

6 WORLD

● Hezbollah fires a missile at Tel Aviv in deepest strike yet after Israeli bombardment of Lebanon

● US missile system will remain in Philippines despite China's alarm

8 NATION

● 'If Cong comes to power even by mistake, it will ruin Haryana with its infighting'

● Foreign diplomats watching J-K polls find it 'very healthy, very democratic'

Recommendations not applicable in 6th Schedule areas sans consent: CM



GUWAHATI, Sept 25: The Assam government and the All Assam Students' Union (AASU) on Wednesday discussed the implementation of Justice (Retd) Biplob Kumar Sharma committee's recommendations on Clause 6 of the Assam Accord to protect the interests of the indigenous population.

Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma, along with his cabinet colleagues and AASU representatives, analysed the recommendations at the state secretariat. Addressing a press conference after the meeting, Sarma said, "It was made clear that the recommendations cannot be implemented in the three districts of the Barak Valley and the autonomous councils under the Sixth Schedule areas without the explicit consent of the people in those regions."

The recommendations will apply only to the districts of the Brahmaputra Valley and not in the three districts of Barak Valley along with the Sixth Schedule areas of Dima Hasao, Karbi Ang-

long and Bodoland Territorial Region (BTR). Sarma explained that the committee's report is divided into three parts - 40 recommendations for exclusive state implementation, 12 to be jointly implemented by both central and state governments, and 15 exclusively for the Centre.

"The state government and AASU will collaborate to implement the 40 recommendations related to land, culture, and linguistics along with the 12 others which are in the shared domain of the state and central government," he added.

Regarding the definition of an indigenous Assamese, Sarma noted that the committee recommended using 1951 as a cut-off date in specific cases under Clause 6, but "this should not be assumed as a general cutoff for all day-to-day activities."

The Committee has recommended that 1951 as a cutoff date will not be applicable in the municipal areas but only in rural areas while all (CONTD. ON PAGE-2)

Talks over Biplab Sarma committee's recommendations on Clause 6 of the Assam Accord held

Process initiated to bring RTI activist to state capital

Dulal Bora arrested from Delhi hospital

HT Bureau
GUWAHATI, Sept 25: Controversial RTI activist Dulal Bora was arrested by police from the national capital on Wednesday.

Bora was on the run after he was accused in extortion and his name was mentioned in a suicide note of a BJP leader in Assam.

Police said that Dulal Bora admitted himself to a hospital in Delhi claiming that he was unwell. However, the police upon receiving his whereabouts, picked him from the hospital.

As per the latest information, Bora is set to be brought to Guwahati.

His detention is connected to a case in which it is claimed that the RTI Act was used for "personal gains."

By submitting an application to look into the anomalies in the building of a neighbourhood temple in Rajapukhuri panchayat, he exploited the RTI.

Borah continued to harass Devojit Hazarika, the panchayat delegate in charge of the project, even after receiving replies from the department.

Hazarika, a local BJP leader, allegedly took the extreme step of taking his own life because he was unable to bear the "mental torture."

In a note, he allegedly included the

names of Dulal Bora and three other people, including two journalists.

There have been rumours that Bora coerced officials by misusing the RTI documents.

His strategy was to demand payment from these officials in order to get them to drop their complaints.

Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma earlier on Wednesday mentioned that Dulal Bora should not be considered as a RTI activist and he is just an accused in a case.

Meanwhile, a police team went to the office of Bora in Guwahati and launched a probe.



Over 25 pc micro and small units struggling to survive in NE: Study

GUWAHATI, Sept 25: A study by the MSME Export Promotion Council (EPC) stated that over 25 per cent of micro and small enterprises in Northeastern states are struggling to survive and suggested a five-point strategy to revive these units and support new startups.

The region hosts around 74,000 MSMEs, but many face crises due to challenges such as a lack of affordable finance, rapidly changing technology and inadequate infrastructure, it said.

MSME EPC chairman Dr D S Rawat, while releasing the study report in New Delhi on Wednesday, said many startups have come up and helped the region in providing jobs, but some of them are in deep crisis in the absence of hand-holding either by large units or institutions.

To address these issues, the EPC has recommended that state governments establish high-powered committees to prioritise the challenges faced by MSMEs.

They suggested developing a roadmap to create a conducive environment for tapping into the region's potential, focusing on skill development, opening showrooms for MSME products, and connecting these enterprises with research and development centres and global marketing agencies. The study emphasised the need for a new financing model that involves the DoNER ministry, multi-lateral institutions, and private (CONTD. ON PAGE-2)

INDIA bloc will hit road if J-K statehood not restored after polls: Rahul Gandhi

JAMMU, Sept 25: Congress leader Rahul Gandhi on Wednesday said restoration of statehood was the "right" of people of Jammu and Kashmir, asserting that the INDIA bloc will hit the road and use "full force" in Parliament and outside if the Centre fails to restore it after assembly polls.

In an election rally here, he said the 2019 decision to bifurcate the erstwhile state into two Union territories (UTs) was "a grave injustice" to the people of Jammu and Kashmir.

"This has never happened in the history of India that we have taken away statehood and transformed a state into a Union territory," Gandhi, who is the leader of opposition in Lok Sabha, said.

"It should have never happened, and I guarantee you that if the BJP does not restore statehood after the elections, we — the INDIA alliance — will use our full force in the Lok Sabha, Rajya Sabha, and even take to the streets for the restoration of statehood to J&K," he asserted.

This rally marked Gandhi's third visit to the region in nearly three weeks, fol-



lowing prior stops in Banihal and Doorn on September 4 and in Surankote and Central-Shalteng on September 23. His visit comes ahead of the crucial third phase of the assembly elections, with the first round having taken place on September 18 and the second on September 25.

Gandhi criticised the current administration for allegedly prioritising "outsiders" over local residents, claiming that the presence of the Lieutenant Governor has marginalised local interests.

"As long as the Lt Governor is there,

outsiders will benefit and locals will be sidelined," he said, arguing that the statehood was revoked to facilitate governance by non-residents.

He told the youths that the restoration of statehood is "your right and your future" and J&K cannot move forward without it.

Gandhi began his day in Jammu with an interaction with local professionals at a hotel before heading to JK Resort Ground for the rally. He further stated that the restoration of statehood is crucial for the region's future, asserting, "J&K cannot move forward without it."

In addition to his focus on statehood, Gandhi criticised the central government's economic policies, alleging that they favour a select few business magnates. "This government runs for Ambani and Adani," he claimed, denouncing the GST and demonetisation as tools designed to benefit these conglomerates.

Referring to migrant Kashmiri Pandits and refugees from Pakistan-occupied Kashmir, he said (CONTD. ON PAGE-2)

BJP membership in Assam crosses 40 lakh

GUWAHATI, Sept 25: Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma on Wednesday said the number of BJP members in the state has already crossed 40 lakh with the party setting a target of 50 lakh.

The membership drive is underway in all 126 assembly segments and will conclude across the state on October 9, a day before the Durga Puja festivities begin, Sarma told reporters after attending a programme here.

A target of 40,000 members has been set for each constituency, and if any segment is "unable to achieve the goal, we will again take up the drive there after Durga Puja," he said.

"Till last night, we had over 43,67,000 members and Assam has contributed 10 per cent of the party's total membership in the country...The BJP membership drive in constituencies held by its allies AGP and UPPL has also been very encouraging. The BJP members will also vote for the allies," Sarma said.

The membership drive in the upper Assam constituencies has been "very encouraging with around 10 segments having already achieved the target of 40,000," he said. The membership drive for achieving the target of 50 lakh has been executed online, he said.

The offline process will begin in some areas where the online membership drive has not been possible due to network problems, he said. "As the #BJPSadasyata2024 campaign in Assam (CONTD. ON PAGE-2)

India exporting military hardware to over 90 countries, def production clocks ₹ 1.27 lakh crore: Rajnath

NEW DELHI, Sept 25: India's defence production has clocked an all-time high of ₹ 1.27 lakh crore in terms of value in 2023-24 and it is now exporting weapons and military hardware to more than 90 friendly countries, defence minister Rajnath Singh said on Wednesday.

Indian armed forces are now using weapons and platforms manufactured on Indian soil and the country is rising on the global defence industrial landscape, the minister said in a post on 'X' on the 10th anniversary of the NDA government's 'Make in India' programme.

The government under Prime Minister Narendra Modi's "astute leadership" introduced the 'Make in India' programme with a vision to make the country self-reliant in every domain, Singh said.

"Ten years since then, many reforms have been made in every sector including the defence sector. India is rising on the defence industrial landscape of the world," he said. "Today, Indian Armed Forces are using weapons and platforms, which are manufactured on our own soil and we are also exporting defence items to more than 90 friendly foreign countries," the minister added.

In the last few years, the government has taken a series of measures to promote the domestic defence industry.

The focus has been to boost domestic defence manufacturing and bolster military preparedness especially in areas along the border with China. India's defence exports crossed the ₹ 21,000 crore mark for the (CONTD. ON PAGE-2)

The Ministry is developing dedicated clusters in five states

India's container handling capacity set for a twofold increase in five years: Sonowal

HT Bureau
NEW DELHI, Sept 25: India's container handling capacity set for a twofold increase in five years, said Union minister Sarbananda Sonowal on Wednesday.

He said this while addressing media persons after participating in a conference which aimed at showcasing the Ministry's contributions toward transforming India's maritime sector and aligning with the vision of Maritime India Vision 2030 and Maritime Amritkaal Vision 2047.

During the press conference, Sonowal presented an extensive overview of the significant milestones achieved by the ministry during the first 100 days.

"After 25 years since the establishment of Kamarajar Port, the addition of Vadhvan Port marks a significant milestone in India's maritime journey, alongside the recent notification of Galathea Bay as a major port. In the next five years, MoPSW projects container



handling to reach an impressive 40 million TEUs, creating 2 million job opportunities across the country. JNPA alone will scale up its handling capacity from the current 6.6 million TEUs to 10 million," an official statement quoted Sonowal as saying.

The minister commenced acknowledged the unwavering guidance of Prime Minister Narendra Modi, whose vision of 'Ports for Prosperity and Ports for Progress' has become the cornerstone of India's maritime transformation. He also highlighted that PM Modi's

focus on holistic development and his mantra of "Transformation through Transportation" are leading to a complete overhaul of India's maritime landscape.

"Prime Minister Narendra Modi Ji's focus on holistic development and his mantra of 'Transformation through Transportation' are creating a paradigm shift in India's maritime sector. This Government's commitment to strengthening maritime infrastructure is paving the way for unprecedented economic growth and generating signifi-

cant employment opportunities across the country. Waterways are becoming the new high-ways of India," he said. He further elaborated on the major initiatives taken by the Ministry under the guidance of PM Modi, highlighting that these are geared toward enhancing port infrastructure, improving ease of doing business, promoting sustainability, and creating employment opportunities.

"Recognising the strategic importance of shipbuilding and ship repair, the Ministry is developing dedicated clusters in Maharashtra, Kerala, Andhra Pradesh, Odisha, and Gujarat. We are also allocating more than 3,900 acres in Kandla and VOC Port for the development of hydrogen manufacturing hubs, positioning India as a leader in clean energy. Additionally, we are eagerly looking forward to the upcoming 'Sagarmathan': The Great Ocean Conference, which will be held in Mumbai this November, (CONTD. ON PAGE-2)

NATIONAL HEALTH MISSION
National Health Mission, Assam

GOVERNMENT OF ASSAM

MITIGATE, SAVE LIVES

Be a part of the Health Community

Report any disease outbreak in your area

Community based Disease Surveillance is an active process to strengthen community participation in reporting outbreak prone communicable diseases.

Steps to participate in Community Reporting over IHIP-IDSP website

- Type <https://ihip.mohfw.gov.in/cbs> through your mobile phone or computer internet browser
- Provide your mobile number and the OTP at the time of submitting the information
- Choose 'Accept' as a web banner appears on the screen
- Fill up basic details of the reporting person
- Fill up the disease outbreak details
- Upload any available related documents
- Enter captcha and submit

This information will notify the Health Department to take immediate remedial action at the Block, District and State Level to institute preventive measures through deployment of rapid response teams.

Call 104 for any health related queries | Call 108 for Ambulance Services

(NEM/D/2024-25/356)

Dairy is sensitive sector; no plans to open up in any FTA: Goyal

NEW DELHI, Sept 25: Commerce and Industry Minister Piyush Goyal on Wednesday said dairy is a sensitive sector in India as it involves livelihood issues of small farmers and there are no plans to give duty concessions under any Free Trade Agreement (FTA) in this area.

He said India has not given any duty concessions in the dairy sector even to Switzerland and Norway under the EFTA (European Free Trade Association) trade pact, which was signed in March.

With Australia also, he said, the sector was discussed but India clearly conveyed the sensitivities involved in this area.

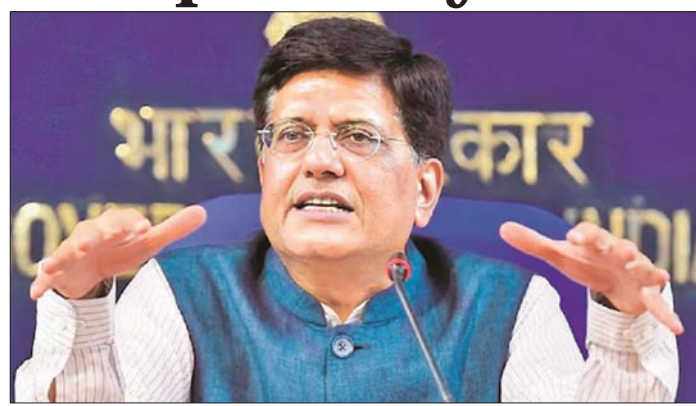
"Our average holding with the farmer is small. It is 2-3 acre farm with 3-4 livestock whereas Australia's farm and dairy farms are both very large and it would be near impossible for these large and small farms to compete with each other on a common footing."

"We had discussed this issue even three years ago and on earlier occasions also, and dairy is such a sensitive sector that in any of our FTAs across the world, we have not been able to open up the sector with duty concessions," Goyal told reporters in a joint press conference at Adelaide with Australian Trade Minister Don Farrell.

The minister is in Australia for bilateral talks to promote trade and investments.

He said the sector is open for trade but there are certain customs duties imposed on that.

"We have neither opened up dairy for Europe nor planning to open up...nor have we opened it with Switzerland and Norway with whom we have recently signed EFTA trade agreement," he said adding "This is the agreement that



Switzerland has signed without any component of dairy in it".

Goyal was responding to a question on India's hesitancy on removing barriers to Australian exports in sensitive sectors like dairy. On CECA talks, the Indian minister said that both the countries are aware of each other's sensitivities.

"So any issue that I can see Australia will be uncomfortable with, I would not like to push, press on that, and likewise our approach has been that if something is very sensitive to a large Indian population given our current status of development, Australia has been very gracious in their understanding of our sensitivities," he said.

Further, Goyal flagged outstanding issues of ECTA (Economic Co-operation and Trade Agreement) for early progress including timely conclusion of Mutual Recognition Agreements (MRAs) in Services and Organics.

Farrell said that Australia has a lot to offer to India in agriculture, as well as the emerging sectors.

Asked about the progress of talks on CECA, the Australian minister said that in terms of agriculture, "we are talking about the removal of all of the tariffs that weren't re-

moved at the last process, so we've made significant progress".

"So things like chickpeas, pistachios, and apples...all of the issues, all of the products where there are still tariffs, wine is another one we are seeking to have those tariffs removed," he said.

On Whyalla steelworks issue, the minister said that he is aware that there have been some discussions between Prime Minister Narendra Modi and his Australian counterpart.

"Obviously steel making is a very important business in Whyalla. As a government we want to see steel making continue, and of course all of those jobs be protected, and we will, of course, continue those discussions between the Prime Minister and the Premier," he added.

India and Australia implemented an interim trade agreement in December 2022 and now they are in negotiations to widen the scope of the pact through CEPA.

The bilateral trade between the two countries dipped to USD 24 billion in 2023-24 from USD 26 billion in 2022-23. The trade is in favour of Australia as India's exports stood at USD 7.94 billion in

the last fiscal year, while imports were at USD 16.15 billion.

Australia is the 25th largest investor in India with foreign direct investments of USD 1.5 billion during April 2000 and June 2024. Goyal also announced opening up of the Invest India office soon in Sydney to help promote bilateral investments.

He said that India offers huge opportunities for investments as it has the advantage of four 'Ds' - democracy, demographic dividend, demand and decisive leadership.

The two sides are looking to double the bilateral trade to USD 100 billion in the coming years.

Farrell also announced USD 10 million in new grants for Australian businesses, organisations and universities to boost cooperation with India.

By extending the USD 10 million Maitri Grants programme, the government will deliver, firstly, USD 5 million for Australian organisations working on projects that boost trade and innovation, cultural ties and community leaders, and then a further USD 5 million for scholars and fellowships to support Australian universities to host some of the brightest Indian students in their research, on some of "our biggest" shared challenges.

Goyal said that the Invest India office will be set up "shortly" to cover four areas - investment, trade, technology, and tourism. It will have representatives from Invest India, the organisation responsible for building industrial smart cities and townships (NICDC), Export Trade and Guarantee Corporation, and CII.

"We (India) will cross the USD 7 trillion mark by 2030, and the USD 10 trillion mark by 2034," he added. (PTI)

Sensex ends above record 85,000 level, Nifty scales 26K mount on fag-end buying

MUMBAI, Sept 25: Benchmark Sensex closed above the 85,000 level for the first time while Nifty scaled the 26,000 peak at close on Wednesday as fag-end buying in banking and power shares helped stock markets recoup early losses.

After a see-saw trade during the day, the 30-share BSE Sensex rose by 255.83 points or 0.30 per cent to settle at an all-time high of 85,169.87. During the day, it surged 333.38 points or 0.39 per cent to hit a record intra-day peak of 85,247.42. As many as 20 Sensex shares closed in green while 10 in red.

The broader Nifty climbed 63.75 points or 0.25 per cent to close above the 26,000 level for the first time. The 50-issue index closed at a record high of 26,004.15 after scaling a new intra-day peak of 26,032.80.

From the 30 Sensex firms, Power Grid, Axis Bank, NTPC, Bajaj Finserv, Bajaj Finance, Tata Steel, Mahindra & Mahindra and

HDFC Bank were the biggest gainers.

Tech Mahindra, Tata Motors, Titan, Kotak Mahindra Bank, State Bank of India and JSW Steel were the biggest laggards.

"After a range-bound trade, the benchmark indices inched higher towards close, led by power and banking stocks, while mid- and small-cap indices experienced corrections driven by valuation concerns," Vinod Nair, Head of Research, Geojit Financial Services said. The domestic market may face short-term challenges owing to a decline in FII inflow and shift of funds to other emerging markets due to their cheap valuation, he added.

"Nifty 50 recovered from day's low in the last leg of the trade to end at record close. A brief China-led rally seemed to be dying out, leaving shares in Europe and Asia mixed on Wednesday after a strong start that had extended overnight gains on Wall Street," Deepak

Jasani, Head of Retail Research, HDFC Securities, said.

The BSE midcap gauge declined 0.53 per cent and smallcap index dipped 0.35 per cent.

Among the indices, utilities jumped 0.99 per cent, power (0.87 per cent), realty (0.71 per cent), metal (0.40 per cent), telecommunication (0.24 per cent) and commodities (0.23 per cent). Consumer durables, IT, services, tech, auto and industrials were the laggards.

In Asian markets, Shanghai and Hong Kong settled in the positive territory while Seoul and Tokyo ended lower.

European markets were trading mostly lower. The US markets ended higher on Tuesday.

Foreign Institutional Investors (FIIs) offloaded equities worth ₹ 2,784.14 crore on Tuesday, according to exchange data.

Global oil benchmark Brent crude dipped 0.35 per cent to USD 74.91 a barrel. (PTI)

SBI aims to become first financial firm to cross milestone of Rs 1 lakh crore profit: Chairman

NEW DELHI, Sept 25: State Bank of India (SBI) is aiming to become the first Indian financial firm to cross a milestone of ₹ 1 lakh crore net profit in the next 3-5 years, chairman of the country's largest lender C S Setty has said. SBI recorded a standalone net profit of ₹ 61,077 crore in FY24, registering a growth of 21.59 per cent. "We have potential. Definitely, we would like to be the first company in India to reach that milestone," Setty said when asked if it is possible to cross ₹ 1 lakh crore in the next 3-5 years.

However, he said, "while profits, market capitalization etc are extremely important elements for our or-

ganization, we give equal thrust on customer-centricity and it acts as a fundamental aspect of our operations." With regard to corporate loan demand, Setty said, the bank has already got a ₹ 4 lakh crore strong credit pipeline from India Inc and capital expenditure by the private sector is expected to pick up in the second half of the fiscal year.

"We see a good amount of interest in private capital expenditure. The infrastructure financing, of course, is mainly coming from the roads, renewable energy, and some of the refineries," he told PTI in an interview. (PTI)

Contd. from Page 1..

Over 25 pc micro and small

players to enhance industry attractiveness and foster entrepreneurship. The proposed 'Single Window' system aims to simplify processes for MSMEs and attract private investments, it added.

Major challenges include geographical barriers, underdeveloped transport systems, low participation from the private sector, and insufficient financial and infrastructure facilities, the report said. The report advocated for collaboration with innovative companies and institutions and encouraged private sector funding through debt instruments with tax incentives.

Additionally, it suggested building networks of development service providers to offer customised solutions to MSMEs in technology, product development, and marketing. (PTI)

Recommendations not applicable

three districts of Barak Valley will be excluded from this definition of Assamese, the chief minister said.

"Regarding the 15 recommendations to be implemented by the Centre, the state government will formally request the Union government to hold a tripartite discussion with the AASU at the earliest," he said. It was also decided to upload the report on the website of the Assam Accord Implementation department so that people know about the recommendations of the committee, he said.

"The meeting primarily focused on demystifying the report by making it public and bringing clarity regarding which recommendation will be implemented by the state, Centre and both the governments", he said. The meeting also decided to prepare an action plan within a month on how to implement the recommendations and hand it over to AASU by October 25, he said.

The second round of talks with AASU will be held on October 25, he said. "If the AASU and the state government arrive at a consensus on majority of the recommendations, then the suggestions within the ambit of the state government will be implemented by April 15, 2025", Sarma said.

Besides, there is no reason why there should be any difference as the report by Justice (Retd) Biplob Sarma had been prepared following discussions with several organisations, including the AASU, he added.

The committee was set up in 2019 following widespread protests against the Citizenship Amendment Act, 2019 and the report was submitted to then chief minister Sarbananda Sonowal in 2020 for handing over to Union home minister Amit Shah.

The Assam Accord was signed in 1985 after a six-year-long violent anti-foreigner movement. It stated, among other clauses, that names of all foreigners coming to Assam on or after March 25, 1971 would be detected and deleted from electoral rolls with steps taken to deport them. (PTI)

India's container handling

further emphasising focus on ocean sustainability and blue economy growth," the minister added.

Sonowal also presented the Ministry's accomplishments, focusing on flagship projects that will enhance India's maritime capabilities and contribute to overall sector development. He underscored the foundation of Vadhran Port, India's first major port project of the 21st century, poised to become one of the largest all-weather deep-water ports with a capacity of 298 MMTPA.

"This mega port is expected to create 1.2 million employment opportunities and place an Indian port among the top 10 container ports globally, significantly improving international shipping connectivity and reducing transit times and costs," he added.

Besides this, another key project highlighted was the Tuticorin International Container Terminal on the East Coast, which will serve as a major transshipment hub, saving up to USD 200 per container and providing an estimated annual foreign exchange savings of USD 4 million.

