

WORLD
NATION

- Polio vaccine campaign begins in Gaza a day before fighting
- 'Country needs more than USD 100 billion in foreign investment'
- Former JJP leaders Anoop Dhanak, Ram Kumar Gautam join BJP
- Sonam Wangchuk led 'Delhi Chalo Padyatra' starts from Leh

25TH YEARS OF DEDICATED JOURNALISM

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HT BRIEFS

Sexual Harrasment

JORHAT: A 50-year-old man was apprehended by police in Assam's Jorhat district for allegedly sexually abusing two minor girls. The accused, identified as Ashok Valmiki, who is sweeper by profession. As per sources, Valmiki was booked under relevant sections of the POCSO Act, after he was handed over to the police by the people of the locality when caught in the crime and fled from his house. The victims were said to be neighbors in the residing rented house where the act took place.

Road closed

DIPHU: Due to continuous heavy rainfall in West Karbi Anglong, the Asom Mala Road (A21), from Hamren to Tumprang, has been closed due to a landslide and rain cut at Ch.11+000. The closure is necessary to ensure public safety as the road conditions have become hazardous. Maintenance work is currently in progress, and the authorities are working diligently to restore access as soon as possible. Residents and travelers are advised to avoid the area and follow updates from local authorities for further information. Safety remains the top priority during this period of adverse weather conditions.

Assam TMC suffers Ripun Bora jolt

Elder Sushmita Dev to meet office bearers of Mamata's party in Guwahati shortly

HT Bureau

GUWAHATI, Sept 1: The Trinamool Congress suffered a major jolt on Sunday as its Assam unit chief Ripun Bora resigned from the primary membership of the party.

Bora joined Mamata Banerjee's party two and half years ago and he led TMC in this year's Lok Sabha polls in the state.

However, for the last few days, it was speculated that Bora might return to the Congress party which he had left after losing Rajya Sabha polls.

Bora wrote a two-page resignation letter to Lok Sabha MP and Trinamool Congress general secretary Abhishek Banerjee where he has outlined the reason behind his abrupt departure from the party.

"Assam TMC has great potential, but several recurring issues have hindered our progress, including the perception of TMC as a regional party of West Bengal. To counter this perception, we made several suggestions, such as the



need for an Assamese leader at the national level, declaring the residence of Bharat Ratna Dr Bhupen Hazarika at Tollygunge as a heritage site, and converting the Madhurpur Satra at Cooch Behar (the place from where Assam's greatest social reformer Mahapurush Sankar Dev started the Vaishnavite movement) into a cultural hub," he wrote.

The former Rajya Sabha MP also alleged that he has failed to se-

cure an appointment with Abhishek Banerjee and West Bengal chief minister in the last one and half year to discuss TMC's prospects in Assam.

"Despite my repeated attempts over the past year and a half to secure an appointment with you and our chief Mamata Didi to address these concerns, I have been unsuccessful," he mentioned. In Assam, the voters see Trinamool Congress as a (CONTD. ON PAGE-2)

Heavy rain inundates Guwahati, normal life affected

GUWAHATI, Sept 1: A spell of heavy rain early on Sunday inundated several arterial roads and residential areas in Assam's Guwahati, disrupting vehicular movement and causing inconvenience to residents of the capital city of the northeastern state.

People were seen wading through knee-deep waters in some areas of the city while the water level reached up to the chest in several localities.

Inundation was reported from Zoo Road, Nabin Nagar, Ganeshguri, Hedayetpur, Guwahati Club, Ulubari, Hatigaon, Gita Nagar, Maligaon, Lachit Nagar, Chandmari, Panjabari, Jorabat, Jatia, Jyotikuchi and Ghoramara and RG Baruah Road areas.

The three-hour downpour also led to waterlogging in GS Road, Anil Nagar, VIP Road, Tarun Nagar, Rajgarh Road, Jorabat, Rukmini Gaon, Survey and Chatriari areas in the city.

Vehicles on GS Road were stopped at Dispur from moving further towards Choy Mile due to flooding in Rukmini Gaon area. They were also diverted through the Last Gate point along Survey-Beltola Road, which was also sub-

merged. Rainwater accumulated in hundreds of houses in the 'smart' city. Traffic jams were reported from almost all localities in the city with vehicles stranded due to inundated roads. Ambulances were stuck for hours with patients facing severe hardship.

There were reports of power cuts in many areas, causing inconvenience to city residents.

The Regional Meteorological Centre (RMC) in Guwahati has issued a 'yellow alert' in and around the city with the prediction of heavy rainfall at isolated places. A 'yellow alert' stands for watch and be updated.

The regional centre of the Indian Meteorological Department said that waterlogging in some areas of Dispur and the Sonapur circle would occur.

There is a possibility of a reduction in visibility and damage to vulnerable structures due to heavy rainfall during the day, it said.

People were advised to avoid visiting landslide-prone localities and areas of waterlogging and refrain from working in the fields during thunderstorms/lightning. Residents (CONTD. ON PAGE-2)



Assam tea workers' wages low, welfare scheme lacks implementation: CAG report

GUWAHATI, Sept 1: Wages of tea garden workers in Assam are "meagre", with "several shortcomings and areas of concern" in implementation of labour laws and worker welfare provisions, a recent Comptroller and Auditor General (CAG) report has said.

It also found the state government's intervention in fixing wages as per the Minimum Wage Act (MW Act) "insufficient", noting that efforts to improve the lives of the workers have "fallen short" of making any substantial change.

The performance audit on 'Implementation of Schemes for Welfare of Tea Tribes' for the period 2015-16 to 2020-21 maintained that low income and lack of education have been major barriers to the overall development of the workers in the state.

The audit was performed in four

zones - Cachar, Dibrugarh, Nagaon and Sonitpur. There are 390 tea estates in the four sampled zones, of which 40 estates (10 per cent) were selected based on the size of the plantations and number of workers employed.

Apart from scrutiny of records, the exercise included interviews of 590 workers in the selected estates.

The report said the Tea Tribes Welfare Department (TTWD) tried to address the issues of the workers, but without basic socio-economic data, and their initiatives were implemented "haphazardly".

"The wages the workers received in the tea estates were meagre," the report said, pointing out that the Assam government did not fix the minimum pay as per the MW Act, 1948.

It also said that workers were not a part of scheduled employments

notified by the state government, as a result of which they do not get benefits of minimum wage standard and variable dearness allowance.

The secretary, Labour and Welfare Department, informed the CAG that when the state government came out with initiatives to increase pay as per the MW Act, it got challenged in the court and hence, the wages could not be increased as desired.

The report also underlined the disparity of wages among workers of Barak and Brahmaputra Valley, and said the Labour Department "could not provide any justification" for it.

It said workers in the Barak Valley have been receiving "at least 10 per cent lower" wage rates than the Brahmaputra Valley workers, with the (CONTD. ON PAGE-2)

NDA against caste census, reservation, alleges Tejashwi

PATNA, Sept 1: Alleging that the NDA governments at the Centre and in Bihar were against caste census and reservation, RJD leader Tejashwi Yadav on Sunday asserted that such an enumeration was "like an X-ray", ascertaining population of various caste groups and their socio-economic conditions.

Addressing party workers while leading a dharna at the RJD office in Patna, Yadav sought to know from the JD(U) its stand on the demand for inclusion of the hiked quota for deprived castes in Bihar in the Ninth Schedule of the Constitution.

"The Mahagathbandhan administration in Bihar last year urged the Centre to incorporate the hike in reservation from 50 to 65 per cent in state government jobs and educational institutions in the Ninth Schedule. But they did not do it. The NDA governments at the Centre as well as in the state are against reservation for the deprived section of the society and also against caste census," he said.

"I must say that caste census is like an X-ray that will ascertain the population of various caste groups and socio-economic conditions of the impoverished sections of the country," he added.



Yadav's RJD organised dharnas across the state, demanding the inclusion of the hiked quota in the Ninth Schedule and the implementation of a nationwide caste census.

The Ninth Schedule of the Constitution is a list of central and state laws that cannot be challenged in courts.

"I simply ask one question to the JD (U) leaders, they must tell people whether they are in favour of putting it in the Ninth (CONTD. ON PAGE-2)

BJP 'Minority Morcha' to seek Muslims' suggestions on Waqf bill

NEW DELHI, Sept 1: Amid strident criticism of the Waqf (Amendment) Bill by some major Muslim bodies, the BJP's 'Minority Morcha' will rally counterinterviews in support of reforms in Waqf boards and seek suggestions on the law to present it to the parliamentary committee examining the Bill.

Sources said a team of seven BJP members, including state Waqf Board chairpersons, will

elicit views of the minority community across the country and assuage their concerns on a host of issues.

"We will convey to the committee every point of view. If there is any concern on any aspect of the Bill, we will express it as well. But the need for reforms in Waqf boards is felt by the community everywhere," a BJP leader claimed.

They Minority Morcha will share the report with the BJP leadership and the parliamentary panel headed by veteran party MP Jagdambika Pal.

The committee members include Shadab Shams, Sanwar Patel and Mohsin Lokhandwala, who head the boards in Uttarakhnad, Madhya Pradesh and Gujarat, and Haryana Waqf Board administrator Zakir Hussain among others.

The issue was also flagged in a last week meeting of the Minority Morcha at the BJP headquarters here.

The party leadership, sources said, told the Morcha head Jamal Siddiqui to reach out to Muslims across the country to make a case for reforms in the Waqf Act so that Waqf boards functioning could be made more accountable and transparent. (CONTD. ON PAGE-2)

GST collections rise 10 pc to ₹ 1.75 lakh crore in August



NEW DELHI, Sept 1: Gross GST collections in August grew 10 per cent to about ₹ 1.75 lakh crore, reflecting higher domestic consumption.

As per the government data released on Sunday, gross GST revenues from domestic transactions grew 9.2 per cent to about ₹ 1.25 lakh crore.

Revenues from import of goods were up 12.1 per cent to ₹ 49,976 crore.

In July, gross Goods and Services Tax (GST) mop-up was ₹ 1.82 lakh crore, while in August last year it was ₹ 1.59 lakh crore.

M S Mani, Partner, Deloitte India, said a 10 per cent increase in collections on a year-to-month basis at the start of the festive season for the year indicates that consumption is robust and will only improve further in the coming festive months.

"This would give renewed confidence that the collection targets for the year would be achieved. There are some differences in the GST collection increases across major states which may need a deep dive," Mani said.

Refunds worth ₹ 24,460 crore

were issued during August, 2024, which is 38 per cent more than the refunds issued in the year-ago period.

After adjusting refunds, net GST revenue increase was 6.5 per cent at ₹ 1.5 lakh crore during the month under review.

EY Tax Partner Saurabh Agarwal said the continued growth in gross GST collections indicate a robust economy.

"The government's commitment to reduce working capital costs for businesses facing inverted duty structure is demonstrated by the higher domestic GST refunds. By rationalising rates, the government aims to address this issue over time," Agarwal said.

Mani further said the ability of large states like Maharashtra, Karnataka, UP, MP and Haryana to record double digit increases in collections once again indicates the robust consumption in these states accompanied by the tax authorities measures to improve compliance and crack down on evasion.

However, the single digit increase in large states like Gujarat, Andhra Pradesh and Tamil Nadu would (CONTD. ON PAGE-2)

The climate-resilient project has boosted farmers' incomes Norwegian delegation reviews climate-resilient agriculture project in three districts

HT Correspondent

JORHAT, Sept 1: A special delegation from the Norwegian government visited Assam's Golaghat, Sivasagar, and Jorhat districts on August 30 and 31 to observe a special project aimed at protecting agriculture and farmers in the context of climate change.

The Norwegian Institute of Bioeconomy Research (NIBIO) is funding the project, which is being implemented by Assam Agricultural University.

The delegation, led by Andreas Benjamin Schei, Counsellor at the Norwegian Embassy, and Dr Udaya Sekhar Nagothu, senior research scientist and centre director at NIBIO, visited agricultural areas in Merapani (Golaghat district) and Dikhowmukh (Sivasagar district) and held discussions with local farmers.

The climate-resilient agriculture project, along with value-added inputs from the marketing team, has significantly increased farmers' incomes. The team reviewed the



fields with Dr Sanjay Kumar Chetia, chief supervisor of the project and current director of Agricultural Research at Assam Agricultural University, and former chief scientist at Assam Rice Research Institute, Titabar.

Speaking on the occasion, the Norwegian team praised the project for transforming Assam's agricultural economy by developing and popularizing paddy varieties like Ranjit Sub 1 and Bahadur Sub

1. They also expressed satisfaction with the development of the Labanya purple rice variety, which has been exported.

The climate-resilient paddy varieties were developed under the NIBIO project.

The delegation observed various innovations related to climate-resilient technologies, including integrated disease management, integrated farming practices, field-based (CONTD. ON PAGE-2)

Govt seeks public input on LGBTQI+ policies as new measures are implemented

NEW DELHI, Sept 1: The Ministry of Social Justice and Empowerment has sought inputs from stakeholders and the general public to ensure the inclusivity and effectiveness of policies related to the LGBTQI+ community.

The government has initiated several measures aimed at safeguarding the rights and interests of the lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer and intersex (LGBTQI) community, following the Supreme Court's directive in October 2023 in the Supriya vs Union of India case.

In compliance with the SC judgment, the government established a high-level committee chaired by the cabinet secretary to define and elucidate the scope of entitlements for the queer community, the ministry said in a statement.

The L'lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and queer.

This committee, constituted in April 2024, includes key officials from the Ministries of Home Affairs, Women and Child Development and Health and Family Welfare, with the DoSJE secretary serving as the Member Convenor. The committee convened a

J-K youth will show exit door to 'Modi & Company' on Oct 1: Kharge

NEW DELHI, Sept 1: Congress president Mallikarjun Kharge on Sunday claimed "deception" is the only policy of the BJP for the youth of Jammu and Kashmir and that they will show the door to "Prime Minister Narendra Modi and company" in the upcoming polls.

In his post on X, Kharge said the youth unemployment rate in Jammu and Kashmir was a staggering 28.2 per cent (PLFS) in March.

"Deception is the only policy of the BJP for the youth of Jammu and Kashmir!" he said.

"Many exam paper leaks, bribes and rampant corruption have delayed hiring across departments for four years now. An astounding 65% of government department posts in Jammu & Kashmir remain vacant since 2019," Kharge claimed.

In Jammu and Kashmir, over 60,000 government daily wagers have been toiling for more than 15 years, earning a meagre ₹ 300 per day, he said.

"Despite their long-standing service, they remain on contract basis, even in essential departments such as Power, Public Health, and Engineering, highlighting the precarious nature of the job crisis," the Congress leader said. (CONTD. ON PAGE-2)

KOLKATA PROTESTS

SC to hear plea against Chhatra Samaj leader's bail today

NEW DELHI, Sept 1: The Supreme Court will hear on Monday the West Bengal government's plea challenging the Calcutta High Court's order granting bail to one of the organisers of the August 27 march to the state secretariat to protest against a trainee woman doctor's rape and murder.

According to the cause list, a bench of Chief Justice D Y Chandrachud, Justice J B Pardiwala and Justice Manoj Misra is likely to hear the matter.

The Calcutta High Court on Friday granted bail to Paschim Banga Chhatra Samaj leader Sayan Lahiri. Paschim Banga Chhatra Samaj, an unregistered student group, was one of the two organisations that gave the call for the August 27 'Nabanna Abhijan'.

Lahiri was arrested on August 27 evening for playing an active role in leading the rally which, the police said, turned violent, causing destruction of public and private property and attacks on police officers.

Acting on a plea by Lahiri's mother Anjali seeking quashing of proceedings against him and grant of bail, the Calcutta High Court had on Friday ordered his release from police custody by 2 pm on Saturday. The Kolkata Police released (CONTD. ON PAGE-2)

meeting in May 2024 to address issues such as the issuance of ration cards, the ability of queer individuals to open joint bank accounts with their partners, and the prevention of harassment based on gender identity and sexual orientation.

A sub-committee, chaired by the home secretary, was subsequently formed to delve deeper into these issues, particularly focusing on prison visitation rights, law-enforcement practices, and ensuring the community does not face violence or coercion.

As a result of these discussions, several ministries have already issued advisories to ensure the inclusion and protection of the LGBTQI+ community.

The Department of Food and Public Distribution has advised states and Union Territories to treat partners in queer relationships as members of the same household for ration card purposes, thereby preventing discrimination.

Similarly, the Department of Financial Services (DFS) has clarified that queer individuals face no restrictions in opening joint bank accounts or nominating their partners as (CONTD. ON PAGE-2)

'It is a fact that loose tea consumption has been giving way to packet tea'

Sluggish consumption growth, high food inflation areas of concern for tea industry: FAITTA chief

GUWAHATI, Sept 1: Sluggish growth in domestic consumption, rising food inflation and slow recovery of exports post the Covid pandemic are some of the challenges faced by the tea industry, a senior official said.

Tea producer associations and the Tea Board India have been concerned over the muted demand growth in the country, he said. The remarks came from Sanjay Shah, chairman of the Federation of All India Tea Traders Association (FAITTA), during its 10th annual general meeting here on Saturday evening.

"As retailers within the FAITTA fold, we are witnessing the market movements from close quarters. It is a fact that loose tea consumption has been giving way to packet tea," Shah said. Rising levels of food inflation also remain a concern area, as it adversely impacts consumption, he said.

"Given that incomes do not ad-



just as fast as prices, high inflation in essentials tend to adversely impact demand for non-essentials. Even within essentials, consumers may shift to lower priced non-premium products," he said.

The FAITTA chairman also maintained that there are underlying concerns over the ability of the market to absorb the "several

rounds of price increases (of tea), which have been inevitable given the sharp rise in main raw material prices last year."

With some recovery in demand from the pandemic period, average prices in 2022-23 were at ₹ 180 per kg, he said.

In 2022, the orthodox tea market was buoyant as the Sri Lanka situ-

ation had turned in India's favour. However, with exports under pressure in 2023, tea prices softened, said Shah.

"The situation in 2024 has significantly altered. Looking at north Indian combined leaf and dust tea rates, prices are almost 46 per cent higher than the corresponding levels last year," the FAITTA official said.

Shah said tea production in the calendar year 2023 closed at 1,393 million kg as against 1,366 million kg in 2022.

On exports, he said after successive years of clocking over 250-million kg levels, shipments sharply declined in 2020 and 2021. Exports registered some recovery in 2022, touching 231 million kg. In 2023, exports closed at 228 million kg.

After many years of relative stagnation, Indian tea exports appear to be on a higher growth trajectory, Shah added. (PTI)

India's power consumption declines 4.7 pc to 144.2 billion units in Aug



NEW DELHI, Sept 1: India's power consumption declined 4.7 to 144.21 billion units (BU) in August compared to the year-ago period, mainly due to the above normal rainfall across the country which reduced the use of cooling appliances like air conditioners and desert coolers.

According to the Indian Meteorological Department, the country recorded 287.1 mm of rainfall in August, which is about 16 per cent higher than the normal 248.1 mm. In August 2023, the power consumption stood at 151.32 BU, according to official data.

The highest supply in a day (peak power demand met) also contracted to 216.68 GW in August 2024 against 236.29 GW in the year-ago month.

The peak power demand touched an all-time high of about 250GW in May this

year. The previous all-time high peak power demand of 243.27 GW was recorded in September 2023.

Earlier this year, the power ministry projected a peak power demand of 235 GW during the day and 225 GW during evening hours for May and 240 GW during daytime and 235 GW in the evening hours for June.

The ministry also estimated that peak power demand may hit 260 GW this summer. Experts said the widespread above normal rainfall in the country reduced the use of cooling appliances like air conditioners and desert coolers.

Experts said the widespread above normal rainfall in the country reduced the use of cooling appliances like air conditioners and desert coolers.

This led to decline in power consumption as well as growth in power demand in the country in August, they said.

The demand for power as well as consumption will continue to be steady in the coming days due to improvement in commercial and industrial consumption in the country with the onset of festival season from Ganesh Chaturthi this month, they added. (PTI)

Royal Enfield launches 2024 classic 350 with new features

HT Bureau

GUWAHATI, Sept 1: Royal Enfield, the iconic motorcycle manufacturer, has unveiled the 2024 Classic 350, continuing its legacy of timeless elegance and accessible style.

Priced from ₹ 1,99,500, the new model comes with updated features, gleaming new colorways, and an exclusive customization offer for early customers. Bookings and test rides will begin nationwide on September 1, 2024.

Staying true to Royal Enfield's DNA, the 2024 Classic 350 blends old-world charm with modern enhancements. The bike is available in seven color options across five variants: Heritage (Madras Red and Jodhpur Blue), Heritage Premium (Medallion Bronze), Signals (Commando Sand), Dark (Gun Grey and Stealth Black), and Chrome (Emerald).

Key upgrades include LED headlamps, gear position indicators, and a Type C USB charging port, with top variants also featuring Tripper navigation and adjustable levers.

B Govindarajan, CEO of Royal Enfield, emphasized the Classic 350's significance, stating, "The Classic 350 embodies Royal Enfield's pure motorcycling DNA. It represents elegance, craftsmanship, and enduring style while remaining accessible and customizable."

The 2024 model continues this tradition, offering both new features and a platform for personal expression through our Factory Custom Programme."

The Royal Enfield Factory Custom Programme allows customers to personalize their Classic 350 through a bespoke design studio service, working directly with Royal Enfield's design team. Options include unique color schemes, trims, badges, and graphics, ensuring each motorcycle is as distinctive as its rider.

In a special promotion, the first 15 customers to book the new Classic 350 between September 1 and 4 will have the opportunity to win an exclusive, all-inclusive two-day trip to Chennai.

Winners will visit Royal Enfield's Thiruvottiyur facility to co-create their own Classic 350 and tour the company's manufacturing site.



Consumer protection watchdog slaps ₹ 5 lakh fine on Shankar IAS Academy for misleading ads

NEW DELHI, Sept 1: The Central Consumer Protection Authority (CCPA) has imposed a ₹ 5,00,000 fine on Shankar IAS Academy for misleading advertisements related to the 2022 civil service exam, the regulator said on Sunday.