"The Ease of Doing Business Initiatives introduced several reforms, including the establishment of the Indian Maritime Centre (IMC) to foster policy and operational synergy, the Indian International Maritime Dispute Resolution Centre (IIMDR) to streamline maritime dispute resolutions, and the Sagar Aankalan Guidelines to benchmark port performance, enhancing global competitiveness. Additionally, the commencement of operations at Cochin Shipyard's International Ship Repair Facility (ISRF), equipped with state-of-the-art ship lifts and workstations, positions India as a global leader in the ship repair market," the statement said.

In cruise tourism, the International Cruise Terminal at Visakhapatnam was operationalised, boosting both domestic and international maritime tourism prospects. The secretary of the Ministry of Ports, Shipping, and Waterways, T K Ramachandran, provided a comprehensive overview of the Ministry's strategic initiatives. He highlighted key reforms aimed at strengthening maritime infrastructure, driving investment, and enhancing ease of doing business.

BJP membership in Assam

surpasses the 40 lakh milestone, I congratulate my fellow karyakartas for their exceptional hard work. We won't rest until we fulfill Pt Deendayal Upadhyaya's dream of taking our party's ideology to every home," the chief minister later posted on 'X'.

Sarma said 18 lakh members had registered last year with the party keen to double its figure this time and the target has been surpassed well ahead of time. The chief minister had renewed his membership at a special programme at the state party headquarters on September 3. (PTI)

India exporting military

first time in 2023-24 and the defence ministry has set a target of increasing it to ₹ 50,000 crore in the next five years. India is one of the largest exporters of arms globally.

According to estimates, Indian armed forces are projected to spend around USD 130 billion in capital procurement by 2029.

The government wants to reduce dependence on imported military platforms and has decided to support domestic defence manufacturing.

The defence ministry has set a goal of a turnover of USD 25 billion (₹ 1.75 lakh crore) in defence manufacturing in the next five years. In May 2020, the government announced increasing the FDI limit in the defence sector from 49 per cent to 74 per cent under the automatic route. The government allows 100 per cent FDI for specific cases. (PTI)

INDIA bloc will hit road

all the promises made to them by the Manmohan Singh government will be fulfilled after the formation of the National Conference-Congress government in J&K. He also said the smart electricity meters will be removed and Punjab will be granted official language status.

The former Congress president concluded his address by accusing the BJP government and the Lt Governor of undermining Jammu's economic strength, which he described as the central hub of J&K essential for facilitating the production chain from the valley to the rest of the country. As the assembly elections unfold, the call for the restoration of statehood remains a pivotal issue in the political landscape of Jammu and Kashmir. (PTI)

Shriram Properties eyes ₹600 cr from Chennai housing project

NEW DELHI, Sept 25: Realty firm Shriram Properties is expecting a revenue of ₹ 550-600 crore from its new housing project in Chennai. The company has launched a new project in West Chennai with a total saleable area of 1.1 million square feet.

The project has a revenue potential of around ₹ 550-600 crore, the company said in a statement.

Shriram Properties Ltd is one of South India's leading residential real estate developers, primarily focused on the mid-market and mid-premium segments.

Its key markets include Bengaluru, Chennai and Kolkata, which together account for nearly 85 per cent of its development. The company has delivered 44 projects with a saleable area of 24.4 million square feet. It has a strong development pipeline comprising 42 projects with an aggregate development potential of 42.1 million square feet as of June 30, 2024. (PTI)

Revolutionising customer protection against spam and fraud

Airtel unveils India's first AI-powered spam detection network

HT Bureau

GUWAHATI, Sept 25: In a groundbreaking move to combat the rising wave of spam calls and messages, Bharti Airtel has launched the country's first AI-powered, network-based spam detection solution, said an official statement on Wednesday.

This pioneering technology, developed by Airtel's in-house data scientists, promises real-time protection for millions of customers by automatically flagging and blocking suspected spam communications, including calls, SMSes, and even malicious links.

"Unlike conventional anti-spam tools that require downloads or service requests, Airtel's solution comes auto-activated and is free of charge for all its users. It features a dual-layer AI shield that operates at both the network and IT systems levels, scanning billions of calls and messages daily in just milliseconds. The system leverages cutting-edge algorithms that analyze patterns like call frequency, SMS origins, and caller behaviors to accurately identify and classify communications as "Suspected SPAM," it added.

It further said that Airtel's AI engine has already flagged 100 million potential spam calls and 3 million spam SMSes every day. Additionally, it actively scans SMSes for malicious links and maintains a dynamic database of blacklisted URLs to prevent users from



accidentally clicking on harmful content.

"The solution can even detect suspicious behaviors like frequent IMEI changes, a common indicator of fraudulent activity," the statement further read.

"Spam has become a menace for customers. Today marks a milestone as we launch the country's first AI-powered spam-free network that will shield our customers from intrusive and unwanted communications. Our goal is to offer an unprecedented level of protection to ensure customer security remains a top priority," the statement quoted Gopal Vittal, MD and CEO of Bharti Airtel as saying.

adopting a more accommodative monetary policy, the ADB said.

"If improved agricultural supply leads to moderating food price increases, the central bank may begin lowering policy rates in FY2024 (2024-25), enhancing prospects for credit expansion," it said. The current account deficit will remain moderate, helped by strong service exports and remittances.

ADB projected India's current account deficit to be 1 per cent of GDP this fiscal and 1.2 per cent in the next, down from the previous forecast of 1.7 per cent for both years, due to better exports, lower imports, and strong remittance inflows. "Near-term growth risks include geopolitical shocks that could disrupt global supply chains and commodity prices, as well as weather-related risks to agricultural output. The outlook is based on the central government achieving its capital expenditure target in FY2024," it said.

ADB said growth in developing Asia remained strong during the first half of 2024, supported by domestic demand and continued recovery in exports. The growth outlook for developing Asia has been revised slightly upward to 5 per cent for 2024 from 4.9 per cent in April.

However, downside risks persist from rising protectionism, depending on the outcome of the presidential election in the United States, which could lead to negative real and financial spillovers in developing Asia.

Other risks to the outlook relate to escalating geopolitical tensions, a deterioration in China's property market, and adverse weather conditions. (PTI)

ADB retains India's growth forecast at 7 pc; govt spending, agriculture to boost economy

NEW DELHI, Sept 25: The Asian Development Bank (ADB) on Wednesday retained India's growth forecast for the current fiscal at 7 per cent saying better farm output and higher government spending will boost economic activity.

In its Asian Development Outlook (ADO) update of September, the ADB said exports in the current fiscal will be higher than earlier projected, led by larger services exports. However, merchandise export growth will be relatively muted through the next fiscal.

"GDP growth is expected at 7 per cent in fiscal year 2024 (FY2024, ending 31 March 2025) and 7.2 per cent in FY2025, both as forecast in ADO April 2024," the ADB said, adding that India's growth prospects remain robust.

The Indian economy grew 8.2 per cent in the last fiscal (2023-24). The RBI projects growth to be 7.2 per cent in the current fiscal.

It said while GDP growth slowed to 6.7 per cent in the first quarter (April-June) of FY2024, it is expected to accelerate in the coming quarters with the improvement in agriculture and a largely robust outlook for industry and services.

"India's economy has shown remarkable resilience in the face of global geopolitical challenges and is poised for steady growth," ADB Country Director for India Mio Oka said.

"Agricultural improvements will enhance rural spending, which will complement the effects of robust performance of the industry and services sectors," he added.

The report highlights that an above-average monsoon in most



parts of the country will lead to strong agricultural growth, enhancing the rural economy in FY2024.

Private consumption is expected to improve, driven by rural consumption fuelled by stronger agriculture and by already robust urban consumption.

The outlook for private investment is upbeat, but growth in public capital expenditure, heretofore high, will moderate in FY2025.

Efforts toward fiscal consolidation are expected to drive down the fiscal deficit to a level last seen before COVID-19, reflecting robust revenue collection and restrained current expenditure, the ADB said.

With the government's fiscal consolidation efforts, central government debt is projected to decrease from 58.2 per cent of GDP in 2023-24 to 56.8 per cent in 2024-25.

The general government deficit, which includes state governments, is expected to fall below 8 per cent of GDP in the current fiscal.

A recent policy announcement

offering workers and firms employment-linked incentives could boost labour demand and bolster job creation starting in FY2025, it added.

The Budget 2024-25 has announced three employment-linked incentive schemes and said the government would allocate Rs 2 lakh crore to implement them.

"Growth slowed year-on-year (yoy) in the first quarter (Q1) of FY2024 but is expected to rise in the coming months on improved agricultural performance and higher government spending.

Industry and services are expected to continue performing robustly," the ADB said.

Elevated food prices will likely mean higher inflation in the current fiscal than previously forecast, but inflation should moderate in the next fiscal, the ADB said.

Consumer inflation is anticipated to rise to 4.7 per cent in the current fiscal due to elevated food prices, despite higher agriculture output expectations. This has prevented India's central bank from

Yadav emphasises strict adherence to guidelines & coordination for seamless conduct of the recruitment examination

Cachar DC reviews preparations for ADRE 2024



HT Bureau
GUWAHATI, Sept 25: Cachar district commissioner Mridul Yadav reviewed the preparations for the upcoming Assam Direct Recruitment Examination (ADRE-2024), scheduled to take place on September 29. The meeting, held at the conference hall of the DC's Office on Wednesday and attended

by key officials, aimed to ensure the flawless conduct of the examination across the district's 29 designated centres.

During the review, commissioner Yadav emphasised the importance of adhering to the guidelines issued by the State Level Recruitment Commission (SLRC) and instructed all officers

to ensure the examination runs smoothly without any lapses. He also called for strict monitoring and effective coordination among the centre in-charges and supervising officers to ensure a seamless examination process.

It is pertinent to mention that the ADRE-2024 is a key recruitment examination in Assam, and Cachar district is playing a crucial role by hosting several examination centres. District commissioner Yadav's proactive measures and detailed review of the preparations underscore the administration's commitment to ensuring a fair and transparent examination process.

The meeting was also attended by district development commissioner Norsing Bey, additional district commissioner (Education) Antara Sen, additional superintendent of police (Headquarters) Subrata Sen, and Bidyut Deb, regional secretary of SEBA, along with other concerned officers and personnel.

High Court orders reinstatement of Batadroba Than Management Committee

HT Correspondent
NAGAON, Sept 25: The Gauhati High Court on Tuesday intervened in the longstanding dispute surrounding the historic Batadroba Than Management Committee, bringing relief to the revered Batadroba Than, the birthplace of the great Vaishnavite Saint Srianta Sankardev.

The committee had been embroiled in controversy following the formation of a parallel committee, which led to widespread criticism and outrage. The parallel committee was formed after a faction of members disrupted the biennial general meeting on June 9, violating constitutional norms. The permanent management committee filed an affidavit in court, stating

that the parallel committee was unconstitutional. The court initially ruled in favor of the parallel committee on July 2 but later reversed its decision following an appeal by the permanent committee.

In a landmark judgment (Case No. MJ-84/2024), the High Court upheld the legitimacy of the permanent committee led by president Jogendra Narayan Dev Mahanta, restoring order and ending the five-month-long stalemate at the historic Batadroba Than, birthplace of Mahapurush Srianta Sankardev.

The court's verdict has brought justice to the permanent committee, ensuring the preservation of the dignity and pride of the Than as well as the greater Assamese nation.

APHLC protests crime surge and calls for action in KA

HT Bureau
DIPHU, Sept 25: The All Party Hills Leaders Conference (APHLC) staged a sit-in demonstration in Karbi Anglong, criticizing CEM Tuliram Ronghang for rising violence against women and children. Recent incidents include multiple murders and alleged rapes over the past few months. Protesters demanded the transfer of Superintendent of Police Sanjib Kumar Saikia, citing his failure to maintain law and order. APHLC leader Bikram Hanse condemned the CEM's claims of peace, asserting that safety has deteriorated. The demonstration also called for immediate arrests in the latest murder case.

Businessman's body held in hospital morgue over unpaid bills

HT Correspondent
NAGAON, Sept 25: A heartbreaking incident has created a sorrowful atmosphere in Barhampur, Nagaon district, following the tragic death of a young businessman. According to reports, the young businessman was critically injured in a road accident one month ago. He was admitted to a private hospital in Guwahati for advanced treatment. His impoverished mother did everything she could to save her son, selling her last possessions, including jewellery, cattle, and land, to gather funds for his care. Despite contributions from local people, the treatment was stopped due to financial constraints, forcing the family to pin their last hopes on

divine intervention. Tragically, the young businessman passed away three days ago.

However, even in death, the family's ordeal did not end. The hospital authorities refused to release the body due to unpaid medical bills, leaving the businessman's remains in the morgue for three days. This heart-wrenching incident has touched the community deeply, with widespread condemnation of the hospital's inhumane actions. Intervening in the matter, local MLA of Barhampur constituency, Jitu Goswami, paid the medical expenses and arranged for the body to be brought home. Pranjal's body was returned to his family on Tuesday night, where grief-stricken relatives and locals gathered.

CM distributes free hearing aids to 200 underprivileged individuals

Sarma honours Upadhyaya's legacy by empowering marginalised communities with hearing aids

HT Bureau

GUWAHATI, Sept 25: Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma attended a free hearing aid distribution camp organized by the Deen Dayal Sravana Foundation in collaboration with the National Health Mission (NHM) Assam at the Assam Water Centre in Basistha. The event commemorated the 109th birth anniversary of Pandit Deen Dayal Upadhyaya, with a total of 200 financially disadvantaged individuals, including children with hearing impairments from Kamrup Metropolitan, Kamrup, Morigaon, and Nalbari districts, receiving free hearing aids.

Speaking at the camp, Sarma noted that the Deen Dayal Sravana Foundation was established in honor of Pandit Upadhyaya, a prominent humanitarian and philosopher. He remarked, "Today's distribution of hearing aids marks the 109th birth anniversary of Pandit Upadhyaya, who championed the upliftment of society's most marginalized individuals through his concept of Antyodaya." The Chief Minister underscored that true societal progress is achievable only when each individual is empowered, a principle central to Pandit Upadhyaya's philosophy of Integral Humanism.

Sarma expressed gratitude to Regula Raman-



janevulu, founder and chairman of the Deen Dayal Sravana Foundation, and all involved in executing this initiative. He extended congratulations to today's hearing aid recipients and acknowledged stakeholders like Coal India Limited for their essential role in supporting this noble endeavor.

Highlighting the global issue of hearing impairment, CM Sarma stated that an estimated 3.40 crore children worldwide are affected, and around 30% of individuals over 60 experience hearing loss. Citing World Health Organization (WHO) data, he noted that approximately 6.30 crore people in India deal with significant hear-

ing impairments. He emphasized that early identification of the causes of hearing loss, followed by appropriate interventions, could greatly mitigate the condition. The CM praised the initiative by the Deendayal Sravana Foundation and NHM Assam to identify eligible beneficiaries and provide free hearing aids, calling it both timely and impactful. Himanta also mentioned that the Deendayal Sravana Foundation, established in 2018, is committed to creating a hearing impairment-free India by 2047, aligning with Prime Minister Narendra Modi's vision for a developed nation. He acknowledged that over 11,000 individuals in Andhra Pradesh and Mizoram have already benefited from this initiative.

In collaboration with the National Institute of Public Cooperation and Child Development and NHM's Child Health Programme, 3,130 individuals with hearing impairments have been identified to receive free hearing aids. In addition to today's distribution, another 200 individuals from the districts of Bongaigaon, Chirang, Kokrajhar, and Goalpara will receive hearing aids at a scheduled program in Bongaigaon tomorrow. Dr. Sarma reiterated the various measures being undertaken by the State Government to eliminate hearing impairment from society.

Road accident at Mothadung GGS Chariali

HT Correspondent

SIVASAGAR, Sept 25: Arabintra Das (32) died on the spot, and another rider, Dwipen Das, was seriously injured when the bike they were riding (AS04V7426) was struck by a speeding truck coming from the opposite direction at around 10:00 pm on Tuesday night near Mothadung GGS Chariali.

Arabintra, who hailed from Morigaon, had been staying at Dwipen Das's home in Sensuwa Gaon, near Bhatipar. Jaisagar police transported the injured to the hospital, while the body of the deceased was sent for postmortem. No information about the truck has been received so far.

Suresh Gopi visits Morigaon

Minister engages with local beneficiaries & inspects key projects

HT Correspondent

MORIGAON, Sept 25: Minister of state for Petroleum and Natural Gas and Tourism, government of India, Suresh Gopi, visited Morigaon district and engaged in a series of notable activities highlighting the government's commitment to the development and welfare of the region on Wednesday. The minister visited several important locations throughout Morigaon district. The day began with a visit to the Murbani public water system. He then visited Dolphin Point at Kachshila in the Mayang area. The minister also inspected the anti-erosion system by boat in the Brahmaputra river, emphasising the protection of natural resources in the area. Later, he interacted with beneficiaries of the Prime Minister's Housing Scheme. The minister also visited the Kumai Kacharigaon Anganwadi Centre and the Kayaking and Canoeing

Training Center at Charan Beel to promote sports development in the area, with a focus on healthcare and nutrition initiatives for children and women. Additionally, he visited Bakharbari to review the Pradhan Mantri Matsya Sampad Yojana, aimed at enhancing fisheries and aquatic resources. The primary focus of the visit was to ensure that the benefits of the government's development programs reach the grassroots level.

After completing the site inspection, the minister arrived at the Morigaon District Commissioner Office, where he planted a neem sapling in the DC Office's garden, naming it 'Damodar'. He was accompanied by DC Debashis Sarma, ADCs, COs, and heads of various departments. Following this, a rally on 'Tobacco-Free among the Young Generation' was flagged off by the minister, which was organised by the Tobacco Control Cell and the joint director of Health, Morigaon.

Minister Suresh Gopi then pro-

ceeded to the meeting room of the district commissioner, where he attended a high-level meeting with senior officials of the district administration. The meeting was attended by the principal secretary to the state government, district commissioner Devashish Sharma, additional district commissioners, heads of various departments, and other senior officials. Discussions centred around ensuring efficient implementation of government schemes, particularly in rural and remote areas of the district. The minister urged district officers to focus on the timely completion of projects under the Pradhan Mantri Awas Yojana, Swachh Bharat Abhiyan, and other welfare programs. At the conclusion of the meeting, the minister appreciated the cooperative efforts of the district administration and local representatives. He encouraged the officers to maintain a people-centric approach and work towards the comprehensive development of Morigaon district.

KAAC updates compassionate appointment policies

HT Bureau

DIPHU, Sept 25: The Karbi Anglong Autonomous Council (KAAC), led by Principal Secretary Mukul Kr. Saikia, has issued an Office Memorandum (OM) reviewing compassionate appointment schemes for the families of deceased government employees.

Key changes include replacing the previous policy with a Compassionate Family Pension Scheme for those who passed away after April 1, 2017. Appointments will now be limited to cases requiring immediate financial aid, with a strong discouragement of delayed applications. The OM also cites a Supreme Court ruling emphasizing the need for timely support rather than long-term inheritance. This update aims to ensure that the scheme effectively assists families in urgent need.

KFA hosts training camp on silkworm rearing

HT Bureau

DIPHU, Sept 25: The Karbi Farmers Association (KFA), in collaboration with the Superintendent of Sericulture office in Hamren, organized a training camp on scientific silkworm rearing at Zirikingend. Sericulture Inspector Mongalsing Rongpi provided insights on constructing proper rearing houses and the importance of cleanliness for successful silkworm cultivation, emphasizing its profitability.

KFA President Tingku Ingti highlighted the association's ongoing support for local farmers, including distributing tools and encouraging scientific agricultural practices. The event was chaired by KFA Hamren branch president Pleaston Ingti and attended by local leaders. The KFA remains committed to assisting farmers interested in silkworm rearing.

Fake circle officer arrested in Nagaon for fraud

HT Correspondent

NAGAON, Sept 25: Rajshree Devi, a woman employee of the Nagaon Court, was arrested by Nagaon police for allegedly impersonating a revenue circle officer and collecting money from a complainant here on Wednesday.

According to reports, Rajshree, in collusion with Rimi Das, collected over ₹ 3 lakh from a woman complainant in Puranigudam, promising her a job.

When the complainant demanded her money back, Rajshree threatened to file false charges against her.

Having no other option, the complainant finally approached Nagaon police and filed a complaint with sufficient evidence, leading to Rajshree's arrest under Sections 420/468 of the Bharatiya Nyai Sanhita. The incident has sparked widespread outrage in Nagaon.

189 ME teachers in Karbi Anglong protest salary delays, demands regularisation

HT Bureau

DIPHU, Sept 25: At a time when the State cabinet has taken a decision to regularise the posts of 131 LP school teachers of Karbi Anglong, the 189 ME school teachers of the district have questioned the state government as to why they are being left out in the cabinet decision for regularisation process.

The 189 ME school teachers have expressed their displeasure for the indifferent attitude shown towards them by the State government and have made a fervent appeal to the Chief Minister of Assam, Himanta Biswa Sarma to take up the matter in the next cabinet meeting for regularisation of the posts.

Expressing their displeasure before the media here at Diphu Govt. Boys HS school playground, where the aggrieved teachers have assembled and one among them Anita Rongpipi said, "It was on April 15, 2022, our Chief Minister of Assam Himanta Biswa Sarma had himself handed the appointment letters to us. For the first 6 months we received provisional



salaries and after that no salaries were given to us. It is now 25 months since we have not received our salaries."

Due to such challenges the teachers are compelled to come out on the streets to express their grievances. Rongpipi stated and said that it is not known why the matter is still pending, but every time the teachers approach the concerned officer they say things will be settled very soon. She said, "Yesterday in the State cabinet meeting passed a resolution for regularisation of 131 posts of LP

teachers. We fervently appealed to our chief minister to take up the matter in the next cabinet meeting for approval of the posts when it is held."

Joining with her is another teacher Rumi Kropi, where she explained that the teachers have endured much hardship. Many teachers have to maintain their families as well as attend to schools amidst not getting salaries. The 189 teachers have now lost all patience for not receiving their dues and went to the extent of class boycott. This boycott call cannot

be immediately withdrawn until and unless their grievances are made, she said.

"Through this media platform we want to appeal to our Chief Minister as to when will the problem of 189 ME teachers be solved," Kropi stated and expressed that it was on April 15, 2022 that the Chief Minister himself had come here at Diphu Govt. Boys HS school playground to hand over the appointment letters to the 189 teachers. After receiving the appointment letters the teachers have been honestly discharging their duties of going to school regularly. But it was quite surprising that yesterday in the State cabinet meeting decided to regularise the posts of 131 LP school teachers, while for 189 ME school teachers were being left out, she said.

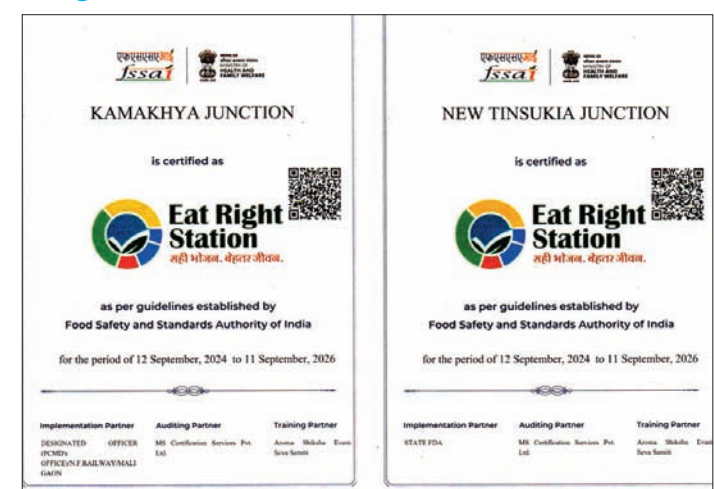
Kropi said, "We teachers were very much hopeful of getting any positive development from yesterday's cabinet meeting, but sadly that did not happen. Why it did not pass and why it has happened like this. That we did not know."