The CCPA, led by chief commissioner Nidhi Khare, found that the coaching institute made false claims

about its success rate and the nature of courses taken by successful candidates.

In its advertisement for the 2022 UPSC Civil Service Examination, Shankar IAS Academy claimed "336 selections out of 933 at All India Level" and "40 candidates in Top 100". The institute also advertised itself as the "best IAS academy in India".

However, the CCPA discovered that Shankar IAS Academy "deliberately concealed" information about the specific courses taken by the candidates it advertised for.

"This practice consequently attracts consumers into buying paid courses advertised by the coaching institutes," the CCPA said in a statement. (PTI)

Godrej Properties tops list India's big realty firms sell properties worth ₹ 35k cr in June quarter

NEW DELHI, Sept 1: India's 21 major listed real estate developers have together sold properties worth nearly ₹ 35,000 crore during the latest June quarter with Godrej Properties reporting highest sale bookings.

Except few, all major listed real estate developers have shown annual growth in sale bookings in the April-June quarter driven by strong consumer demand for residential properties, especially of luxury homes.

According to the data compiled from regulatory filings, India's 21 major listed realty firms have reported combined sale bookings of ₹ 34,927.5 crore in the first quarter of 2024-25 fiscal.

Out of these combined sale bookings, bulk of pre-sales came from residential segment.

In terms of sale bookings, Godrej Properties emerged as the largest listed player in the June quarter with pre-sales of ₹ 8,637 crore.

DLF Ltd, the country's largest realty firm in terms of market capitalisation, reported more than three-fold jump in its sale bookings at ₹ 6,404 crore in the first quarter of this fiscal.

Mumbai-based Macrotech Developers, which sells properties under 'Lodha' brand, clocked pre-sales of ₹ 4,030 crore.

Gurgaon-based Signature Global, which recently got listed, achieved sale bookings of ₹ 3,120 crore in June quarter, more than three times from the year-ago period.

Bengaluru-based Prestige Estates Projects clocked sale bookings of



₹ 3,029.5 crore in June quarter, down from the corresponding period of the previous year.

Bengaluru-based firms Sobha Ltd and Brigade Enterprises sold properties worth ₹ 1,874 crore and ₹ 1,086 crore, respectively, during the April-June period of this fiscal.

Bengaluru-based Puravankara Ltd achieved sale bookings of Rs 1,128 crore, almost flat compared to the year-ago period.

Mumbai-based Oberoi Realty, which is into luxury housing segment, sold properties worth ₹ 1,067 crore last fiscal.

Mumbai-based builders Mahindra Lifespace Developers Ltd and Keystone Realtors (Rustomjee) clocked sale bookings of ₹ 1,019 crore and ₹ 611 crore, respectively.

Pune-based Kolte-Patil sold properties worth ₹ 711 crore while Mumbai-based Sunteck Realty sold properties worth ₹ 502 crore.

Bengaluru-based Shriram Properties achieved sale bookings of Rs

376 crore.

Delhi-based TARC Ltd and Ashiana Housing achieved sale bookings of ₹ 310 crore and ₹ 235 crore, respectively.

Ahmedabad-based Arvind Smartspaces Ltd sold properties worth ₹ 201 crore, while Mumbai-based Ajmera Realty & Infrastructure Ltd reported pre-sales of ₹ 306 crore.

Lucknow-based Eldecos Housing & Industries Ltd sold properties worth ₹ 59 crore while Mumbai-based Equinox India Developments Ltd (earlier Indiabulls Real Estate Ltd) achieved pre-sales of ₹ 82 crore.

Mumbai-based Suraj Estate Developers Ltd has reported a sale bookings of ₹ 140 crore in the first quarter of this fiscal year.

Sale bookings data of many listed players was not available.

Industry experts attribute this increase in sale bookings of major listed players to strong housing de-

mand after the COVID pandemic.

Housing market is also witnessing a shift in consumer demand towards those realty companies and brands which have better track record of executing real estate projects.

Real estate developers, which are not listed on stock exchanges, generally do not report their quarterly and annual sale bookings.

Tata Realty & Infrastructure Ltd, Adani Realty, Piramal Realty, Hirandani Group, Embassy Group and K Raheja Group are major players in unlisted space.

Post-COVID pandemic, Indian real estate market, especially housing segment, has bounced back sharply on pent up demand and growing desire to have home ownership.

Branded and reputed players, including listed and unlisted ones, have benefited most in this revival cycle as homebuyers do not want to take risk of getting stuck in real estate projects after making payments.

Thousands of buyers are still stuck in housing projects of builders like Unitech and Jaypee Infratech Ltd which defaulted in delivering projects.

Homebuyers of Amrapali Group are getting possession of their flats after intervention from the Supreme Court.

Suraksha Group has won a bid to acquire Jaypee Infratech Ltd (JIL) through insolvency process. The Group has infused capital and is awarding construction contracts to complete around 20,000 unfinished flats in Delhi-NCR. (PTI)

Contd. from Page 1...

Assam TMC suffers Ripun

regional party operating from another state. Bora has also accepted this fact in his letter stating that people of Assam are not ready to accept a regional party from another state unless it gives immense effort in gaining the confidence of voters.

Another source said the leadership was not happy with Bora, especially after the performance of TMC in Assam in the Lok Sabha polls. The TMC has contested from four Lok Sabha constituencies in Assam and secured only 0.37 per cent vote share.

It has been widely speculated that Bora will soon join the Congress party although he has not mentioned about his next move yet. But the former Rajya Sabha MP has already met with his supporters in his home constituency in Gohpur about possible shifting of political sides.

PTI adds from Delhi: Meanwhile, following Bora quitting the party on Sunday, party sources said its Rajya Sabha member Sushmita Dev will go to Guwahati soon to meet the state office bearers.

"MP Sushmita Dev will be going to Guwahati in the next few days to meet TMC office bearers," a party source said after Bora's resignation.

The TMC has been keen on expanding its presence in the northeastern states. It got a boost recently when Meghalaya TMC chief Mukul Sangma became the leader of opposition in the state assembly.

The TMC has five MLAs in Meghalaya including Sangma.

Heavy rain inundates Guwahati,

of Guwahati faced a horrendous situation on August 5 as a spell of heavy rain left people stranded for 7-8 hours on their vehicles till midnight. School children were in their buses till 11 pm.

The Gauhati High Court had on August 7 said the time has come to deal with the problem of flooding in the state capital and the government is required to take steps to resolve the issue permanently.

The court asked the administration to submit a plan to mitigate the crisis. The Housing and Urban Affairs Department, in its affidavit, told the high court that efforts were being initiated to tackle such situations in the city.

Stating that the Assam government was "not serious" in solving perennial waterlogging problems in the state capital, the Gauhati High Court had on June 26 come down heavily for not responding to its repeated notices and slapped a fine of ₹ 1,000 each to four departments concerned.

Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma had on August 9 accused a private university in neighbouring Meghalaya of engaging in a "flood jihad" by demolishing hills on its campus to build new structures, which he claimed had led to large-scale waterlogging in Guwahati. (PTI)

J-K youth will show exit door to

Even though the BJP promised industry in Jammu and Kashmir, the union territory has no major manufacturing units, he said.

The private sector is confined to providing services in farming, hospitality and health, he said. "Despite the introduction of the New Industrial Policy in 2021, a mere 3% of investments have materialised on the ground. 40% of projects under the PM's Development Package, 2015, remain pending," Kharge said.

"On October 1, Youth of J&K will show the Exit Door to Modi & Company!" he said. Elections to the 90-member Jammu and Kashmir Assembly will be held in three phases on September 18, September 25 and October 1 and the results declared on October 8. (PTI)

Assam tea workers' wages low,

government never intervening to address the issue. The report said that as per the 2019 wage rates, tea workers of Assam were being paid the least wages compared to other tea-producing states like Tamil Nadu, Kerala, Karnataka and West Bengal.

It noted that though wages to tea workers are paid partly in cash and partly in kind in Assam, the authorisation granted by the government for such an arrangement is not available on record.

"The Labour Department was also not aware about the year of commencement of payment of wages in kind and the purpose for the state," the report said.

The list of qualified items to be paid in kind was neither prescribed by the government nor was the system for calculating the cost of these items, it said, adding, the payment of wages in cash or in kind was "not in compliance with provisions" of the MW Act.

The CAG report also said the Assam Tea Employees Labour Welfare Board did not undertake any mandated welfare activities, and 85 per cent of the expenses borne for it during 2015-20 are related to administrative expenses.

During 2015-16 to 2020-21, the director, TTWD, had planned 187 welfare schemes with a budget of ₹ 600.19 crore, out of which actual implementation was carried out in only 82 schemes at a cost of ₹ 210.65 crore against the budget allotment of ₹ 365.60 crore, it said.

The budget speeches from 2015-16 to 2019-20 had mention of 25 schemes under the TTWD, out of which nine were not implemented due to non-receipt of funds.

The TTWD claimed that lack of adequate field staff was an issue resulting in shortcomings in the implementation of schemes, which was also observed by the auditors.

"However, such constraints were not new for the Department, rather these shortcomings persisted since the inception of the TTWD (1984) and should have been addressed long back," it said.

Shortcomings in facilities such as hospitals, schools, canteen, creche, recreation club and housing accommodation as compared to the specifications notified by the state government were also observed by the auditors. (PTI)

NDA against caste census,

Schedule or not. If yes, then why are they not doing it when they are part of the NDA? And if not, they must say it. Why is the CM maintaining a stoic silence over the issue? What happened to him?" asked Yadav.

"BJP wants the son of a garbage collector to clean drains. All the veteran socialist leaders, from time to time, talked about the caste census. Our great leaders always talked about the reservation and talked about those sections that are at the bottom of the society, whether Dalits, tribals or socially marginalised people," he added. Yadav also accused the BJP and its allies of celebrating when "Bihar was denied special category status".

"JD(U) leaders were happy when Bihar was not given the special category status. They are not interested in the overall development of Bihar at all," he alleged.

Reacting to Yadav's comments, JD(U) spokesperson Sanjay Kumar Jha said the chief minister ensured that a caste survey took place in the state.

"He took all affirmative actions regarding it. The opposition leaders in Bihar are people who did not even provide reservation in panchayats when they were in power," he said. (PTI)

BJP 'Minority Morcha' to seek

The Morcha was also asked to seek suggestions and assurance the community's concerns.

Major Muslim bodies like Jamiat Ulema-e-Hind and All India Muslim Personal Law Board have been galvanising opinion against the proposed bill, alleging that it is against their religious practices and violates the Constitution.

BJP leaders said the government had started working on the bill during its second term and has spoken to a number of stakeholders. (PTI)

SC to hear plea against Chhatra

Lahiri from its custody on Saturday. A woman post-graduate trainee doctor was raped and murdered at the West Bengal government-run R G Kar Medical College and Hospital earlier this month, triggering nationwide outrage. (PTI)

GST collections rise 10 pc to

engage the attention of the tax authorities in these states, Mani added.

KPMG Indirect Tax Head & Partner Abhishek Jain said the GST collections seem to have stabilised around ₹ 1.75 lakh crore now.

"With the kick-off to festivities, the next few months is expected to witness a further surge," Jain added. (PTI)

Govt seeks public input on LGBTQI+

beneficiaries. The Ministry of Health and Family Welfare has also issued guidelines to prevent discrimination in healthcare, prohibiting conversion therapy, and ensuring the availability of sex reassignment surgery.

The government is working on additional guidelines to address the mental health and well-being of the queer community, as well as medical interventions for intersex infants and children.

In July 2024, the Department of Social Justice and Empowerment held a consultation on LGBTQI+ matters, bringing together representatives from the community, central ministries, and state governments.

The suggestions from this consultation have been shared with relevant ministries for further action.

The government has now invited the public to share their suggestions and feedback on further measures that could be taken to support queer communities. (PTI)

Norwegian delegation reviews climate

nutrition management, village knowledge centers, and mechanical management centers. These initiatives have helped maintain gender equality in agriculture, with 40 per cent female participation.

Dr Phuleswar Nath, chief scientist at Assam Rice Research Institute, Titabar; Dr Milan Jyoti Konwar, scientist; Dr Parinda Barua, Project Associate; Madhurya Khanikar; and Prapti Bora, along with representatives from the Agricultural Science Centre, Agriculture Department, Seed Certification Agency, and Dikhowmukh College, participated in the project.

The delegates also held a review meeting chaired by AAU vice-chancellor Bidyut Chandan Deka at the vice-chancellor's Conference Hall of Assam Agricultural University.

The event was anchored by Assam Agricultural University registrar Tapan Kumar Gohain and director of Agricultural Research Dr Sanjay Kumar Chetia. Dean of the Faculty of Agriculture Dr Prasanna Kumar Pathak, director of Post Graduate Studies Dr Anup Kumar Das, dean of Community Science College Dr Mamoni Das, director of Extension Education Dr Monoranjan Neog, DBT director Dr Bidyut Kumar Sharma, heads of departments, and professors were also present.

The Norwegian Institute of Bioeconomy Research (NIBIO) contributes to food security and safety, sustainable resource management, innovation, and value creation through research and knowledge production in food, forestry, and other biobased industries.

AJYCP concludes three-day 'mid-term' session in Nagaon

HT Correspondent

NAGAON, Sept 1: The three-day 'mid-term' session of the central body of the Asom Jatiyatabadi Yuva Chatra Parishad (AJYCP) concluded on Sunday in Nagaon. The session, which began on August 30, was attended by over a thousand delegates from 30 districts across the state.

The final meeting of the 'mid-term' session was held on Sunday at the Nagaon District Library auditorium, followed by a 'delegates meet' at the same venue.

The meeting was presided over by Palash Changmai, the state president of the youth organisation. The general secretary of the organisation, Ratul Borgohain, outlined the objectives of the meeting.

During the meeting, the organisation's leaders extensively discussed various pressing issues in the state, including the current situation, and adopted several resolutions.

These included the demand for a new land law in Assam, the need for a separate state for the indigenous people of Assam, and the de-

mand for a minimum support price for tea leaves produced by small tea growers.

Additionally, the organisation urged the government to take immediate action to address the flood problem in Assam and provide relief to the affected people. They also appealed to the government to tackle the issue of illegal immigration in the state.

Other resolutions adopted during the meeting included demands for the government to repair major roads in Assam, establish an IIM in Nagaon, and take action to protect the language and culture of the indigenous people of Assam.

Earlier on Saturday morning, a cultural procession was held throughout the small town, featuring various ethnic indigenous cultural groups showcasing their respective cultural heritage and identities.

Noted Assamese singers Deepina Deka and Krishna Moni Nath also took part.

Swapanil Deka, superintendent of police, Nagaon, ceremonially flagged off the cultural procession at Nagaon Nehrubali field.

UPPL organises massive joining event in Srirampur

Over 6,000 people join the party as it launches pre-election campaign in BTR

HT Correspondent

GOSSAIGAON, Sept 1: The ruling United People's Party Liberal (UPPL) marked the start of their pre-election campaign to strengthen their base in the Bodoland Territorial Region (BTR) with a grand joining program held recently at Shymaguri playground in Srirampur, under Gossaigaon sub-division in Kokrajhar district.

The BTR government, led by CEM Pramod Boro, following the announcement by chief minister Himanta Biswa Sarma that the Saffron party will contest the BTR elections independently, organised this grand joining program in a BJP stronghold. This move by UPPL in BJP's territory saw about six thousand people from different communities joining the UPPL party.

Participating as the chief guest at the grand joining program held at Shymaguri playground in Srirampur under the 3 No Srirampur constituency, BTR chief Pramod Boro stated that after the BTR Accord, the establishment of peace in the region has brought smiles and joy to the people. He highlighted the constant efforts of the BTR government in building a prosperous BTR, ensuring the security of all communities, preserving language, literature, and culture, and working tirelessly to help every child grow into a valuable human resource.

Despite the scorching heat, thousands of people attended the rally, where Boro expressed the desire to forget the 40-year dark history—a time when people were afraid to leave their homes, students were scared to attend schools and colleges, constantly worrying about when and where a bomb might explode or a shootout might occur. However, with the efforts of various community organisations and the pub-



lic, peace was established following the 2020 Accord. Pramod Boro also warned that no one should attempt to create a bad atmosphere again as peace has been established, divisions among communities have reduced, and harmony has been fostered in the region.

In his speech, the BTR chief executive member also spoke about various ambitious projects undertaken by the BTR government, including the establishment of a model college in Srirampur, the construction of the Sujit Narzary Auditorium, and a multi-crore auditorium named after Marjit Basumatary.

He also mentioned that a Rs 30 crore tourist hub and a large market are being developed in the abandoned area near the inter-state check post in Srirampur. Once completed, thousands of people will be able to engage in trade

and business there. Additionally, the BTR government is giving significant importance to land rights. A statue and project in the name of Sidho-Kanu, costing Rs 1 crore, are also under construction. The government is focusing on the development of all classes of people, considering the 35-lakh people of the region as their own, and has made provisions for jobs without accepting any bribes.

Meanwhile, executive member Wilson Hasda stated that along with peace, the government is also working towards improving education and healthcare in Srirampur. He expressed confidence that the public will soon witness Srirampur as a developed region due to the government's efforts. He mentioned that this government is working for the poor, traders, employees, and labourers.

On the other hand, Rungwra Narzary said that UPPL has ensured the safety and security of the 35-lakh people in the region. He emphasised that the UPPL party, which has never faced defeat in any election, has won by-elections, Lok Sabha elections, etc., after taking over governance, and has always prioritised peace for the people without considering caste or creed while focusing on the development of their languages, religions, and economic progress.

The rally was attended by MLA Jiron Basumatary, MCLE and political secretary Madhav Chetry, general secretary Raju Narzary, vice president Afzal Haque Sarkar, former MLA Hemendra Nath Brahma, former executive members Christom Tudu, Chandi Basumatary, Laxiram Tudu, and many leaders from the central committee, district, block, and primary committees. The program was conducted by block president Nicholas Hasda. Over six thousand people joined the UPPL during the rally.

NHRCCB reviews Cardiology Unit's progress & issues at AMCH, Dibrugarh

HT Correspondent

BISWANATH CHARIALI, Sept 1: National Human Rights and Crime Control Bureau (NHRCCB) state president Nishant Thard analysed the Cardiology Unit of Assam Medical College & Hospital (AMCH), Dibrugarh, which has a rich history dating back to its establishment in April 1978. The unit began its journey with the appointment of Dr Bhadreswar Das as an assistant professor. Since then, it has grown and evolved significantly, contributing to the advancement of cardiac care in Assam. Dr Hem Chandra Kalita was the first faculty member in the Cardiology department with a DM degree, which he obtained from PGIMER, Chandigarh. He joined the department as an assistant professor in December 1990, marking a new chapter in the development of the unit.

In recent years, the department has seen further expansion in both personnel and facilities. Dr Darpan Gogoi joined as a general duty medical officer (GDMO) in 2013, followed by Dr Krishna Narayan Dutta Baruah in 2015. Both doctors have been pivotal in providing quality support and service, particularly given the department's struggle with minimal manpower.

A significant milestone for the Cardiology Unit was the commencement of the DM course on May 1, 2022. This was a historic achievement for AMCH, as the Cardiology department became the first department in the hospital to initiate super-specialty (DM/MCh) education and training. In a further boost to the department's capabilities, it moved to the new Super Speciality Building (SSB) in June 2022, enhancing its infrastructure and capacity to provide advanced cardiac care.

Despite these accomplishments, the Cardiology Unit faces some serious challenges, alleged by state president NHRCCB through its state media officer Minmay Kr Nath.

"It is disheartening to note the inadequate facilities in the new Super Speciality Building. The lack of sep-

arate toilets for men and women on Floor no 3, Ward no 3, has been a significant concern. Currently, both genders are forced to share a single toilet, raising questions about privacy and respect, especially at a time when there is a national emphasis on respecting women's rights. Moreover, the men's bathroom has been closed for an extended period, leaving male patients to use a bathroom outside the ward. However, this alternative facility has also been inconsistently available, often locked, further complicating the situation. Another pressing issue is the closure of the RO water system inside and outside the ward, which compromises patient hygiene and comfort, as the space is now used to store urinals. Additionally, the ward suffers from an inadequate number of nursing staff, leading to an overburdened workforce and potentially compromising patient care. The hospital is equipped with a centralised AC system in the patient wards. However, it often remains turned off, raising concerns about the effectiveness and quality of the installation by the state government."

"These conditions are in stark contrast to India's commitment to respecting privacy and maintaining dignity in healthcare settings. It is imperative for the hospital management and the HR division to address these concerns promptly. Improving the basic amenities and staffing levels is crucial to ensuring that the Cardiology Unit can continue to provide the high standard of care for which it has become known."

"The dedicated team at AMCH's Cardiology Unit, including those who have chosen to remain in Dibrugarh, like Dr HC Kalita, has made significant contributions to the hospital and the broader community. However, to maintain and build upon this legacy, it is essential to address these challenges and ensure that the facilities meet the needs and rights of all patients. The state government must take immediate action to rectify these issues, uphold human rights, and honour the institution's longstanding commitment to quality healthcare."

RERA conducts interactive session at Tezpur Convention Centre

HT Correspondent

TEZPUR, Sept 1: The Real Estate Regulatory Authority (RERA), Assam, in collaboration with Sonitpur district administration and the banks of Sonitpur and Biswanath Chariali, organised an interactive session on the effective implementation of the Real Estate (Regulation and Development) Act, 2016, with promoters, bankers, associations, and other concerned stakeholders of both Sonitpur and Biswanath districts at the Tezpur Convention Centre.

In his remarks as the chairperson of RERA, Assam, and former chief secretary of the state, Paban Kumar Barthakur enumerated the necessity of awareness regarding the provisions of the Real Estate Act, 2016, for all parties involved, the registration of real estate projects with RERA, and the penalties for non-compliance, the duties of both builders and buyers, along with the duties and roles of all stakeholders, including government bodies. He added how RERA is working on fostering a robust real estate ecosystem safeguarding the rights of all parties involved.