Kamakhya and New Tinsukia Railway Stations achieve 'Eat Right Station' certifications

HT Bureau

GUWAHATI, Sept 25: The Kamakhya Station under the Lumding division and New Tinsukia Station under the Tinsukia division of NF Railway have been awarded 'Eat Right Station' certifications by FSSAI (Food Safety and Standards Authority of India) in recognition of facilitating high-quality, nutritious food for passengers. These stations have qualified under the guidelines established by FSSAI, becoming the 9th and 10th railway stations in NF Railway to receive this status. These certifications are valid from September 12, 2024, to September 11, 2026, for both stations.

Furthermore, in its endeavour to ensure safe and hygienic food for passengers, NF Railway has planned to include more stations in the future to qualify as 'Eat Right Stations' by FSSAI, with necessary efforts already underway. Previously, Guwahati, Harishchandrapur, Lumding, Rangia, Mariani, Samsi, New Bongaigaon, and New Jalpaiguri



Railway Stations of NF Railway were awarded 'Eat Right Station' certifications by FSSAI.

It is worth mentioning that the 'Eat Right Station' certification is granted by FSSAI to railway stations that adhere to standard food storage and hygiene practices. This certification is awarded following an audit by an FSSAI-empowered

third-party agency, recognising stations that set benchmarks in providing safe and wholesome food to passengers.

The certification is part of the 'Eat Right India' movement, a large-scale effort by FSSAI to transform the country's food system to ensure safe, healthy, and sustainable food for all Indians.

QUOTE OF THE DAY

*He is richest who is content with the least,
for content is the wealth of nature - Socrates*

Easing business in India

As India marks the 10th anniversary of the Make in India initiative on September 25, 2024, the government's commitment to enhancing the ease of doing business continues to be at the forefront. The flagship program, launched in 2014, aimed to transform India into a global manufacturing hub. However, despite significant efforts, the initiative has yet to deliver the anticipated results. To address lingering hurdles, the Modi government decriminalized 183 provisions across 42 central laws in 2023. Now, it plans to go further by decriminalizing 300 more provisions, aiming to reduce the compliance burden for businesses and boost foreign investment. But the question remains: will these measures truly accelerate India's journey to becoming a manufacturing powerhouse? India's ranking in the World Bank's Ease of Doing Business index has improved significantly since 2014, moving from 142nd to 63rd by 2019. While this is a commendable achievement, the desired momentum in foreign direct investment (FDI) has been slow to follow. FDI inflows, which stood at \$45.15 billion in 2014-15, increased to \$83.57 billion by 2021-22, but this modest rise indicates that regulatory reform alone may not be enough to attract the level of investment needed.

The government's Make in India 2.0 initiative, launched in 2019, targets 27 sectors, with a renewed focus on both manufacturing and services. Various policy measures, such as the Production Linked Incentive (PLI) schemes and the National Infrastructure Pipeline (NIP), were rolled out to boost domestic and foreign investments. Yet, despite these efforts, FDI inflow in the manufacturing sector remained limited, totalling only \$165.1 billion over the past decade. The Modi government has placed significant emphasis on reducing the compliance burden to encourage investment. The Jan Vishwas (Amendment of Provisions) Act, passed in 2023, was one such attempt to simplify regulations by decriminalizing numerous business-related provisions. However, the results have been underwhelming, raising doubts about whether further decriminalization will make a tangible impact. While regulatory hurdles undoubtedly play a role in discouraging investment, they are not the only barriers. India's socio-political environment has also been a critical factor in limiting the success of Make in India. Frequent disruptions, such as internet shutdowns, curfews, and escalating political tensions, have adversely affected industrial relations and market stability. These factors create an unpredictable business climate, which cannot be addressed solely through legal reforms.

The government must go beyond regulatory simplification and tackle the broader socio-political issues that deter investors. Stable connectivity, peaceful industrial relations, and a conducive business environment are just as crucial to attracting investment as reducing red tape. Furthermore, labour reforms must be handled with care to ensure that the workforce is not sidelined in the pursuit of profit. To truly transform India into a manufacturing hub, the focus must extend beyond business interests to include social welfare and human development. A harmonious balance between easing business operations and ensuring workforce security is vital for sustainable growth. Decriminalization alone will not suffice—what is needed is a more comprehensive approach that addresses both economic and social challenges. Additionally, fostering trust between businesses, labour unions, and the government is crucial for sustainable growth and long-term success. Only with a peaceful and stable environment can India hope to realize the full potential of Make in India and truly become the global manufacturing hub it aspires to be.

Bangladesh parliamentary elections is likely next year



By: Saleem Samad

Bangladesh will not have to wait for years, as it happens in countries where popular people's revolutions have ousted autocratic regimes and military dictators.

The election in Bangladesh is expected sometime in the winter of 2025. In a rare press interview, General Waker-uz-Zaman, the chief of the Bangladesh Army, told world-reputed British news agency, Reuters that a transition to democracy should be made between a year and a year-and-a-half, but urges to hold patience.

The military chief was candid in speaking out that the transition to democracy should be within a year and a half. Why will it take time to transition? Bangladesh is presently under repair and in maintenance mode as described by the students on the city wall graffiti.

The country is being overhauled, which has crumbled during the 15 years of autocratic rule. All the democratic institutions like the judiciary, law enforcement, bureaucracy, education, election and media have been riddled with corruption, nepotism and favouritism.

Awami League, lifelong president of the party Sheikh Hasina, had deployed his henchmen and loyalists to govern the state institutions, which are supposed to uphold the pillars of democracy. The inventor of micro-credit Dr Yunus, chief adviser of the Interim Government, has launched to overhaul the institutions through reforms on the principles of democracy.

In line with sweeping government, reforms proposed since Hasina was shunted from power, the army, too, is looking into allegations of wrongdoing by its personnel and has already punished some soldiers, Zaman said, without providing further details.

Come what may, General Zaman pledges support to Nobel laureate Dr Muhammad Yunus-

led Interim Government, he told the Reuters correspondent Devijot Ghoshal and Ruma Paul on 23 September. Yunus, the interim administration's chief adviser, and the army chief meet every week and have "very good relations", with the military supporting the government's efforts to stabilise the country after a period of turmoil, said Zaman.

Regarding the enforced disappearance of opposition, critics and dissidents, the interim government has formed a five-member commission, headed by a former high court judge, to investigate reports of up to 600 people who may have been forcibly "disappeared" by Bangladesh's security forces since 2009.

The army chief admitted that some military officials may have acted out of line while working at agencies directly controlled by the former prime minister or home affairs minister. "If there is any serving member who is found guilty, of course, I will take action," he said.

Regarding politico-military relations, he said that he wanted to distance from the political establishment from the army, which has more than 1,30,000 personnel and is a major contributor to United Nations peace-keeping missions.

"It can only happen if there is some balance of power between president and prime minister, where the armed forces can be placed directly under the president," he said.

"I will not do anything detrimental to my organisation," he said. "I am a professional soldier. I would like to keep my army professional," he further added.

"The military as a whole must not be used for political purposes ever," he said. "A soldier must not indulge in politics." (The author is an award-winning independent journalist based in Bangladesh. He could be reached at saleem.samad@hotmail.com; Twitter (X): @saleemsamad)

Quad summit at Delaware was US president's swan song in diplomacy

The latest Quad Summit is largely seen as an effort by the US President Joe Biden to leave a lasting legacy. Though Prime Minister Narendra Modi ticked all boxes, yet nothing substantial for India was gained at the summit, apart from the optics.

PM Modi along with President Joe Biden, Australian Prime Minister Anthony Albanese, and Japanese Prime Minister Fumio Kishida attended the Quad Summit at President Biden's hometown of Wilmington, Delaware, 100 miles north of capital, Washington DC, last weekend.

India was initially set to host the Quad summit this year but agreed to swap duties as Biden's time in office will end in next two months. The leaders met ahead of the UN General Assembly in New York City this week.

The Delaware Summit is also seen by many analysts as an attempt by President Biden aiming to put a final stamp on an alliance he hopes will endure beyond his presidency. Or which might be referred to in the broader context of a Biden Doctrine. Concerns are also being raised about the fate of the Quad, if Trump returns to power.

At the summit, China and its actions in the South China Sea were first on the agenda. At the start of the discussion, Biden was caught in a hot mic moment and could be heard saying that Chinese President Xi Jinping is looking to "buy himself some diplomatic space, in my view, to aggressively pursue China's interest."

"We believe Xi Jinping is looking to focus on domestic economic challenges and minimise the turbulence in China diplomatic relationships," Biden could be heard saying.

In a joint statement after the summit, the leaders of the Quad countries said that they are "seriously concerned" about China's escalations in the South China Sea, without naming the



country by name.

Biden emphasised that his administration views Beijing's actions as a tactical shift rather than a fundamental change in strategy. The Quad leaders also unveiled a significant strategy to bolster maritime security cooperation in the Indo-Pacific and pledged for lasting peace in Ukraine.

Prime Minister Narendra Modi reaffirmed the Quad's commitment to a rules-based global order, emphasising respect for national sovereignty and territorial integrity. In his address, Modi said a free, open, inclusive, and prosperous Indo-Pacific is a shared priority of the Quad.

The leaders also announced a new regional Maritime Initiative for Training in the Indo-Pacific (MAITRI), to enable partners to maximize tools provided through Indo-Pacific Maritime Domain Awareness (IPMDA) and other Quad initiatives.

In addition, an expansion of the Indo-Pacific Partnership for Maritime Domain Awareness, which helps countries monitor illegal fishing and other unlawful activities in their waters, to the Indian Ocean and provide partners with more sophisticated technology and training, was also announced.

They also launched a logistics network to allow the US military to share cargo space on aircraft and vessels to be used in humanitarian assistance or disaster relief operations. The partnership will also roll out new

Open Radio Access Network pilot projects in the Pacific Islands and Southeast Asia.

Meanwhile, the most personal announcement by President Biden focused on new joint efforts to fight cancer.

The Quad leaders launched a new partnership aimed at reducing cervical cancer in the Indo-Pacific, a global extension of the president's signature "Cancer Moonshot" initiative. This included efforts to provide more cervical cancer screenings in the region and increase vaccinations for human papillomavirus or HPV, a main cause for cervical cancer.

However, the Chinese newspaper Global Times in an editorial criticising the Quad summit wrote that everyone knows that the Quad summit is aimed at China, but the participants want to cover it up, demonstrating how the encirclement of China enjoys little support in the international arena.

The editorial criticised the joint statement issued by the Quad besides saying that although Western public opinion had previously heightened the rhetoric surrounding the meeting "to deal with aggressive China," we see that, apart from continuing to hype the "China threat" and "Indo-Pacific crisis" theories behind closed doors, Quad has achieved nothing substantial. It further opined that the Quad's situation is also a mi-

crocosm of the closed and exclusive small circles that the US has pieced together around China.

Meanwhile, Prime Minister Narendra Modi pledged India's "unwavering support" to the people of Palestine as he held talks with the President of Palestine Mahmoud Abbas on Sunday (September 22, 2024) evening, during his visit to New York and the United Nations.

The meeting comes days after India abstained on a UN resolution calling on Israel to vacate the Occupied Palestinian Territories within the next 12 months.

During Sunday's meeting, Modi discussed "India's support to Palestine at the United Nations".

"Mr Modi emphasised that only a two-State solution would deliver peace, as he called for a ceasefire between Israel and Palestine, the release of hostages, and a return to diplomacy and dialogue," a government readout said. Modi also held talks with Nepali Prime Minister K P Sharma Oli on Sunday. They discussed a range of subjects, the Ministry of External Affairs (MEA) said, listing hydropower cooperation, people to people ties and increasing connectivity.

Meanwhile, the Prime Minister also addressed the Indian diaspora in New York's Nassau Coliseum and dubbed them the Rashtradrut.

He said, "I have always understood the capabilities of the Indian diaspora. I understood it even when I held no official position...For me, you all have been strong brand ambassadors of India. This is why I call you Rashtradrut..."

Speaking about the contributions of Indians living in America, he said, "For the world, AI means artificial intelligence, but for me, AI also means American-Indian spirit. This is the new 'AI' power of the world...I salute the Indian diaspora here."

PM Modi then went on to say

that Indians are also a strong voice of the Global South...

"Today, when India says something on a global platform, the world listens. Some time ago when I said that this is not the era of war, its severity was understood by all..." he said.

Modi also announced that India has decided to open two new consulates in Boston and Los Angeles.

Further, India on Sunday signed the 14-member, Indo-Pacific Economic Framework for Prosperity (IPEF) bloc's agreements on a clean and fair economy with an aim to enhance cooperation in these areas.

The agreements would help facilitate development, access, and deployment of clean energy and climate-friendly technologies; catalyse investment and strengthen measures for anti-corruption, tax transparency etc. and improve business environment, the Commerce Ministry said in a statement.

The agreement on clean economy intends to accelerate efforts of IPEF partners towards energy security, GHG (greenhouse gas) emissions mitigation, developing innovative ways of reducing dependence on fossil fuel energy, promoting technical cooperation, capacity building, besides collaborating to facilitate development, access, and deployment of clean energy and climate-friendly technologies.

The IPEF, focuses on building economic cooperation through its four key pillars - trade, supply chain resilience, clean economy, and fair economy (focusing on tax and anti-corruption).

All in all, the US visit by Prime Minister ticked all boxes for him, articulating India's support and ambitions for Quad, enhancing regional collaboration, enhancing his rapport with the US presidents and of course, targeting the Indian diaspora in the US, which comes to his aid at election time in India. But in reality, nothing substantial was achieved during the visit from India's view. (IPA Service)

"Frontier Nagaland Territory's legal case for direct central funding: Implications of proposed reforms"

By: Dr. Aniruddha Babar

(...continued from the previous edition)

Under the Indian Self-Determination and Education Assistance Act (ISDEAA) of 1975, tribes are empowered to manage federal funds directly, bypassing state-level intermediaries. This Act allows tribes to enter into contracts and compacts with federal agencies to administer programs that address their specific needs, such as healthcare, education, and infrastructure. The success of this model has significantly contributed to the socio-economic upliftment of Native American communities, providing a blueprint for similar governance reforms in India.

Adopting such a model in the Indian context would not only enhance governance but also ensure that tribal regions / backward among backward tribal regions are no longer left behind in the nation's development trajectory. This direct funding model has led to a significant improvement in resource allocation and governance outcomes, ensuring that tribal governments have the autonomy to prioritize their developmental goals.

Moreover, the U.S. approach is bolstered by the Federal Trust Responsibility, a legally binding obligation requiring the federal government to protect tribal assets, resources, and treaty rights. Through the Bureau of Indian Affairs (BIA) and other federal agencies, Native American tribes receive grants and other financial resources directly, ensuring that funds are not diluted or misallocated by state governments. This legal provision has fostered greater transparency, accountability, and efficiency in the use of federal funds, significantly empowering tribal communities to govern themselves and manage their development more effectively.

The parallels between the U.S. system and the situation in Eastern Nagaland (in our case, Tribal Backwards among Tribal Backwards) are evident, with both contexts demonstrating the necessity of aligning financial mechanisms with the unique governance needs of indigenous populations. Implementing a similar direct funding model in India would represent a significant step towards fulfilling the constitutional promises made to its tribal communities. The parallels between the U.S. system and the situation in Eastern Nagaland and the demand for Frontier Nagaland Territory underscore the potential benefits of adopting a similar approach in India starting with proposed Frontier Nagaland Territory as a test case, especially given the constitu-

tional protections for Naga Tribes as well as Naga tribal areas under Article 371(A) and related provisions.

The U.S. case strengthens the argument of the ENPO for direct funding from the central government in India. By demonstrating that direct funding, coupled with appropriate legal frameworks, can improve governance and development outcomes, the U.S. model serves as a compelling example of how India could reform its approach to funding tribal regions.

The American experience shows that when tribal communities are entrusted with managing their own resources, with proper oversight, strict legal framework, robust system of accountability, checks and balances and constructive support and direct intervention from the central government, they can make more effective use of funds tailored to their unique socio-economic contexts. This evidence-based approach highlights the importance of empowering local governance structures to handle their own affairs, a principle that resonates with the aspirations of the ENPO for Frontier Nagaland.

Adapting such a model to the Indian context could revolutionize the way tribal regions are integrated into the national development agenda. This model could be adapted to the Indian context starting with the proposed Frontier Nagaland Territory as a test case, where constitutional provisions already exist for special treatment and autonomy for tribal areas, further reinforcing the case for direct funding. However, critics caution that direct funding alone may not resolve the region's complex challenges. Without robust legal frameworks, direct supervision from New Delhi and effective and transparent local implementation mechanisms, even direct funding may not yield the desired development outcomes.

Past experiences in the ENPO region, where development funds often failed to translate into tangible benefits due to mismanagement and corruption, underscore the need for stringent oversight and active local agency involvement to ensure effective use of resources in the proposed Frontier Nagaland Territory. This also calls for a simultaneous strengthening of local traditional governance institutions and also various government bodies that will come under proposed FNT, ensuring that they are equipped with the necessary tools and capacities to manage funds responsibly.

Transparent and accountable traditional institutions as well as government institutions are the bedrock of successful governance, making the fight against corruption an integral part of this reform

process. This is further emphasized by Article 256, which mandates that the state governments comply with laws enacted by Parliament and ensure the implementation of these laws.

While Article 256 requires states to follow the directions given by the central government, it does not directly address direct funding. However, effective governance, particularly in the context of direct funding, indeed necessitates a clear legal and institutional framework, which could be reinforced by compliance with central directives under this Article.

The proposed Frontier Nagaland Territory would operate under Article 371(A) of the Constitution, which grants Nagaland special autonomy to manage its internal affairs, including religious and social practices, customary law and procedure, administration of civil and criminal justice, and ownership and transfer of land and resources. This special provision allows the FNT to leverage an existing constitutional framework tailored to the region's specific needs, ensuring an effective and culturally appropriate governance structure that reflects local customs and aspirations. This constitutional framework is pivotal in ensuring that the development initiatives are not only effective but also resonate with the socio-cultural ethos of the region.

Moreover, it enables the FNT to operate with a level of constitutional autonomy that is crucial for sustainable and inclusive development, providing an effective model for other tribal regions in India. The autonomy granted to the proposed Frontier Nagaland Territory under Article 371(A) is crucial for tribal regions, where governance must be sensitive to unique cultural and social practices, ensuring that development initiatives align with the region's specific needs and requirements.

As is widely recognized, the proposed Frontier Nagaland Territory (FNT) will not be governed under the Sixth Schedule of the Constitution of India, which typically provides for autonomous councils in tribal areas. Instead, it will operate under the unique provisions of Article 371A. This unique constitutional framework under Article 371A grants Nagaland special autonomy, particularly concerning religious and social practices, customary law, and ownership of land and resources. Given this distinct status, there are no constitutional or legal barriers to extending direct funding to the proposed FNT. This distinct constitutional positioning of the FNT offers a significant opportunity for pioneering governance reforms in tribal regions in India.

Frontier Nagaland Territory presents a

unique chance to create a model of development that is both locally relevant and constitutionally sound.

Unlike regions under the Sixth Schedule, which must await the passage of the Constitution (125th Amendment) Bill to secure direct central funding, the FNT can immediately benefit from such financial arrangements. This makes the FNT a potential model for financial governance in tribal areas, offering valuable insights for the Government of India as it seeks to reform and improve financial governance across other tribal regions, potentially setting a precedent for more responsive and effective resource allocation in areas with unique governance needs.

In summary, the direct funding model demanded by ENPO for the Frontier Nagaland Territory not only aligns with existing constitutional provisions but also enhances the autonomy and self-governance of tribal regions, addressing longstanding developmental disparities. This model would empower the FNT to directly manage and allocate funds according to its specific needs, without the bureaucratic delays and mismanagement that have plagued state-level interventions. The move towards direct funding is a step towards rectifying the historical neglect of these regions, empowering them to chart their own development trajectories. Furthermore, it represents a broader shift in governance philosophy, where underrepresented, backward local communities (backward among backwards in case of Eastern Nagaland Tribes) are recognized as capable and responsible stakeholders in their own development.

By leveraging the special status granted under Article 371(A) and the constitutional flexibility provided by Articles 275(1) and 282, there is no doubt that the FNT could serve as a model for other tribal regions across India. This initiative would not only uplift marginalized communities but also demonstrate the transformative power of our Constitution, which ensures justice and equality for all.

The successful implementation of the proposed Frontier Nagaland Territory would reaffirm India's commitment to preserving the unique identities of its tribal populations and the "backward among backwards" among them; while securing their rightful place in the nation's progress and prosperity. Embracing this model fosters sustainable development and strengthens our national unity, ensuring that no community is left behind in our journey toward a stronger and more cohesive India. (The author is a faculty in the Dept. of Political Science, Tetsu College, Nagaland)

The new 'green revolution' will not feed India: Lessons for Assam's agricultural future

By: Mowsam Hazarika

The promise of natural farming, often referred to as zero-budget farming due to its lack of purchased inputs, has sparked significant debate across India. Agriculture Minister Shivraj Singh Chouhan's recent proposal to increase subsidies for farmers transitioning from Green Revolution techniques to natural farming has brought the issue to the forefront.

While the government has launched the National Mission on Natural Farming with much fanfare, the finance ministry has temporarily rejected an increase in the subsidy from ₹15,000 to ₹ 20,000 per hectare. The divide between supporters and critics of this agricultural approach raises important questions for Assam's future in farming.

The Context of Assam's Agriculture

Assam, with its rich agricultural traditions and unique agro-climatic conditions, stands at a crossroads in determining the best way forward for its farming community. The state's agricultural sector, predominantly based on small and marginal farmers, depends heavily on rice, tea, and horticultural crops. The Green Revolution, which dramatically increased India's food production, had a limited impact in

Assam compared to regions like Punjab and Haryana. This was partly due to Assam's distinct topography, less developed irrigation infrastructure, and a reliance on traditional farming methods.

Natural farming techniques, such as the use of cow dung, crop rotation, and plant-based insecticides, resonate with Assam's historical farming practices. However, the modern challenges faced by farmers, including climate variability, soil degradation, and the need for higher yields to support a growing population, demand a careful evaluation of whether natural farming can truly meet these needs.

Lessons from the Green Revolution

The Green Revolution of the 1960s played a pivotal role in making India self-sufficient in food production. During that period, the country faced a food crisis exacerbated by two consecutive years of drought in 1965 and 1966. India was dependent on food aid from the United States, with the country's agriculture producing insufficient grain to feed its population. The introduction of high-yielding varieties of wheat and rice, along with chemical fertilizers and modern irrigation techniques, transformed India's agricultural landscape.

Assam, although not at the

center of this transformation, still benefited from increased food availability and the gradual adoption of better farming practices.

However, the adverse effects of the Green Revolution, including the overuse of chemical fertilizers, depletion of groundwater, and soil salinity, are issues that Assam's farmers must now navigate. With limited irrigation facilities in many parts of the state, over-pumping of water remains a potential risk, while the excessive use of pesticides is already a growing concern.

The Rise of Natural Farming: Hopes and Challenges

Agriculturist Subhash Palekar, the father of Indian natural farming, claims that farmers can achieve higher yields using ancient techniques that avoid costly inputs like chemical fertilizers. This idea of returning to traditional, resource-efficient methods appeals to many, particularly in regions like Assam where smallholder farmers often struggle with the high costs of agricultural inputs.

Assam's agro-climatic zones are well-suited for crop diversity, including pulses, vegetables, and medicinal plants that can thrive under natural farming systems. Proponents argue that the state could benefit from adopting zero-budget farming techniques, using local

resources such as cow dung and plant-based insecticides to reduce dependency on external inputs.

However, critics like Swaminathan S Anklesaria Aiyar caution against an over-reliance on natural farming, pointing out that such techniques left India hungry and humiliated in the 1960s. Historically, these practices were used because farmers lacked the money for modern inputs.