Welcoming the gathering, district commissioner, Sonitpur,



Deba Kumar Mishra stated the need for a standardised, planned, and systematic development of the real estate sector for the proper and sustainable growth of towns.

While addressing the gathering, district commissioner, Biswanath, Dr Neha Yadav mentioned that regularised real estate development is a step forward in the effective administration of towns and is vital to their growth and development. Various issues including planning permits, various necessary clearances such as environmental clearance, emergency measures or safety, height restrictions, etc., along with the provision for filing complaints were discussed in the programme. The participants were urged to visit the RERA official website <https://rera.assam.gov.in/> to learn more about the various provisions, and prospective buyers can

also view details regarding the project before buying.

In-depth presentations regarding the Real Estate (Regulation & Development) Act, 2016, were given by secretary, RERA, Assam, Mukta Nath Saikia, and director, Town and Country Planning, Assam, Deepak Bezbaruah, respectively. member, RERA, Assam, Binod Kumar Chetri, in his address, clarified many doubts and misconceptions usually associated with the Act that RERA authorities typically encounter from both promoters and allottees.

Additional district commissioner Tawhir Alam, deputy director of Town and Country Planning, Tezpur, Biren Swargiary, chairperson of Tezpur Development Authority, Biraj Nath, executive officers, chairpersons and vice chairpersons of Municipal Boards of both Sonitpur and Biswanath districts, officials of banks of Sonitpur and Biswanath districts, real estate promoters or builders, Residential Welfare Associations, prospective land owners, officials of DoHUA, and other concerned officials of district administration and RERA, Assam were part of the awareness programme.

Patharughat hosts multispecialty health camp under RBSK

HT Correspondent

MANGALDAI, Sept 1: A multispecialty health camp was organised at Patharighat HS School recently under the auspices of Rashtriya Bal Swasthya Karyakram (RBSK) in collaboration with the school's NSS unit. During the camp, health examinations were conducted for over 200 students from various local schools, and medications were provided based on the individual needs of the students. The primary goal of the program was to raise awareness among children about health issues and to encourage them to prioritise their well-being.

The camp was inaugurated by Dr Ramesh Chandra Goswami, nodal officer, RBSK, in the presence of Dulal Chandra Kalita, principal, Patharighat HS School; Dr Washim Faruk Choudhury, eye specialist; Dr Homendra Kumar Nath, MO; Dr Ratika Kalita, district coordinator, RBSK; Dr Brajen Dutta, psychologist; Dr Makibul Islam, audiologist, MCH; Dr Shafiq Kafi, MS, ENT; Dr Lanima Choudhury, BDS; Dr Dhrubajyoti Sarma, MO, RBSK; Himangshu Deka, block coordinator, Barichowka; Bijit Kumar Nath, pharmacist; Karabi Devi, pharmacist; Namita Devi, ANM; Imratun Nessa, ANM; and Dr Mokhlisur Rahman, program officer, NSS unit, Patharighat HS School.

Two cattle recovered in Demow

HT Correspondent

DEMOW, Sept 1: Two cattle were recovered from a luxurious Ford Figo car in Ahompathar Nitaipukhuri near Demow on Saturday night. According to information received, the cattle were being transported in the Ford Figo (AS 07 B 6868) when local residents, along with Nitaipukhuri police, intercepted the vehicle. However, the thief present in the car managed to escape.

Sources revealed that a money bag was recovered from the car. Amjad Ali, a resident of 2 No Bhatgaj Gaon, lodged an FIR at the Nitaipukhuri Police Outpost on Sunday stating that his red-coloured cattle had been stolen on Saturday night, and he appealed for the recovery of his cattle from the thief.

Another person, Hunu Ali, also a resident of 2 No Bhatgaj Gaon, lodged an FIR at the same outpost on September Sunday claiming that his white-coloured cattle had been stolen fifteen days ago.

He urged the authorities to apprehend the cattle theft gang and take appropriate action against them.

AR completes major tree plantation drive

HT Correspondent

BISWANATH CHARIALI, Sept 1: Assam Rifles conducted a significant tree plantation drive from January 1 to August 31, 2024, under the 'Ek Ped Maa Ke Naam' initiative launched by the government of India. The plantation drive took place at various locations in Lokra over eight months, during which a total of 69,800 saplings were planted, stated a press release. This significant achievement reflects Assam Rifles' dedication to environmental conservation and aligns with the broader national goal of increasing green cover across the country. The 'Ek Ped Maa Ke Naam' program is a tribute to motherhood, encouraging individuals and organisations to plant trees in the name of their mothers, thus nurturing both the environment and familial bonds. By participating in this campaign, Assam Rifles not only contributed to ecological preservation but also set an example for others to follow. The plantation drives also witnessed enthusiastic participation from local people, underscoring the importance of collective efforts in combating climate change and promoting a sustainable future.



gies and stakeholder engagement.

Om Narayan Singh, AGM (C&M), received the awards on behalf of NTPC Bongaigaon from P A Mohammed Riyas, minister of PWD and Tourism, government of Kerala, in the presence of Dr T Vinay Kumar, chairman, and K Ravindran, director, Corporate Partnership & Communication, Indo-Continental Trade and Entrepreneurship Promotion Council, during the ceremony held at Kozhikode.

Following the national recognition, the

awards were presented to Akhilesh Singh, head of project, NTPC Bongaigaon, by Asutosh Biswas, GM (Operation), A M Chaudhury, AGM (C&I), and A K Singh, AGM (FM), in the presence of heads of departments (HODs) and senior executives including Onkar Nath, AGM (HR), Roshan Dzungdung, DGM (HR), and Madhurjya S Lahkar, senior manager (HR-Corporate Communication), along with other employees executives of the station.

Expressing his gratitude, Akhilesh Singh congratulated the HR department and all employees for their outstanding contribution and concerted teamwork, which led to this remarkable achievement. He emphasised that these awards are a reflection to NTPC Bongaigaon's commitment to excellence, community development, and innovative corporate communication and stakeholder practices.

NTPC Bongaigaon Salakati remains dedicated to its vision of sustainable growth and development, continuing its mission to make a positive impact in the communities it serves and setting benchmarks in the industry.

ABSU forms RC for 57th Annual Conference in Dotma

HT Correspondent

KOKRAJHAR, Sept 1: A general meeting of the Kokrajhar district committee of the All Bodo Students Union (ABSU) was held at the Dotma HS School auditorium in Kokrajhar on Sunday.

The meeting was chaired by Kripesh Daimary, president of the Kokrajhar district committee, ABSU, and attended by ABSU general secretary Khanindra Basumatary, vice president Khwvndao Wary, assistant general secretary Dinesh Brahma, MLA Lawrence Isary, and several leaders and members from different anchalik committees of Kokrajhar district.

The meeting thoroughly discussed the organisation of the upcoming 57th Annual Conference of the central committee of ABSU and the 56th Annual Conference of the Kokrajhar district committee.



tee, ABSU, scheduled to be held in the first week of February 2025.

A strong reception committee (RC) for the annual conference was formed, with Lawrence Isary, MLA of Kokrajhar East LAC, as chairman, and Shankarlal Brahma as convener, along with 19 other subcommittees, to ensure

the grand success of the event. The ABSU's annual conference will be held with a four-day colourful programme scheduled at Dotma in Kokrajhar.

ABSU general secretary, Khanindra Basumatary, stated that the 57th annual conference of the students union will be organised as per the resolution passed dur-

ing the delegate session of the Golaghat conference held in February last year. Accordingly, the reception committee was formed on Sunday. He mentioned that the Dotma session will mark the termination period of the existing body of the students union. The session will feature various colourful programmes, including sports, literary, and cultural competitions.

Basumatary added that the session will discuss various issues and matters related to the welfare and development of the Bodo community, particularly in the field of educational upliftment.

He informed that more than 5,000 delegates and observers from different district committees, state units, and university units across the state and nation are expected to participate in the annual conference.

NTPC Bongaigaon Salakati wins three prestigious awards at Tusker National Awards

HT Correspondent

KOKRAJHAR, Sept 1: NTPC Bongaigaon Salakati has achieved a remarkable feat by winning three prestigious awards at the 1st Tusker National Awards, organised by the Indo-Continental Trade and Entrepreneurship Promotion Council in Kozhikode, Kerala. The 750 MW power station secured honours in three categories, reflecting its commitment to excellence and innovation across diverse areas.

NTPC Bongaigaon Salakati was awarded Gold in the 'Short Film Category' for its compelling film on migratory birds, showcasing the station's dedication to environmental sustainability and awareness. The power station also won Gold for its Girl Empowerment Mission (GEM) Mentorship and Role Model Program 2024, recognising its impactful efforts in promoting education and empowerment among young girls.

Additionally, NTPC Bongaigaon Salakati received a Silver award for Excellence in Corporate Communication Initiatives across NTPC, highlighting its effective communication strate-



HT Bureau

GUWAHATI, Sept 1: In a significant move aimed at enhancing the operational efficiency and safety of train operations, the Lumding division of Northeast Frontier Railway (NFR) has successfully replaced the existing 1 in 12 track turnout at the Langting yard, located in the Lumding-Badarpur hill section, with a safer 1 in 16 turnout set.

This marks a milestone achievement, as this is the first time such an upgrade has been adopted and implemented in the zone.

In fact, following the success of this installation, plans are already in place to further replace 12 more turnouts with 1 in 16 turnouts in the Lumding-

Badarpur hills section under Lumding division, with projects already sanctioned and underway.

The previous 1 in 12 turnout (point 101) at Langting yard was laid on a 3.5-degree curve, resulting in a sharp curvature of the crossover at 7.5 degrees. This sharp curvature posed challenges in maintaining smooth train operations.

By installing the 1 in 16 turnout, the resultant curvature has been significantly reduced to 5.73 degrees, thereby facilitating safer and more efficient train movement through the yard. The replacement process involved meticulous planning and execution, with multiple rounds of machine tamping conducted using MFI technology, which further stabilises the tracks and ensures optimal alignment.

NFR is committed to continuous improvements and upgrades to its train connectivity infrastructure.

The upgraded Langting yard is a testament to NFR's dedication to adopting advanced technologies and practices, ensuring high standards for railway operations and minimising the challenges of the existing layout.

NFR remains committed to providing safe, efficient, and reliable rail services to its passengers and will continue to invest in infrastructure upgrades to meet the growing demands of the region.

QUOTE OF THE DAY

A person who won't read has no advantage over one who can't read.
-Mark Twain

Himanta's campaign against 'Miya Muslims'

In a political landscape increasingly defined by identity and exclusion, Assam's Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma has emerged as one of the most polarizing figures. His governance has taken a distinct and aggressive approach, particularly targeting the state's 'Miya Muslims,' a community he claims are infiltrators from Bangladesh. This strategy, while appealing to a segment of Assam's indigenous population, has deepened religious and ethnic divisions in the state. Sarma's rhetoric is blunt and unapologetic. He has openly declared that he is the Chief Minister for only "some" of Assam's people, pointedly excluding the 'Miya Muslims' from his purview. These statements, while shocking to some, have resonated with a portion of the indigenous Assamese population, who see Sarma as a protector of their interests against what they perceive as a demographic and cultural invasion by Bengali-speaking Muslims. The 'Miya Muslims' have long been a contentious issue in Assam. Often portrayed as illegal immigrants from Bangladesh, they have been accused of altering the state's demography, occupying significant portions of land, and overwhelming the native population. Sarma has capitalized on these fears, positioning himself as a defender of Assam's indigenous identity.

One of Sarma's most controversial policies has been his crackdown on madrasas, which he has linked to crimes against women. His use of bulldozers to demolish these institutions, coupled with his tough stance on issues like child marriage, has won him support among those who believe in strong, decisive action. However, these moves have also drawn criticism for targeting a specific community under the guise of law enforcement. Sarma's latest campaign focuses on banning polygamy, a practice he associates with the 'Miya Muslim' community. The Assam Assembly's recent passage of the Assam Compulsory Registration of Muslim Marriages and Divorces Bill, 2024, is a clear indication of his determination to regulate Muslim marriages, further encroaching on personal and religious freedoms. Critics argue that Sarma's actions are less about governance and more about stoking religious and ethnic tensions. The opposition, led by the Congress, has accused him of exploiting these divisions for political gain. They warn that his policies could ignite unrest in a state already fraught with tension.

Sarma's rise to power is as much about his political acumen as it is about the failures of his rivals. A former Congress leader, Sarma defected to the BJP after a falling out with Rahul Gandhi, whom he accused of treating him with disdain. This personal slight seems to have fuelled his ambition, and he has since become one of the BJP's most prominent leaders in the Northeast. While Sarma's policies have made him a hero to some, they have also drawn sharp criticism from those who see them as divisive and dangerous. The opposition's warnings of potential unrest are not unfounded, as history has shown that such deep-rooted tensions can easily flare into violence. As Sarma navigates this fraught political landscape, the question remains: Will Sarma's hardline approach bring stability and security, or will it deepen the divisions that have long plagued the state? Only time will tell, but one thing is certain—Assam's future is being shaped by a leader who is unafraid to take bold, controversial steps, regardless of the consequences.

Narendra Modi's visit to Ukraine was primarily meant to mollify US

By: P Sudhir

Narendra Modi's brief visit to Ukraine has been hailed by the pro-American circles and the corporate media as a big success. According to this version, here is an Indian leader whose international stature has been heightened by the holding of the G20 summit in Delhi and gaining recognition as a leader of the Global South, making a historic visit to Kyiv, thus opening the way for India to play a mediating role in bringing about peace in the Russia-Ukraine conflict.

But, unfortunately, for the sycophantic media and the pro-US commentators, the Ukraine president Zelensky, in his press conference after the Modi visit, made some blunt remarks. He expressed his unhappiness about India buying Russian oil and helping to finance its arms industry. He also dismissed any role for India in hosting a peace summit. He stated that he cannot be able to conduct a peace summit in a country "who has not joined the communiqué of the peace summit"; a reference to the first peace conference which was held in Switzerland in June this year. A joint secretary of the ministry of external affairs had attended the meeting, but India did not sign the communiqué. Zelensky also stated that when he visits India, he wanted India on his side and "not balancing between US and Russia". Zelensky spoke, as if he saw Modi was a junior ally of the United States just like himself and therefore could be spoken to in this manner.

The real intent behind Modi's visit to Kyiv is evident to all but those blinkered by talk of India being a Vishwa Guru. Modi's visit to Moscow in July coincided with the holding of the 75th anniversary meeting of NATO in Washington. The spectacle of Modi hugging president Putin and receiving the highest Russian civilian award from Putin caused indignation in Washington. The NATO meeting was meant to marshal all forces against Putin's Russia, when on that very occasion, the 'Indo-Pacific' ally of the US was brazenly courting the enemy.

There was a chorus of disapproval voiced by various representatives of the Biden administration, ranging from na-

tional security advisor, Jake Sullivan, to the state department spokesperson. But it was left to the American Ambassador to India, Eric Garcetti, to convey the warning that the US-India defence partnership is amongst the most consequential in the world, but "don't take the relationship for granted". He added: "I know India like its strategic autonomy. But in times of conflict, there is no such thing as strategic autonomy".

The national security advisor Ajit Doval called up the US national security advisor Jake Sullivan just two days after Modi's Russia visit to mollify the Americans to assure them that India would be seriously pursuing the strategic alliance and confirming its participation in the forthcoming Quad foreign ministers' meeting in Tokyo. Soon after, foreign ministry sources began briefing the media about a possible visit of Modi to Ukraine in the third week of August. It is evident, therefore, that Narendra Modi went through the motions of reaching out to Ukraine in order to pacify the Americans and to signal India's continuing fealty to the US alliance.

This commitment to its US ally was further exemplified by the visit of defence minister Rajnath Singh to the US which began exactly on the day of Modi's trip to Kyiv. The four-day visit has led to the signing of a 'Security of Supplies Arrangement' (SOSA) and an agreement for posting of Indian military officers as liaison at key US commands. As part of the burgeoning purchase of arms from the United States, the US government approved the sale of anti-submarine sonobuoys amounting to 58.6 million dollars.

While India cannot dispense with its longstanding ties with Russia, especially military supplies in the short term, the Modi visit to Kyiv and the outcome of Rajnath Singh's visit to the US show that the Modi government is set on a course of strengthening its strategic alliance with the United States and signalling, at the same time, that it is willing to lessen its dependence and ties with Russia in the long run. The Modi government seems to have learnt its lesson – that there is not much scope for strategic autonomy whilst being a US ally. (IPA Service)

"Frontier Nagaland Territory awaits: A defining opportunity for Nagaland's political leadership"

The state must be a resource for justice, not a barrier to it. The creation of Frontier Nagaland Territory is not just a unique Constitutional experiment—it is about ensuring that the marginalized communities of Eastern Nagaland have access to the opportunities and support they need to thrive. Supporting Frontier Nagaland means supporting equity, dignity, and the future of both an inclusive state of Nagaland and the diverse, vibrant, thriving, progressive, and resilient nation of BHARAT."

The issue of the "Frontier Nagaland" has been a longstanding concern for the Eastern Naga people, who have faced decades of marginalization and neglect. The region has often been left out of developmental policies, leading to deep socio-economic disparities compared to other parts of Nagaland. Their growing demand for a separate Frontier Nagaland Territory within the state of Nagaland reflects a deep-seated need for constitutional autonomy, recognition, and fair representation. The neglect has led to a persistent sense of alienation and frustration among the Eastern Nagas, fueling their desire for self-governance. This movement has reached a critical point, and it is crucial that the Nagaland government takes immediate action by officially submitting its comments, views, and suggestions to the Government of India in the larger interest of the public. Failure to act now could further deepen the divide and exacerbate existing tensions.

The creation of Frontier Nagaland Territory is not merely about addressing regional disparities; it is a pivotal step toward rectifying historical injustices and empowering the Eastern Nagas to shape their future. The Eastern Naga region's constitutional rights have been undermined by insufficient political representation and a lack of sufficient constitutional autonomy. This has obstructed the region's efforts to address its socio-economic challenges effectively and to ensure fair access to opportunities and resources, exacerbating existing disparities and compromising its fundamental rights.

A new constitutional experiment—the "Frontier Nagaland Territory"—would spur economic development, providing much-needed infrastructure and resources to the region without being a burden on Kohima or New Delhi. Moreover, it would enable better governance, reducing the influence of distant policymakers that often overlook local needs. Additionally, it would ensure more direct participation of the Eastern Nagas in decision-making processes, safeguarding their constitutional rights. This newfound constitutional autonomy would allow the Eastern Nagas to pursue policies tailored to their unique socio-economic realities.

The Eastern Nagas, who inhabit the districts of Tuensang, Mon, Longleng, Kiphire, Noklak, and Shamator, have long felt alienated from Nagaland's political and economic life. These areas, despite their vast potential, remain underdeveloped due to consistent neglect by successive state governments. Despite the region's strategic importance, it has lagged behind in terms of basic infrastructure, education, healthcare, and overall development. This neglect has perpetuated a cycle of poverty and lack of development, with little hope for improvement under the current state structure.

The frustration caused by fractured governance, lack of development, deep-rooted corruption, and Kohima-centric politics and a deep rooted sense of tribalism in the Nagaland politics has ultimately fueled the demand for Frontier Nagaland, well-rooted in a legitimate desire for self-governance that can better address the unique needs of the region through constitutional mechanisms. The creation of Frontier Nagaland Territory would not only address these concerns but also restore a sense of dignity and empowerment to the people.

Understanding the demand for Frontier Nagaland requires a comprehensive look at the economic disparities at play. The region is rich in natural resources, yet these have remained largely untapped due to the lack of infrastructure, investment and necessary attention from the state government. The Eastern Naga region has consistently received less state investment and policy attention compared to other parts of Nagaland. This systemic neglect has stunted the region's economic growth, leaving it reliant on subsistence agriculture, low-paying jobs as well as other sundry occupations. This neglect is evident in the poor condition of roads, lack of healthcare facilities, inadequate educational institutions, and limited access to basic amenities like clean, potable water, electricity and sanitation. The establishment of Frontier Nagaland Territory could serve as a catalyst for targeted investments, leading to sustainable development and improved living standards. By seriously considering the demand for Frontier Nagaland, the government would acknowledge the region's economic plight and take a critical step toward rectifying these long-standing inequalities.

The demand for Frontier Nagaland Territory is not just a call for administrative separation but a cry for socioeconomic justice. The people of Eastern Nagaland have long been denied equal access to opportunities, resources, and representation. The Nagaland government has an opportunity to address these grievances by submitting its views, perspectives and vision to the Government of India, demonstrating its commitment to equitable development through its support to the 'voice of the people' for Frontier Nagaland Territory. This would signal a commitment to bridging the development gap between Eastern Nagaland and the rest of the state. Failing to do so would perpetuate existing inequalities and further alienate the Eastern Naga community which will never be acceptable in free and Independent India.

The creation of Frontier Nagaland also presents an opportunity for cultural preservation and the promotion of the unique heritage of the Eastern Naga tribes. The rich cultural diversity of the Eastern Nagas, including their languages, traditions, and customs, has been underrepresented in the broader Nagaland identity. Establishing Frontier Nagaland Territory would provide the necessary autonomy to safeguard and revitalize these indigenous cultural treasures, fostering greater unity and pride among the Eastern Naga tribes. This would also allow for the preservation and promotion of traditional knowledge systems that are at risk of being lost due to a lack of robust policy measures.

By prioritizing cultural preservation, the new territory would ensure that the Eastern Naga identity is not only maintained but honoured and celebrated. The region's cultural revival through locally centered policy initiatives would also attract tourism, further boosting the local economy and creating new opportunities for the youth. The economic implications of creating Frontier Nagaland Territory hold significant potential for the entire nation. The region's untapped natural resources, including minerals and fertile land, could be harnessed to drive economic growth of the region. With the right vision and leadership, Frontier Nagaland could become a hub for economic activities such as agriculture, horticulture, international education, tourism & hospitality, industrial manufacturing and cross-border trade with Myanmar. These sectors have the potential to transform the region's economy, providing employment and improving livelihoods. Prioritizing this issue could unlock the region's economic potential, leading to skill development, job creation, improved infrastructure, and enhanced livelihoods for the people of Eastern Nagaland. Such economic progress would also contribute to the overall development of Nagaland, reducing regional disparities and fostering greater state unity.