While efficient within the limits of old technology, they were not capable of producing enough food to feed a rapidly growing population. Aiyar argues that India's successful escape from famine and food aid dependency was made possible by the technological advances of the Green Revolution.

Scaling Up: The Key Issue

One of the biggest challenges with natural farming, as pointed out by critics, is scalability. While isolated cases of high yields have been reported, particularly on small plots of land, the question remains whether these techniques can be expanded to cover larger areas and sustain the food needs of a growing population.

This issue of scalability is particularly relevant for Assam. The state's fragmented landholdings and dependence on subsistence farming mean that while natural farming may offer short-term benefits for

some farmers, it may not be feasible for large-scale food production.

Moreover, Assam's frequent floods and changing weather patterns pose additional challenges to the implementation of natural farming techniques, which may not be resilient enough to withstand these environmental pressures.

The Organic Farming Debate

Organic farming, which is closely related to natural farming, has already established a niche market in India. Organic products, which are often more expensive, appeal to consumers seeking healthier, chemical-free food. In Assam, organic tea and other products are gaining popularity among health-conscious urban consumers.

However, as seen in Sri Lanka's failed experiment with organic farming, transitioning too quickly away from conventional farming can lead to a sharp drop in agricultural output and economic chaos. Assam's farmers, who rely heavily on cash crops like tea and rice, must therefore tread carefully when considering a shift towards organic or natural farming on a larger scale.

The key challenge is that Assam, like much of India, requires a balanced approach. While there is merit in reducing chemical inputs and pro-

moting sustainable practices, abandoning modern agricultural techniques entirely could jeopardize food security. Assam's farming community, particularly in flood-prone and resource-constrained areas, needs policies that integrate both modern technology and traditional knowledge.

A Path Forward for Assam's Agriculture

As Assam looks toward the future, the question of how to balance sustainable practices with the need for food security is more relevant than ever. While natural farming offers the promise of reducing costs for farmers and protecting the environment, it cannot be seen as a silver bullet. The state's policymakers must consider a blended approach, incorporating the best of both worlds: the efficiency of modern technology and the sustainability of traditional farming methods.

Investments in research, irrigation infrastructure, and rural credit will be essential for Assam's agricultural growth. Additionally, promoting agro-ecological practices that combine natural farming principles with modern innovations - such as precision farming, integrated pest management, and conservation agriculture - could offer a more sustainable solution.

Ultimately, Assam's farmers, like those across India, are the

best judges of what works. As Aiyar notes, farmers have been quick to adopt high-yielding varieties and modern techniques when they see tangible benefits. The government's role should be to support them with a range of options, ensuring that they have the tools and knowledge to make informed choices about their farming practices.

Conclusion: Sustainable Progress

While the new 'green revolution' of natural farming may not be the panacea for India's agricultural challenges, it offers valuable insights into how farming systems can be made more sustainable. Assam, with its unique agricultural landscape, has the potential to lead the way in developing a balanced approach to farming that embraces both traditional wisdom and modern advancements. By focusing on sustainability, scalability, and food security, Assam can chart a course toward a resilient agricultural future that meets the needs of its people while preserving its natural resources. *(The author is a poet, freelance science journalist, People's Science Activist and a former Director, Assam Seed and Organic Certification Agency & Former Joint Director of Agriculture (Pulse), Department of Agriculture, Assam)*

Antibiotic pollution in a warming world

By: K. S. Uplabdh Gopal

Following the World War II, when industrially produced antibiotics emerged, our quality of life and life expectancy substantially improved. A world in awe of the new cure that could beat the once-fatal infection never suspected that bacteria could outsmart the very drugs designed to kill them. As the author of A Short History of Nearly Everything, Bill Bryson aptly puts it: "Because we humans are big and clever enough to produce and utilise antibiotics and disinfectants, it is easy to convince ourselves that we have banished bacteria to the fringes of existence. Don't you believe it. Bacteria may not build cities or have interesting social lives, but they will be here when the Sun explodes. This is their planet, and we are on it only because they allow us to be."

With the grim reality of climate change today, society faces an unprecedented juncture of Antibiotic Pollution combined with Antimicrobial Resistance (AMR). Rising temperatures allow the increased contamination of our water systems by antibiotic residues, feeding the surge in resistant "superbugs"—bacteria which common medical treatments cannot kill.

A recently published study in the Lancet estimates that more than 39 million deaths will occur due to antibiotic-resistant infections between now and the year 2050. AMR-related deaths are projected to rise by nearly 70 percent by 2050, and South Asia, which includes India, is expected to be the most hit. 11.8 million deaths would likely be attributed to resistant infections over the next 25 years in South Asia. The consequences of inaction could be disastrous, where decades of medical progress could be undone and put public health in jeopardy on a scale never before seen.

The invisible pathways of pollution

Antibiotic pollution influences the environment through several key paths, each playing a sizable role in the spread of AMR. Pharmaceutical manufacturing: India, one of the world's largest producers of antibiotics, accounts for more than 20 percent of the world's generic drugs. But this kind of positioning comes at a cost.

The effluents discharged from the manufacturing units, like in industrial belts such as Patancheru-Bollaram industrial estate in Hyderabad, have been found to carry high concentrations of antibiotics like Ciprofloxacin, Ofloxacin, and Azithromycin, at levels thousands of times higher than what is deemed safe. A study estimated the antibiotic residue concentrations in certain Indian rivers, namely the Yamuna and Gomti, to be 2-5 times higher than the limits proposed by the Ministry of Environment, Forest, and Climate Change.

Even with wastewater treat-



ment systems installed, systems usually fail to effectively filter out these antibiotic residues. The Indian pharmaceutical industry, valued at around US\$50 billion, has yet to fully execute stricter wastewater management practices.

Improved surveillance is a significant component of the new World Health Organisation (WHO) guidelines on wastewater management and limiting antibiotic pollution from manufacturing. India is far from the mark as local industries continue to discharge untreated toxic waste into nearby water bodies.

Agriculture and livestock: Increased temperatures and changing disease patterns in agriculture have spurred overuse in livestock and crop production. A major share of antibiotics is consumed by livestock farming in India, with most farmers using antibiotics to promote the growth of their animals. This practice causes significant quantities to seep into the soil and find their way into nearby water bodies.

A 2021 study by the Indian Council of Agricultural Research noted AMR in E. coli and other bacterial samples taken from livestock and shrimps in 12 states. The samples had resistance levels higher in regions where antibiotics were used extensively.

Aquaculture: Aquaculture in India, particularly within shrimp farms along the coastal regions, is highly dependent on antibiotics as infections are too common due to warmer water temperatures. A 2022 study detected Norfloxacin in the waters of the Zuari river (Goa). The concentrations were higher than the WHO recommended limits. With water temperatures rising, the demand for antibiotics also continues to rise. This not only affects marine ecosystems but also poses a risk to public health.

Climate change as a pollution multiplier

Climate change also means that the risks posed by antibiotic pollution are amplified, doubling the need for such urgent action. More flooding due to increasing global temperatures sends antibiotic residues derived from pharmaceutical plants, agricultural lands, and urban areas into rivers and lakes.

An example to understand this would be to look at monsoon floods this year, the spillover from urban sewage systems, which carry waste containing antibiotics, contaminate local water bodies and create an environment conducive to the amplification of

bacteria that were resistant to those antibiotics. A study finds that over 85 percent of Indian districts are exposed to extreme climate events such as floods, thereby placing our ecosystems at risk of contamination from pollution with antibiotics.

Simultaneously, in northern India and much of the country, the increasing intensity of drought is concentrating pollutants (with evaporation), including antibiotic residues, in shrinking water bodies such as local lakes. This creates a "perfect storm" for bacteria to develop resistance. In addition to this, a warming climate directly drives the proliferation of bacteria. Elevated temperatures allow bacteria little time to multiply; in this case, chances of developing resistance increase. The high temperatures make it possible for bacteria to exchange genes, i.e., horizontal gene transfer, thus spreading the genes carrying antibiotic resistance between additional bacterial strains.

One 2020 article reports that a 10°C temperature increase predicts an added ~5 percent rise in the antibiotic resistance rate of common pathogens like E. coli and S. aureus. In India, with a 0.7°C increment in temperature compared to that in 1901, the accelerated growth of bacteria is contributing to the vicious cycle of escalating antibiotic use and resistance.

AMR: A global and Indian public health crisis

It is staggering to realize that drug-resistant infections kill approximately 1.27 million every year, and will rise by 10 million every year by 2050 if rapid action is not taken. Projections estimate that AMR will cause a death toll of 2 million annually in India by 2050 due to its heavy use in health care and agriculture.

India is at the centre of this emerging crisis. With ~1.4 billion people and the world's highest use of antibiotics, it has very particular challenges with both use and pollution. Resistance to antibiotics accounted for an estimated more than 56,000 neonatal deaths in India in 2019 alone, according to an analysis published in The Lancet Microbe. Antibiotic misuse has been rendered possible in light of prevalent over-the-counter availability and lax regulations in human and veterinary medicine.

The healthcare systems are overworked in rural areas, where a course of antibiotics is often used as a quick fix for most gen-

eral ailments, whether required or not. With WHO support, India drew up the National Action Plan on AMR (NAP-AMR) in 2017, which targets improvement in regulation, education, and surveillance. Yet, the implementation has been sluggish, and the country remains a global hotspot for AMR.

Policy and solutions: What needs to change

Antibiotic pollution requires more than just awareness; it needs stringent regulatory reform. India, as one of the world's largest antibiotic producers, needs to take greater responsibility for the environmental consequences of this industry. It needs stricter regulations that will offer better governance in terms of disposing of antibiotic waste, with mechanisms to ensure compliance.

According to the WHO 2024 guidelines on wastewater management, monitoring the antibiotic residues in manufacturing effluents is vital.

The broad plan for tackling AMR is given in India's NAP-AMR, but it needs to go further to the local level. Needless to say, stricter regulations are needed concerning the disposal of pharmaceutical waste and the improvement of standards for the treatment of wastewater to cope better with the residues of antibiotics. The country should also strengthen its agriculture by advocating antibiotic stewardship and Climate Smart Agriculture to reduce overdependence on antibiotics.

India, along with major antibiotic producers like China, must work within global frameworks to enforce limits on pharmaceutical waste. Partnerships between countries, international organisations like WHO, and global industries are vital to stem the tide of antibiotic pollution.

Urgency in action The time to take action on antibiotic pollution is now. Still, with climate change gathering at an accelerated pace, the dispersal of antibiotics in the environment will continue to worsen. The consequences of inaction are dire: millions of lives are at risk, and modern medicine itself could be undermined. This calls for coordination by governments, industries, and the community to reduce antibiotic pollution by bringing in stricter regulations. It is only through such collective action that the dual crises of climate change and antimicrobial resistance can be mitigated.

(Courtesy: ORF)

Plastic recycling: A deceptive solution to an escalating crisis

By: Tribhuwan Singh Bisht

To date, over 10 billion metric tonnes of plastic have been produced worldwide, with plastic production skyrocketing by more than 18,300 per cent over the past 65 years. Currently, around 460 million metric tonnes of plastic are produced annually, and without intervention, this figure is projected to triple by 2050.

Despite this massive production and recycling being pitched as the solution for plastic pollution, less than 9 per cent of all plastic ever made has been recycled, 12 per cent is incinerated or openly burned, and the remaining 79 per cent ends up in landfills or the environment.

Plastic recycling, once touted as a cornerstone of environmental sustainability, has proven largely ineffective in combating plastic pollution. Despite decades of advocacy and public education campaigns by plastic manufacturers, governments, and organizations, plastic waste continues to proliferate. This disconnect raises critical questions about the viability of recycling as a sustainable solution.

Historically, plastics were never designed to be recycled. In 1956, a packaging industry executive bluntly declared that "the future of plastic is in the trash can", reflecting the industry's intent for plastic to be disposable rather than recyclable. The recycling process often leads to downcycling, where plastics are transformed into products of lesser quality and utility, such as plastic lumber, park benches, among others.

Many of these products cannot be recycled again, and the process is energy-intensive, contributing significantly to greenhouse gas emissions and contaminating water resources.

Additionally, recycled plastics frequently contain a toxic cocktail of chemicals, making them unsuitable for many applications, particularly food and beverage packaging. Research has shown that these toxic chemicals can leach into products, posing serious health risks.

The concept of plastics circularity, where plastics are endlessly reused without adverse effects, is fundamentally flawed. Current recycling practices exacerbate environmental degradation, climate change, and public health issues. Effective recycling requires significant inputs of virgin plastics and toxic additives, undermining the notion of a closed-loop system.

For example, when plastics are collected for traditional "mechanical" recycling, they must be sorted by colour and type, washed and shredded. These processes consume large amounts of fossil fuel energy, emitting chemicals and greenhouse gases, wasting and contaminating water, and creating microplastics and nanoplastics.

Moreover, to restore some of the useful properties of recycled plastics, manufacturers often need to mix in virgin plastic and / or toxic additives. Studies have identified hundreds of additional toxic chemicals, including pesticides and pharmaceuticals, in recycled plastics. This is in addition to the mix of more than 16,000 chemicals in the newly made plastics, with over 4,000 of them identified as toxic. This raises further questions on the safety and sustainability of plastic recycling.

Since monitoring of plastic waste trade began in 1988, more than 250 million tonnes have been legally exported across the world, highlighting stark inequalities by often shifting the burden of plastic waste to the Global South. These regions become dumping grounds where plastic waste is frequently burned in the open, releasing toxic pollutants into the air and disproportionately affecting vulnerable communities.

India, for instance, imported around 121,000

metric tonnes of plastic in 2019, according to a report by Pandit Deen Dayal Upadhyay Smriti Manch. The report, along with objections from environmentalists, eventually led the Indian government to ban plastic imports in 2019.

Although the government had already banned plastic imports in 2014, a loophole allowed companies in Special Economic Zones to continue importing plastic, which was heavily exploited. This loophole was finally closed in August 2019.

Malaysia has a recycling capacity of 515,009 tonnes but imports an average of 835,000 tonnes of plastic waste each year, in addition to an estimated 2.4 million tonnes of domestic plastic waste.

The import of plastic waste has led to severe environmental and health impacts, with local communities facing polluted air and water, increased disease rates and degraded living conditions. These practices perpetuate environmental injustice, as communities near recovery facilities and recycling plants, typically the most underserved, face increased health risks, including polluted air, soil and drinking water, as well as frequent fires and exposure to hazardous materials.

As awareness of plastic recycling's limitations grows, the plastic and fossil fuel industries have promoted "chemical recycling" techniques, which involve the chemical breakdown of plastics into fuels or other materials. These methods are marketed as innovative solutions but often perpetuate harmful practices, diverting attention from the need to reduce plastic production.

These industries' substantial lobbying efforts aim to maintain the status quo, hindering meaningful progress toward addressing the root causes of plastic pollution. For example, in the United States, significant investments in chemical recycling facilities have faced criticism for failing to deliver promised environmental benefits while continuing to pollute. In Europe, similar projects have also been scrutinised for their environmental impact and questionable effectiveness in reducing plastic waste.

To address the plastic crisis, a paradigm shift is necessary. Policymakers must prioritise reducing plastic production and supporting sustainable, reuse-based solutions. This involves implementing policies that restrict single-use plastics, incentivise reusable alternatives and promote equitable waste management practices. On an individual level, adopting plastic-free habits in daily life can significantly reduce the demand for disposable plastics. Countries like Sweden have made strides in reducing plastic use by implementing strict regulations and promoting reusable alternatives, resulting in lower plastic waste levels.

Scientific consensus and indigenous knowledge emphasise minimising plastic use to protect human health and the environment. For instance, indigenous communities around the world have long practiced sustainable living and resource management, offering valuable insights into reducing plastic dependency. Society must move beyond the false promises of recycling and embrace comprehensive strategies that tackle plastic pollution at its source.

The notion that we can recycle our way out of plastic pollution is a dangerous illusion. Evidence shows that current recycling practices are insufficient and often counterproductive. By focusing on reducing plastic production and fostering a culture of reuse, substantial strides can be made toward mitigating the plastic crisis. It is time to abandon the myth of plastic recycling and implement real, effective solutions that prioritise the health of our planet and its inhabitants. *(Courtesy: Down To Earth)*

Zelenskyy's victory plan sets Ukraine's terms in desperate war against Russia

KYIV, Sept 25: The victory plan that President Volodymyr Zelenskyy will present to the White House this week asks the Biden administration to do something it has not achieved in the two and a half years since Russia invaded Ukraine: act quickly to support Kyiv's campaign.

While Western dawdling has amplified Ukraine's losses, some Ukrainian officials, diplomats and analysts fear Kyiv's aim to have the plan implemented before a new US president takes office in January may be out of reach.

US Ambassador to the UN Linda Thomas-Greenfield, reportedly briefed on the plan, said it "can work" but many privately question how.

The specifics of Zelenskyy's blueprint have been kept under wraps until it can be

formally presented to President Joe Biden, but contours of the plan have emerged, including the need for fast action on decisions Western allies have been mulling since the full-scale invasion began in 2022.

It includes the security guarantee of NATO membership, according to Zelenskyy's chief of staff Andrii Yermak — a principal demand of Kyiv and Moscow's key point of contention. Western allies, including the US, have been sceptical about this option.

Zelenskyy has said he will also seek permission to use long-range weapons to strike deep inside Russian territory, another red line for some of Ukraine's supporters.

"Partners often say, 'We will be with



Ukraine until its victory.' Now we clearly show how Ukraine can win and what is needed for this. Very specific things," Zelenskyy told reporters ahead of the trip. "Let's do all this today, while all the officials who want victory for Ukraine are still in official positions."

Meanwhile, outnumbered Ukrainian forces face grinding battles against one of the world's most powerful armies in the

east. As Zelenskyy pitches his plan to Biden on Thursday, Ukrainian servicemen will be grappling to hold defensive lines in the key logistics point of Vuhledar in the Donetsk region. For some of them, it is essential that Biden buys into Zelenskyy's plan.

"I hope that allies will provide us with what we need," said Kyanin, a soldier fighting in the Donetsk region. "Not 10 or 31 tanks, but a thousand tanks, thousands of weapons and ammunition."

Kyiv sets the terms

The victory plan is Kyiv's response to rising pressure from Western allies and war-weary Ukrainians to negotiate a cease-fire. A deal with Russia would almost certainly be unfavourable for Ukraine, which has lost a fifth of its terri-

tory and tens of thousands of lives in the conflict. Unless, Kyiv calculates, its western partners act quickly. Ukraine's allies have routinely mulled over requests for weapons and capabilities, granting them often after their strategic value is diminished. Under the plan, from October to December, they must dramatically strengthen Kyiv's hand.

The plan comprises military, political, diplomatic and economic elements.

Aside from the demand for NATO membership, it seeks to bolster Ukraine's defenses, including air defense capabilities, enough to force Moscow to negotiate. A request to ramp up sanctions to weaken Russia's economy and defence industry is also expected.

Zelenskyy has said without elaborating

that Kyiv's military incursion into Kursk, in Russia, is part of the victory plan. That offensive, which embarrassed President Vladimir Putin as the Kremlin scrambled to counterattack, has not yielded any strategic gains. But it has shown the Russian public and doubtful Western allies that Russian is not invincible and Kyiv still has offensive capabilities despite being battered on the eastern front.

The cost of inaction

Zelenskyy has described his proposal as "a bridge to the Peace Summit" that he has proposed for November but that Russia says it will not attend. No international players capable of swaying Moscow agreed to his earlier 10-point peace plan, which calls for the full withdrawal of Russian forces. (AP)

A wave of Israeli strikes on Monday and Tuesday killed at least 560 people in Lebanon and forced thousands to seek refuge

Hezbollah fires a missile at Tel Aviv in deepest strike yet after Israeli bombardment of Lebanon

TEL AVIV, Sept 25: Hezbollah hurled dozens of projectiles into Israel on early Wednesday, including a missile aimed at Tel Aviv that was the militant group's deepest strike yet and marked a further escalation after Israeli strikes on Lebanon killed hundreds of people.

The Israeli military said it intercepted the surface-to-surface missile, which set off air-raid sirens in Tel Aviv and across central Israel. There were no reports of casualties or damage. The military said it struck the site in southern Lebanon where the missile was launched.

Hezbollah said it fired a Qader 1 ballistic missile targeting the headquarters of Israel's Mossad intelligence agency, which it blames for a recent string of targeted killings of its top commanders and for an attack last week in which explosives hidden in pagers and walkie-talkies killed dozens of people and wounded thousands, including many Hezbollah members.

The Israeli military said it

was the first time a projectile fired from Lebanon had reached central Israel. Hezbollah claimed to have targeted an intelligence base near Tel Aviv last month in an aerial attack, but there was no confirmation. The Palestinian Hamas militant group in Gaza repeatedly targeted Tel Aviv in the opening months of the war.

The launch ratcheted up tensions as the region appeared to be teetering toward another all-out war, even as Israel continues to battle Hamas in the Gaza Strip. A wave of Israeli strikes on Monday and Tuesday killed at least 560 people in Lebanon and forced thousands to seek refuge.

Fleeing families have flocked to Beirut and the coastal city of Sidon, sleeping in schools turned into shelters, as well as in cars, parks and along the beach. Some sought to leave the country, causing a traffic jam at the border with Syria.

Hezbollah's latest strikes included dozens of rockets fired



Wednesday into northern Israel, with one hitting an empty home and sparking a fire in the city of Safed. The Israeli military said that at one point the militants fired 40 projectiles simultaneously.

Israel responded with its own new strikes on Hezbollah. In Lebanon, at least three people were killed and nine wounded in an Israeli strike near Byblos, according to the country's Health Ministry. The coastal town is north of Beirut and far from Hezbollah's main strongholds.

The Israeli military has said there are no immediate plans for a ground invasion, but it has

declined to give a timetable for the air campaign. Tensions between Israel and the Lebanese militant group have steadily escalated over the last 11 months. Hezbollah has been firing rockets, missiles and drones into northern Israel in solidarity with Palestinians in Gaza and its ally Hamas, a fellow Iran-backed militant group.

Israel has responded with increasingly heavy airstrikes and the targeted killing of Hezbollah commanders while threatening a wider operation.

The U.N. Security Council scheduled an emergency meeting on Lebanon for Wednesday

at the request of France.

Nearly a year of fighting between Hezbollah and Israel had already displaced tens of thousands of people on both sides of the border before this week's escalation. Israel has vowed to do whatever it takes to ensure its citizens can return to their homes in the north, while Hezbollah has said it will keep up its rocket attacks until there is a cease-fire in Gaza, something that appears increasingly remote.

The rocket fire over the past week has disrupted life for more than 1 million people across northern Israel, with schools closed and restrictions on public gatherings. Many restaurants and other businesses are shut in the coastal city of Haifa, and there are fewer people on the streets. Some who fled south from communities near the border are coming under rocket fire again.

Israel has moved thousands of troops who had been serving in Gaza to the northern border.

It says Hezbollah has some 150,000 rockets and missiles, including some capable of striking anywhere in Israel, and that the group has fired some 9,000 rockets and drones since last October.

Lt. Col. Nadav Shoshani, an Israeli military spokesperson, said the missile fired Wednesday had a "heavy warhead" but declined to elaborate or confirm it was the type described by Hezbollah. He dismissed Hezbollah's claim of targeting the Mossad headquarters, located just north of Tel Aviv, as "psychological warfare."

The Iranian-made Qader is a medium-range surface-to-surface ballistic missile with multiple types and payloads. It can carry an explosive payload of up to 800 kilograms (1,760 pounds), according to the Washington-based Center for Strategic and International Studies. Iranian officials have described the liquid-fueled missile as having a range of 2,000 kilometers (1,240 miles). (AP)

'Leave Lebanon immediately': UK PM to British nationals



LONDON, Sept 25:

Prime Minister Keir Starmer has called on British nationals to leave Lebanon "immediately" after fighting intensified between Israel and Iran-backed Hezbollah and around 700 UK troops were deployed to Cyprus in case an emergency evacuation is needed.