The Government of Nagaland supporting the creation of Frontier Nagaland Territory would super-strengthen our nation's position in the region, enabling local leadership to take ultra-bold steps to boost cross-border trade & commerce through the complete activation of the long dead International Trading Centers at Dan (Noklak), Mimi (Kiphire) and Longwa (Mon), and foster socio-economic stability along neglected border areas. The strategic location of Eastern Nagaland, bordering Myanmar, positions it as a crucial player in India's Act East policy. The establishment of Frontier Nagaland Territory could stimulate investment in key sectors, driving sustainable economic growth.

The increased focus on the region not only contributes to constructive development but also assures social justice for deprived Eastern Naga communities in the neglected border areas where the light of constitutional governance never reaches from the center of power & politics in Nagaland. By empowering the Eastern Naga communities through constructive—on the ground support to the creation of Frontier Nagaland Territory, the state government would ensure that these historically marginalized Eastern Naga people are active participants in the region's development. This would also send a strong message of inclusivity and fairness, reinforcing the integrity of the Indian Union.

The significance of Eastern Nagaland has long been underappreciated by policymakers in Kohima, leading to challenges stemming from fractured governance and the divisive effects of tribalism in Nagaland's politics. The centralized nature of governance in Nagaland has often sidelined the needs and aspirations of the Eastern Nagas. By supporting the creation of Frontier Nagaland Territory, the Government of Nagaland has a valuable opportunity to address these past oversights. This move would resolve historical griev-

ances and foster more equitable governance, development, and social justice. It would also pave the way for a more balanced distribution of resources and opportunities across the state. In doing so, the Nagaland government would not only rectify past mistakes but also lay the foundation for a more unified and prosperous future.

The creation of Frontier Nagaland Territory offers a constructive solution to the deep-rooted socio-economic challenges faced by the Eastern Naga people. The establishment of a separate territory would allow for tailored policies that directly address the region's unique challenges which remained unaddressed for the past six decades. This initiative seeks to empower the region through self-governance, aligning with the community's cultural heritage and distinct needs. It would also provide a platform for the Eastern Nagas to voice their concerns and aspirations on a larger stage. Establishing the Frontier Nagaland Territory would ensure that governance is more directly responsive to local needs, prioritizing the welfare of the people and addressing long-standing grievances. The success of this initiative could serve as a model for other regions in India facing similar issues of marginalization and underdevelopment.

Now, as we all can see, the ball is in the court of the State Government of Nagaland, and the entire population of Eastern Nagaland is closely watching the developments as they unfold. The momentum for Frontier Nagaland has been built over years of struggle, sacrifices and advocacy, and the people are eagerly awaiting the next steps. The local population and Eastern Naga intellectuals are fully aware of the status of their demand and their successful journey so far under the banner of ENPO. The grassroots support for this movement underscores the widespread desire for change and the urgency of the situation.

The previous ENPO leadership team with the "Talk Team" successfully advanced the cause of the Frontier Nagaland Territory through successful rounds of talks with MHA to the "Point of No Return", marking a historic milestone in the movement. Moreover, they managed to spread awareness across every corner of the nation, bringing national attention to the struggles of the forgotten citizens of India living in the remotest mountains and deep jungles of Eastern Nagaland. This achievement has ignited a renewed sense of hope, raw courage and determination among the region's people.

As the movement enters a critical phase, building trust between the state government and the people will be crucial, determining the success of the initiatives undertaken. The new ENPO leadership must recognize that they are representing a movement for fairness and progress that resonates deeply with the people. This responsibility requires a strong commitment to inclusive leadership, a clear vision for the future, and a strategic approach to negotiating for Frontier Nagaland Territory.

Economic development, robust infrastructure, financial autonomy (ensuring that the proposed Frontier Nagaland Territory has control over its resources, funds and revenues),

self-governance, and social equity are at the forefront of the Eastern Naga people's concerns, and these areas must be prioritized. Additionally, fostering open communication channels and ensuring voices of Eastern Naga people and the echoes of their tireless struggles are heard and considered in the decision-making process will be essential. As the current ENPO leaders move forward, maintaining unity, focus, transparency and a balanced approach that combines visionary goals with pragmatic strategies will be key to achieving lasting success.

The eyes of the nation, and indeed the world, are on Nagaland as this pivotal moment unfolds. The outcome of this struggle will be closely watched by other marginalized communities in India and beyond. The success or failure of this endeavour will not only impact the lives of the people in Eastern Nagaland but will also set a precedent for how regional aspirations are managed in a diverse and complex country like India.

This is a moment of truth for the Nagaland government, one that will be remembered for how it handles this critical issue. The state government should no longer delay commenting on the draft memorandum of settlement, which it has held in its custody since December 2023. It should take on the role of a facilitator, actively supporting the voices of the Eastern Naga people echoing through ENPO—the sole negotiating body-legally recognised negotiating entity for the Frontier Nagaland Territory having a public mandate and the Government of India in its creation. The invisible people, marginalized on the periphery of the Indo-Myanmar border, are eagerly awaiting the sunrise. Do not deprive them of the light they deserve.

In the grand scheme of history, there comes a moment when a choice must be made—a choice between continuing as before or daring to take the bold steps necessary to build a just and equitable future. This is a defining moment for the Nagaland government, one that will determine its legacy in the annals of history. For the State Government of Nagaland, that moment is now. It must choose whether to be remembered as a government that stood for justice and progress or one that allowed an opportunity for meaningful change to slip away. Let the Nagaland government be remembered as a champion of progress and justice, a government that seized the opportunity to make history by standing with the Eastern Nagas at this pivotal time. The time for action is now.

The future of Frontier Nagaland Territory, and the promise it holds for the people of Eastern Nagaland, hangs in the balance. It is a future worth fighting for, and it is a future that can be realized if the Nagaland government has the courage to act-hand in hand, shoulder to shoulder with the people of Eastern Nagaland—the men, women and the children—scorned and covered with scars—still strove with their last ounce of courage—to dream the impossible dream and reach the unreachable star—to build the Frontier Nagaland....

The whole India is watching. The Truth Shall Prevail. LET US NOT FAIL, HISTORY WILL NEVER FORGIVE US. (The author is a Senior Faculty, Dept. Of Political Science, Tezpur college)

Noopur Baruah, Tezpur
barooahnoopur@gmail.com

DEGREE OF THOUGHT

By: Dr. Aniruddha Babar

POST BAG

The need for clarity in debates on indigenous identity and the "Mia" issue

Sir/Ma'am

Through the columns of your esteemed newspaper, I wish to draw attention to the murky atmosphere that has been created in the legislative discussions surrounding indigenous people and the so-called "Mia" issue. The debates have escalated to an unfortunate level, with references as extreme as Draupadi's disrobing and a blind Dhritrashtra, while meaningless slogans like "Mias are forbidden to go south!" and "Assam will be dominated by indigenous people!" have been recklessly thrown around.

At the heart of this confusion lies the lack of a universally accepted definition of "indigenous

people." Equally ambiguous is the term "Assamese," which neither the ruling party seems inclined to define nor the opposition appears eager to demand.

This raises a fundamental question: Who is a "Mia"? Are people with hats and long beards Mias? And who will enforce this supposed prohibition on their movement to the south? If a person from a char area shaves his beard, removes his hat, and dresses in a suit and tie, who will identify him? Will there be immigration gates in our own state, or will such individuals be met with violence?

The core of the matter is this: Are Mias illegal citizens? If they are deemed so, how can they re-

side in southern or central Assam? Is this not part of Assam? And if the government believes they are illegal, why hasn't a clear Standard Operating Procedure (SOP) been issued on their identity, movement, and residence?

It seems that political discourse has been reduced to a tool for creating noise, diverting attention from real issues, wasting government resources, and misleading the public. I urge the responsible authorities to move beyond this fog of confusion and provide the clarity that the people of Assam deserve.

Mowsam Hazarika
Guwahati, Assam
mowsam2000@yahoo.co.in

Traffic congestion woes

Sir/Ma'am

Traffic Congestion is no longer a problem of only the metropolitan cities, it is now troubling even the smallest urban agglomerations. An average Indian driver loses 135 hours a year, which is a waste of precious working hours and fuel loss. With the soaring fuel prices, every drop of fuel lost is like losing a drop of blood. India loses almost two lakh crore rupees every year due to traffic congestion.

Building flyovers has only proven to confuse drivers and add more woes to the problem of traffic congestion. Practical solutions like Heavy Occupancy Vehicle (HOV) lanes where separate lanes for larger vehicles like SUVs and larger Wagons can be built. These

lanes can be monetized so that people refrain from using larger vehicles inside the cities which causes traffic congestion. This measure will also encourage people to use the parking lots. The urban bodies can design the town area such that all the areas are equally served with the daily amenities that people want, which would ultimately help control traffic congestion.

Artificial Intelligence can also be used to manage traffic signals by studying traffic behavior. The onus is on the government and the administration to churn out more innovative solutions to this problem.

Noopur Baruah, Tezpur
barooahnoopur@gmail.com

Advancement in Robotic Surgery for Cancer treatment

By: Dr. Surender Kumar Dabas

It is well known that minimizing the impact of oncological treatment is the way not only to improve cancer patients' quality of life, but also to increase compliance to treatment and ultimately the chances of a cure. Maintaining oncological standards, improving perioperative outcomes and functional results, and minimizing complications, are the principles that inspired the minimally invasive approach in oncological surgery.

The laparoscopic technique has been a revolution in particular for gynecological surgery, as well as abdominal and urological surgery. Less scarring, less pain, visual magnification, and the pneumoperitoneum tamponade effect reducing the risk of bleeding are the strengths of laparoscopic surgery.

On the other hand, 2D vision, counterintuitive movements and instruments with few degrees of freedom rendered laparoscopy a technically challenging approach. The introduction of Robotics at the end of the last millennium has led to a revolution, fixing all the shortcomings of laparoscopy. There are numerous advantages of Robotic surgery which include 3D HD vision, 7 degrees of freedom, more precision and control,

meticulous dissection, better ergonomics, improved dexterity, endo-wrist movements, 10X magnification and greater instrument stability. Robotic-assisted surgery is expanding the capabilities of surgery and is changing the face of medical care.

Robotic Surgery is very safe, infact much safer than open surgery in skilled hands. The machine is not a true robot (it does not operate or move by itself), but is a "master slave" unit. This means the surgeon is in complete control throughout the procedure, and controls the instruments at all times. Robot allows more-precise tremor-free movements in tiny spaces. Tumours can be dissected free from surrounding tissues safely.

A great constraint to the wider and far reaching application of Robotic Surgery is the cost factor, robotic surgery being perceived as way too expensive. Overall robotic surgery is not expensive as compared to open surgery. Definitely, the initial cost involved is higher because of the costly equipment involved but the long term benefits offered by robotic surgery even out the initial cost. Patients have shorter hospital stay, rapid recovery, and early return to the work and less work hours lost. In some cases the need for chemoradiotherapy may be reduced or even eliminated.

In abdominal surgery, robotic

surgery can overcome the intrinsic limitations of laparoscopic instruments and can be useful for various cancer surgeries of the Pancreas, Stomach, Gallbladder, Liver and Colon. Robotic surgery finds special application in the treatment of Rectal cancers in terms of better functional outcomes and preserving the normal continence of the patients.

In thoracic surgeries for Lung cancer, Esophageal cancer and other mediastinal tumours robotic surgery avoids the large thoracic incision and provides earlier return to normal routine with better perioperative outcomes and less complications.

Regarding the commonest robotic operation, radical prostatectomy, there is increasing evidence reporting functional advantages for robotic surgery compared to open while as robotic surgery also offers advantage in other urology surgeries like radical nephrectomy, partial nephrectomy, and radical cystectomy. At the same time, Robot provides better vision and outcomes in pelvic surgeries like those for the Gynecologic Cancers of Uterus, Ovary and Cervix.

Beyond the abdominal approach, TORS (Trans Oral Robotic Surgery) represents one of the most interesting experiences of extra abdominal robotic application. Nowadays TORS may be applied for benign and

malignant lesions of the upper aero-digestive tract like throat and voice box cancers attaining good functional results in terms of return to normal speech, avoiding disfiguring mandibulotomy and long incisions on the neck and face.

Similarly Robotic Thyroid Surgery offers the same oncology outcomes with no neck scar. Faster return to normal function allows patients to begin adjuvant therapy, if warranted, much sooner than in patients who undergo open surgery, affording potential advantages and benefits over current treatment modalities of head and neck tumors.

The global overview of existing robotic experiences demonstrates multiple opportunities for surgical indications in the oncological setting. The miniaturization of the instruments and further technological advancements provide a glimpse of an even less invasive surgical approach for the near future.

With the advent of robotic surgery a new surgical era has dawned in the field of Oncology, where with manageable costs, we can offer better functional surgical outcomes to the cancer patients without compromising on the conventional principles of oncology. *(The author is the Vice Chairman - Oncology & Chief - Robotic Surgery, BLK-Max Super Speciality Hospital, Delhi)*

Life without movement is a misery

By: Gita Debnath

Everything in this universe is moving the sun, the moon, the stars, trees, animals. What if there is no movement? Actually, without movement there is no possibility of existence of life, because movement is the ultimate source of energy. Movement is fundamental to the formation and existence of our world and the universe.

We have read about the Cosmic evolution. The universe began with the big bang, an explosive event that initiated the movement of matter and energy outward. Over billions of years, gravitational movements led to the formation of galaxies, stars, and planetary systems, including our own solar system. From the beating of the heart to the movement of muscles and neurons firing in the brain, every biological function relies on movement.

Movement is intricately tied to energy production. Processes like cellular respiration, which occurs in mitochondria rely on the movement of molecules and electrons to generate ATP (energy).

No movement → No Energy → No life

Movement is the ultimate source of energy.

We are surviving because something within us is moving, the more we move right the better we live.

A person who does regular exercises, yoga, running, jogging, walking is way healthier than the inactive person.

What happens to our body when we are inactive?

Heart
If the heart is never challenged, it will do as little work as possible, preventing it from going extra distance when it needs to it. A weak heart hampers circulation.

Muscles
Muscles that are not used waste away, the tendons become fragile; muscles lose their elasticity and become stiff.

Joints
During youth, the body's cartilage is enhanced by movement. An inactive kid's

cartilage becomes thinner which leads to many joint disease at early age. So let your child play on ground, make him participate in sports.

Bones
Bones get stronger when they are loaded.

Circulation
The better you move the better your muscles get oxygen supply.

Inactivity decreases our Metabolism which leads to many diseases.

Movement is essential for maintaining good health. Regular physical activity has numerous benefits, including:

1. Weight Management: Helps maintain a healthy weight, reducing the risk of obesity-related diseases.

2. Cardiovascular Health: Strengthens the heart, lowers blood pressure, and improves circulation.

3. Increased Strength and Flexibility: Enhances muscle tone, bone density, and range of motion.

4. Improved Mental Health: Reduces stress, anxiety, and depression symptoms.

5. Enhanced Cognitive Function: Boosts brainpower, memory, and concentration.

6. Better Sleep: Regular movement promotes deeper, more restful sleep.

7. Increased Energy: Raises energy levels and reduces fatigue.

8. Reduced Disease Risk: Lowers the risk of chronic diseases, such as diabetes, certain cancers

9. Improved Immune Function: Supports immune system function, reducing illness susceptibility.

10. Enhanced Overall Well-being: Contributes to a better quality of life, increasing happiness and life satisfaction.

Aim for at least 150 minutes of moderate-intensity exercise or 75 minutes of vigorous-intensity exercise per week.

Here are some examples of movement exercises:

Aerobic Exercises:
1. Brisk Walking
2. Jogging or Running
3. Swimming
4. Cycling
5. Dancing

6. Jumping Rope
7. Boxing or Kickboxing
8. Rowing

Strength Training Exercises:
1. Squats
2. Lunges
3. Push-ups
4. Chest Press (dumbbells or barbell)

5. Lat Pulldowns
6. Bicep Curls
7. Tricep Dips
8. Shoulder Press

Flexibility and Stretching Exercises:

1. Hamstring Stretch
2. Quad Stretch
3. Chest Stretch
4. Shoulder Rolls
5. Hip Circles
6. Calf Stretch
7. Seated Forward Fold
8. Yoga or Pilates

Balance and Coordination Exercises:

1. Single-Leg Squats
2. Heel-To-Toe Walking
3. Balance Boards
4. Reaction Training
5. Agility Ladder Drills
6. Tai Chi or Qigong

Remember to always consult with a healthcare professional before starting a new exercise program. It's essential to choose exercises that suit your fitness level and goals.

And definitely it's not just about moving more, but moving correctly.

Being a physiotherapy student when I see paralyzed patients, wheelchair bound patients or patients with any movement disorders in our clinical postings. I realize how lucky I am to be able to move.

Seeing my professors and seniors treating movement disorder patients and giving them a better life motivates me to work more on myself so that I can treat the patients who are suffering from movement problems.

Movement is the source of living. Keep moving for better living, because being able to move is a Blessing. *(The author is a BPT 4th year student of College of Physiotherapy and Medical Sciences. All views and opinions expressed in the article are the author's own. She can be reached at 70865 68294)*

Think you need therapy? There's never a wrong time to start

By: Simon Sherry

People go to therapy for many reasons. A challenging life event, trauma, volatile emotions, relationship problems, poor mental health: all can prompt someone to seek it out. Whatever the reason, it can be difficult to decide when and if therapy is right for you. If you're reading this, now's probably the right time. If you're considering therapy, something is likely bothering you and you want help. Consider this your sign to reach out.

If you're still unsure, keep reading.

Why therapy
Sometimes, our minds work against us. Therapy can help you understand why you think, feel, or act how you do and give you the skills you need to think, feel, or act in healthier ways.

This includes helping you:

- identify, understand, and overcome internal obstacles
- identify and challenge thought patterns and beliefs that are holding you back
- improve your mental health
- cope with mental illness
- and create lasting changes to your thoughts and behaviour that can improve all areas of your life.

Mental health suffering

Everyone experiences negative emotions in difficult situations – like sadness after a breakup or anxiety before a big life event. But when do these feelings become problematic? When you have poor mental health.

Mental health and mental illness are distinct, but related, concepts. Mental health refers to the inner resources you have to handle life's ups and downs. You have good mental health if you enjoy life; feel connected to others; cope well with stress; and have a sense of purpose, a sense of self and strong relationships. If you have poor mental health, it can be hard to adapt to changes like a breakup, move, loss or parenthood. Therapy can help you improve your mental health, develop resilience and maintain a state of well-being.

Mental illness refers to distressing disturbances in thoughts, feelings and perceptions that interfere with daily life. There are different kinds of mental illness, each characterized by different thoughts, feelings and

behaviours.

Mental illness may feel like:

- **Hopelessness** – feeling stuck, unmotivated or helpless.
- **Apathy** – feeling uninterested in things that used to give you satisfaction or pleasure.
- **Anger** – feeling rage or resentment, especially frequently or disproportionately.
- **Stress** – feeling overwhelmed, unable to cope, unwilling to rest or like everything is hard (even if you know it shouldn't be).
- **Guilt** – feeling ashamed, undeserving of good things or deserving of bad things.
- **Anxiety** – worrying about what has or might happen or having disturbing intrusive thoughts.
- **Exhaustion** – sleeping more than usual, having difficulty getting out of bed or lacking energy during the day.
- **Insomnia** – having difficulty falling or staying asleep.

Both poor mental health and mental illness are equally good reasons to seek therapy. Ask yourself: Am I having trouble dealing with life challenges?

If the answer is yes, therapy might be for you. People often cope with the feelings listed above in different ways. Some gain or lose a lot of weight. Others might seek out or do things that are unhealthy for them, like entering a toxic relationship, engaging in dangerous activities, developing an unhealthy habit or procrastinating. Others might isolate themselves from friends and family, or catastrophise and ruminate on negative experiences. However it manifests, mental illness often gets worse if left untreated. It can have very real impacts on your life, potentially leading to unemployment, broken relationships, poor physical health, substance abuse, homelessness, incarceration or even suicide.

Ask yourself: Is mental illness negatively affecting my functioning or well-being?

If the answer is yes, therapy might be for you.

Previous experience

Many people put off going to therapy because they don't think their problems are serious enough, but you don't need a big, deep reason to start therapy.

Some people go to therapy to learn more about themselves. Some, to improve their skills, relationships or productivity. Others

go for help reaching their goals or because they aren't happy and don't know why. Any of these are good reasons to start therapy, even if they don't seem like "problems" in a traditional sense. You can go to therapy just because there's something about yourself or your life you'd like to explore.

There's no quick fix for mental health. Symptoms can take weeks, months or even years to improve. Although this can be frustrating or disheartening, for therapy to work, you have to give it time. Sometimes people go to therapy, but are skeptical or resistant. Therapy won't work if you aren't invested in it. For therapy to work, you have to put in the work.

Therapy is a vulnerable process, so finding a psychologist you trust and relate well with is crucial. Psychologists also have different specialties and approaches. For therapy to work, you have to find the right therapist for you.

Not ready?

There are several reasons why now might not be the right time for you to start therapy. Maybe therapy isn't in the budget. Maybe you have other priorities. Maybe you're scared to relive trauma. That's okay. Therapy can be expensive and difficult, but also rewarding. Just because now isn't a good time, doesn't mean there will never be a good time. If you don't want to start therapy, don't. However, it can be helpful to determine why you don't want to. Maybe you don't want to go to therapy because you're worried what others might think.

If so, remember that people are often more understanding than we anticipate, and there is nothing wrong with investing in your health or happiness. If you're struggling with your mental health, know that you're not alone. Mental health issues are common. Having them or attending therapy does not mean there is something "wrong" with you.

Mental illness affects 970 million people and is the leading cause of disability worldwide. One in five adults and more than one in 10 children and youths have mental illness. About 15 per cent of Canadians use mental health services each year. Don't let stigma keep you from bettering your life and well-being. Everyone deserves to live a healthy, fulfilling life. Therapy can help you get there. *(Courtesy: ScrollIn)*

avoiding late meals or snacking can further prevent acid reflux during sleep. Medications are commonly used to treat GERD, including antacids, H2 receptor blockers, and proton pump inhibitors (PPIs), which work to reduce stomach acid production. For severe cases that do not respond to medication or lifestyle changes, surgical options such as fundoplication may be considered. These treatments aim to address the underlying causes of GERD and provide relief from persistent symptoms.

The Impact of Modern Lifestyle
The rise of GERD cases in India is closely linked to modern lifestyle factors. The shift towards processed and fast foods has increased the intake of high-fat, high-sugar, and spicy foods, which trigger GERD symptoms. Urbanization has led to a sedentary lifestyle with limited physical activity, contributing to obesity and increased abdominal pressure. High-stress levels from demanding work and personal pressures can exacerbate GERD by boosting stomach acid production.

Irregular eating habits, such as skipping meals or eating large quantities late at night, further contribute to GERD. Increased consumption of carbonated beverages can relax the lower esophageal sphincter, worsening acid reflux. Additionally, smoking, excessive alcohol consumption, and irregular sleep patterns can also trigger GERD symptoms.

Understanding GERD's symptoms and management strategies is crucial. Lifestyle modifications, such as dietary adjustments, weight management, and mindful eating habits, can alleviate symptoms and improve health. While medications and surgical options provide relief for severe cases, addressing root causes like high-stress levels, sedentary behaviour, and unhealthy eating habits is essential. *(The author is the Director and Head of Department, Gastroenterology, Yatharth Hospital, Greater Noida)*

Sleep 'resets' neurons to help brain take on new memories

By: Corrie Pelc

One of the main functions of the human brain is to create memories—the ability to retain and recall information over time. Memories allow us to remember important events in our lives, the faces of those we know, and give us the ability to learn.

Special cells in the brain called neurons help create memories, which are then stored in the hippocampus area of the brain. A number of lifestyle factors can help improve a person's ability to create memories, including following a healthy diet, exercising, meditation, and getting enough sleep. "We have a bulk knowledge about sleep being better for our body to rest, for our memory to be better, but we do not yet understand all the details of how this happens," Azahara Oliva, PhD, assistant professor in the Department of Neurobiology and Behavior in the College of Arts and Sciences at Cornell University explained to Medical News Today.

"Once we start cracking the neural processes that are important for these many different things, we could use that to reverse detrimental conditions, such as memory impairment, during sleep," she added.

Oliva is the corresponding author of a new study recently published in the journal Science, which found that during sleep, the hippocampus goes "silent" and allows neurons to "reset," making them available to create new memories the next day, via a mouse model.

"We want to see what exactly the brain is doing during sleep that favors or disfavors memory," Oliva said. "We [spend] about a third of our life sleeping—this is a lot of time. Understanding the relation between sleep and memory will provide insights into how we can tackle detrimental memory conditions."

How do neurons 'reset' during sleep?

The researchers explained that there are three main regions of the hippocampus: CA1, CA2, and CA3.

Using a mouse model, the scientists discovered that while the neurons in areas CA1 and CA3 were very active during daytime learning, those regions became "silent" while the mice slept.

"We realized there are other hippocampal states that happen during sleep where everything is silenced," Oliva said in a press release. "The CA1 and CA3 regions that had been very active were suddenly quiet. It's a reset of memory, and this state is generated by the middle region, CA2."

This "silencing" of areas CA1 and CA3 allow neurons to "reset" during sleep.

"During our experience, a few neurons become highly active," Oliva explained. "The same neurons 'work hard' during sleep to imprint this experience into memory. What we found is that for these neurons to be able to imprint these memories, they also need breaks or a 'reset.' Without these breaks, the neurons are not able to make proper memories."

Opening treatment options for memory-related conditions

Thanks to the findings of this study, Oliva and her team believe they now have some tools to

help potentially boost memory. Such strategies could eventually help doctors tackle diseases characterized by memory issues, such as Alzheimer's disease.

Additionally, scientists believe these findings might help one day allow doctors to remove negative or traumatic memories from a person to assist with conditions like post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD).

"We now know which particular neurons and through which particular neural circuits are responsible for different neural processes, both important for memory, like consolidation and resetting," Oliva said. "That will facilitate the specificity that we can gain when treating different types of detrimental memory conditions."

Commenting on the next step in this research, she told MNT:

"We want to know how exactly the brain coordinates high memory demands. What happens when there is more than one experience? At the end of the day, during most of our life we [always have] many things we want to learn and remember."

Memory research: Hippocampus remains an area of interest

After reviewing this study, Manisha Parulekar, MD, FACP, AGSF, CMD, director of the Division of Geriatrics at Hackensack University Medical Center, co-director of the Center for Memory Loss and Brain Health at Hackensack University Medical Center, and associate professor at Hackensack Meridian School of Medicine in New Jersey, told MNT that it provides insight into how sleep "resets" the brain for new learning, offering a potential explanation for why we need sleep and how it impacts memory consolidation. "Understanding the role of the CA2 region in silencing and resetting memory circuits could lead to therapies that enhance memory consolidation and prevent further cognitive decline in patients with dementia and Alzheimer's disease," Parulekar explained.

"Additionally, optimizing sleep quality through interventions like cognitive-behavioral therapy for insomnia could be crucial in managing these conditions," she noted.

Parulekar said that it is important for researchers to continue to find new ways in which sleep affects the brain as further research is needed to understand individual variations in sleep patterns and brain activity to personalize these potential therapies.

"Exploring the contributions of other sleep stages and developing noninvasive techniques to modulate brain activity during sleep are also important areas for future investigation," she continued.

"Translating these findings into clinical trials to test the efficacy of interventions targeting the CA2 circuit or sleep quality in patients with dementia and Alzheimer's disease is crucial," said Parulekar. "Developing personalized approaches based on individual sleep patterns and brain activity and conducting studies to evaluate the sustained benefits and potential risks of these interventions are essential next steps." *(Courtesy: Medical News Today)*

Acid reflux disease: Heartburn in modern lifestyle

By: Dr Vineet Kumar Gupta

Gastroesophageal reflux disease (GERD) commonly known as acid reflux disease is increasingly becoming a common ailment in India, affecting a significant portion of the population. Characterized by persistent heartburn and acid regurgitation, GERD occurs when stomach acid frequently flows back into the esophagus, irritating its lining. This condition, which can significantly impact quality of life, is closely tied to modern lifestyle habits, making it a pertinent issue in today's fast-paced world.

Symptoms and Diagnosis

The primary symptoms of GERD include chronic heartburn, acid reflux, and a sour taste in the mouth. Other symptoms may include chest pain, difficulty swallowing, regurgitation of food or sour liquid, and a sensation of a lump in the throat. In some cases, GERD can also cause chronic cough, laryngitis, and disrupted sleep.

Diagnosis of GERD typically involves a combination of symptom assessment and diagnostic tests such as endoscopy, pH monitoring, and esophageal manometry. These tests help determine the severity of the reflux and the extent of esophageal damage.

Managing GERD

Management of GERD involves a combination of lifestyle modifications, medications, and, in some cases, surgical interventions. Key lifestyle changes can significantly alleviate symptoms. Dietary adjustments are crucial; avoiding foods and beverages that trigger reflux – such as fatty foods, chocolate, caffeine, alcohol, and spicy foods – can help reduce discomfort.

Additionally, eating smaller, more frequent meals instead of large ones can be beneficial. Weight management also plays a critical role, as excess weight increases abdominal pressure, exacerbating GERD symptoms. Elevating the head of the bed by 6-8 inches and

Israel recovers bodies of 6 hostages in Gaza

JERUSALEM, Sept 1: Israel on Sunday said it had recovered the bodies of six hostages in Gaza, including a young Israeli-American man who became one of the most well-known captives held by Hamas as his parents met with world leaders and pressed for his release.

The military said all six had been killed shortly before the arrival of Israeli forces trying to rescue them. Their recovery sparked calls for mass protests against Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, whom many families of hostages and much of the wider Israeli public blame for failing to bring them back alive in a deal with Hamas to end the 10-month-old war. Negotiations over such a deal have dragged on for months.

Netanyahu expressed sorrow over the deaths and said Israel would hold Hamas accountable for killing them in "cold blood". He said the killings prove that the militant group does not want a a cease-fire agreement.

"Whoever murders hostages doesn't want a deal," he said.

Militants seized Hersh Goldberg-Polin, 23, and four of the other hostages at a music festival in southern Israel during Hamas' October 7 attack, which triggered the war.

The native of Berkeley, California, lost part of his left arm to a grenade in the attack. In April, a Hamas-issued video showed him, his left hand missing and clearly speaking under duress, sparking new protests in Israel urging the government to do more to secure his and others' freedom.

The army identified the other dead hostages as Ori Danino, 25; Eden Yerushalmi, 24; Almog Sarusi, 27; and Alexander Lobanov, 33; who were also taken from the music festival. The sixth,

Carmel Gat, 40, was abducted from the nearby farming community of Be'eri.

It said the bodies were recovered from a tunnel in the southern Gaza city of Rafah, around a kilometer (half a mile) from where another hostage, Qaid Farhan Alkadi, 52, was rescued alive last week.

"According to preliminary information, they were cruelly murdered by Hamas terrorists shortly before we reached them," Rear Adm. Daniel Hagari, the Israeli military spokesperson, told reporters.

Hamas has offered to release the hostages in return for an end to the war, the withdrawal of Israeli forces and the release of a large number of Palestinian prisoners, including high-profile militants.

Izzat al-Rishq, a senior Hamas official, blamed the hostages' deaths on Israel and the United States, saying they would still be alive if Israel had accepted a cease-fire proposal that Hamas said it had agreed to back in July. He did not mention the hostages by name.

Families of hostages call for a complete halt of the country

Netanyahu has vowed to continue the war until Hamas is destroyed and says military pressure is needed to bring home the hostages.

Israel's Channel 12 reported that he got into a shouting match at a security Cabinet meeting late Thursday with his defense minister, Yoav Gallant, who accused him of prioritising control of a strategic corridor along the Gaza-Egypt border — a major sticking point in the talks — over the lives of the hostages.

The Cabinet reportedly voted in favour of re-



maining in the corridor over the objections of Gallant, who said it would prevent a hostage deal.

An Israeli official confirmed the report and said three of the hostages — Goldberg-Polin, Yerushalmi and Gat — had been slated to be released in the first phase of a cease-fire proposal discussed back in July. The official was not authorized to brief media about the negotiations and spoke on condition of anonymity.

"In the name of the state of Israel, I hold their families close to my heart and ask forgiveness," Gallant said Sunday after the remains were recovered. He later called for the Cabinet to reverse its decision.

A forum of hostage families called for a massive protest on Sunday, demanding a "complete halt of the country" to push for the implementation of a cease-fire and hostage release.

"A deal for the return of the hostages has been on the table for over two months. Were it not for the delays, sabotage, and excuses those whose deaths we learned about this morning would

likely still be alive," it said in a statement.

US President Joe Biden, who has met with Goldberg-Polin's parents, said he was "devastated and outraged".

"It is as tragic as it is reprehensible," he said. "Make no mistake, Hamas leaders will pay for these crimes. And we will keep working around the clock for a deal to secure the release of the remaining hostages."

Vice President Kamala Harris said her prayers were with the Goldberg-Polin family and condemned Hamas.

A high-profile campaign

Goldberg-Polin's parents, US-born immigrants to Israel, became perhaps the most high-profile relatives of hostages on the international stage. They met with Biden, Pope Francis and others and addressed the United Nations, urging the release of all hostages.

On August 21, his parents addressed a hushed hall at the Democratic National Convention — after sustained applause and chants of "bring him home".

"This is a political convention. But needing our only son — and all of the cherished hostages — home is not a political issue. It is a humanitarian issue," said his father, Jon Polin. His mother, Rachel, who bowed her head during the ovation and touched her chest, said "Hersh, if you can hear us, we love you, stay strong, survive."

She and her husband sought to keep their son and the others held from being reduced to numbers, describing Hersh as a music and soccer lover and traveller with plans to attend university since his military service had ended. At events she often addressed her son directly in the hope he

could hear her, urging him to live another day.

Some 250 hostages were taken on October 7. Before the military's announcement of the latest discovery of bodies, Israel said it believed 108 hostages were still held in Gaza, of which about one-third were dead. In late August, the Israeli military recovered the bodies of six hostages in southern Gaza.

Eight hostages have been rescued by Israeli forces, the most recent found on Tuesday. More than 100 were freed during a weeklong cease-fire in November in exchange for the release of Palestinians imprisoned by Israel.

Two previous Israeli operations to free hostages killed scores of Palestinians. Hamas says several hostages have been killed in Israeli airstrikes and failed rescue attempts. Israeli troops mistakenly killed three Israelis who escaped captivity in December.

Hamas-led militants killed some 1,200 people, mostly civilians, when they stormed into southern Israel on October 7, attacking army bases and several farming communities.

Israel's retaliatory offensive in Gaza has killed over 40,000 Palestinians, according to local health officials, who do not say how many were fighters and how many civilians. It has displaced the vast majority of Gaza's 2.3 million people, often multiple times, and plunged the besieged territory into a humanitarian catastrophe.

In a separate development Sunday, Palestinian militants killed three Israeli police officers when they opened fire on their vehicle in the West Bank, according to Israeli officials. Israel has been carrying out large-scale military raids across the occupied territory in recent days. (AP)

Country needs more than USD 100 billion in foreign investment: Iran Prez

TEHRAN, Sept 1: Iran's president said Saturday his country needs some \$100 billion in foreign investment to achieve an annual target of 8% economic growth up from the current rate of 4%.

The remarks by Masoud Pezeshkian, who was elected in July, came in his first live televised interview by state TV.

Pezeshkian said Iran needs up to \$250 billion to reach its goal but more than half is available from domestic resources. Experts say growth in GDP of 8% would reduce double-digit inflation and unemployment rates.

Hundreds of entities and people in Iran — from the central bank and government officials to drone producers and money exchangers — are already under international sanctions, many of them accused of materially supporting Iran's Revolutionary Guard and foreign militant groups such as Hamas,



Hezbollah and the Houthis.

Pezeshkian in his interview complained about the sanctions and said his administration plans to reduce inflation, which is running at more than 40% annually, "if we solve our problems with neighbours and the

world." He did not elaborate.

Pezeshkian confirmed that his first visit abroad will be to neighboring Iraq and he would then fly to New York to attend the United Nations General Assembly meeting on Sept 22-23. He said while he was in

New York he would meet with Iranian expatriates to invite them to invest in Iran. Out of more than 8 million Iranian expatriates, some 1.5 million Iranian live in the United States.

Pezeshkian, who is viewed as a reformist, was sworn in last month and parliament approved his cabinet earlier in August, promising a softer tone both inside and outside the country. His predecessor, Ebrahim Raisi, a hard-line protégé of Iran's supreme leader who led the country as it enriched uranium near weapons-grade levels, died in a helicopter crash in May, along with seven other people.

Iran's economy has struggled since 2018 after then-President Donald Trump pulled the US out of the deal to constrain Tehran's nuclear programme and imposed more sanctions. Pezeshkian said during his presidential campaign that he would try to revive the nuclear deal. (AP)

Bangladesh doctors on strike to protest assault at Dhaka hospital



DHAKA, Sept 1: Doctors in Bangladesh on Sunday announced a nationwide strike at public and private hospitals to protest the assault on medical professionals for their alleged negligence resulting in the death of a student at Dhaka Medical College Hospital (DMCH) last night.

The demonstrating doctors called for immediate legal and punitive action against the perpetrators of the assault while also demanding safety at workplaces as a precondition to return to work.

Doctors across the country announced a complete shutdown of all public and private hospitals starting September 1 with a four-point demand, including the arrest of those involved in the assault on doctors in Dhaka Medical College Hospital (DMCH) on Saturday night.

"The sooner they accept our demand, the better. We will start giving treatment as soon as our demands are met," the protesting doctors told the media at the DMCH premises.

They said the nurses also expressed solidarity with doctors and refused to join work.

Asked who would take responsibility if anyone died for lack of treatment, the protesters said the administration would be responsible for any such incident.

The doctors demanded immediate security measures at all healthcare facilities in the country through the deployment of armed "health police".

They said if any irregularities or negligence in patient care were observed at any hospital, appropriate action should be taken through complaints to relevant authorities.

"Under no circumstances should individuals take the law into their own hands," the doctors said in a statement.

The protest by medical professionals comes following the massive quota reform demonstrations that led to the ouster of former Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina. (PTI)

Trump's appearance at Arlington a 'political stunt' that 'disrespected sacred ground': Harris

WASHINGTON, Sept 1: US Vice President Kamala Harris said former President Donald Trump "disrespected sacred ground" in his recent appearance at Arlington National Cemetery, where the Republican nominee took and distributed images despite a federal prohibition on campaign activity on the grounds.

Harris, in a statement posted Saturday on the social media platform X, cited reports that Trump's campaign aides created an altercation with a cemetery staffer and proceeded to take photographs and film the former president, including at the graves of Afghanistan war veterans, after being warned about rules at the site.

"Let me be clear: the former president disrespected sacred ground, all for the sake of a political stunt," Harris said, calling Arlington a "solemn place where we come together to honour American heroes ... not a place for politics."

The original incident stemmed from Trump's and Republicans' continued criticism of President Joe Biden and now Harris for the chaotic US withdrawal from Afghanistan. At the invitation of some family members of

service members killed during the withdrawal, Trump laid wreaths last Monday in honour of Sgt Nicole Gee, Staff Sgt Darin Hoover and Staff Sgt Ryan Knauss.

They were among 13 US service members and more than 100 Afghans who died in an Aug 26, 2021, bombing at Hamid Karzai International Airport.

Trump's campaign was warned about not taking photographs before an altercation at the cemetery, according to defense officials. Officials have said since that an Arlington employee whom two Trump campaign staff members allegedly "verbally abused and pushed" aside has declined to press charges. The Trump campaign has since lashed out at Pentagon officials, with a top campaign adviser, Chris LaCivita, referring to military spokespersons as "hacks". Trump campaign officials say it had permission to bring someone to take video.

Since Biden ended his reelection bid, Trump has been zeroing in on Harris and her roles in foreign policy decisions. He has specifically highlighted the vice president's statements that she was the last person in the room before Biden made the decision on Afghanistan. (AP)

Without X, Brazilians say they feel disconnected from world

SAO PAULO, Sept 1: The blocking of social media platform X in Brazil divided users and politicians over the legitimacy of the ban, and many Brazilians had difficulty and doubts over navigating other social media in its absence.

The shutdown of Elon Musk's platform started early Saturday, making it largely inaccessible on both the web and through mobile apps after the billionaire refused to name a legal representative to the country, missing a deadline imposed by Supreme Court Justice Alexandre de Moraes. The blockade marks an escalation in a monthslong feud between Musk and de Moraes over free speech, far-right accounts and misinformation.

Brazil is one of the biggest markets for X, with tens of millions of users.

"I've got the feeling that I have no idea what's happening in the world right now. Bizarre," entertainment writer and heavy X user Chico Barney wrote on Threads on Saturday. Threads is a text-based app developed by Instagram that Barney was using as an alternative. "This Threads algorithm is like an all-you-can-eat restaurant where the waiter keeps serving things I would never order."

Bluesky, a social media platform that was launched last year as an alternative to X and other more established sites, has seen a large influx of Brazilians in the past couple of days. The company said Friday it has seen about



200,000 new users from Brazil sign up during that time, and the number "continues to grow by the minute". Brazilian users are also setting records for activities such as follows and likes, Bluesky said.

Previous users of other platforms welcomed Brazilians to their ranks. "Hello literally everyone in Brazil," a user wrote on Threads. "We're a lot nicer than Twitter here," said another. Platform migration isn't new for Brazilians. They were huge adopters of Orkut and, when Orkut went kaput, they very gladly moved to other platforms.

X is not as popular in Brazil as Facebook, Instagram, YouTube or TikTok. However, it remains an important platform on which Brazilians engage in political debates and is highly influ-

ential among politicians, journalists and other opinion makers.

It's also where they share their sense of humour. Many of the country's most famous memes originate from posts on X before spreading to other social networks. Last week, for instance, Brazilians collaboratively crafted an absurd storyline for a fictional telenovela, complete with a theme song created using artificial intelligence tools.

Pop stars and their fanbases were also hit by Brazilians being left off the platform.

"Wait a lot of my fan pages are Brazilian!!! Come back hold up!!," Cardi B said Friday on X. A fan page dedicated to Timothée Chalamet, known by the handle TimotheeUpDates, said it would temporarily cease

updating as all of its administrators are Brazilian. De Moraes said X will stay suspended until it complies with his orders, and he also set a daily fine of 50,000 reais (\$8,900) for people or companies using virtual private networks, or VPNs, to access it. Some legal experts questioned the grounds for that decision and how it would be enforced. Others suggested the move was authoritarian.

The Brazilian Bar Association said Friday in a statement that it would request the Supreme Court review the fines imposed on all citizens using VPNs or other means to access X without due process. Brazil's bar association argued that sanctions should never be imposed summarily before ensuring an adversarial process and the right to full defence.

"I've used VPNs a lot in authoritarian countries like China to continue accessing news sites and social networks," Mauricio Santoro, a political science professor at the State University of Rio de Janeiro, said on the platform before its shutdown. "It never occurred to me that this type of tool would be banned in Brazil. It's dystopian."