Speaking on the sidelines of the Labour Party conference in Liverpool on Tuesday before he left for the United Nations General Assembly in New York, Starmer said the UK was ramping up its contingency plans in light of the "escalation" of violence, with fears growing of all-out war between Israel and Hezbollah.

Thousands of British nationals are believed to be in Lebanon and the UK Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office (FCDO) continues to advise against all travel to Lebanon.

"The most important message from me to British nationals in Lebanon is to leave immediately," Starmer told reporters in response to questions about his message.

"It is important that we've been really, really clear: now is the time to leave," he said.

On the situation in the region, he added: "I think we need to be clear, we need de-escalation, we need a ceasefire, we need to pull back from the brink."

Meanwhile, the FCDO said the UK is focused on bolstering its presence in the region with around 700 UK troops moving to Cyprus as part of the first phase of its contingency plans following "significant escalation" between Israel and Lebanon in recent days.

The military teams will be supported by Border Force and FCDO officials as the situation continues to "deteriorate rapidly, with devastating consequences".

"Events in the past hours and days have

demonstrated how volatile this situation is, which is why our message is clear, British nationals should leave now," said UK Defence Secretary John Healey, who left the Labour conference early to chair an emergency Cabinet Office Briefing Room A (COBRA) meeting with ministers, intelligence chiefs and diplomats to assess government planning.

"We continue to urge all sides to step back from conflict to prevent further tragic loss of life. Our government is ensuring all preparations are in place to support British nationals should the situation deteriorate. I want to thank the British personnel deployed in the region for their commitment and professionalism," he said.

The UK said it already has a significant diplomatic and military footprint in the region, including RAF Akrotiri in Cyprus and Royal Navy ships RFA Mounts Bay and HMS Duncan, which have remained in the eastern Mediterranean to support British nationals and allies over the recent months.

The Royal Air Force (RAF) also has aircraft and transport helicopters on standby to provide support if necessary. It comes as Israel launched one of its biggest offensives against Hezbollah — considered a terrorist organisation by the UK — since the two sides went to war in 2006.

The operation followed the detonation of thousands of pagers and walkie-talkies used by the group, for which Israel has not staked a formal claim.

This covert action was soon followed by Israel Defence Forces saying they targeted Hezbollah weapons sites and killed several senior commanders.

According to reports from the region, hundreds are believed to have been killed in clashes as people are being forced to flee their homes in southern Lebanon. (PTI)

US missile system will remain in Philippines despite China's alarm

MANILA, Sept 25: American and Filipino security officials have agreed to keep a US mid-range missile system in the northern Philippines indefinitely to boost deterrence despite China's expressions of alarm, two Philippine officials said on Wednesday.

The US Army transported the Typhon missile system, a land-based weapon that can fire the Standard Missile-6 and the Tomahawk Land Attack Missile, to the northern Philippines as part of combat exercises in April with Philippine troops and to test its deployability aboard an Air Force aircraft.

Tomahawk missiles can travel over 1,000 miles (1,600 kilometers), which places China within their target range. Officials are considering keeping the missile system in the northern Philippines up to April next year, when US and Philippine forces are scheduled to hold their annual Balikatan — Tagalog for "shoulder-to-shoulder" — large-scale combat exercises, he said.

The two officials spoke to The Associated Press on condition of anonymity because they were not authorised to discuss the sensitive US missile deployment publicly. There was no immediate immediate comment from US officials.

Chinese diplomats have repeatedly conveyed their alarm to the Philippine government, warning that the deployment of the missile system could destabilise the region.

A Philippine army spokesperson said earlier that the system was scheduled to be removed from the country by the end of this month. Philippine Defence Secretary Gilberto Teodoro Jr. refused to confirm or deny the extension.

But Teodoro rejected China's demands as interference in the Philippines internal affairs, speaking to reporters Tuesday on the sidelines of an Asian defence industry exhibition in Manila.

"China is saying that they are alarmed but that is interference into our internal affairs. They are using reverse psychology in order to deter us from building up our defensive capabilities," Teodoro said.

"Before they start talking, why don't they lead by example? Destroy their nuclear arsenal, remove all their ballistic missile capabilities, get out of the West Philippines Sea and get out of Mischief Reef," Teodoro said. "I mean, don't throw stones when you live in a glass house."

Teodoro used the Philippine name for the disputed South China Sea and for a contested reef off the western Philippines that Chinese forces seized in 1995 and is now one of seven missile-protected island bases China maintains in the disputed waters. Philippine military chief Gen. Romeo Brawner Jr. said he has asked US military officials to keep the missile system in the Philippines, but declined to say what their response. (AP)

Peace on border must for progress in India-China ties; 'parallel rise' of two nations presents unique problem: Jaishankar

NEW YORK, Sept 25: The India-China relationship would influence the future of the entire world. External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar said while making it clear that peace needed to be restored on the border first for bilateral ties to move forward.

Addressing an event hosted by the Asia Society and the Asia Society Policy Institute here on Tuesday, Jaishankar noted India's "difficult history" with China and said the "parallel rise" of the two countries presented "a very, very unique problem".

"I think the India-China relationship is key to the future of Asia. In a way, you can say that if the world is to be multi-polar, Asia has to be multi-polar. And therefore this relationship will influence not just the future of Asia, but in that way, perhaps the future of the world as well," Jaishankar said at the event titled 'India, Asia and the World'.

"You have two countries who are neighbours, unique in the sense that they are the only two countries with over a billion people, both rising in the global order and who often have overlapping peripheries, including the fact that they have a common border. So it's really a very complicated issue," he said.

"I think, if you look today in global politics, the parallel rises of India and China, present a very, very unique problem."

"When I said 75 per cent of it has

been sorted out - I was asked in a way to quantify - it's only of the disengagement. So that's one part of the problem. The main issue right now is the patrolling. You know, how do we, both of us, patrol up to the Line of Actual Control," Jaishankar said.

Jaishankar said the patrolling arrangements after 2020 have been disturbed. "So we've been able to sort out much of the disengagement, the friction points, but some of the patrolling issues need to be resolved."

He said once we deal with the disengagement, "there is the larger issue as both of us have brought a very large number of troops up to the border. So there is what we call the de-escalation issue, and then there is the larger, the next step is really, how do you deal with the rest of the relationship?"

Jaishankar gave a historical perspective of the relationship and of the border dispute, saying the "entire 3,500 kilometre-border between India and China is disputed".

"And so you make sure the border is peaceful so that other parts of the relationship can move," he said.

He added there were a series of agreements between the two countries that went into greater and greater detail on how to make sure the border remained peaceful and stable.

"Now the problem was in 2020, despite these very explicit agree-

ments, we saw that the Chinese - we were all in the middle of Covid at that time - moved a large number of forces in violation of these agreements to the Line of Actual Control. And we responded in kind," he said.

"Once troops were deployed very close up, which is "very dangerous", it was likely a mishap could happen, and it did happen," Jaishankar said, referring to the 2020 Galwan clash.

"So there was a clash, and a number of troops died on either side, and that has since, in a sense, overshadowed the relationship. So until we can restore peace and tranquillity on the border and ensure the agreements signed up to are adhered to, it's obviously difficult to carry on with the rest of the relationship," the minister said.

Jaishankar said the focus for the last four years had been to, in the first instance, at least disengage the troops, meaning that they go back to the camp, the military bases from which they traditionally operate.

"Because right now, both sides have troops deployed forward," he said.

Jaishankar, who will address the General Debate of the 79th session of the UN General Assembly on Saturday, held a series of bilateral meetings with his global counterparts during the day in the UN Headquarters and the city. (PTI)

China test-fires an intercontinental ballistic missile into the Pacific Ocean

TAIPEI, Sept 25: China test-fired an intercontinental ballistic missile into the Pacific Ocean on Wednesday, stirring security concerns in the region already tense over Beijing's territorial claims and rivalry with the U.S.

The ICBM carried a dummy warhead and fell into a designated area of the sea, the Defense Ministry said in a statement posted to social media.

The launch by the People's Liberation Army's Rocket Force was part of routine annual training, complied with international law and was not directed against any country or target, according to the statement. It is unclear how often China conducts tests over such a distance. In 1980, China launched an ICBM into the South Pacific.

A map published in Chinese newspapers at the time showed the target area as roughly a circle in the center of a ring formed by the Solomon Islands, Nauru, the Gilbert Islands, Tuvalu, western Samoa, Fiji and the New Hebrides.

The U.S. and non-governmental



organizations have said China has been building up its missile silos, but it's unclear how many missiles and nuclear warheads it has added to its arsenal.

The People's Liberation Army, which functions as the ruling Communist Party's military wing, runs China's space program, which has established an orbital station and has ambitions to set up a Moon base and land a spacecraft on Mars.

Rocketry has long been part of China's development into a major global power, spurring nationalism and growth that has made China the world's second-largest economy.

The U.S. remains China's main global rival, although Japan, Taiwan, the Philippines and others have territorial disputes with Beijing that occasionally threaten to develop into military clashes.

China maintains a "no first use" of nuclear weapons policy, even as its desire for regional predominance grows.

Tests of China's intercontinental ballistic missiles into international waters are rare. Experts and a historical survey of China's program by the Washington-based Nuclear Threat Initiative suggest the last occurred in May 1980. That test saw China launch its DF-5 missile into

the South Pacific. China typically launches missiles toward its western deserts from its east coast, said James Acton, the co-director of the Nuclear Policy Program and a senior fellow at the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace. The fact that China launched a test that splashed down in international waters was unusual, but mirrors testing that the United States does for its own ballistic missile fleet.

"When they haven't done something for 44 years and then they do it, that's significant," Acton told The Associated Press. "It's China's way of telling us, 'Like you, we're not ashamed we have nuclear weapons and we're going to behave like a great nuclear power.'"

The launch came amid the ongoing United Nations General Assembly in New York. China is one of five veto-holding permanent members of the U.N.'s Security Council and has sought to gain influence over its key departments involving human rights and that align with its authoritarian system. (AP)

Thailand legalises same-sex marriage, allows couples to wed from January

BANGKOK, Sept 25: Thailand's landmark marriage equality bill was officially written into law on Tuesday, allowing same-sex couples to legally wed.

The law was published in the Royal Gazette after endorsement by King Maha Vajiralongkorn, and will come into effect in 120 days.

This means LGBTQ+ couples will be able to register their marriage in January next year, making Thailand the third place in Asia, after Taiwan and Nepal, to allow same-sex marriage.

The bill, which grants full legal, financial and medical rights for marriage partners of any gender, sailed through both the House of Representatives and the Senate in April and June respectively.

"Congratulations to everyone's love," Prime Minister Paetongtarn Shinawatra wrote on X, adding the hashtag #Love Wins.

Thailand has a reputation for acceptance and inclusivity but strug-

gled for decades to pass a marriage equality law.

Thai society largely holds conservative values, and members of the LGBTQ+ community say they face discrimination in everyday life.

The government and state agencies are also historically conservative, and advocates for gender equality had a hard time pushing lawmakers and civil servants to accept change.

Bangkok Deputy Governor Sanon Wangrangboon said last week that the city officials will be ready to register same-sex marriages as soon as the law gets enacted.

The legislation amended the

country's Civil and Commercial Code to replace gender-specific words such as "men and women" with gender-neutral words such as "individual".

The government led by the Pheu Thai party has made marriage

equality one of its main goals. It made a major effort to identify itself with the annual Bangkok Pride parade in June, in which thousands of people

celebrated in one of Bangkok's busiest commercial districts. The organisers of Bangkok Pride announced on Facebook that it will organise a wedding for couples who wish to register their marriage on the very first day that the law becomes effective. (AP)



10th CPA successfully concludes



DIMAPUR, Sept 25: The 10th Commonwealth Parliamentary Association (CPA) India Region Conference held in the Parliament House, New Delhi from September 23, successfully concluded on September 24, where the speaker of Nagaland Legislative Assembly, Shringain Longkumer, has been selected as a member of the Executive Committee (EC) of CPA India Region.

The conference brought together the presiding officers and secretaries of all the state legislatures in India. The inaugural address was delivered by Om Birla, speaker of Lok Sabha.

The Executive Committee comprises of 6 to 7 members selected from amongst the speakers from all over India headed by the speaker of the Lok Sabha.

Shringain Longkumer, Speaker, and S. Toiho Yephtho, deputy speaker, Nagaland Legislative Assembly along with Khruhitunuo Rio, secretary-in-charge, Nagaland Legislative Assembly attended the conference. (NNN)

Mizoram's connectivity remains intact despite landowners' agitation

AIZAWL, Sept 25: Mizoram's connectivity remained stable on Wednesday as vehicles continued to use National Highway-306, the state's vital link with Assam, despite ongoing protests by landowners in Kolasib district over land ownership disputes.

A police officer said landowners began blocking NH-306 at Sethawn, but heavy police deployment ensured that traffic movement remained unaffected.

Some minor injuries were reported during scuffles between police and protesters. Over 2,000 landowners launched an indefinite blockade on NH-306, demanding a resolution of land ownership issues and the lifting of a freeze on lands they assert are privately owned.

The Kolasib District Land Owners' Association (KDLOA) alleged that their long-held lands along NH-306 and NH-6, between Vaingte and Mualkhang, have been designated as Roadside Reserve Forest (RRF) by the state forest department since 2020, effectively freezing these properties.



The Centre had previously approved a widening project for NH-306 and NH-6 in the Aizawl district, with the National Highway Infrastructure Development Corporation Limited (NHIDCL) assigned to execute it.

However, the project has stalled due to ongoing disputes between the state forest and revenue departments. The KDLOA contended that when the widening project was announced, the forest department declared an 800-metre strip on either side of the highways as RRF.

TPYC demands release of exam marks for Group D post

HT Correspondent
AGARTALA, Sept 25: Tripura Pradesh Youth Congress (TPYC) on Wednesday demanded immediate implementation of the waiting list in group D and publication of written and viva marks separately for all appeared candidates of Joint Recruitment Board Tripura (JRBT).

In a memorandum submitted by TPYC President Neelkamal Saha to the director of JRBT, said that in the last meeting with the JRBT, the party tabled

two important demands which are the immediate publication of a waiting list for JRBT GROUP D. Neelkamal pointed out that many candidates from Group D have also appeared in exams for Group C and they are placed under Group C.

"We also know from sources that nearly 700 Group D candidates are from outside states and a maximum of them will not join the job so in total approx 950 to 1000 candidates in JRBT Group D will not appear for their job so as to not create

the vacuum of unemployment. Again the need for a waiting list is a must so that the next 1000 candidates can join the jobs, as many of them can never appear for government jobs again because of their age barriers," he said.

He also demanded immediate publication of written and viva exam results separately so that a clear picture of performance satisfaction is established among the candidates who appeared for the JRBT GROUP D post.

Regional centre for Kendriya Hindi Sansthan's to be set up: CM Khandu

'Plot of land to be located immediately'

ITANAGAR, Sept 25: Arunachal Pradesh chief minister Pema Khandu said on Wednesday that his government will provide land for the establishment of a regional centre of Kendriya Hindi Sansthan in the state.

Addressing the silver jubilee celebrations of the Hindi department of Rajiv Gandhi University (RGU) near here, Khandu said that his government's proposal for the establishment of a regional centre of Kendriya Hindi Sansthan in the state has been accepted by the Centre and now sufficient and suitable land has to be provided for it.

The event was also attended by Kendriya Hindi Sansthan Director Professor Sunil Baburao Kulkarni. "Arunachal Pradesh is the only state in the Northeast that has adopted Hindi as its lingua franca. To enhance the quality of the spoken language, a regional centre of the Kendriya Hindi Sansthan needs to be established here," the chief minister said.

The Kendriya Hindi Sansthan, an autonomous organisation under

the Union education ministry with its headquarters in Agra, runs eight regional centres, with three of those in the Northeast -- Guwahati, Shillong and Dimapur.

"I promise to Professor Kulkarni that the process for locating the plot of land will be started immediately," Khandu assured.

Congratulating the Hindi department of the central varsity on the completion of 25 years of its existence and churning out Hindi language scholars, Khandu said that students of the department have excelled in their fields like poetry, storytelling, and novel writing, among others.

Khandu said that in Arunachal Pradesh, Hindi plays a pivotal role in uniting the diverse ethnic texture of the state.

"Yes, our Hindi may not be of the purest form but it's the sole medium of communication between different tribes and communities of the state. All other northeastern states have their one common language of communication except Arunachal Pradesh.

So, we developed our own Hindi and perfectly communicated with each other," he said.

Khandu encouraged RGU to take an active role in refining and polishing the Hindi spoken by the people of the state.

"By enhancing it, we can further strengthen our connection with the rest of India and establish Arunachal Pradesh as a significant centre for Hindi learning and promotion," he said.

Khandu said that the widespread use of Hindi in Arunachal Pradesh has opened doors for many talented individuals in the entertainment industry, especially in Bollywood and Hindi singing reality shows on national television.

"Our command over the language has allowed Arunachalis to showcase our state's talent on the national stage. Strengthening our Hindi language skills will continue to unlock more opportunities for our people in diverse fields across India," the chief minister added. (PTI)

Manipur Cong MLA concerned over security advisor's remark

IMPHAL, Sept 25: Manipur Congress MLA Th Lokeshwar on Wednesday expressed concern on security advisor Kuldip Singh's recent claim that 900 Kuki militants have entered the state, which he said has caused panic in the outlying villages of Imphal valley. Demanding clarity on the claim, Lokeshwar asked what actions have been taken to address the potential threat.

Speaking to reporters during a visit to the Khundrakpam constituency, Lokeshwar said, "Singh's claim has created unrest in peripheral areas of Imphal valley. He should clarify the grounds for his assertions and what measures are in place to

counter the militants' entry. Villagers should not be left to live in fear." He urged the government to act promptly, emphasising that the responsibility for protecting the villages lies with the authorities, not the villagers themselves. On Friday, Singh had said security forces are on high alert following reports that 900 Kuki militants had entered the state to target peripheral villages, with potential attacks expected around September 28.

Singh asserted that intelligence has been shared among various security agencies and proactive measures are being communicated to remote areas to prevent any militant preparations. (PTI)

Meghalaya inks MoU with Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation

3rd state in NE to establish a partnership

SHILLONG, Sept 25: The government of Meghalaya and the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation (BMGF) made a major stride in the area of health, nutrition and agriculture on Tuesday when they entered into a memorandum of understanding (MoU) to work together towards improving population health outcomes of the state, particularly related to maternal and newborn health, family planning, nursing education and agriculture and livestock development. Meghalaya is only the third state in India, after Uttar Pradesh & Bihar, with whom the Gates Foundation is establishing a partnership.

The MoU was signed in the presence of the chief minister of Meghalaya, Conrad K Sangma and minister of health & family welfare and agriculture, Dr M Ampareen Lyngdoh.

M. Hari Menon, director of the India Country Office at the Gates Foundation, and Sampath Kumar, principal secretary to the Government of Meghalaya, health & family welfare department on behalf of the state signed the MoU.

The MoU signed today called for the realization of efficient and effective healthcare solutions in Meghalaya, and the parties also pledged to undertake numerous activities to achieve the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals, especially the health-related goal for the year 2030.

The MoU will last for four years where both stakeholders shall facilitate successful delivery of the set objectives in the paper with efficiency checkups, monitoring, and evaluation.

Through the MoU, BMGF will provide both financial and technical support to improve outcomes in twelve key areas: comprehensive primary healthcare, family planning, maternal health and anaemia, neonatal health, immunisation, childhood wasting and nutrition, nursing education, supply chain management, digital health, results-based financing and performance management in healthcare, competency mapping and development for government functionaries, and agriculture and livestock development.

Speaking at the signing event, Conrad K. Sangma emphasized the importance of this collaboration and said, "We are happy and excited about the partnership that we are going to have with the Gates Foundation. We need to have the right-minded people with the right desire, goal, and mindset to sit together and try to

resolve the problems, the institutional setups, and the plans that we have. We are looking at expertise in terms of knowledge."

"To conclude, for us what matters is how to make life better for our citizens." He also stressed improving the socio-economic conditions of mothers and the female population at large.

"We have started to make plans based on the real problems, the institutional systems and what we have to do to address the problems. We will go the extra mile to make sure that we achieve the goals that we want. It will not be easy, but it is a continuous process," he said.

Dr. Ampareen Lyngdoh, health minister, government of Meghalaya added, "We are very happy that you are already in the field for so long, so you are familiar with what our gaps are, you are familiar with what we need to get done. I would like to see this community participation. I hope that we will be able to evolve a module which would likely be suitable for replication across the board in North Eastern states and other areas. I am looking forward to the MoU signing."

The collaboration between the government of Meghalaya and the Gates Foundation is based on three strategically oriented goals for changing the current state of health care.

First, it seeks to lower maternal, neonatal and child mortality through increasing access to family planning, managing anaemia and developing emergency transport to reduce death rates.

Second, the partnership aims to promote health and nutrition services provided by government and non-government organizations with special reference to gender. Finally, the partnership will build the capacity of local institutions by ensuring that they are involved in policy formulation, research and breakthroughs in healthcare to support sustainable change.

The partnership will also focus on several key program areas, such as the creation of IT solutions for primary healthcare as well as improving family planning by increasing the number of contraceptive methods and availability.

It will also involve enhanced maternal and neonatal health with reference to anaemia and other essential infrastructure joined to hidden childhood wasting and anaemia through supplementary feeding and immunization. (NNN)

No.CHD/UDD-1/15th FC/Tied/1st Inst./2024/NIT-CS/1882

Dated Kokrajhar the 13th September/2024

PRESS NOTICE INVITING TENDER

The Council Head of Department, Urban Development Department, BTC, Kokrajhar invites bid for the following scheme under 15th FC TIED Grant (1st Installment) for the year 2022-23 during 2024-25.

| Group No. | Name of Schemes | Bid cost (Rs.) | Tender Value (Rs.) |
|-----------|--|----------------|--------------------|
| Group-1 | Supply of Dustbin 240 Ltrs. Capacity in Urban areas of Kokrajhar Town under Kokrajhar MB | 400.00 | 1109700.00 |
| Group-2 | Supply of Dustbin 240 Ltrs. Capacity in Urban areas of Basugaon Town under Basugaon MB | 300.00 | 808300.00 |
| Group-3 | Supply of Dustbin 240 Ltrs. Capacity in Urban areas of Kajalgaon Town under Kajalgaon MB | 300.00 | 822000.00 |
| Group-4 | Supply of Dustbin 240 Ltrs. Capacity in Urban areas of Bijni Town under Bijni M.B | 500.00 | 1438500.00 |
| Group-5 | Supply of Dustbin 240 Ltrs. Capacity in Urban areas of Goreswar Town under Goreswar M.B | 100.00 | 246600.00 |
| Group-6 | Supply of Dustbin 240 Ltrs. Capacity in Urban areas of Tangla Town under Tangla M.B | 300.00 | 835700.00 |
| Group-7 | Supply of Dustbin 30 Ltrs. Capacity (for Door to door Garbage Collection) or BPL/EWS Beneficiary in Urban of Goreswar Town | 100.00 | 202980.00 |
| Group-8 | Supply of Dustbin 30 Ltrs. Capacity (for Door to door Garbage Collection) or BPL/EWS Beneficiary in Urban of Bijni Town | 200.00 | 509440.00 |
| Group-9 | Supply of Dustbin 30 Ltrs. Capacity (for Door to door Garbage Collection) or BPL/EWS Beneficiary in Urban of Kajalgaon Town | 200.00 | 491530.00 |
| Group-10 | Supply of Dustbin 30 Ltrs. Capacity (for Door to door Garbage Collection) or BPL/EWS Beneficiary in Urban of Basugaon Town | 200.00 | 487550.00 |
| Group-11 | Supply of Dustbin 30 Ltrs. Capacity (for Door to door Garbage Collection) or BPL/EWS Beneficiary in Urban of Kokrajhar Town | 200.00 | 472625.00 |
| Group-12 | Supply of Dustbin 30 Ltrs. Capacity (for Door to door Garbage Collection) or BPL/EWS Beneficiary in Urban of Fakiragram Town | 100.00 | 294520.00 |
| Group-13 | Supply of Dustbin 30 Ltrs. Capacity (for Door to door Garbage Collection) or BPL/EWS Beneficiary in Urban of Gosaigaon Town | 50.00 | 146265.00 |
| Group-14 | Supply of Dustbin 30 Ltrs. Capacity (for Door to door Garbage Collection) or BPL/EWS Beneficiary in Urban of Udalguri Town | 150.00 | 378100.00 |
| Group-15 | Supply of Dustbin 30 Ltrs. Capacity (for Door to door Garbage Collection) or BPL/EWS Beneficiary in Urban of Tangla Town | 100.00 | 316410.00 |

Last date of submission of completed tender is 03.10.2024 (up to 2:00 PM) and will be open on the same day. The detail tender documents may be obtained from the office of the undersigned during office hours till 01.10.2024.