A search Friday on X showed hundreds of Brazilian users inquiring about VPNs that could potentially enable them to continue using the platform by making it appear they are logging on from outside the country. (AP)

Germany's leaders pay tribute to victims of the Solingen knife attack



BERLIN, Sept 1: German leaders paid tribute on Sunday to the three people killed in the August 23 knife attack by a suspected Islamic extremist, which has pushed immigration back to the top of the country's political agenda. Eight people also were wounded in the attack at a "Festival of Diversity" marking the 650th anniversary of the city of Solingen in western Germany. President Frank-Walter Steinmeier said at a memorial event in a city theatre that he was "relieved and thankful" that none of them is now in serious danger.

The 26-year-old Syrian suspect, who was arrested a day after the attack, was supposed to be deported to Bulgaria last year but reportedly disappeared for a time and avoided deportation.

In recent days, Chancellor Olaf Scholz's government has announced new restrictions on knives and new measures to ease deportations. On Friday, it deported Afghan nationals to their homeland for the first time

since the Taliban returned to power in 2021, following up on a pledge made in June after a previous attack.

"It is a horrifying crime that brings us together today, carried out by a man who, according to everything we know, sought and found protection here, and abused this protection so terribly," Steinmeier said at the memorial, also attended by Scholz and other top officials. "That is also intolerable."

Steinmeier said that "we are for good reason a country that takes in people who seek protection from political persecution and war".

He added that "we want to remain that country, but ultimately we can only do so if the number of those who are not entitled to this special protection does not overburden us".

"We must make every effort to implement the entry rules that exist and the ones that are now being drawn up," he said, adding that "this must be a priority in the coming years".

The attack in Solingen also has reawakened painful memories of a racist firebomb attack on a Turkish family's home there in which five women and girls were killed in 1993. Four young Germans were later convicted. "There was already one shocking Solingen attack, now a second," Mayor Tim Kurzbach said. "Why always Solingen?" (AP)

ZPM govt's flagship programme led to growth of plantation area of agricultural crops

AIZAWL, Sept 1: The Zoram People's Movement (ZPM) government's plan to purchase a few agricultural and horticulture produce of farmers has led to growth of plantation area of such crops in the state, an official said.

Sticking to its pre-poll plank, the ZPM government led by Chief Minister Lalduhoma soon after it came to power in December last year, had announced that it will purchase four agricultural or horticultural crops - ginger, turmeric, chilli and broom sticks under its flagship programme "Bana Kaih" or hand holding policy to economically uplift the farmers. The government also fixed minimum prices for such crops.

According to officials of the state horticulture department, the number of farmers cultivating organic ginger, turmeric and Mizo chilli and the extent of the area where such cultivations are being done has gone up this year as compared to the previous year.

The reason for such growth might have been due to the government's assurance to arrange markets or buy the four crops and also to provide minimum price support to farmers in the case of failure to sell their produce below the minimum prices fixed by the government, they said.

The department officials said that ginger plantation is now done in 27,608.5 acres of land by 25,102 families in 11 districts and more than 19,000 quintals are expected to be harvested by farmers this year.

The officials said that turmeric cultivation also spread to over 4,281 acres of land in the state and is being cultivated by 3,415 families.

The state is expected to harvest more than 81,000 quintals of turmeric at the end of this year, they said.

With 892 families planting turmeric plants in over 1,600 acres of land, south Mizoram's Lunglei district topped in turmeric cultivation, followed by Aizawl district and Kolasib district.

Over 8,600 families are currently cultivating Mizo chilli in over 11,800 acres of land across all the 11 districts, officials said.

The cultivation is expected to yield over 37,000 quintals of chilli by the end of the year, they said. Aizawl district has the highest number of farmers (1,138 families) doing chilli plantation on 1,218 acres of land, followed by Serchhip district, which has 1,026 families doing such plantation on 1,258.5 acres of land, officials said. (PTI)

Suspected militants kills women, injures daughter in Manipur

IMPHAL, Sept 1: A woman was killed and four others were injured when suspected militants launched a gun-and-bomb attack in Manipur's Imphal West district on Sunday, police said.

According to police, the militants fired indiscriminately from hilltop positions towards the low-lying valley areas of Koutruk and neighbouring Kadangband killing the woman and injuring four others, including her eight-year-old daughter and a police officer.

The sudden assault on the unsuspecting village caused widespread panic, forcing many residents, including women, children, and the elderly, to

flee to safer areas, police added.

The body of the deceased woman, identified as 31-year-old Ngangbam Surbala Devi, has been taken to the Regional Institute of Medical Sciences (RIMS) for post-mortem examination. Devi's daughter and police officer N. Robert (30) have been admitted to RIMS while two others are recuperating at Raj Medicity.

The victims were at their homes when the firing and bombings began. Security forces, including both state and central units, have been deployed to the area to stabilise the situation, police added. (PTI)

Manipur CM Biren Singh vows to curb activities of Arambai Tenggol

IMPHAL, Sept 1: Manipur Chief Minister N Biren Singh has taken a firm stand against pro-Meitei militant groups, specifically the Arambai Tenggol, which has been accused of inciting violence against the Kuki community.

In a recent interview with PTI Videos, the chief minister said, "I told them (Arambai Tenggol) you will not do any anti-national or communal act. You have to support the government."

"There should be no communal word from you. I gave a clear warning 'You will not say anything', Singh said.

He noted that the group has remained silent for five months, affirming his commitment to prevent any extremist or anti-national activities.

The Arambai Tenggol has been a focal point of controversy, with Kuki representatives blaming the organisation for exacerbating violence.

The chief minister characterised the group as a cultural outfit that resorted to



arms in response to an initial lack of police presence during the outbreaks of violence.

He also emphasised his resolve not to resign from his position, recalling a dramatic incident last year when Arambai Tenggol members thwarted his attempt to step down by seizing and tearing his resignation letter in public.

Kuki groups have alleged that the group conducted surveys to profile their community and marked the homes of Kuki-Zo tribals, leading to targeted violence after May 3 last year.

The Kuki groups, including the Indige-

nous Tribal Leaders Forum (ITLF), an umbrella organisation of tribal groups, have alleged that the Manipur government ignored all evidence linking the Arambai Tenggol to the incidents of violence.

The cadre of the group have been accused of being involved in incidents like the brutal killing of a seven-year-old boy of mixed Kuki-Meitei parentage who was burnt alive alongside his mother and his aunt in an ambulance in June last year.

In a police complaint, Joshua Hangsing, the father of the child, accused a mob comprising members from the Meitei Leepun, Arambai Tenggol and Kangleipak Kanba Lup of attacking the ambulance and setting it ablaze with people inside.

Manipur's demographic landscape reveals that Meiteis constitute approximately 53 per cent of the population, primarily residing in the Imphal valley, while tribal communities, including Nagas and Kukis, make up around 40 per cent and predominantly inhabit the hill districts. (PTI)

USTM Commemorates PA Sangma on his 77th Birth Anniversary



HT Bureau

GUWAHATI, Sept 1: The University of Science and Technology-Meghalaya (USTM) paid heartfelt tribute to Late PA Sangma, former Lok Sabha Speaker and Chief Minister of Meghalaya, during a solemn ceremony marking his 77th birth anniversary on September 1.

Late Sangma was remembered as an exemplary statesman and a beacon of inspiration and was honored with floral tributes by the entire USTM family.

In this context, Shri Mahabul Hoque reflected on the enduring influence of Late PA Sangma and said that he has been an all-time inspiration and great support to

USTM since its inception. His memory is our guiding light, Hoque stated, highlighting the upcoming PA Sangma International Medical College and Hospital, a cutting-edge multi-specialty facility approved by the Meghalaya Cabinet, as a tribute to Late PA Sangma's legacy.

Prof GD Sharma, Vice Chancellor of USTM, emphasized the university dedication to preserving Late PA Sangma's memory, noting, "At USTM, we honor his legacy through the establishment of a Chair for Tribal Research and by naming a university block after him. These efforts ensure that future generations will continue to draw inspiration from his life and ideals."

Dr Rashna Dass Hazarika, Medical Superintendent of PIMC, echoed these sentiments, praising Late PA Sangma as a visionary leader and founder of the National People's Party (NPP), the first national political party from the North East. His legacy continues to inspire us, and we remain forever grateful to him, she remarked.

Seven illegal immigrants, including two Rohingyas arrested in Tripura



AGARTALA, Sept 1: Five Bangladeshis and two Rohingyas, who entered Tripura without valid documents, were arrested from two separate areas in the northeastern state, police said on Sunday.

Acting on a tip-off, Government Railway Police (GRP) personnel detained two persons from Agartala station on Friday, a senior officer said. During interrogation, the two persons admitted that they were inmates in Cox's Bazar Rohingya camp in the neighbouring country, he said.

"Ramzan Ali and Azida Begum crossed the international border and planned to go to Kolkata by

train," Agartala GRP Police Station Officer-in-Charge (OC) Tapas Das said.

In another incident, five Bangladeshi infiltrators and two suspected Indian touts were arrested in Dhalai district on Saturday.

All the arrested Bangladeshis are residents of Moulvibazar and Sylhet districts in the neighbouring country, a BSF official said.

"The Bangladesh nationals entered India without valid documents and the two Indians are believed to be actively involved in facilitating illegal migration," he added. (PTI)

Air India Express adds Agartala in its flight services

MUMBAI, Sept 1: Air India Express on Sunday announced the addition of Agartala in its flight services network, making it the airline's 46th domestic destination.

As part of this, the airline commenced from Sunday its direct daily flight services to Guwahati and Kolkata, Air India Express said.

Additionally, Air India Express also inaugurated new routes from Hyderabad to Guwahati, Bengaluru to Vijayawada, and Bengaluru to Indore on Sunday.

The airline said it now operates a total of 14 weekly flights from Agartala, providing daily direct services to Guwahati and Kolkata, besides offering one-stop connections to Bhubaneswar, Bengaluru, Chennai, Delhi, Hyderabad, Imphal, Jaipur, and Kochi from Agartala. (PTI)

Pradyot demands action against idol vandalism

Urges unity for flood-affected victims



HT Correspondent

AGARTALA, Sept 1: Former Tripura Chairman, Pradyot Kishore Manikya Debbarma, called for strict action against those responsible for the vandalism of a Kali Maa idol in Ranibazar, West District, which occurred on August 26.

Debbarma, after visiting the home of late Chiranjit Dey, announced his personal contribution of ₹ 50,000 to Dey's grieving family. The 31-year-old Dey tragically lost his life while trying to rescue another individual during the recent floods.

"When faced with disasters, whether a pandemic or a natural calamity, the impact is universal. We must rise above differences in religion and community to stand united. I choose to spread love and empathy, even if others harbor hatred and jealousy. Now is not the time for politics, especially when people are suffering. The focus should be on helping those affected by the floods," said Debbarma.

Addressing the issue of idol vandalism,

Debbarma stressed the role of political actors in such incidents, calling for an end to communal tensions.

"Politicians often have a hand in stoking communal violence, whether it's in Gandatwisa or Ranibazar. Such incidents only hinder Tripura's development. We are all Indians, regardless of our religion, and it is unacceptable to see people fighting in the name of God. The culprit behind the desecration of the Kali Maa idol should be brought to justice, but targeting a Muslim family in retaliation is equally wrong. The law must take its course," he asserted.

Debbarma emphasized India's unique identity, contrasting it with neighboring countries. "In Pakistan and Bangladesh, minorities have been oppressed and failed to progress. India stands apart as the land of Swami Vivekananda and B R Ambedkar. We must ensure that minorities are empowered and modernized, not persecuted. This is not the time for communal violence," he concluded.

Membership drive

AGARTALA, Sept 1: Tripura Chief Minister Manik Saha will kick start the one-and-a-half month-long membership drive of BJP in the northeastern state on September 3, a senior party leader on Sunday. The BJP Tripura unit has set a target of 12 lakh members this time, state BJP general secretary Amit Rakshit told PTI.

"We will kick start the one-and-a-half month-long membership drive of BJP in Tripura from September 3. Chief Minister Manik Saha will inaugurate the process in the presence of party's state president, Rajib Bhattacharjee," he said.

In the membership the focus will be on online members, Rakshit said. (PTI)

Man held

GANGTOK, Sept 1: A man has been arrested in Sikkim's Soreng district for allegedly raping her minor stepdaughter, police said on Sunday. The incident came to light when the nine-year-old girl had gone to the district hospital in Soreng town for a regular checkup on August 30, they said. The hospital authorities then informed the district police following which the accused was arrested on Saturday, an officer said.

The girl has alleged that she was raped by her stepfather at least four times in the past few months, he said. Investigation is underway, the officer added. (PTI)

Assam CM donates ₹ 5 Cr for flood relief, Tripura CM conveys thanks

HT Correspondent

AGARTALA, Sept 1: Tripura Chief Minister Prof Manik Saha expressed his gratitude to Assam Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma for donating ₹ 5 crore to assist the flood

Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma and the Government of Assam for coming forward to help the flood victims."

CM Saha further mentioned that at his official residence, Assam's

Minister of Tourism Jayanta Malla Barua, on behalf of the Government of Assam, donated ₹ 5 crore to aid the flood victims.

"I am also very thankful to Shri Jayanta Malla Barua," added Manik Saha.

Meanwhile, Assam CM wrote, "The people of Assam stand shoulder to shoulder with the people of Tripura in this hour of crisis. Chief Minister, this token of assistance of 5cr comes with the prayers of 3.5 crore people of Assam for quick return of normalcy in Tripura."



victims in Tripura.

The donation was presented by Assam's Minister of Tourism, Jayanta Malla Barua, to CM Saha at his official residence in Agartala.

On X, Saha wrote, "My sincere thanks and gratitude to Assam Chief

Nagaland govt decision to revisit liquor prohibition divided Naga society

HT Correspondent

DIMAPUR, Sept 1: The Nagaland Pradesh Congress Committee (NPCC) on Sunday said the state government's decision to revisit the Nagaland Liquor Total Prohibition (NLTP) Act, 1989, and the subsequent debate that ensued between those in favour and against the review of the act has divided the Naga Society right through the middle.

In a statement issued by its communication department, the NPCC said it opposes the state government's intention to review the act.

The Pradesh Congress urged the government to reconsider its decision or hold extensive consultations and consensus-building exercises with all stakeholders on the matter before arriving at a final decision.

It recalled that the NLTP Act, 1989, was enacted and enforced in 1989 and 1990 respectively during the then Congress government in the state in accordance with the strong and unanimous public sentiment that prevailed during those times.

The NPCC said it has steadfastly upheld and stood by that decision till date.

Further, it appealed to the people of Nagaland to consider contemporary realities and approach the issue with an objective and conciliatory spirit.

Need for policy, institutional support to protect Arunachal state animal

In a bid to save Mithun from extinction



ITANAGAR, Sept 1: Arunachal Pradesh Governor Lt Gen (ret'd) K T Parnaik on Sunday emphasised the urgent need for both policy and institutional support to protect the state animal, Mithun, whose population is declining.

Speaking at the second edition of "Mithun Day" and the inauguration of the national seminar on "Integrated Mithun Farming for Enhancing Farmers Income in NE", Parnaik highlighted that the animal has not received adequate support, likely due to its small population and localised presence.

"Lack of support has led to habitat exploitation and destruction, posing a serious threat to its already dwindling numbers," Parnaik said and underscored that conservation efforts for Mithun should integrate traditional practices with modern conservation techniques.

The Governor proposed the development of a "special land

use policy" and designation of Mithun conservation areas. He suggested that community Mithun rearing centres be established in strategic locations to serve clusters of 2-3 villages.

He also recommended in-depth discussions with scientists, farmers, and officials to create a pilot project for Mithun research and development, focusing on evolving best practices to benefit Mithun farmers.

Parnaik noted that Arunachal Pradesh holds the highest Mithun population among the North Eastern states, accounting for 89 per cent of the global population. He expressed pride in the farmers and people of the state for nurturing such a unique animal.

The Governor described the Mithun as a symbol of peace and communal harmony, frequently featured in tribal mythology and folklore.

He further advocated for the domestication of Mithun for draft power in plowing and as a beast of burden in hilly areas.

Parnaik suggested forming cooperatives for Mithun milk and its products and establishing tanneries with modern equipment to utilise the skin and hides, which are often discarded after slaughter. These products could include high-quality coats, mats, and shoes for export, he added. The governor exhorted the scientists and officials to evolve a technically and biologically sound breeding policy to avoid "inbreeding" and reduce mortality and establish research centres to exploit the productive in-built potential of milk, meat and draught.

The seminar was organised by the Arunachal Mithun and Yak Conservation Mission, the state Department of Animal Husbandry, Veterinary, and Dairy Development, in collaboration with the National Research Centre on Mithun in Nagaland, under the Indian Council of Agricultural Research (ICAR). (PTI)

ENGAGEMENT UNDER SAMAGRA SHIKSHA AXOM

No. SSA/Esstt/Engagement/SPE/441/2024/1852

Applications are invited from the eligible candidates for the below mentioned position under Samagra Shiksha on contractual basis. The post is temporary in nature and the selected candidate will be initially engaged for a period of 11 (eleven) months only.

The contractual engagement will neither be regularized under Samagra Shiksha nor will be absorbed under any job/programme of Government of Assam in future.

Name of the Post	Essential Qualification and Experience	Pay in Pay Band in Rs.	Grade Pay in Rs.	Age limit
State Project Engineer (01 position at State Mission Office)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> BE in Civil Engineering with minimum working experience of 03 years as Executive Engineer /Superintending in Govt. Deptt/undertaking. Knowledge of Computer Operation 	30000- 110000/-	13300/-	Should not less than 45 years and not more than 65 years of age
		In case of retired person fixed salary will be paid as per Govt. norms.		

- Application in plain A4 paper stating clearly (i) Name of Applicant (in capital letter), (ii) Name of the post, (iii) Permanent Address, (iv) Address for communication, (v) Contact Mobile No./Telephone No., (vi) e-mail (vii) Age on 1st January, 2024, (viii) Details Educational Qualifications, (ix) Other Qualification (x) Working Experience with one self attested copy of passport size recent photograph and self attested copies of Certificates/testimonials relating to Educational Qualifications and Experience certificates should be submitted to the Mission Director, Axom Sarba Siksha Abhiyan Mission (Samagra Shiksha), Kahilipara, Guwahati-19 latest by **16.09.2024** No application will be accepted beyond **16.09.2024, 5.00 pm**.
- Only short-listed candidates will have to appear in test/interview, the exact date of which will be communicated separately.
- The office will not be responsible for any lapse in submission of application due to any postal delay or other problem.



Sd/Mission Director,
Samagra Shiksha Axom
Kahilipara, Guwahati-19

Janasanyog/DF/ 949 / 24/ 2-Sep-24

Former JJP leaders Anoop Dhanak, Ram Kumar Gautam, Jogi Ram Sihag join BJP

CHANDIGARH, Sept 1: Former Jannayak Janta Party leaders Anoop Dhanak, Ram Kumar Gautam and Jogi Ram Sihag, who quit the party recently, joined the BJP on Sunday giving the ruling party in Haryana a boost ahead of the October 5 Assembly poll.

The three leaders along with Ambala Mayor Shakti Rani Sharma were welcomed into the BJP fold by Chief Minister Nayab Singh Saini, the party's state unit chief Mohan Lal Badoli and its Haryana affairs co-incharge Biplab Kumar Deb at a rally in Jind.

Sharma is the wife of Haryana Janchetna Party chief and former Union Minister Venod Sharma. Her son and Independent Rajya Sabha member Kartikeya Sharma was also present at the Jind event.

Dhanak, Gautam and Sihag were Jannayak Janta Party (JJP) MLAs when they abandoned the party.

Gautam, who was with the BJP earlier, represented the Narnaud segment in Haryana Assembly after winning the seat on a Jannayak Janta Party (JJP) ticket in 2019. He, however, did not get a ministerial berth in the BJP-JJP coalition government and was also a vocal critic of former deputy chief minister Dushyant Chautala on various issues.

Addressing the gathering rally, Gautam said the BJP will return to power in Haryana for a third consecutive term, adding, "Nayab Saini will again become chief minister, 200 per cent".

Anoop Dhanak, a former minister, was an MLA from Uklana while Jogi Ram Sihag represented the Barwala segment in the Assembly.

Recently, Jogi Ram Sihag, Ram Niwas Surjakhera, Ram Kumar Gautam and Anoop Dhanak extended support to BJP leader Kiran Choudhry's candidature for the Rajya



Sabha bypoll in Haryana. Kiran was elected unopposed to the Upper House of Parliament.

Notably, Surjakhera was also expected to join the BJP at the Jind rally but was not seen at the event. A few days ago, he was booked on the charge of rape by the Jind police based on a woman's accusations against him.

Surjakhera has dismissed the allegation as "conspiracies" against him ahead of the Assembly polls.

Addressing the Jind rally, Chief Minister Saini said the joining of these leaders has come as a boost for the BJP.

Taking a dig at the Congress over its 'Haryana Maange Hisab' campaign, he accused the opposition party of spreading lies.

Referring to Congress leaders' remarks a week ago that the saffron party has accepted defeat by seeking deferment of the polls, Saini said, "(Bhupinder Singh) Hooda sahab this is BJP. I want to tell Congress leaders that the BJP is not scared, we are always ready to face polls at any time."

Notably, the ruling BJP and the opposition

INLD in Haryana had urged the Election Commission to revise the polling date, keeping in mind the long weekend which might result in poor voter turnout as people tend to go out on extended weekends.

State BJP chief Mohan Lal Badoli, in a recent letter to the poll panel, had also said that on 'Asoj Amavasya' on October 2, several members of the Bishnoi community of Haryana will leave for Rajasthan to participate in an annual fair held on the occasion.

This too can affect the voting percentage, he had said. The Election Commission on Saturday deferred the Haryana assembly poll date from October 1 to October 5, saying the decision was taken keeping in mind the Bishnoi community's festival.

Saini thanked the Election Commission for the decision. Attacking the Congress, he said, "They have been seeking an account (of work done) from us. I posed some questions to the Congress, but they have not given any reply yet."