N.B.: The bill of contractor will be paid only after receiving the fund from BTC.

Sd/- CHD,

Urban Development Department,

BTC, Kokrajhar

IPR(BTC)/C/2024-25/588

Last date of submission of completed tender is 03.10.2024 (up to 2:00 PM) and will be open on the same day. The detail tender documents may be obtained from the office of the undersigned during office hours till 01.10.2024.

N.B.: The bill of contractor will be paid only after receiving the fund from BTC.

Sd/- CHD,
Urban Development Department,
BTC, Kokrajhar

IPR(BTC)/C/2024-25/588

LOST

I have lost my HSLC Marksheets of 2019, new roll C- 19 - 035, no- 0190, previous roll B19- 465, No- 0209 and H.S. Registration certificate no 143910 of 2019-20 on 01.08.2024 with in this PS area.

Name : Guriya chauhan
Father : Bikarama Chauhan
Village : cherapathar no 1
P.o.: Memmeji
P.S : Kheroni
District: West Karbi Anglong

Wanted



UTP Raja Das S/O Lt Babul Das, Vill-Krompron, 7 mile, Super market, PS-Dimapur, Nagaland, another address, Vill- Tarapur, PS- Silchar, Dist- Cachar, who was lodged in the Hafong Sub- Jail in connection with a POCSSO case of Lanting PS of Dima Hasao district has escaped from the Jail Custody.

If anyone has any information about him, kindly share the same with the O/C Hafong P.S (Contact No 9508405436) or Police Control Room, Dima Hasao (Contact No.863839873/6026900464)

Janasanyog/D/6423/24/26-sep-24

No.DA/BTC/K/Actt-43/2024-25/665
Tender No. DA/BTC/K/e-Tender/2024-25/16

PRESS NOTICE

The Director of Agriculture, BTC, Kokrajhar invites bids through e-Tendering process only from the Firms registered by the Department of Agriculture, Bodoland Territorial Council, Kokrajhar for supply of Potato Seed Tubers for an amount of Rs.198.45 Lakh (Rupees One Crore Ninety Eight Lakh Forty Five Thousand) only against distribution of Potato Seed Tubers under Horticulture and Vegetable Crops, SOPD for the year 2024-25.

Details may be seen at www.assamtenders.gov.in and also at the office of the undersigned during office hours.

Sd/-
Director of Agriculture,
BTC, Kokrajhar.

IPR(BTC)/C/2024-25/596

Dated. 25/09/2024.

No. SLRC-G-III/91/Advertisement/2023/64

NOTICE

This is for information of all the candidates who had appeared in the Assam Direct Recruitment Examination held on 15 September, 2024, for the posts of Class III (HSSLC Level) that an Online Portal will be made live from 28 September, 2024 at 11.30 A.M to 10 October 2024, the link of which will be available in the website of Assam State School Education Board (erstwhile SEBA) i.e www.site.sebaonline.org and website of Govt. of Assam (www.assam.gov.in). This Portal will facilitate the interested candidates to raise their objection against the Answer Key of any question on payment of Rs. 500/- (Rupees Five Hundred only) per question. Objection must be supplemented with proper justification and any objection without justification will be treated as null and void. If the justification for challenging a particular Answer key is found valid by the expert Committee constituted to examine the challenges, then the amount of Rs. 500/- will be refunded to the source from where the amount was paid. All the Objections shall be placed before a Committee of Academic Experts and the decision of this Committee shall be final and no further communication shall be entertained. The login credentials will be—

User name - His/Her Application ID
Password - His/Her own Password

Further this is to inform that the softcopies of all 6 sets of Question paper are already available on the website of Assam State School Education Board (erstwhile SEBA) i.e www.site.sebaonline.org. The answer keys of these 6 sets will also be made available in the same website on 28 September, 2024 at 10.00 A.M.

Sd/-
Secretary,

State Level Recruitment Commission for
Class-III Posts, Assam Administrative Staff College,
Janasanyog/D/6400/24/26-Sep-24
Jawahar Nagar, Khanapara, Guwahati -22

No.DA/BTC/K/Actt-43/2024-25/664
Tender No. DA/BTC/K/e-Tender/2024-25/12

PRESS NOTICE

The Director of Agriculture, BTC, Kokrajhar invites bids through e-Tendering process only from the Firms registered by the Department of Agriculture, Bodoland Territorial Council, Kokrajhar for supply of Dragon Fruit Cuttings (Planting Material) with Concrete Post for an amount of Rs. 249.16720 Lakh (Rupees Two Crore Forty Nine Lakh Sixteen Thousand Seven Hundred Twenty) only against cultivation of High value crop (Dragon Fruit) under RKVY-RAFTAAR for the year 2024-25.

Details may be seen at www.assamtenders.gov.in and also at the office of the undersigned during office hours.

Sd/-
Director of Agriculture, BTC, Kokrajhar.

IPR(BTC)/C/2024-25/595

Dated. 25/09/2024.

No. SLRC-G-III/91/Advertisement/2023/63

NOTICE

This is for information of all the candidates who had appeared in the Assam Direct Recruitment Examination held on 15 September, 2024, for the posts of Class III (HSSLC Level) that an Online Portal will be made live for downloading of Soft-copy of OMR Answer Sheet from 27 September, 2024 from 11.30 A.M. to 15 October, 2024 and the link of which will be available in the website of Assam State School Education Board (erstwhile SEBA) i.e. www.site.sebaonline.org and website of Govt. of Assam (www.assam.gov.in).

This portal will facilitate interested candidates to obtain the scanned copy of their OMR Answer sheets on payment of Rs. 50/- (Rupees Fifty only).

The login credentials will be—
User name - His/Her Application ID
Password - His/Her own Password

On receipt of application with payment the concerned candidate will receive SMS in his/her registered mobile number within a period of one week time of receiving the application. After receipt of SMS, the applicant can download the scanned copy of his/her OMR Answer sheet by logging in using the same credentials.

Sd/-
Secretary,

State Level Recruitment Commission for
Class-III Posts, Assam Administrative Staff College,
Janasanyog/D/6386/24/26-Sep-24
Jawahar Nagar, Khanapara, Guwahati -22

If Cong comes to power even by mistake, it will ruin Haryana with its infighting: Modi

SONIPAT, Sept 25: Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Tuesday launched a blistering attack on the Congress saying if it comes to power in Haryana even by mistake, stability and development will be at stake because of its "infighting" and this will ruin the state. Addressing a poll rally in Gohana in this district for the October 5 assembly polls, he also lashed out at the Congress over the issue of reservation, alleging opposing reservation and hatred towards it are in its DNA.

Slamming the main opposition party, he said Congress governments are known for "instability." "In the past few years wherever it formed governments, chief ministers and ministers were involved in infighting. They have nothing to do with the pain and problems of the people," Modi said as he cited the example of Congress-ruled Karnataka.

"In Karnataka, its chief minister and deputy chief minister are busy in internal fighting. In Telangana and Himachal Pradesh, it is the same story," he said in his second rally in the state, the first being over a week ago in Kurukshetra.

Modi also mentioned about alleged infighting in Rajasthan and Chhattisgarh when the Congress was in power there.

"Therefore, Haryana has to be cautious. Haryana has right over me. Remember, if Congress comes to power even by mistake, it will ruin Haryana due to its infighting," he warned.

"The way infighting is rising in Congress, entire Haryana is watching," he said. Voting for Congress means putting Haryana's stability and development at stake and opening the doors of destruction, he further said.

"This instability will stop every work in Haryana. Investment and jobs will be impacted", said Modi.

Notably, with Haryana going to polls next month, the ruling BJP has been targeting the Congress over the alleged infighting in its Haryana unit and even claimed that Lok Sabha member and prominent Dalit leader Kumari Selja is unhappy with her party over ticket distribution and so is staying away from the poll campaign. Former chief minister Manohar Lal Khattar had also invited Selja to join the BJP but she dismissed any possible switch, saying, "I am a Congress person. I will remain a Congress person."

In his speech, Modi said whenever the Congress remained out of power, the poor, SC, ST and OBC got their due rights.

Whenever the Congress remained in power, it snatched rights of Dalits and downtrodden, he alleged. Whoever became prime minister from Congress's "royal family", they always opposed reservation, he said.

"Opposing and hatred towards reservation is in Congress party's DNA. That is why today we are seeing that fourth generation of the royal family of the Congress wants to remove reservation. You have to



be cautious of Congress party's anti-reservation tactics," he said. The BJP gave participation, in true sense to Dalit, OBC and tribals while it worked to take forward deprived and backward sections, Modi said. "In Haryana, you see BJP made Nayab Saini (who comes from OBC community) chief minister. In short time, Saini has created a place in hearts of people of Haryana," he said.

Referring to his US visit, Modi said he met big leaders and representatives of big companies. "I told them about the talent of Indian youths," he said under the BJP government, Haryana has made place among top states in industry and agriculture sectors.

"Today, the world's biggest companies are interested in setting up factories in India, he said, adding "when industrialisation in-

creases, its biggest benefit goes to poor, farmers and Dalits".

Modi asserted that as the voting day draws near in Haryana, support for the BJP is growing while Congress is on the slide. He excluded confidence about BJP's return to power in Haryana.

Today, entire Haryana is saying 'Phir ek baar, BJP sarkar', he said. He also said, "I am saying with pride that whatever I am today, Haryana has a great contribution in it." Modi said B R Ambedkar believed that in empowerment of Dalits, industry plays a big role.

He used to see Dalit, poor, deprived don't have adequate land. He knew that many poor are landless and spend their life as farm labourers, Modi said.

That is why Baba Saheb (Ambedkar) used to say that when factories are set up, Dalits and de-

prived get a chance.

That is why Baba Saheb used to tell Dalits to learn technical skills. In BJP's policies, decisions and thoughts, you will see reflection of this thinking of Baba Saheb, Modi said. By giving opportunities to Dalit and deprived sections in industry, real empowerment is possible, Modi pointed out. There is one more challenge before our country, about which only BJP talks, he said. In our country, farm holding is shrinking. Population is increasing, but farms are shrinking. Agriculture economists believe that in villages along with farming, there should be other avenues of earning, the prime minister said.

This is why every parent wants that while one child will work on farm, other will go to city to earn, he said. When industry expands, lives of farmers also improve and youth of farmer families also get good jobs and opportunities, he said.

Modi also paid tributes to Pandit Deendayal Upadhyaya on his birth anniversary, saying drawing inspiration from him, the BJP is taking the country to new heights of development and uplifting the poor.

On the second phase of polling in Jammu and Kashmir on Wednesday, he congratulated the people for taking part in the festival of democracy with great enthusiasm. "Since morning, people are in queues to exercise their vote. The way in first phase, voting record broke in J&K, that too the world has seen," he said. (PTI)

Foreign diplomats watching J-K polls find it 'very healthy, very democratic'



SRINAGAR, Sept 25: The members of a foreign delegation who are here on Wednesday to observe the assembly elections in Jammu and Kashmir expressed satisfaction over the conduct of polls, with some of them saying the process looks comparable to how it happens in their own countries.

Jammu and Kashmir is voting in the second phase of assembly elections in which 26 seats in six districts are going to polls. The Ministry of External Affairs has invited a delegation of diplomats from 16 countries, including the US, Norway and Singapore, to observe the exercise. The US deputy Chief of the Mission in Delhi Jorgan K Andrews said the voting process looked healthy and democratic.

"It is great to see the enthusiasm; it's great to see Kashmiris out voting after a pause for 10 years. We are very excited to see the results. It looks very healthy and very democratic," Andrews told PTI Videos at a polling station here. The US diplomat said the process here was similar to how it happens in his country.

"It is very comparable. In my

country, we use schools as well for voting. So it looks very similar," he added. South Korea diplomat Sang Woo Lim liked the idea of Pink polling station, an initiative of the Election Commission of India where polling stations are managed by all-female staff.

"It is my first time here in Kashmir. I am happy to be here as a part of the MEA delegation. I see it is a beautiful place and people are very nice. It is special to witness how democracy works. This idea of a pink polling station is very ingenious. It is a great way to attract more people to come to vote," Lim added. Singapore deputy head of the mission in Delhi Cheng Wei Wei Alice said it was wonderful to be part of the delegation observing the polls here.

"I am glad that all the voters showed up. That's wonderful to see. The process is very similar to how we conduct elections in Singapore. We use government buildings for polling stations so that it is easily accessible to voters," she said. Alice said the delegates were "very thankful to the MEA for organising this trip and allowing us to visit the polling stations". (PTI)

'Are you up to some mischief: Rahul asks PM Modi

NEW DELHI, Sept 25: Leader of Opposition in the Lok Sabha Rahul Gandhi on Wednesday slammed the BJP over its MP Kangana Ranaut's remarks calling for bringing back the three farm laws, demanding that the actor-politician be expelled by the ruling party if it does not agree with her remarks.

Congress president Mallikarjun Kharge on Wednesday slammed the BJP over Ranaut's remarks calling for bringing back the three farm laws that were repealed in 2021 and said the poll-bound states, including Haryana, would give a befitting reply to the ruling party. Ranaut on Wednesday withdrew her remarks calling for bringing back the three farm laws and said those were her personal opinions and did not represent the party's stand. The actor-politician said she must remember that she is not only an artiste but also a BJP member now and her statements should be in line with her party's policies.

In a video statement, Gandhi said, "The BJP people keep testing ideas. They ask someone to voice an idea among the people and then they see the reaction. This is what has happened, one of their MPs has talked about reviving the three black farm laws. Modi ji you must clarify, whether you are against this or you are again up to some mischief." "Will the three farm laws be revived or not? If you do so, I guarantee you that the INDIA bloc will together stand against it. 700 people were martyred, they must be remembered and respected," the former Congress chief said. (PTI)

Expel Kangana if you don't agree with her views on farm laws: Cong to BJP

NEW DELHI, Sept 25: The Congress on Wednesday stepped up its attack on the BJP over its MP Kangana Ranaut's remarks calling for bringing back the three farm laws, demanding that the actor-politician be expelled by the ruling party if it does not agree with her remarks.

Congress president Mallikarjun Kharge on Wednesday slammed the BJP over Ranaut's remarks calling for bringing back the three farm laws that were repealed in 2021 and said the poll-bound states, including Haryana, would give a befitting reply to the ruling party. Ranaut on Wednesday withdrew her remarks calling for bringing back the three farm laws and said those were her personal opinions and did not represent the party's stand.

The actor-politician said she must remember that she is not only an artiste but also a BJP member now and her statements should be in line with her party's policies.

The Congress on Tuesday shared on X a video in which she said in Hindi, "Farm laws that have been repealed should be brought back. I think this may get controversial. The laws in farmers' interest be brought back. Farmers should themselves demand this (to bring farm laws back) so that there is no hindrance to their prosperity."

"Farmers are a pillar of strength in India's progress. Only in some states, they had objected to farm laws. I appeal with folded hands that farm laws should be brought back in the interest of farmers,"

she had said.

In an apparent response to Ranaut's remarks, Kharge said, "Even after the martyrdom of 750 farmers, the anti-farmer BJP and Modi government did not realize their grave crime! There is talk of re-implementing of the three black anti-farmer laws. The Congress Party strongly opposes this."

The 62 crore farmers will not forget that the Modi government crushed the farmers under a vehicle, used barbed wire, teargas from drones, nails and guns against them. "This time, poll-bound states, including Haryana, will give a befitting reply to insulting remarks, calling farmers 'andolan-jevi' and 'parasites', hurled by the prime minister himself in Parliament," the Congress chief said in a post in Hindi.

"Due to Modi ji's statements, his ministers, MPs and propaganda machinery have become habituated to insulting the farmers," he alleged.

"In 10 years, the Modi government has broken three promises made to the country's food producers? doubling the income of farmers by 2022, implementing input cost + 50% MSP as per the Swaminathan Report and legal guarantee for MSP," Kharge said.

"When the farmers' agitation was withdrawn, Modi ji had announced a government committee, which is still in cold storage. The Modi government is against the legal guarantee of MSP," he alleged. (PTI)

BJP MP Dubey suspects role of foreign powers behind massive feedback on Waqf bill, seeks MHA probe

NEW DELHI, Sept 25: Raising concern over the staggering number of feedback -- nearly 1.25 crore submissions -- received by the parliamentary committee scrutinising the Waqf (Amendment) Bill, BJP member Nishikant Dubey has called for a home ministry probe, including into possible role of Pakistan's ISI and China.

In a letter to the committee's chairperson Jagdambika Pal, he said the investigation must also cover the possible roles of fundamentalist organisations, individuals like radical Islamic preacher Zakir Naik, and foreign powers such as the ISI and China besides their proxies.

Dubey, a committee member and a fourth-term Lok Sabha MP, said the geographical origins of these submissions need immediate attention, claiming that it is statistically improbable that such an overwhelming volume response could emerge organically from within India alone.

He described the volume of feedback as "unprecedented" which, he said, has set a global record for legislative submissions and deserves scrutiny over the motivations and sources behind these communications.

He said it signals a disturbing trend that cannot be ignored. "I believe it is vital that the committee addresses these concerns head-on to ensure the integrity and independence of our legislative process," he added.

The committee examining the contentious bill, which has been opposed stridently by opposition parties and several Muslim groups for its alleged attempt to interfere in their religious affairs, had come out with an advertisement, seeking people's feedback on its provisions.

As his letter sparked a debate, Minority Affairs Minister Kiren Rijiju said the consultation process undertaken by the committee is the most extensive in the history of the country's parliamentary democracy.

He, however, declined to comment on

Dubey's suspicions.

"I can't comment on the functioning of the joint parliamentary committee. It has been empowered, how mails have come in and in what circumstances, that is for the JPC to look into," he said.

Dubey told Pal that it is essential to ask whether foreign entities, organisations, and individuals may be deliberately orchestrating this "flood of responses to manipulate the democratic process".

Urging him to ask the Ministry of Home Affairs to conduct a thorough investigation, he said the probe finding should be circulated to all members of the committee to ensure complete transparency.

India has a robust parliamentary system, and any attempt to influence it through coordinated foreign intervention represent a direct threat to national sovereignty, he asserted.

Citing media reports, he said the content of a large portion of these submissions is identical or contains minor variations, signalling that many of these communications may be part of an organised campaign.

"It is not uncommon for special interest groups, both foreign and domestic, to use this tactic to saturate the legislative process with pre-drafted suggestions or demands, giving the illusion of mass public support. This orchestrated effort undermines the very purpose of soliciting genuine public feedback," he said. Hinting at the role of Islamic fundamentalist organisation, he said these groups often funded or influenced by outside powers seek to divide India along religious lines, destabilising its democracy and disrupting our legislative processes. He said, "There is reason to suspect that these elements are leveraging the Waqf Bill deliberations to sow discord and polarise public opinion. These efforts are not isolated but part of a broader strategy by fundamentalist groups to manipulate sensitive issues in our country."

The influence of a radical Islamist preacher Zakir Naik cannot be underestimated, he said.

There are credible concerns that Naik and his network may be involved in orchestrating this deluge of submissions to the Waqf Bill, leveraging the issue to further his extremist rhetoric, he added, noting that Naik is a fugitive wanted in India for promoting hate speech and inciting terrorism.

Dubey also mentioned foreign powers like Pakistani spy agency ISI, China, and radical organisations like Jamaat-e-Islami Bangladesh and the Taliban.

Given the sheer volume of submissions and their questionable content, it is entirely plausible that foreign actors are attempting to influence the legislative process, he said.

"If foreign intelligence agencies are behind this flood of submissions, it would constitute an unprecedented attack on Indian sovereignty and a deliberate attempt to compromise the independence of Parliament," he added.

Noting that Article 105 of the Constitution guarantees the free and fair functioning of Parliament, including the operations of its committees, he said any attempt by external forces to manipulate the legislative process will be an attack on the very foundations of parliamentary system. He said an investigation by the MHA is critical to preserving the fairness, integrity, and independence of the Waqf Bill deliberations.

The Waqf bill deliberations, he stressed, must proceed without the interference of outside influences that aim to destabilise, delay, and disrupt the process.

The committee, whose meetings have been marked by fiery exchanges between BJP and opposition members, has been holding extensive consultations and has held frequent day-long deliberations as it rushes to meet the deadline of submitting its recommendations to Parliament in the first week of winter session. (PTI)

Court orders probe by Lokayukta police against CM Siddaramaiah, sets the stage for FIR against him

BENGALURU, Sept 25: A Special Court here on Wednesday ordered a Lokayukta police probe against Karnataka Chief Minister Siddaramaiah in the Mysuru Urban Development Authority (MUDA) site allotment case, setting the stage for filing of an FIR against him.

The order of the Special Court Judge, Santhosh Gajanan Bhat, came a day after the High Court upheld the sanction granted by the Governor Thawarchand Gehlot to conduct an investigation against Siddaramaiah on the allegations of illegalities in the allotment of 14 sites to his wife B M Parvathi by MUDA.

The Special Court exclusively to deal with criminal cases related to former and elected MPs/MLAs issued the order directing the Lokayukta police in Mysuru to initiate an investigation on the complaint filed by RTI activist Snehamayi Krishna.

The Court issued directions to take up the probe under section 156 (3) of the Code of Criminal Procedure (CrPC) (that gives a magistrate the power to order an investigation into a cognisable offense.) and file the investigation report by December 24.

The HC had also vacated its Au-



gust 19 interim order directing the Special Court to defer the decision on complaints against the Chief Minister, giving the green signal for ordering a probe.

It had dismissed Siddaramaiah's petition challenging the legality of the Governor's August 16 order granting approval for investigation under Section 17A of the Prevention of Corruption (PC) Act, 1988.

Reacting to the Special Court order, Siddaramaiah reiterated that he was ready to face an investigation. "Already I have said that I am ready to face an investigation. I am not afraid of a probe," Siddaramaiah told reporters here. "I am ready for a legal fight. I had

said this yesterday and I am reiterating it today as well."

Home Minister G Parameshwara said Lokayukta police is an independent body. "It is not under anyone's mercy, they will investigate independently."

"...will react once the order copy comes. Chief Minister Siddaramaiah has said that he is ready for any probe....what investigation and other things let the order come, and let's see what (the court) has defined in the order," he said.

Parameshwara chose not to directly respond to a question regarding a statement made by Siddaramaiah seeking BJP leader and former CM B S Yediyurappa's

resignation during a "similar situation" in the past, and said "let's see what's in the order copy."

Meanwhile, the BJP once again demanded Siddaramaiah's resignation and asked him to cooperate with the probe.

State BJP President B Y Vijayendra said: "the CM has said that he is ready for any probe, but has questioned why he should resign. Siddaramaiah seems to have forgotten what he preached as Leader of Opposition to the then Chief Minister Yediyurappa. He had asked Yediyurappa to resign for fair and impartial probe when the accused person is at the helm of affairs." "The Court might have asked Lokayukta police to probe, but we urge the CM -- before he resigns -- that he should order the investigation to be handed over to independent agency CBI, for free and impartial probe," he said.

The opposition BJP and JD(S) in Karnataka on Wednesday also sought to step up its demand for Chief Minister's resignation as they tried to lay siege to his residence. Holding posters, placards and raising slogans, members of BJP Yuva Morcha marched towards "Cauvery" but the police thwarted their attempt, took them into preventive custody and

whisked them away in a bus.

Leaders and workers of the JD(S), an NDA partner, headed by former Prime Minister H D Deve Gowda, staged a demonstration at the Freedom Park here before proceeding to "Cauvery" but were stopped by police.

Complainant Snehamayi Krishna hailed the Special Court's order and said, after filing of the FIR, he would appeal to the High Court to hand over the case to CBI. In the MUDA site allotment case, it is alleged that compensatory sites were allotted to Siddaramaiah's wife in an upmarket area in Mysuru, which had higher property value as compared to the location of her land which had been "acquired" by the MUDA.

The MUDA had allotted plots to Parvathi under a 50:50 ratio scheme in lieu of 3.16 acres of her land, where it developed a residential layout.

Under the controversial scheme, MUDA allotted 50 per cent of developed land to the land losers in lieu of undeveloped land acquired from them for forming residential layouts. It is alleged that Parvathi had no legal title over this 3.16 acres of land at survey number 464 of Kasare village, Kasaba hobli of Mysuru taluk. (PTI)

Glitzy ads on Make in India cannot sugarcoat its colossal failures: Congress

NEW DELHI, Sept 25: Congress president Mallikarjun Kharge on Wednesday alleged that 10 years of the Narendra Modi government's Make in India "stunt" has put a break on India's manufacturing and said that glitzy ads cannot sugarcoat its "colossal failures."

Kharge said that contrary to the BJP's high decibel propaganda, India's manufacturing sector has become de-industrialised.

"10 years of Modi Govt's Make in India Stunt has put Break in India's Manufacturing! 10 years ago, PM Narendra Modi crafted the slogan of 'Make in India' and claimed to build Aatm Nirbhar Bharat. Contrary to BJP's high decibel propaganda, India's manufacturing sector has got de-industrialised due to Modi government's FLOP policy initiatives," he said in a post on X. Kharge listed five "stark facts" which he claimed made India miss the bus on manufacturing.

"The average growth rate of the manufacturing sector between 2014-15 and 2023-24 is just 3.1% (BJP-NDA) whereas between 2004-05 and 2013-14, the average growth rate was 7.85% (Congress-UPA). The number of employees in factories grew at 6.2% annually during the Congress-UPA regime. This growth fell spectacularly to just 2.8% under the Modi government," the Congress chief said.

Between 2011-12 and 2022,

India's manufacturing sector saw minimal growth in employment, increasing from 6 crore to merely 6.3 crore workers, he said.

"This modest addition of 3 lakh jobs annually is insufficient, considering 1.5 crore youth enter the workforce every year," he said.

Kharge said that according to NSO, the share of employment in manufacturing accounted for 12.6 per cent of all workers in 2011-12.

This declined to 10.9 per cent in 2020-21, before recovering 11.6 per cent in 2021-22, he said.

Kharge said that the share of manufacturing in India's GDP has hit "an all time low" of 12.83 per cent in 2023, which under the UPA in 2013 was 15.25 per cent.

"PLI schemes have miserably failed in several sectors. Sectors such as high-efficiency solar PV modules, advance chemistry cell (ACC) batteries, textile products, speciality steel, white goods and medical devices have failed to yield the claimed results," Kharge said. He claimed that most Production-Linked Incentive, or PLI, schemes have garnered "lukewarm and tepid" response from the industry and experts have criticised the schemes for their poor design, lack of clarity and no real value addition. "Year after year, the Modi government has sold stakes of even profit making PSUs to Modi ji's cronies, thereby breaking the backbone of our Public sector. (PTI)

PM Modi to launch projects worth ₹ 22,600 crore from Maharashtra

NEW DELHI, Sept 25: Prime Minister Narendra Modi will flag off a Metro train in Pune on Thursday and also launch various development projects worth over ₹ 22,600 crore. An official statement said the inauguration of Pune Metro section of District Court to Swargate will mark the completion of Pune Metro Rail Project (Phase-1). The cost of the underground section between District Court to Swargate is around ₹ 1,810 crore.

He will also lay the foundation stone for Swargate-Katraj extension of Pune Metro Phase-1 to be developed at the cost of around ₹ 2,950 crore. This southern extension of around 5.46 km is completely underground with three stations namely Market Yard, Padmavati and Katraj, it said.

Among other projects, he will lay the foundation stone for the memorial for Krantijyoti Savitribai Phule's first girl school at Bhidewada in commemoration of the noted social reformer.

In line with his commitment to make India self-reliant in the field of supercomputing technology, the statement said, Modi will dedicate to the nation three PARAM Rudra Supercomputers worth around Rs 130 crore, developed indigenously under the National Supercomputing Mission (NSM).

These supercomputers have been deployed in Pune, Delhi and Kolkata to facilitate pioneering scientific research. Giant Metre



Radio Telescope (GMRT) in Pune will leverage the supercomputer to explore Fast Radio Bursts (FRBs) and other astronomical phenomena. Inter University Accelerator Centre (IUAC) in Delhi will enhance research in fields like material science and atomic physics.

The S N Bose Centre in Kolkata will drive advanced research in areas such as physics, cosmology and earth sciences, it added.

During his visit to the poll-bound state, the prime minister will inaugurate a high-performance computing (HPC) system tailored for weather and climate research. This project represents an investment of ₹ 850 crore, mark-

ing a significant leap in India's computational capabilities for meteorological applications.

Located at two key sites, the Indian Institute of Tropical Meteorology (IITM) in Pune and the National Center for Medium Range Weather Forecast (NCM-RWF) in Noida, this HPC system has extraordinary computing power. The new HPC systems are named 'Arka' and 'Arunika', reflecting their connection to the Sun, it said. Modi will launch various initiatives of petroleum and natural gas sector worth Rs 10,400 crore. These initiatives will focus on energy, infrastructure, safety and convenience of truck and cab

drivers, cleaner mobility and a sustainable future. To enable ease of driving, he will launch way side amenities for truck drivers at Chhatrapati Sambhaji Nagar in Maharashtra, Fatehgarh Sahib in Punjab, Songadh in Gujarat, and Belagavi and Bangalore Rural in Karnataka.

With the objective of developing modern facilities for the comfortable journey break at one place designed to cater to the needs of truckers and cab drivers during their long journeys, way side amenities such as affordable boarding and lodging facilities, clean toilets, safe parking space, cooking area, WiFi and Gym are being developed at a cost of around ₹ 2,170 crore at 1,000 retail outlets.

Among numerous other projects, Modi will inaugurate Bidkin Industrial Area, a transformative project covering an expansive 7,855 acres under the National Industrial Corridor Development Program of the government of India, situated 20 kms south of Chhatrapati Sambhaji Nagar in Maharashtra. The project developed under Delhi-Mumbai Industrial Corridor holds immense potential as a vibrant economic hub in the Marathwada region. The Central government has approved this project with an overall project cost of over ₹ 6,400 crore for development in three phases, it said. (PTI)

Probe into death of Badlapur sexual assault case accused should be fair, impartial: HC

MUMBAI, Sept 25: The Bombay High Court on Wednesday said the shoot-out of Badlapur sexual assault case accused Akshay Shinde could have been avoided and urged for the probe into his death to be carried out in a fair and impartial manner.

A division bench of Justices Ravati Mohite Dere and Prithviraj Chavan said if it would be constrained to pass appropriate orders if the probe is not done properly.

"We are not suspecting the police on their activities, but come clean on all aspects," the court said. It said this shoot-out cannot be termed as an 'encounter' as its definition is different.

The bench raised questions on the shoot-out, which took place on Mumbra bypass in Maharashtra's Thane district on Monday evening, and said it could have been avoided if police had tried to overpower Shinde first.

Why the accused was shot in the head instead of opening fire on his hand or legs first? it asked.

The bench said while it was not raising any suspicion at this stage, it was very hard to believe Shinde managed to seize a pistol from a police officer and open fire.

It is not very easy to unlock and open fire from a pistol, the HC said. "The investigation has to be done fairly and impartially. If we find this is not done, then we would be constrained to pass appropriate orders," the court said.

It posted the matter for further hearing on October 3, by when police would have to take a decision on the complaint submitted by Shinde's father, seeking an FIR against the cops concerned.

Shinde, a 24-year-old contractual sweeper, was accused of sexually assaulting two minor girls at a school in Thane's Badlapur town. He was arrested on August 17.

The court also directed for all case papers to be immediately handed over to the Maharashtra Crime Investigation Department (CID), which would be probing the case.

"Why are files not handed over to the CID yet? Preservation of evidence is vital. Any delay on your part would raise doubts and spec-



ulations," it said.

The court was hearing a petition filed by Akshay's father Anna Shinde, who alleged his son was killed in a "fake encounter" and sought a probe into it by a special investigation team (SIT).

The petition, filed through advocate Amit Katarnaware, also demanded the HC monitor the investigation. The HC asked how the police officers escorting the accused could be so negligent and careless that he managed to seize a cop's pistol and open fire.

"What is the SOP or guidelines when an accused, especially in such a serious crime, is taken in custody. Why should they (police) be so negligent and careless?" the HC said. The officer who shot at the accused is an inspector who has experience on how to react in such a situation, it noted.

"Ordinarily, the retaliation would be on the leg or arm. Why directly on the head? Does he (police) not know where the shot has to be fired? It may have been spontaneous. The first reaction should have been to disarm him," the court said.

It also questioned police's case that Akshay managed to seize the pistol and opened fire.

Justice Chavan said, "This is very hard to believe. I have fired pistol hundred times. It is hard to unlock and fire. We are not suspecting at this stage but just looking at the possibilities. Revolver is easier. Any Tom, Dick or Harry can do it. But a pistol is very hard to fire."

The HC said the incident could

have been avoided as the escorting team comprised officers from the Thane crime branch.

"Four officers were there in the vehicle. One of the officers was involved in encounters in the past. Four officers couldn't overpower the accused? How can we believe they couldn't overpower the accused. The accused was not hefty or strong. You all could have overpowered him," the court said.

The bench asked if the shot fired at Shinde was from a distance or point-blank range, if it was a ricochet or direct shot, and if it was a brush of the bullet of through-and-through shot.

"We want to know whether it was point-blank range...distance from where shot was fired. Ballistic experts would know. Was it an entry and exit wound? If yes, where was the exit," the HC said.

All these details would have to be submitted on the next date, it said.

The bench directed police to preserve all CCTV footages and call data records of all the four cops and the police vehicle driver.

It directed the police to forthwith collect forensic samples of hands of the deceased and the four police officers to verify if there was any residue from the use of pistols.

Katarnaware told the court that Akshay's parents met him the day he was killed, and he had asked when he would get bail and also asked for money.

"This shows he (Akshay) was not in a mental state to take any such drastic step," he said. (PTI)

Delhi govt mandates one-year service bond for medical graduates

NEW DELHI, Sept 25: Delhi government has introduced a one-year mandatory service bond for medical students passing out from All India Quota and State Quota in both undergraduate (UG) and postgraduate (PG) programs from medical institutions in Delhi.

Under this new regulation, students graduating from undergraduate and postgraduate courses, including super-speciality programs, will be required to serve for one year in medical institutions under the Government of the National Capital Territory (GNCT) of Delhi, according to the order issued by the Health and Family Welfare Department of the Delhi Government (GNCTD).

At the time of admission, UG students will have to furnish a bond of Rs 15 lakh, while PG and super-speciality students will submit a bond of Rs 20 lakh. These bonds will be forfeited if a student opts out of the mandatory service period, as stated in the GNCTD order.

The scheme will ensure that UG pass-outs are placed in Junior Resident (JR) positions, while PG pass-outs will be assigned Senior Resident (SR) roles. They will be compensated at the same level as the stipends paid to JRs and SRs, with super-speciality graduates receiving appropriate increments. Medical graduates will be deployed across various hospitals under the GNCT of Delhi, including society hospitals.

They may also be posted in other hospitals as needed by the Health and Family Welfare (H&FW) Department, according to the order.

A committee chaired by the Dean of Maulana Azad Medical College (MAMC) has been tasked with assessing the need for additional JR and SR posts. If necessary, new positions will be created, and the services of these graduates will be deployed accordingly. The mandatory one-year service bond will come into effect from the next academic session. Until then, current medical graduates will have the option to voluntarily take up available JR or SR positions in GNCT hospitals, with remuneration as prescribed by the government, it added. (PTI)

Odisha CM announces assistance for flood-affected people in Balasore

BHUBANESWAR, Sept 25: Odisha Chief Minister Mohan Charan Majhi has announced financial assistance for the people affected by recent floods in Balasore district, according to an official statement. Majhi visited the flood-hit areas in Balasore on September 18 and held a meeting with the district administration.

After returning from the areas, he directed officers concerned to provide relief to the affected people, the statement from the chief minister's office (CMO) said late on Tuesday.

According to the announcement, assistance of ₹ 1.20 lakh will be provided for each household whose residence was completely damaged in the flood, while ₹ 6,500 has been earmarked for each partially damaged 'pucca' house, ₹ 4,000 for partially damaged 'Kucha' house, ₹ 8,000 for hut and ₹ 3,000 for damage of cowshed.

Small and marginal farmers, who have suffered crop loss of 33 per cent and above will get an input subsidy, an assistance to compensate for the investment made in agriculture, of ₹ 8,500 per hectare of land in non-irrigated areas. Those having land in areas

under assured irrigation facilities will get assistance of ₹ 17,000 per hectare. The aid for crop loss can be provided for a maximum of two hectares of land.

Financial assistance of ₹ 6,000 will be given to fishermen for the repair of partially damaged boats and ₹ 3,000 for fishnets.

They will also get ₹ 15,000 for the replacement of completely damaged boats and ₹ 4,000 for fishnets, the CMO said.

Those associated with fish farming will get assistance of ₹ 10,000 per hectare for de-silting and repair of damaged fish seed farms.

For loss of livestock, farmers will be provided ₹ 37,500 per milch cow or buffalo, ₹ 32,000 per draught animal, ₹ 20,000 per calf and ₹ 4,000 per goat.

Under the handicrafts/handloom sector, assistance of ₹ 5,000 per artisan for the replacement of tools/equipment and ₹ 5,000 for loss of raw material/goods will be provided. After getting reports on damage to public properties like schools, hospitals, electricity lines, water supply connections, irrigation projects, etc, the government will provide financial assistance to the department concerned, the statement added. (PTI)

Maharani Lakshmi Bai 'national hero', don't divide history on 'communal politics': HC

NEW DELHI, Sept 25: Maharani Lakshmi Bai of Jhansi is a "national hero" and history should not be divided on "communal politics", the Delhi High Court said on Wednesday while pulling up the Shahi Idgah Managing Committee for making "scandalous pleadings" in its plea against installation of her statue inside the Shahi Idgah Park at Sadar Bazar here.

The high court said the committee's intent was to do communal politics through court and a religious colour was being given to the matter. "A religious colour is being given to this. It is a matter of pride that you are having this statue there. On one hand we are talking about women empowerment... She is a national hero, cutting across all religious lines and you are doing this on religious lines. Let's not divide history on communal politics," a bench of Chief Justice Designate Manmohan and Justice Tushar Rao Gedela said.

The division bench, which was hearing an appeal by the committee challenging a single-judge's order, dismissed its petition seeking to restrain the installation of the statue of 'Maharani of Jhansi'

inside the Shahi Idgah Park at Sadar Bazar here on the ground that the plea appeared to be without any cause of action. The court took exception to certain paragraphs against the single judge in the appeal which it said was "divisive". "Someone has clearly lost it. The person who is doing it has got totally swayed. Just because someone has got emotionally swayed... The petitioner is indulging in communal politics and also dragging the court into it. Courts don't get involved in communal politics. Give a written apology. What you are doing is not done," the bench said.

The bench further said, "Look at the wordings which have been used for the single judge. Withdraw these pleadings please and give us an apology letter. This is scandalous. Absolutely scandalous. Communal politics being played through court. Do communal politics outside the court. Don't use us in the process. She is a national hero. This is not fair what you people are doing."

"The intent, it seems, is to do communal politics through court. Rani Lakshmi Bai has nothing to do with religion. In case the land

belonged to you, you should have volunteered yourself," it said.

The counsel for the petitioner committee apologised and said this was not the intent and added that the plea was not politically motivated. He said that the land here does not belong to the managing committee and that it was only concerned with the Shahi Idgah.

Delhi government standing counsel Santosh Kumar Tripathi said it has become a fashion to make harsh statements, including against judges, in pleadings and that "people don't know how to address the single judge or the tribunal".

To this, the bench remarked that the court was not being addressed in the pleadings but "someone behind was being addressed" and that everyone was going through some political pressure.

The court asked the petitioner's counsel to delete the objectionable paragraphs in which scandalous pleadings were made and file an application to that effect by Thursday. "The senior counsel for the appellant (managing committee) admits that the aforesaid paragraphs are scandalous and shall be deleted forthwith. (PTI)

Allahabad HC to hear Krishna Janmabhumi-Shahi Idgah dispute on September 30

PRAAYAGRAJ, Sept 25: The Allahabad High Court on Wednesday fixed September 30 as the next date for hearing in the Krishna Janmabhoomi-Shahi Idgah dispute at Mathura.

The Hindu side had moved an application for amendment in its petition, following which the next hearing was fixed.

Justice Mayank Kumar Jain is hearing 18 suits which are consolidated.

On August 1, the high court rejected the plea challenging the maintainability of 18 cases related to the temple-mosque dispute in Mathura, and ruled that the "religious character" of Shahi Idgah needs to be determined.

The high court had dismissed the Muslim side's contention that the suits filed by Hindu litigants relating to the dispute over the Shahi Idgah mosque complex adjoining the Krishna Janmabhoomi temple violated the Places of Worship (Special Provisions) Act, and were thus not maintainable.

The 1991 Act prohibits changing the religious character of any shrine from what existed on the day of the country's Independence. It exempted only the Ram Janmab-

hoomi-Babri Masjid dispute from its purview.

The cases filed by the Hindu side seek the "removal" of the Aurangzeb-era mosque they claim was built after demolishing a temple that once stood there.

In its ruling, the high court had said the 1991 Act did not define the term "religious character" and the "disputed" place cannot have a dual religious character -- of a temple and a mosque, which are "adverse to each other" -- at the same time.

"Either the place is a temple or a mosque. Thus, I find that the religious character of the disputed place as it existed on August 15, 1947 is to be determined by documentary as well as oral evidence led by both the parties," the high court judge had said.

The controversy is related to Mughal emperor Aurangzeb-era Shahi Idgah mosque at Mathura, which is alleged to have been built after demolishing a temple at the birthplace of Lord Krishna.

However, the Muslim side (management committee of the Shahi Idgah and the UP Sunni Central Waqf Board) has opposed it on several grounds. (PTI)

Three IIMs, ISB Hyderabad among world's top 100 for MBA courses, Stanford at top spot: QS rankings

NEW DELHI, Sept 25: Three Indian Institutes of Management (IIMs) and Indian School of Business, Hyderabad have figured in world's top 100 for their MBA courses, according to QS rankings announced on Wednesday.

The three IIMs are IIM Bangalore, IIM Ahmedabad and IIM Calcutta. Also, the three B-schools have been ranked among top 50 for employability. Fourteen Indian full-time MBA programmes have secured a spot in QS' global list for 2025, including three new entries.

Stanford School of Business in the US continues to be at the top spot among B-schools for the fifth consecutive year.

The QS Global MBA and Business Master's Rankings 2025 spans 58 countries and territories, analysing the world's 340 best global MBAs and a series of specialised high-demand Business Master's Rankings, including Mas-



ter's in Management, Finance, Marketing, Business Analytics, and Supply Chain Management.

"These rankings offer independent insights for career-driven students navigating the global business education landscape. By providing a detailed comparative analysis, these rankings help prospective stu-

dents make informed decisions about programs that align with their career goals. "Whether aiming to lead in corporations, innovate in start-ups, or impact the public sector, students can use these insights as they shape their professional paths," said QS CEO Jessica Turner. "Indian institutions are increasingly nurturing leaders prepared to navigate today's complex and dynamic business environments. The strong showing of IIM Bangalore, IIM Ahmedabad, and IIM Calcutta particularly in employability and alumni impact demonstrates India's ability to shape top-tier global talent."

"However, ongoing challenges related to internationalisation and gender diversity remain critical areas for improvement. Bridging these gaps is not only key to enhancing the global competitiveness of India's leading business schools, but also vital for fostering more inclusive environments that align with the future of business leadership," added Turner.

IIM Kozhikode has made its debut in the 151-200 band, while the Institute of Management Technology, Ghaziabad, and Somaiya Vidyavihar University featured in the 251+ band. (PTI)

2 IITs develop eco-friendly geogrids inspired by Taj Mahal architecture

INDORE, Sept 25: The IITs in Indore and Hyderabad have jointly developed two special geogrids, inspired by the Taj Mahal's architecture and the Indian star tortoise's shell pattern, to strengthen eco-friendly construction work and address climate change issues, officials said.

These two geogrids are expected to have various civil engineering applications, including the construction of flexible pavements, especially highways, they said.

A geogrid is a geosynthetic material used to reinforce soil and other materials.

The geogrids developed by the Indian Institutes of Technology (IITs) at Indore and Hyderabad have been named Multiaxial Diamond Anchored Octagonal Geogrid (MDAOG) and Multiaxial Concentric Octagonal Geogrid (MCOG), an official said on Tuesday. These two innovations drew inspiration from nature, particularly from the Indian star tortoise and the architecture of the Taj Mahal, the official said.

India, with its extensive road net-



work, faces significant challenges in managing massive volumes of crushed stone aggregates required for such infrastructure, IIT Indore's director Prof Suhas Joshi said. "This technological development is in alignment with the nation's commitment to the UN Sustainable Development Goals, particularly those focused on innovative, resilient, and sustainable infrastructure. This new technology addresses climate change, resource scarcity, and waste management issues," he said.

Another official from IIT Indore said the MDAOG and MCOG geogrids are expected to have diverse

civil engineering applications, including the construction of flexible pavements, especially highways.

They also enhance airport runways and railway track beds, provide support in tunnel construction and underground mining, and reinforce foundations, embankments, and slopes. Additionally, they are vital in retaining walls, bridge abutments, riverbank protection, and soil erosion control, making them crucial for sustainable civil engineering projects, the official said. The geogrids can be produced from recycled or waste materials, such as post-consumer plastics, addressing solid waste management challenges while supporting a circular economy.