"We undertook (projects for) equitable development. Jobs have been given on merit,"

Saini said that after he took oath as chief minister in March and just three days later the Model Code of Conduct for the Lok Sabha polls came into effect.

The BJP replaced Manohar Lal Khattar with its then state unit president Nayab Singh Saini as chief minister in March, ahead of the Lok Sabha polls. Khattar got elected to the Lok Sabha from Karnal and was made a Union minister while Saini won the Karnal Assembly bypoll that was held along with the general elections.

Saini said that after the Lok Sabha poll process ended, from that date till the announcement of the Haryana polls on August 16, he barely got around two months.

Even in that short period, the state government took several decisions for the welfare of various sections, including farmers, youth, employees and the poor, he said.

Saini said Congress neither has no policy, intent, or leadership.

"Those who are seeking an account (an account of work done) from us, I want to tell them that we have taken several decisions for the welfare of various sections... they should also tell what they did when they were in power," he said at the Jind rally.

"But the Congress does not have answers to the questions we asked. The people of Haryana will give them a befitting reply on October 5 by bringing the BJP back to power," Saini said.

The Congress has been targeting the ruling party over several issues concerning farmers as well as on issues of unemployment, law and order and others.

The BJP is aiming for a hat-trick in the Haryana Assembly polls to be held on October 5 but faces a tough challenge from a resurgent Congress which is looking to cash in on the anti-incumbency factor. (PTI)

Sonom Wangchuk led 'Delhi Chalo Padyatra' starts from Leh in support of 4-point agenda

LEH, Sept 1: More than 100 volunteers led by renowned innovator and climate activist Sonam Wangchuk started a foot march from here to the national capital on Sunday to urge the Centre to resume the stalled dialogue with the leadership of Ladakh on their four-point agenda.

The 'Delhi Chalo Padyatra' was organized by the Leh Apex Body (LAB), which along with Kargil Democratic Alliance (KDA), are jointly spearheading an agitation over the past four years in support of statehood, extension of the Constitution's sixth schedule, early recruitment process along with a public service commission for Ladakh and separate Lok Sabha seats for Leh and Kargil districts.

The talks between Ladakh representatives and the Central government ended in March without any concrete outcome.

Amid chants of 'Bharat Mata Ki Jai' and "we want sixth schedule", LAB chairman Thupstan Chhewang flagged off the march from NDS Memorial park with Wangchuk expressing hope that the government will greet them with a good news on reaching Delhi on Gandhi Jayanti, marking the birth anniversary of father of the nation Mahatma Gandhi, on October 2. "It is a matter of satisfaction that people from all sections of the society, including elders, women and youngsters, have joined this march in support of our demands...Sixth schedule

of the Constitution and UT with legislature is our democratic right as we want development and management of the region in accordance with our wishes and aspirations," said Wangchuk, who earlier in March held a 21-day long hunger strike in support of the demands. He said this is a people's movement and the government should fulfill the demands of the Ladakhis without a second thought. "We are sharing borders with Pakistan and China who may be boasting of their technology but I want to tell my country that Indians should be proud of the people of Ladakh who are ready to sacrifice their lives for the nation," he said. Expressing confidence that more people will join the march enroute to Delhi via Himachal Pradesh, he said the people are enthusiastic which is evident that even a 90-year-old Ladakh citizen, who lives in Switzerland, is ready to join them in Delhi. "This is another phase of our struggle and the KDA is not joining this march at the initial stage but will definitely give a positive response as the march moves to Delhi," Chhewang said. Tsering Dorjee, an elderly participant, said though his health will not allow him to cover the full distance of around 1,000 km by foot but "I will try to be part of the march as long as I can". "By this march, we want to convey a message that we are very serious with regard to our four demands," he said. (PTI)

Mahayuti seat-sharing talks for assembly polls to conclude in 10 days: BJP's Bawankule

MUMBAI, Sept 1: Maharashtra BJP chief Chandrashekhar Bawankule on Sunday said seat-sharing talks for the assembly polls between the ruling allies will conclude in 10 days.

Chances of winning and not the number of seats contested will be the criteria, he told reporters in Nagpur.

"The seat-sharing talks in Mahayuti will conclude in 10 days. We have decided that seats will be allotted on the basis of winnability. We will leave some seats for our allies. How many each will contest is not important. What is important is to have double engine government to ensure continuity of welfare schemes," he said.

Bawankule also said directives have been issued to all BJP functionaries to not make comments that could cause discord in the alliance, which also comprises Chief Minister Eknath Shinde's Shiv Sena and Ajit Pawar-led NCP.

Those violating this diktat will face strict action from the party, Bawankule added.

Earlier, on Saturday, CM Shinde, and Deputy CMs Devendra Fadnis and Ajit Pawar held seat-sharing talks in Nagpur for the upcoming state assembly polls, which are likely to be held in October-November.

Sources said the final seat-sharing formula would be arrived upon after two to three more meetings.

Sources from the NCP said consensus has been arrived for 173 seats, with BJP getting the maximum share, followed by Shiv Sena and the Ajit Pawar-led party.

The remaining 115 seats will be finalised soon in a meeting of Maharashtra BJP chief Chandrashekhar Bawankule, CM Shinde as well as senior NCP leaders Sunil Tatkar and Praful Patel, these sources added. (PTI)

Will dialogue with Pakistan end terrorism in valley? J&K BJP leader asks NC



JAMMU, Sept 1: Slamming National Conference for advocating dialogue with Pakistan, Jammu and Kashmir BJP president Ravinder Raina on Sunday asked it to clarify whether initiating dialogue with the neighbouring country will end terrorism and bloodshed in the Union Territory.

He also played down the protests and resignations by his party leaders and workers over the selection of candidates, saying he

is confident the BJP will form the government on its own.

The assembly election in Jammu and Kashmir is scheduled to take place on September 18, 25, and October 1. Votes will be counted on October 8. "Unfortunately, the NC leaders do not talk about the welfare of the people, the Pakistani gun which brought death and destruction to our land. By advocating for dialogue with Pakistan, they are not doing the

right thing," Raina said.

He said starting a dialogue with Pakistan is the prerogative only of the central government and the foreign minister.

"NC leaders should know that our former PM A B Vajpayee went to Pakistan in a bus to extend the hand of friendship but Pakistan backstabbed India by starting Kargil war. Prime Minister Narendra Modi also went to Lahore on his return from Afghanistan but the terror attacks and killing of innocents continued," he said.

Asked about resentment within the party over ticket distribution, he said BJP is like a family and works together like a team.

"When you have 15 lakh registered members in J&K, political activists have their own aspirations but only one name is finalised for each segment. "We are all together because our party believes in nation first, party second and self last," he said. He said Modi and Union Home Minister Amit Shah have turned around the fate of Jammu and Kashmir with restoration of peace, prosperity, and development. (PTI)

KC Tyagi resigns as JD(U) spokesperson

NEW DELHI, Sept 1: Janata Dal (United) spokesperson K C Tyagi, whose stand on various issues often highlighted his party's differences with ally BJP, has resigned, the regional party said on Sunday.

The JD(U) said in a statement that its president and Bihar Chief Minister Nitish Kumar has appointed Rajiv Ranjan Prasad as its national spokesperson.

It attributed Tyagi's resignation to "personal reasons".

In his letter to Kumar, the former MP and socialist leader said he has been unable to do justice as a spokesperson due to his involvement in other works.

He said he had made the request earlier as well.

Tyagi, party leaders said, will continue in his another role as "political advisor".

It is believed that frequent comments of Tyagi, who is based in Delhi and enjoys an unlikely high profile in the national media for a regional party leader due to his experience and articulation, on central government's policies were seen by many within his party as unhelpful to the BJP-JD(U) ties.

Be it on the Uniform Civil Code, the Waqf (Amendment) Bill, lateral entry to high-level Central government jobs or even the Palestine issue among a number of other matters, his articulation of the JD(U)'s stand different from the BJP created ripples and left the saffron party less than amused.

He was the only member of the ruling National Democratic Alliance in the August 25

meeting, which included several opposition party members, with Mohammad Makram Balawi, Secretary General of the League of Parliamentarians.

Israel was accused of "genocide" on Palestinians and the Indian government was urged to stop the sale of arms to the country by the participants in a joint statement.

The JD(U) retained him as spokesperson and political advisor in the party on August 23 when the party distributed organisation work among its leaders.

Though his views often, though not always, echoed the party's ideological position, a section of the JD(U) was uncomfortable with Tyagi's readiness to air his opinions when its senior leaders mostly played it safe.

His seniority meant that few leaders barring Nitish Kumar, who has of late been relying more on other party colleagues to helm organisational matters, could direct his stand.

With two senior JD(U) leaders -- Union minister Lalan Singh and its parliamentary party leader Sanjay Jha -- representing the party in national politics, sources said there is a view that both leaders should be left to shape the ties with the BJP without frequent public interjections of Tyagi.

It may be noted that the BJP has been reaching out to allies to maintain coordination and harmony in the ruling National Democratic Alliance in its bid to quell reports of differences in the bloc. (PTI)

Gadgil, Kasturirangan reports not pragmatic

Expect good Wayanad relief package from Centre: Vijayan

THIRUVANANTHAPURAM, Sept 1: The Kerala government has sought a ₹ 2,000 crore relief package from the Centre for the unprecedented devastation that occurred in Wayanad recently and is hopeful of getting "good assistance", Chief Minister Pinarayi Vijayan said here.

He also dismissed as "not pragmatic" the recommendations made by the Madhav Gadgil and Kasturirangan committees on ecologically sensitive areas of the Western Ghats, saying the panels did not consider the societal expectations and ground realities in his state.

Speaking to PTI this weekend during an interview on the Wayanad landslides, the chief minister said the state government has decided to construct new townships for the families of the victims and the survivors of the unprecedented devastation "within a year" and these dwellings would be "climate-resilient and sustainable".

Vijayan said the state sought a disaster relief package of about ₹ 2,000 crore from the Centre when he recently met with Prime Minister Narendra Modi in Delhi.

The PM was "very positive" on the issue and the state was hopeful of getting "good assistance" from the Union government, he added.

The chief minister said the funds were expected to be released after a central team submitted a report to the Union government.

Vijayan added that categorising the Wayanad landslides as a "national or severe calamity" would enable all parliamentarians to donate ₹ 1 crore each to the Kerala relief fund, otherwise only the local MPs will be able to do so.



"If this disaster is included in that (national or severe calamity) category, we will get good assistance. It will create a good atmosphere for reconstruction," he told the news agency.

The 79-year-old veteran Marxist politician said the July 30 disaster that wiped off large tracts of three villages -- Panchirimmattam, Chooralmala and Mundakkai -- apart from some areas of Attamala in Wayanad has "shaken the lives of our people, leaving those affected with unimaginable trauma and concerns about their future".

"The recent landslide in Chooralmala village has caused unprecedented devastation. I would like to assure that our government's primary objective is to provide a comprehensive rehabilitation package to the survivors. "We are committed to providing the best possible rehabilitation

package to the survivors, in line with the Kerala model of development with its people-centric approach," he said.

Vijayan recently said during an all-party meeting that the Wayanad survivors would be housed in one or two townships which will have single-storey houses of about 1,000 square feet in size with the option to expand to two storeys in the future.

"Our priority is to ensure that families who lost their homes in the landslides have a safe and secure place to reside. The construction of the townships is expected to be completed within a year," he told PTI.

On the recommendations made by the Madhav Gadgil and Kasturirangan committees on handling the fragile and ecologically sensitive areas along the Western Ghats, Vijayan said these reports were

"not fully accepted by the entities that commissioned them."

This highlights the fact, he said, that "much of the recommendations in these reports were not pragmatic and did not consider societal aspirations and ground realities".

"At least some parts of the reports did not consider humans dwelling in ecologically fragile zones for centuries as part of the ecosystem," the chief minister added.

He also underlined that "small and marginal" farmers cannot be equated with rich realtors, planters or miners occupying similar terrains.

"There was no such differentiation in these reports, which is why many states were forced to completely disregard them," Vijayan said.

He added that it was also "not desirable" for his government to take a position in a "hasty manner" without "adequately" studying the draft Ecologically Sensitive Area (ESA) notification issued by the Centre recently.

The notification issued on July 31 seeks to declare over 56,800 square kilometres of the Western Ghats across six states, including 13 villages in Kerala's landslide-hit Wayanad, as an Ecologically Sensitive Area (ESA). It invited suggestions and objections within 60 days.

"We have to wait to hear from the local self-governments and eventually take an informed decision on it. This is going to affect the lives of millions..." Vijayan said.

Asked about the controversy

that erupted after the Centre alleged that Kerala did not heed the alerts sent by it, he said while there was no time for these issues as their aim was to swiftly rehabilitate the affected, the "so-called alerts were generic, routine and carried no specifics regarding an event of such a magnitude".

He said the calamity was triggered by extremely heavy and continuous rainfall in two days.

"It is a fact on record that this was not foreseen by the early warning mechanisms of the government of India. Even a red alert was issued after the massive landslide," Vijayan said.

He said the four settlements that were affected by the landslides had human habitation for two centuries.

"However, the landslide originated in a pristine forest. It is pertinent to note that there was no human settlement even remotely close to the point of origin," the chief minister asserted.

Vijayan said the proposed townships will "exemplify the best possible post-disaster rehabilitation plan in the country and these will be climate-resilient and sustainable".

The state has identified five parcels of land, each of about 50 hectares, for the township projects and the chief minister said they were investing "significantly" for this project, with support from businesses and philanthropic organisations.

As of now, a post-disaster needs assessment is ongoing in Wayanad. "This will give us more insights into the changes that we may have to bring about," Vijayan said. (PTI)

Shivaji Maharaj statue collapse unforgivable, says Thackeray

MUMBAI, Sept 1: NCP (SP) supremo Sharad Pawar and Shiv Sena (UBT) leader Uddhav Thackeray on Sunday led a march of Maha Vikas Aghadi from the iconic Hutatma Chowk to Gateway of India in south Mumbai to protest the collapse of Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj's statue in Maharashtra's Sindhudurg district.

They slammed the Union and state governments for the collapse, with Thackeray calling Prime Minister Narendra Modi's apology as one "smacking of arrogance", while Pawar said the episode was an example of corruption.

The statue of the 17th century Maratha warrior king at Rajkot fort in Malvan tehsil, some 480 kilometres from here, fell on August 26. It was unveiled by PM Modi on December 4, 2023, on the occasion of Navy Day.

Addressing a gathering at Gateway of India, where the protest march culminated, Thackeray said, "Did you notice the arrogance in the (Prime Minister Narendra Modi's) apology? It smacked of arrogance. One deputy chief minister was smiling." "The mistake (collapse) cannot be forgiven. We have all gathered here to demand 'BJP get out of India'," he said at the well-attended protest march.

Asserting that people of Maharashtra will never forgive the insult to the legendary warrior king, Thackeray cited the statue collapse, leakages in the Ram Temple and the new Parliament complex to mock Modi's "guarantees". "For what was the PM apologising? For the statue he inaugurated eight months ago? For the corruption involved? The MVA cadre must work together to defeat the forces that have insulted Shivaji Maharaj.

The collapse of the statue is an insult to the soul of Maharashtra," he asserted.

During his address in Palghar on Friday, PM Modi had said Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj is not just a name or a king but a deity. "Today, I bow my head at his feet and apologise to my deity," he had said.

Speaking at the protest march, Pawar said, "The collapse of Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj's statue in Sindhudurg is an example of corruption. It is an insult to all Shiv premis (followers of the warrior king)." Maharashtra Congress chief Nana Patole said, much before the PM, the opposition had sought forgiveness from the emperor for allowing such a "Shiv drohi" (those betraying the principles of Chhatrapati Shivaji) government to come to power.

"We have taken a pledge to never let it happen again," he said, adding the PM's apology was with an eye on the upcoming state polls.

During the agitation, called "jode maro andolan" (hitting with slippers), Thackeray joined Shiv Sena (UBT) and Congress leaders to hit a poster of Chief Minister Eknath Shinde and deputy CMs Devendra Fadnis and Ajit Pawar with footwear. Kolhapur Congress MP Shahu Chhatrapati, a descendant of the emperor, said the latter's dignity must be maintained at all cost.

NCP (SP) supremo Pawar, Shiv Sena (UBT) leader Thackeray, Congress state unit chief Nana Patole and the party's Mumbai head Varsha Gaikwad began the protest march by laying wreaths at Hutatma Chowk, a memorial to those martyred in the "Samyukta Maharashtra" agitation. (PTI)

Gujarat govt launches reformulated gender policy

AHMEDABAD, Sept 1: The Gujarat government has launched a reformulated 'State Policy for Gender Equity- 2024' by broadening its scope of work with the aim of ensuring inclusive development and empowerment of women and girls, an official said on Sunday.

The objective of the reformed policy is to ensure an enabling environment for women and girls that further promotes just and equal opportunities, eliminates gender discriminations, and accomplishes inclusive development and empowerment through changes in social structures, Chief Minister Bhupendra Patel said in his message to the policy document released during the day.

The 'Naari Gaurav Niti' was first formulated and implemented in 2006 under the leadership of then chief minister and current Prime Minister Narendra Modi, a government release said.

"Gujarat was the first state to include gender issues into the main-



stream development agenda, striving to achieve gender equality through a comprehensive policy aimed at the overall development of women. Due to changing socio-economic contexts and evolving laws, regulations and social condi-

tions, it became necessary to modify the original framework and related aspects of the policy," it said. "Naari Gaurav Niti-2024 integrates eight areas of focus and will be implemented through the coordination of various departments for

the overall development of women in the state. Each department has been given the responsibility of taking action on the issues related to their sectors as outlined in the policy," the release added.

The policy ensures equal rights and opportunities for women and men in all state government development activities, eliminates discriminatory attitudes and practices, ensures their fundamental rights and establishes a system-based on equality and uniformity, it said.

"The need for reformulation of the 2006 policy arose due to evolving socio-economic perspectives, new laws and regulations and shifting conditions. It is also required to be aligned with global sustainable development goals. The reformulated policy expands the scope of existing areas and introduces new ones," the policy document said.

Some of the areas covered are education and sports, protection against violence, health, nutrition

and quality of life, impact of environment and climate change, social security and welfare, science and technology, economic environment, administration and decision-making powers.

Various departments have been entrusted with the responsibility of the implementation of the policy within a given timeline, and certain indicators formulated for the monitoring administrative capacities of women, reduction in maternal mortality rate, improvement in sex ratio at birth, increase in female employment rate, among others, the document stated.

It also delineates certain points that need to be considered while formulating a new scheme, such as a mandatory integration of a gender equality perspective, aligning budget allocation for the scheme/programme with gender equality considerations, striving for gender balance in the distribution of benefits, the release added. (PTI)

MHA constitutes central team to assess damage caused by floods in Gujarat



NEW DELHI, Sept 1: The Ministry of Home Affairs has constituted an inter-ministerial team to assess the damage caused by rainfall and floods in Gujarat.

The team will shortly visit the flood-affected districts of Gujarat, which was hit by heavy to extremely heavy rainfall between August 25 and 30 caused by a deep depression formed over Rajasthan and Gujarat, according to an official statement.

At least 25 people have died in rain-related incidents across the state on August 26 and 27.

The statement said the MHA has constituted an inter-ministerial central team (IMCT) led by the executive director, the National Institute of Disaster Management (NIDM), to assess the damage caused by rainfall and floods in Gujarat, the statement said.

Madhya Pradesh and Rajasthan were also affected by heavy to very heavy rainfall.

Multiple spells of heavy rains, cloudbursts and landslides have caused extensive damage in Himachal Pradesh this year.

The MHA is in touch with sen-

ior officers of these states, and will depute IMCT there as well, if the severe damages are reported by them, the statement said.

During this monsoon, some other states have been affected by heavy rainfall, floods, cloudbursts and landslides.

Under the leadership of Prime Minister Narendra Modi, the central government is fully committed to providing all possible help to affected states, the statement said.

As per the decision taken by the Union Home Minister Amit Shah, in August 2019, the MHA, this year, constituted IMCTs which have visited flood and landslides-affected states of Assam, Kerala, Mizoram, and Tripura in advance for on-spot assessment of the damage without waiting for their memorandum.

The IMCT for Nagaland has also been constituted, which will visit the affected areas of the state shortly.

In the past, the IMCT used to visit the disaster-affected states only after the receipt of a memorandum from the state government, the statement said. (PTI)

AIIMS-Delhi announces 'hostel mentor' initiative

NEW DELHI, Sept 1: Taking steps to enhance the quality of life and support for hostel residents, AIIMS-Delhi has announced an initiative to increase faculty engagement in the hostel system. The move comes after residents' feedback that the faculty should be more involved in regular hostel affairs.

After a review of the hostel management system, it has been decided to upgrade the framework by designating two faculty members as 'hostel mentors' per block, the AIIMS-Delhi said in a statement.

AIIMS-Delhi Director Dr M Srinivas said, "Our students and residents are the core of what we do and their health is our most important issue. By having hostel mentors, we hope that every resident feels supported and listened to."

"This initiative demonstrates our dedication to creating a caring and supportive environment that looks after the regular, as well as the extraordinary needs, of our hostel society," he added.

The voluntary hostel mentors will play an important role in creating a welcoming and inclusive environment, the statement said.

Their duties will comprise weekly rounds for visiting hostel blocks and interacting with the residents. They will also be required to be available over the phone 24x7 for the residents and their families.

There will be community events and functions, including engaging the residents in festivals and events and bringing them together while allowing cultural diversity to blossom.

The hostel mentors will also promote continuous interaction and work closely with the hotel superintendents to address any issues regarding infrastructure and facilities.

They will identify the residents who require additional support and connect them with the Student Wellness Centre for obtaining proper psychological help, the statement said.