"This reduces the need for virgin materials and cuts down greenhouse gas emissions during production. By stabilising soils, preventing erosion, and enhancing infrastructure resilience, geogrids help mitigate climate impacts like flooding and rising sea levels, making them essential in building climate-resilient infrastructure, the official said. (PTI)

'DEADPOOL' STAR KARAN SONI TO HEADLINE THRILLER MOVIE 'FADE TO BLACK'



LOS ANGELES, Sept 25: Indian American actor Karan Soni will play the lead role in the upcoming thriller film "Fade to Black". Soni is best known for playing Dopinder in the Ryan Reynolds-led "Deadpool" film series as well as movies such as "A Nice Indian Boy", "Safety Not Guaranteed", "Paper Flowers" and "Strange World". In "Fade to Black", the actor will feature alongside Katerina Tannenbaum, Max Carver, Rafael Casal, Gavin Leatherwood, Joseph Lee, John Carroll Lynch and Zosia Mamet, reported entertainment news outlet 'Variety'. The movie will mark the directorial debut of Andrew Sandler, who earlier directed music videos for artists including Blink-182, Justin Bieber, Machine Gun Kelly and Ariana Grande. The story follows Amit (Soni) as he navigates the horrors of trying to break into the twisted business of Hollywood. "After an accidental death spurs a sinister epiphany, the screenwriter starts committing the murders of his script's fictional serial killer in a desperate attempt to generate the IP necessary to get his movie made. The film promises a darkly comedic exploration of ambition, madness and the brutal reality of the entertainment industry," according to the official logline. The screenplay, written by Brandon Cohen, was discovered on 'The Black List' site by Danny Hamouie and Brent Craft. Paul Scanlan and David Baxter will produce through the 'Legion M' banner alongside Craft, under 'Craftsmen Media Co' and Andrew Carlberg. Randall Einhorn, Danny Hamouie and Jeff Annison will serve as executive producers. (PTI)

I love India, Indian fans: Chris Hemsworth on Thor and moments to remember

NEW DELHI, Sept 25: Five years ago, fans in a theatre in India celebrated the entry of Thor in "Avenger: Infinity War" by throwing popcorn in the air. It is an enduring image and nothing like he had seen before, says actor Chris Hemsworth whose role as the superhero propelled him to the dizzying heights of stardom.

"I love India. I love Indian fans," the Hollywood star told PTI, adding that footage from that screening comes to his mind every time he visits India.

India is also where he shot a significant portion of his 2020 movie "Extraction".

"I remember the 'Bring Me Thanos' moment during 'Infinity War'. There was footage of a cinema hall in India where that happened and people (were) throwing popcorn on the chair, I'd never seen anything like it.

"Every time I go to India, I think of that moment," the Australian actor added in the virtual interview. The scene features the actor as Thor, making a spectacular entry during a battle sequence in the 2018 movie and thundering "Bring Me Thanos", a dare to the enemy forces and the film's main villain Thanos.

It is considered one of the most remembered moments in Hemsworth's portrayal of the iconic superhero, which he essayed in four stand alone films and four "Avengers" movies. The Hollywood superstar is now associated with another fan-favourite franchise, "Transformers". He appears as a voice actor in "Transformer One" and is hoping the film resonates with audiences in India in a similar way.

"Transformers One", an animated film which released in Indian theatres last week, serves as the prequel to the franchise's earlier live-action movies, which revolved around two factions of alien robots, the Autobots and the Decepticons, who have the ability to transform into vehicles and machines, and are engaged in an eternal war.

The animated movie has a "similar energy" to the MCU, said the actor, who has voiced the character of Optimus Prime, the leader of the Autobots. "The themes in there are relatable to

audiences across the globe. And it has a great sense of humour and a huge amount of heart, visually stunning.

This film really is epic and we're all incredibly proud of it," Hemsworth added. Touted as the "first-ever fully CG-animated 'Transformers' movie", the movie explores the untold story of Optimus Prime and Megatron's friendship before they became sworn enemies and leaders of their re-

spec-
tive

other universe and to be swept up with larger than life characters, but have them also be relatable. I think people in India are going to love it," the actor said.

"Transformers One" also features the voices of actors Brian Tyree Henry, Scarlett Johansson, Keegan-Michael Key, Steve Buscemi, Laurence Fishburne and Jon Hamm. The Paramount Pictures India film is currently playing in theatres in English and Hindi, in 2D, 3D, 4DX and IMAX formats. (PTI)



Our god, star and our friend: Telugu directors on Chiranjeevi



HYDERABAD, Sept 25: Recently, when superstar Aamir Khan went on record that he is a "huge fan" of Telugu star Chiranjeevi, he was not alone. For most in the Telugu film industry, Chiranjeevi is a beacon that not only led the way, but also put a shine on their dreams and ambitions.

Khan was sharing the stage with the megastar when he was handed over the Guinness World Certificate for being the most prolific film star in the Indian film industry on September 22.

Interestingly, the debut film of Chiranjeevi, who has done 156 films in his career spanning 45 years, was released also on September 22 in 1978.

Initially, the megastar played antagonist characters and within a span of a year he had eight major film releases. It wasn't until 1982, that he got to play the leading character. The rest, as they say, is history. "You can say, he is a god for me," said Venu Yeldandi, a comedian turned director who won the 68th Filmfare Award for Best Director (Telugu) for his debut film 'Balagam'. Yeldandi said he had to wait for nearly a decade before he could act with Chiranjeevi.

"My film with him, 'Bhola Shankar' (2023 action drama) is a dream come true for me. I play his friend. I had heard so much about how Chiranjeevi garu makes sure everyone acting with him is on the same page and that the energy compliments each other. I witnessed this firsthand in the sets of our movie. He is a thorough professional," said Yeldandi. 'Bhola Shankar', incidentally, is the 156th film for megastar.

The director of his 155th film, 'Waltair Veeraya', K S Ravindra, popularly known as Bobby Kolli, recalled how way back in 2003, before he entered the film industry, he chanced upon Chiranjeevi in Hyderabad. (PTI)

I WAS CRAVING FOR LIGHT-HEARTED SHOWS: BARUN SOBTI ON 'RAAT JAWAAN HAI'

MUMBAI, Sept 25: Actor Barun Sobti says he was eager to work on a light-hearted series like "Raat Jawaan Hai" that would give audiences a break from the abundance of intense dramas currently dominating the streaming landscape.

The comedy-drama follows three friends, Avinash (Sobti), Radhika (Anjali Anand), and Suman (Priya Bapat), as they navigate the often hilarious and chaotic world of parenting while juggling their individuality and relationships.

The actor, who received universal praise for his performances in crime thriller shows "Asur" and "Kohrra", said he was instantly drawn to the story about new parents and felt it was written "delicately".

"It was a novel idea. My wife and I watch content at night when the kids are sleeping. Everything looked the

same, everyone was trying to sound very intelligent... It feels like we've seen a lot of this and there's no light-hearted stuff.

"People were making shows with their brains and not hearts. When this show came, I was like, 'It is all heart, let's do this'. If I'm craving for such shows, the audience will lap it up on this," Sobti told PTI in an interview here.

According to Sobti, "Raat Jawaan Hai" is one show of his that even his children can watch. He shares two kids with wife Pashmeen Manchanda.

"Things like 'Asur' and 'Kohrra' are much colder to handle. Compared to the larger milieu, 'Raat Jawaan Hai' is a much lighter show right now. My idea will be to show them a funny series that they can laugh at," he added.

In the new series, Sobti plays

Avinash, who leaves his corporate job to be a stay-at-home dad.

The show comes from writer-creator Khyati Anand-Puthran and director Sumet Vyas, best known for his starring roles in "Permanent Roommates" and "Veere Di Wedding".

As a parent, the actor said there are differing degrees of guilt experienced by mothers and fathers.

"I feel that all the time that I'm not making myself a great human being. Even when I'm at home, I play with the kids. My wife takes care of everything. Fathers feel guilty depending on what kind of relationship they have with their kids. (Likewise) mothers feel extremely guilty.

"I don't know why, maybe it's because they are missing their child. I don't feel guilty

(in that sense). I think, 'I'm doing this for my family'. But mothers are not made to feel like that by society. They should not be made to feel guilty that they are not around them when they are shaping their future," he added.

Sobti said he was initially worried whether people would connect with "Raat Jawaan Hai". However, when the team did a trial screening of the series, they received a positive response. "While shooting we were like 'How many people will watch it?' We showed it to many young people who are not parents and are far away from marriage and they loved it because of the structure of the writing, and the content," he said. "Raat Jawaan Hai", produced by Yamini Pictures Private Limited, will premiere on Sony LIV on October 11. (PTI)



Mbappé extends scoring streak as Real Madrid beat Alaves 3-2 in Spanish league

MADRID, Sept 25: Kylian Mbappé extended his scoring streak with his sixth goal in five matches as Real Madrid defeated Alaves 3-2 to move closer to leader Barcelona in the Spanish league on Tuesday.

Mbappé's seventh goal since joining Madrid was a beauty, with the France forward starting a give-and-go with Jude Bellingham with a heel flick and then picking up the pass inside the area and using a nifty move to clear a defender before finding the net in the 40th minute at the Santiago Bernabeu Stadium.

Mbappé asked to be substituted in the 80th because of a muscle ailment, according to Madrid coach Carlo Ancelotti, who said it was not serious.

Lucas Vázquez and Rodrygo also scored for Madrid, which extended its unbeaten run in the league to 39 matches — with 29 wins and 10 draws going back to last season. Alaves made a late charge by scoring with Carlos Benavidez in the 85th and Kike García in the 86th but couldn't find the equalizer despite chances in the final minutes.

"We played a great match for 80 minutes, but we suffered more than we should have in the end," Vázquez said. The victory moved Madrid within one point of league leader Barcelona, which will go for its seventh victory in a row to start the season when it hosts winless Getafe on Wednesday. Mbappé now has seven goals in nine matches with

Madrid in all competitions. He has five goals in the Spanish league, one behind leading scorer Robert Lewandowski of Barcelona. The France star who signed as a free agent after leaving Paris Saint-Germain, also had a goal disallowed for offside in the 22nd. Arda Güler came in for Mbappé in the 80th. Vázquez had put Madrid ahead one minute into the match with a shot from inside the area after a nice run by Vinícius Júnior through the left side of the area. Rodrygo added to the lead after a long run in the 48th. Ancelotti, in his 300th match with the club, used most of his regular starters and did not immediately rotate his squad despite a congested schedule. Vázquez started as a right



back in place of regular starter Dani Carvajal, who was rested with fitness issues. Teenage Brazil forward Endrick replaced Rodrygo in the 69th, his earliest appearance off the bench, and a couple of minutes later struck the post from inside the area.

Madrid complained about yellow cards to Vinícius, Federico Valverde and substitute Luka Modric for protesting in a match in which Madrid felt its players were often subjected to tough tackles. "There is a different standard now and we have to adapt," Ancelotti said. "We have to stop protesting."

Alaves, whose players were not shown any cards, complained that a red card should have been given to Endrick after

the Brazilian appeared to kick an opponent away from the play.

Madrid's next match is the city derby against Atletico Madrid at Atletico's Metropolitan stadium. Sevilla midfielder Saúl Ñíguez was carried off the field on a stretcher with an apparent leg injury early in the second half of Sevilla's 2-1 home win over Valladolid. Chidera Ejuke scored the winner in the 85th minute for Sevilla's second victory in its past three league matches.

Valladolid's only win this season came in its league opener against Espanyol. Valencia followed up its first win of the season — 2-0 at Girona — with a 0-0 draw against Osasuna.

Osasuna had won two of its last three matches. (AP)

Macau Open: Srikanth leads Indian charge into second round



MACAU, Sept 25: Star shuttler Kidambi Srikanth, along with compatriots Ayush Shetty and Tasnim Mir, advanced to the second round of the singles event at the Macau Open Super 300 badminton tournament on Wednesday.

In his first competition since recovering from an injury sustained in May, sixth seed Srikanth, a silver medalist at

the 2021 World Championships, outclassed Israel's Daniil Dubovenko 21-14, 21-15, while Ayush, the 2023 World Junior Championships bronze medalist, also had a strong start, defeating fellow Indian Alap Mishra 21-13, 21-5 in another men's singles opening-round match.

Former world junior number one Tasnim Mir triumphed

over Devika Sihag, winning 15-21, 21-18, 22-20 to also secure her spot in the next round of women's singles.

The second round will feature an all-Indian matchup, with Srikanth set to face Ayush, who was a runner-up at the 2023 Odisha Masters. Tasnim will take on fourth seed Tomoka Miyazaki of Japan, the 2022 World junior cham-

pion.

In mixed doubles, the pair of B Sumeeth Reddy and N Sikki Reddy also progressed after a hard-fought victory against Malaysian qualifiers Loo Bing Kun and Ho Lo Ee, winning 24-22, 10-21, 21-13. They will next face the Malaysian duo of Wong Tien Ci and Lim Chiew Sien.

However, the tournament

was challenging for other Indian participants, with Tanya Hemanth, Anupama Upadhyaya, Isharani Baruah, Chirag Sen, S Sankar Muthusamy Subramaniam, Sameer Verma, and Mithun Manjunath all exiting in the opening round.

Tanya lost a close match to Taiwan's Liang Ting Yu, falling 18-21, 19-21, while Anupama put up a fight but lost 12-21, 22-20, 7-21 to Japan's Riko Gunji. Isharani struggled against Chinese qualifier Wu Luo Yu, losing 7-21, 15-21.

In men's singles, Chirag Sen was defeated by second seed Ng Ka Long Angus of Hong Kong, losing 12-21, 17-21, while Sameer Verma fell to Wang Zheng Xing of China in three games, 21-18, 11-21, 13-21. Mithun was ousted by Huang Yu Kai of Chinese Taipei with a score of 12-21, 15-21.

Sankar, who won silver at the 2023 World Junior Championships, also faced disappointment, losing 14-21, 21-10, 12-21 to Thai player Panitchaphon Teeraratkul.

In mixed doubles, the pairing of Rohan Kapoor and Ruthvika Shivani Gadde fought hard but were eliminated by the eighth-seeded Thai duo of Rittanapak Oupthong and Jhenicha Sudjaipraparat, falling 21-23, 22-24. (PTI)

Osaka cruises through opening round at China Open



BEIJING, Sept 25: Former top-ranked Naomi Osaka started the China Open with a routine 6-3, 6-2 victory over Lucia Bronzetti of Italy on Wednesday. The four-time Grand Slam champion was the headline act on the opening day and showed her class in closing out the first-round match against the No. 77-ranked Italian player in 83 minutes.

Osaka, who claimed the 2019 China Open before COVID-19 and a WTA boycott of China over the wellbeing of Peng Shuai forced the cancellation of tournaments in China for four years, next plays Yulia Putintseva, a 21st-seeded player from Kazakhstan, in the second round. "I'm glad that I'm able to be able to play on this court again," Osaka said on court. "And I hope to be able to lift a trophy again sometime soon."

After trading breaks in the first set, Osaka made the decisive break in the seventh game of the first set.

On the back of some big serving she increased the pressure in the second set, breaking Bronzetti twice more to seal victory. Former Australian Open winner Sofia Kenin progressed with a 7-5, 6-2 win over Ana Bogdan of Romania.

The 25-year-old Kenin, one of a record 15 American women in

the draw in Beijing, next plays 12th-seeded Diana Shnaider in the second round.

American Taylor Townsend will join Kenin in the second round after beating Martina Trevisan 6-2, 4-6, 6-3.

Also, China's Wang Xinyu beat Mai Hontama of Japan 6-1, 6-3 and Yulia Starodubtseva defeated Laura Siegemund 6-4, 7-6 (3). U.S. Open champion and top-seeded Aryna Sabalenka begins her tournament in the second round on Friday against the winner of the match between Zarina Diyas and Mananchaya Sawangkaew.

Top-ranked Iga Swiatek, a winner of four WTA 1000 events this season, is not playing this week citing personal reasons. The men's tournament begins Thursday and is headlined by top-ranked Jannik Sinner and No. 3 Carlos Alcaraz, who accounted for all four Grand Slam titles this season.

Second-ranked Alexander Zverev said earlier in the week he would not be playing in Beijing as he recovers from an illness. Matteo Berrettini started his Japan Open campaign with a straightforward 6-3, 6-4 win over Botic van de Zandschulp of the Netherlands.

The big-serving Italian fired seven aces and broke van de Zandschulp four times. (AP)

Former France and Real Madrid defender Raphael Varane announces his retirement

COMO (ITALY), Sept 25: Former France and Real Madrid center back Raphael Varane announced his retirement on Wednesday, ending a career that included a World Cup title and a big haul of club trophies.

The 31-year-old Varane signed with promoted Serie A club Como in July but injured his knee during his only appearance with the club — an Italian Cup match against Sampdoria last month.

"In my career I have taken on many challenges, rose to occasion after occasion, almost all of it was supposed to be impossible," Varane wrote on Instagram. "Reflecting on these moments, it is with immense pride and a feeling of fulfillment that I am announcing my retirement from the game that we all love."

Varane was arguably the tournament's standout defender when France won the 2018 World Cup in Russia, where he scored the most important of his five international goals with a header against Uruguay in the quarterfinals.

An elegant, ball-playing defender with excellent positional sense thanks to his quick reading of the game, Varane formed a solid center back pairing with

Samuel Umtiti in that tournament. He also helped Madrid to four Champions League titles and three Spanish league trophies.

He moved to Manchester United in 2021 but was restricted to 95 appearances in his three seasons in England — mainly because of injuries.

Varane began his career at Lens. "From Lens to Madrid to Manchester, and playing for our national team. I have defended every badge with everything I have, and loved every minute of the journey," Varane said. "I have no regrets, I wouldn't change a thing. I have won more than I could have even dreamed of."

Varane had already retired from France's national team, a few months after the World Cup final defeat to Argentina in 2022. During that match, his 93rd for Les Bleus after making his debut in 2013, he fell to the ground exhausted deep into extra time. Varane said he would remain at Como: "Just without using my boots and shin pads. Something I am looking forward to sharing more about soon."

Como got its first Serie A victory in more than 21 years when coach Cesc Fabregas' team won 3-2 at Atalanta on Tuesday. (AP)

If McCullum calls, it's a 'yes': Stokes on white-ball return

CHESTER-LE-STREET (ENGLAND), Sept 25: England Test skipper Ben Stokes is open to rejoin the white-ball set up, especially following the appointment of Brendon McCullum as the head coach for both limited-overs and Test cricket.

McCullum, who has already transformed England's Test team, is set to take over the reins of the limited-overs squads when England tour India next January.

"If I get the call and (Baz) says, 'Do you want to come and play?' Then obviously, it's definitely going to be a yes," Stokes told Sky Sports on the sidelines of the third ODI against Australia here, which the hosts won by 46 runs.

"But, I'm not going to be too disappointed if I don't, because I can just sit back and watch everyone else go out and smack it."

The 33-year-old last played for England in the limited overs format during their unsuccessful ODI World Cup defence in India last year.

While he has not featured in a T20 International since 2022, England's selector Luke Wright has hinted that both Stokes and Joe Root remain in contention for future white-ball squads, particularly with the upcoming Champions Trophy in Pakistan.

Stokes however said there has been no formal discussion on this. For now, his focus remains firmly on England's Test team, with a three-match series against Pakistan scheduled to start next



month. "I've played a lot of white-ball cricket for England, and I'm very happy with what I've achieved in that form of the game. But to be honest, we've not even spoken about anything like that whatsoever," he said.

"I think he's just letting me concentrate on what I need to concentrate on, especially around the Test team."

Stokes further heaped praise on McCullum's influence since taking charge of the Test team,

expressing excitement over the prospect of the same approach being applied to white-ball cricket.

"It's an amazing opportunity for the white-ball team to experience what Baz has brought to the Test team. He's an incredible coach who speaks with utter commitment, and it's nice to have all three teams now with the same messaging and the same philosophies towards playing cricket," he added. (PTI)

Jasmine takes 3-shot lead in Leg 13 of Hero WPGT

GURUGRAM, Sept 25: Jasmine Shekar tamed the Golden Greens Golf Club course with one of her best rounds in her short pro career as she took a three-shot lead after the first round of Leg 13 of the Hero Women's Pro Golf Tour here. The 19-year-old Jasmine, who turned pro last year, fired seven birdies against one bogey for a round of 6-under 66 and was three shots clear of the experienced Ridhima Dilawari (69), a multiple winner on the Tour. Three established players -- Hitaashee Bakshi, the current Hero Order of Merit leader, Vidhatri Urs, winner of three of the last four events, and Gaurika Bishnoi, already a winner this year -- shot 1-under 71 each and were tied third.

Jasmine, whose best has been a runner-up finish in Kolkata in the third leg of the Tour last year at the Royal Calcutta Golf Club and again at Tollygunge this year, was playing alongside Astha Madan and amateur Nandita Kumar in the third group from the first tee.

Jasmine birdied three in a row from third to the fifth and added a fourth birdie on the ninth to turn in 4-under. On the back nine she birdied the 12th, 14th and the 16th

and dropped one shot on the Par-4 15th. Ridhima had four birdies against one bogey. Her birdies came on the first, fifth, 11th and the 12th and the dropped shot was on the par-4 10th.

Gaurika had four birdies against three bogeys while Hitaashee, who has been in good form this season, also had four birdies against three bogeys. Vidhatri, whose seven starts as a pro on the Hero WPGT Tour includes three wins and four third-place finishes, had three birdies and two bogeys. Five players held the tied-sixth place on a tight leaderboard.

The five included experienced Amandeep Drall, the 2022 runner-up at the Hero Women's Indian Open, Sneha Singh, winner of Order of Merit in 2023, Gauri Karhade, amateur Anvvi Dahhiya and Khushi Khanijui. They all carded 1-over 73 each.

Among other well-known names, Seher Atwal shot 75 and was T-13, Shweta Mansingh (77) was T-20 and Neha Tripathi (78) was T-28. A total of 41 players are playing in the Rs 14-lakh event, which is the last one before the flagship Hero Women's Indian Open next month. (PTI)



অলভাৰ চৰকাৰ
my GOV
মই সৰকাৰ



The Assam Public Examination (Measures for Prevention of Unfair Means in Recruitment) Act, 2024



Exams with
Integrity,
Recruits with
Excellence



"Today, Assam stands out as a state where every government employee can proudly declare that he is a product of meritocracy. He/she did not receive any undue favours or assistance to get government job. His/her education, knowledge and talent alone made him capable to secure his position"

Dr Himanta Biswa Sarma
Chief Minister, Assam

Malpractice in Public Examinations can now lead to Severe Penalties

Government of Assam's comprehensive law to prevent malpractices
and ensure clean and fair recruitment in public examinations

The Act aims to



Ensure transparency in public examinations for recruitment under the State Government, autonomous bodies, or authorities, boards, or corporations



Prohibit the use of unfair means, such as leaking, possessing, selling, solving or opening question papers before and assisting during public examinations



Promise fairness in conducting public examination systems



Prevent the spread of confidential information related to question papers

Violations

- ▶ Unauthorized access to question papers/OMR sheets
- ▶ Giving confidential information related to question papers
- ▶ Divulging or causing to be divulged any information pertaining to the public examinations except where permitted by duty
- ▶ Access to examination premises by unauthorized person
- ▶ Use of any place other than the examination center for holding public examinations
- ▶ Indulging in unfair means/organised crime in conspiracy with the public examinations

Penalties: Cognizable, Non-bailable and Non-compoundable



Examinee

Examinees found indulging in unfair means: imprisonment up to **3 years** and a fine of at least **₹1 lakh** (defaulting on payment may lead to 9 months imprisonment)- Section 10(1)

Conspiracy and unfair means: imprisonment up to **10 years** and a **fine up to ₹10 crore**- Section 10(2)

Examinees found engaging in unfair means will be **debarred from appearing future public examinations for a period of 2 years** - Section 11



Person Entitled to Conduct Exams

Conspiracy and unfair means: imprisonment up to **10 years** and a **fine up to ₹10 crore** - Section 10(2)

Those connected to organized crime in conspiracy with examination authorities will face **recovery of wrongful gains through attachment and sale of assets/property**- Section 12



Management

Management found guilty will be liable for all **examination-related costs and expenditures**, determined by a special court, and will be **banned forever**- Section 13



It is for information of all concerned including all candidates appearing in the Assam Direct Recruitment Examination 2024

Using unfair means or violating exam rules can lead to imprisonment (up to 10 years) and hefty fines (up to ₹10 crore) under the Assam Public Examination (Measures for Prevention of Unfair Means in Recruitment) Act, 2024

Be cautious and avoid any violation to prevent severe penalties