AIIMS-Delhi's media cell in-charge Dr Rima Dada said, "This initiative underscores AIIMS-New Delhi's commitment to creating a more supportive and interactive hostel environment for its students and residents. The involvement of faculty members as hostel mentors is expected to significantly enhance the overall hostel experience and provide a more responsive and caring atmosphere." (PTI)

Air Marshal Tejinder Singh takes over as Deputy Chief of Air Staff

NEW DELHI, Sept 1: Air Marshal Tejinder Singh on Sunday took over as Deputy Chief of the Air Staff of the Indian Air Force, the Defence Ministry said.

After taking charge at the Air Headquarters (Vayu Bhawan), the Air Marshal paid homage to the bravehearts, who made the supreme sacrifice, by laying wreath at the National War Memorial here.

An alumnus of the National Defence Academy, Air Marshal Singh was commissioned in the fighter stream of the Indian Air Force (IAF) on June 13, 1987.

He is a Category 'A' Qualified Flying Instructor with over 4,500 hours of flying and an alumnus of the Defence Service Staff College and National Defence College, the ministry said in a statement.

He has commanded a fighter squadron, a radar station, a premier fighter base and was the Air Officer Commanding, Jammu and Kashmir.

"His varied staff appointments include Operational Staff at a Command HQ, Air Commodore (Personnel Officers-1) at Air HQ, Deputy Assistant Chief of Integrated Defence Staff, Financial (Planning) at HQ IDS, Air Commodore (Aerospace Safety), Assistant Chief of Air Staff Operations (Offensive) and ACAS Ops (Strategy) at Air HQ," the statement said. Prior to his present appointment, he was the Senior Air Staff Officer, HQ Eastern Air Command of the IAF at Shillong, Meghalaya.

In recognition of his meritorious services, he was awarded the Vayu Sena Medal in 2007 and the Ati Vishist Seva Medal in 2022 by the President of India, it said.

In a separate statement, the defence ministry said Air Marshal Ashutosh Dixit assumed the ap-

pointment of Air Officer Commanding-in-Chief of the Central Air Command on Sunday.

Air Marshal Dixit was commissioned into the fighter stream of the IAF on December 6, 1986. The Air Officer is an experimental test pilot and a qualified flying instructor with more than 3,300 hours of flying experience on a variety of aircraft in the IAF inventory, it said.

He is an alumnus of the National Defence Academy, Defence Services Staff College (Bangladesh) and National Defence College. He has actively participated in numerous operations and exercises such as 'Op Sated Sagar' and 'Op Rakshak', the statement said.

During his illustrious career spanning more than 37 years, the Air Officer has held several significant field and staff appointments. As a Commanding Officer, he re-equipped one of the squadrons of the IAF with the state-of-the-art Mirage aircraft and later commanded a front-line fighter air base in the Western Sector and a premiere fighter training base in the Southern Sector, it added.

The Air Officer headed many path-breaking projects during his previous tenure with the adoption of future technologies and ensured that the IAF achieves modernisation while maintaining a steady focus on 'Atmanirbharta'.

Operational readiness of Central Air Command in all scenarios shall be the top most agenda of the Air Officer Commanding-in-Chief to ensure the IAF achieves its goal successfully, the ministry said.

In recognition of his meritorious services, he has been awarded the Ati Vishist Seva Medal, Vayu Sena Medal and Vishist Seva Medal by the President of India. (PTI)

Mob rule being created as politicians assuring death penalty for culprits: SC

PUNE, Sept 1: Justice Abhay Oka of the Supreme Court on Sunday said "mob rule" is being created as politicians capitalise on certain incidents and assure capital punishment for culprits, stressing that only the judiciary can pass legal verdicts. Addressing a conference organised by the Bar Council of Maharashtra and Goa in Pune, Justice Oka underscored the importance of maintaining the judiciary's independence and delivering swift, just decisions.

He also said the judiciary is "bombarded with criticism" for no reason in certain cases over granting bail. Justice Oka underlined the critical role of sensitivity among

lawyers and the judiciary in ensuring adherence to the Constitution. "If the judiciary is to be respected, its freedom must remain intact. The Constitution will be followed only if the lawyers and judiciary remain sensitive. Lawyers play a major role in maintaining the judiciary, and they must fulfil this responsibility; otherwise, democracy will not survive," Justice Oka said. He further commented on the current state of public discourse, saying a "mob rule" is being created wherein politicians capitalise on certain incidents and assure people of the death penalty for culprits even though only the judiciary has the power to pass legal verdicts. (PTI)

Rallies, demonstrations over medic's rape-murder in Kolkata

KOLKATA, Sept 1: Film director Aparna Sen and numerous other prominent personalities from the Bengali film industry on Sunday joined thousands of people in a massive rally demanding justice for a trainee doctor who was raped-murdered at RG Kar hospital here last month.

In addition to the 'Mahamichhil', two other rallies took place elsewhere in the city. While one was organised by the alumni of Ramakrishna Mission-run educational institutions, another involved students and past pupils from a well-known convent school, both echoing the demand for justice for the medic.

At the mega rally that kicked-off at College Square, Sen, accompanied by fellow artists such as Swastika Mukherjee, Sudipta Chakraborty, Chaiti Ghosal, Sohini Sarkar, and others, marched along Central Avenue demanding justice for the postgraduate trainee doctor.

Asked by reporters, the eminent actor-turned-director said, "We are walking on the road together, demanding justice. If needed, I will hit the road again."

"Common people have the right to demand answers and know the truth. The deep-rooted anguish comes from the bottom of our hearts. But we have faith in the judiciary, and we are hopeful about the investigation," she added. Swastika Mukherjee voiced her concern, saying, "So many days have passed since the August 9 incident. After one arrest, we have not heard any further updates from the investigating agency. The

initial attempt by the hospital administration to dismiss the death as a suicide and the arrest of only one person have compelled the people of this state to come out of their homes. We have all come together to demand justice."

A junior doctors' forum, which has been protesting since the R G Kar incident, also joined the rally.

In south Kolkata, alumni of Ramakrishna Mission schools and other educational institutions marched from Golpark to Rabindra Sadan Exide Crossing carrying banners with the message 'Tamaso Ma Jyotirgamaya (Lead me from darkness to light), and demanded a fair, impartial investigation and the arrest of all those involved in the crime.

In another rally, around 300 alumni, along with current students and guardians from St. John's Diocesan Girls' Higher Secondary School, walked from Minto Park to the school compound before forming a human chain near Exide Crossing along A J C Bose Road. They also displayed a symbolic image of a spine with the slogan "Our spines are not up for sale" at the rally.

Women members of the Trinamool Congress (TMC) staged protests at various blocks, advocating for amendments in laws to ensure capital punishment for rapists.

Meanwhile, the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) has been staging a sit-in at Dorina Crossing in Esplanade since August 29. (PTI)

Teamwork key to solving Delhi's pollution woes: Gopal Rai

NEW DELHI, Sept 1: The problem of pollution in Delhi can only be solved through teamwork, Environment Minister Gopal Rai said on Sunday as he urged the Centre to give permission for artificial rain during winter, when air quality levels in the city plummet.

Addressing a press conference, Rai said though the Delhi government has taken several steps to address the problem, pollution levels in and around the national capital spike in November.

"An emergency situation arises in Delhi, Punjab, Haryana and Uttar Pradesh. The Kejriwal government is working to reduce the pollution levels. Ever since our government came to power, the pollution levels have de-

clined," he said.

But November witnesses a spike in pollution levels, he said.

"Last year, IIT-Kanpur submitted a proposal that artificial rain or a cloud seeding experiment could be done in Delhi. They said that financial management and security permissions were needed. Last year, there was very little time so permissions could not come through."

"We held a meeting with experts and I wrote to Union Environment Minister Bhupendra Yadav and sought the Centre's help," he added.

Rai said he has requested a meeting with central agencies and IIT Kanpur experts to discuss the proposal for artificial rain. (PTI)

Dharavi NGOs support redevelopment survey, say opposition only by non-locals

MUMBAI, Sept 1: Several non-government organisations working in Dharavi have pledged their support to the ongoing state government-led survey of informal tenants in Asia's biggest slum and accused non-locals of trying to stall redevelopment by spreading misinformation, according to letters they wrote to state government authorities.

The NGOs have written to Dharavi Redevelopment Project/Slum Rehabilitation Authority (DRP/SRA), a government of Maharashtra body overseeing the USD 3-billion redevelopment project being executed by the Adani group, extending support for the survey.

A total of eight NGOs and citizen welfare associations involved in diversified welfare activities ranging from health, education, women empowerment amongst others, met with DRPPL CEO and extended support of Dharavikars to the state-government-led survey currently being conducted in the area. While extending support to

the survey, Noor Mohammed Khan of Global Giving Foundation and All India Police Jan Seva Sangathna asked the authority 13 questions ranging from the period of free maintenance Adani group entity will provide to flats that it will construct to rehabilitate the Dharavi and what would happen to those who came to reside in the slums posts January 2000 -- the cutoff date for determining eligibility for getting a flat. Reached for comments, he confirmed to PTI that he has written the letter and asked the questions to which the authority has promised a response. Extending support to the survey, Enlighten Foundation on August 20 wrote to SVR Srinivas, CEO of Dharavi Redevelopment Project Private Ltd (DRPPL), saying, "the residents and the commercial premises owners are not against the project, nor the survey."

The survey "is opposed only by a handful of people who are against redevelopment and has vested interests. Most of the people who are opposing are not locals

and have been living outside Dharavi and are oblivious to the living conditions of Dharavi," said Rajeshkumar Paniselsam, founder and president of Enlighten Foundation.

Paniselsam confirmed to PTI that he has written the said letter.

Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj CHS, a resident association from Dharavi, in its letter sought "going ahead with the survey and also the redevelopment project that has been halted for decades together. Many generations have passed by, waiting for the area to be redeveloped but only now we are witnessing a positive step". Last month, Dharavi redevelopment project received a shot in the arm after a newly formed association of residents of Dharavi approached Srinivas and lent its support to the survey of informal tenements.

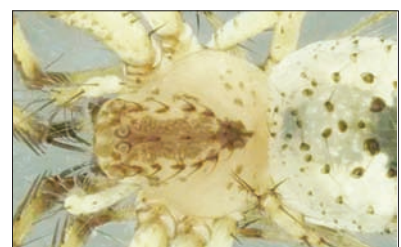
The survey, which began on March 18, 2024, has so far completed over 11,000 tenements via door-to-door visits, while numbering has been done on more than 30,000 tenements. (PTI)

2 new spider species found by ZSI

KOLKATA, Sept 1: The Zoological Survey of India announced the discovery of two spider species in the Western Ghats region, a biodiversity hotspot, in south India. A ZSI statement said the newly discovered species - *Mimetes spinatus* and *Mimetes parvulus* - highlight the importance of the region.

The addition of two new spiders brings the number of *Mimetes* species in India to three, all of which have been spotted from the southern part of the country, the surveyor said.

Speaking about the discovery, ZSI Director Dr Dhriti Banerjee said, "The Western Ghats plays a crucial role in the climatic conditions of the country and continue to surprise scientists with their high levels of endemism."



The discovery was made by a research team comprising Dr Souvik Sen along with Dr Sudhin PP and Dr Pradeep M Sankaran. *Mimetes spinatus* and *Mimetes parvulus* were collected from the Mookambika Wildlife Sanctuary, Karnataka and Ernakulam district of Kerala respectively.

This discovery highlights the need for

continued exploration and conservation efforts in the region, which is one of the world's hottest biodiversity hotspots, she said on Saturday.

Banerjee emphasised the importance of the Western Ghats, a UNESCO World Heritage site, in preserving India's rich biodiversity. She said this discovery assumes significance as it comes 118 years after the last *Mimetes* species was found in India. "This long gap emphasises the need for more extensive surveys and research into the taxonomy and biogeography of spiders in India. "The current findings suggest that the true diversity of *Mimetes* in the country remains largely unexplored, with the potential for more undiscovered species in India's least explored areas," she said. (PTI)

India to host 15th World Conference on Injury Prevention and Safety Promotion

NEW DELHI, Sept 1: India is set to host the 15th World Conference on Injury Prevention and Safety Promotion, 2024 -- "Safety 2024" from September 2 to 4 with focus on global efforts in areas such as road safety and drowning prevention.

The conference is being hosted by the Indian Institute of Technology (IIT), Delhi; George Institute for Global Health in collaboration with the All India Institute for Medical Sciences (AIIMS), National Institute of Mental Health and Neuro Sciences (NIMHANS) and co-sponsored by the World Health Organization (WHO).

With the theme "Building a Safer Future for All: Equitable and Sustainable Strategies for Injury and Violence Prevention," Safety 2024 will spotlight global efforts to reduce injury and violence, particularly among vulnerable populations like children and adolescents.

Over three days, the international experts will share cutting-



edge research, innovative practices and collaborative strategies to create safer environments and prevent injuries worldwide.

Union Road and Transport Minister Nitin Gadkari will deliver the inaugural address at the conference reflecting on the government's commitment to enhancing road

safety across the nation.

The conference will also feature international experts -- Rebecca Stapleton, ADB, Philippines;

Dipan Bose, World Bank, USA (TBC) and David Ward, Executive President, Global New Car Assessment Programme (Global NCAP).

The conference is guided by the

International Organising Committee, chaired by Professor Adnan Hyder from George Washington University. "Safety 2024 is a pivotal platform for driving global progress in injury and violence prevention. By bringing together experts, policymakers and stakeholders from around the world, we aim to foster innovative solutions, strengthen partnerships, and accelerate progress towards a safer and healthier future for all," said Jagnoor Jagnoor, Senior Research Fellow, George Institute of Global Health.

"India's active participation is instrumental in addressing the unique challenges and opportunities within the region, across road safety, drowning, fall prevention and other injuries," she added.

The 14th World Conference on Injury Prevention and Safety Promotion (Safety 2020) was held in Adelaide, Australia, following the 13th World Conference (Safety 2018) in Bangkok, Thailand. (PTI)

No power group in cinema world: Mammooty; requests govt to implement Hema committee report

KOCHI, Sept 1: Actor Mammooty on Sunday denied the presence of any 'power group' in the film industry and called upon everyone working in the field to be vigilant so that nothing untoward happens there.

The veteran actor, in a Facebook post, praised the state government's initiative to constitute the Justice Hema Committee and requested it to implement the recommendations of the panel by enacting necessary legislation if there were any legal hurdles.

Breaking his silence on the report and the subsequent allegations that rocked the cinema world, Mammooty said that he wholeheartedly welcomes and supports the recommendations and solutions in the committee's report and urged all associations in the film industry to join hands in implementing them.

He said that the police was vig-

orously investigating the complaints of sexual harassment and abuse raised by several women, so let the agency carry on with its probe honestly.

The actor also said that as the full report of the committee was before the court, it can decide the punishments.

Mammooty, in his post, said that his response was delayed as he was waiting for the organisation representing actors and its leadership to first respond to the committee report.

He said that cinema was the "epitome" of society and the good and the bad present among the general public are there in the films too.

He also said that as society pays close attention to the film industry, anything that happens there becomes a major topic of discussion.

"Therefore, those working in the film industry need to be careful

and vigilant so that nothing untoward happens in this sector," the actor said, adding that "cinema must survive."

His response comes a day after his colleague in the film industry, actor Mohanlal, broke his silence over the shocking revelations in the committee's report.

Mohanlal too denied the existence of a power group in the industry and had said that cinema was a part of the society and what happens everywhere else is happening in the film world also.

He too had welcomed the panel's report and said that wrongdoers should be punished if there was evidence against them.

The Justice K Hema Committee was constituted by the Kerala government after the 2017 actress assault case, and its report revealed instances of harassment and exploitation of women in the Malayalam cinema industry. (PTI)



I'm fighting the perception of what audience thinks of me: Ananya Panday

MUMBAI, Sept 1: Actor Ananya Panday, set to make her web series debut with "Call Me Bae", says she wants to break out of her perceived image in the audience and industry, and that will happen when she is in a position to say no to offers that feed into a certain stereotype. "Call Me Bae", directed by Collin D'Cunha and created by Ishita Moitra, sees Ananya's Bae leading a privileged life in New Delhi, before she is disowned by her family. The eight-episode series will debut on Prime Video on September 6.

The actor, who made her debut with 2019's rom-com "Student of the Year 2", said "fighting perception" is a challenge that she continues to deal with as an individual.

"When you start up with a certain kind of film, people put you in a box and they would expect the same thing from you."

"So, I'm fighting the perception of what the audience thinks of me and the kind of work you get within the industry. When something of yours does well, you get the same offers, and it is up to us as actors if we have that position where we can say no," Ananya told PTI in an interview here.

Sometimes saying no is more important than yes because that defines you as an actor and a person, she added.

"You can be scared that, 'Oh this is such a big opportunity, what if I say no to this'. But then, in the long term, it does well because you are not feeding into a stereotype. "You are reinventing, challenging yourself and doing something different. All this might mean that you are missing out on something that seems big but actually, you are choosing growth over doing something similar."

"Call Me Bae" marks the web series debut for the 25-year-old, whose previous films such as "Gehraiyaan" and "Kho Gaye Hum Kahan" were direct-to-digital releases.

Ananya said playing Bae, a young woman who goes on riches to rags journey, was a "dream role" for her. (PTI)



No power group, but 'strong alliances' are there in film industry: FEFKA gen secy

KOCHI, Sept 1: B Unnikrishnan, general secretary of the Film Employees Federation of Kerala (FEFKA), on Sunday said there were "strong alliances" in the cinema industry, but he was not aware of any "power group" as mentioned in the Justice K Hema Committee report. Unnikrishnan, speaking to a TV channel, said that it was an "undeniable fact" that there were "strong alliances" of some production houses with certain directors, writers and actors to make big films.

"They often work together on several projects back-to-back and naturally, everyone would try to align themselves with them to get opportunities. However, such alliances are based on commercial interests," he said.

He also said that such alliances were not confined to Malayalam cinema alone and were present in film industries everywhere.

At the same time, he said that there cannot be a secret lobby of different cinema-related organisations which meet periodically to decide who should be isolated from films.

"The industry will not be able to work like that," he said in response to queries about whether there was a "power group" in the film sector. Another undeniable fact that he admitted was the presence of the "casting couch".

"It is a reality we have all heard about. We cannot escape from it by saying it is present

in other film industries too. Our endeavour should be to ensure that such things are not there in the Malayalam film industry," he said. Unnikrishnan also said that the names of the perpetrators in the Hema Committee report should be disclosed.

Regarding south Indian actress Radhika Sarathkumar's startling claim that objectionable videos of female actors were recorded with hidden cameras inside caravans on the shooting sets, he said that a thorough investigation would be carried out into the matter.

Sarathkumar had said on Saturday that at the shooting set of a Malayalam film, she had seen men watching clips of actresses captured using hidden cameras in their caravans.

On whether the response of the Association of Malayalam Movie Artists (AMMA) to the committee report was delayed, Unnikrishnan said that it was not late, but what they said was criticised by the general public.

"They (AMMA) should be ready to accept that criticism and learn from it," he said.

He also said that the present crisis in AMMA was due to the fact that it was not a trade union like organisation and has a loose structure. They lack the "experience and flexibility" to deal with the issues that were mentioned in the Hema Committee report, he further said. (PTI)

Raj & DK walk down memory lane as 'Stree' turns 6, say it was the 'fastest film' they ever made

NEW DELHI, Sept 1: Raj Nidimoru and Krishna DK, writers and producers of "Stree", marked the six year anniversary of the popular horror comedy franchise in a lengthy heartfelt note in which they reflected upon how they finished the script in three weeks and how the film went on to become a phenomenon.

Raj, one-half of the writing duo, said they came up with the story of "Stree", based on the urban legend of Naale Ba, at a time when their production banner D2R Films was facing back-to-back flops, including 2017's "A Gentleman" starring Sidharth Malhotra.

"And a film was made at the smallest budget possible and dared to go into theatres without a formula, and not following the norms. Edits were changed, interval points were invented... But the original core story only got stronger at every step."

"It was the fastest film we ever made. I guess that is what happens when you have a point to prove, to yourself. On the cusp of the release, we knew something magical was going to happen. And it happened!" he wrote on Instagram on Saturday.

"Stree" opened in theatres on August 31, 2018 to glowing reviews and went on to become a box office success. Directed by first-time filmmaker Amar Kaushik, the horror comedy starred Rajkummar Rao, Shraddha Kapoor, Pankaj Tripathi, Abhishek Banerjee and Aparshakti Khurana.

"Aug 31, 2018. A ridiculous story, defying all odds, became a phenomenon. Glad we went back to our roots. Glad we stuck to the films we want to make. Glad this

was the first Hindi film we produced. A renewed second innings of D2R Films started, on our terms with our kind of stories and with no compromises. The Family Man, Farzi, Guns & Gulaabs, Cinemabandi, Citadel Honey Bunny, Gulkanda Tales, Rakt Brahmand... all followed," he added in the post.

Raj said he and DK wanted to make "original and unique" films and so one day he typed out on a blank page: "O Stree, Kal Aana!"

"I dug into one of my lasting childhood visuals - every other wall in my hometown covered with the scribbling."

"O Stree, repurposed. And I thought, what if she can't read Telugu? Why is she get-

ting fooled by a silly trick to come tomorrow, again and again? "What if she still didn't care and wanted to come inside? I had let these crazy/silly ideas float in my head for years," he wrote.

After he discussed the idea with DK, they realised that it couldn't just be a "silly comedy or a silly horror film" and that's how they came up with the idea of "gender reversal".

"Stree" revolved around a female ghost who haunted the men of the small town of Chandri so much so that they were afraid to step out of their homes at nightfall, a spin on what daily life looks like for women off screen.

"What if men were the ones afraid to go out at night? What if men had to go

through what innumerable women have to deal with every day?"

A little coffee shop in Andheri West became the office for the banner.

"That's where we met all the crew, all the actors, discovered a great writer-friend at the next table, and discussed endlessly how to start production on this film (like so many filmmakers do at coffee shops). Ironically as soon as the script was done and the shoot was getting ready, the BMC pulled down that sweet little coffeeshop."

Soon, they found a crew that was ready to buy into this "silly story".

"A cast was cajoled into doing this film despite it being nonconforming. A film started getting shot despite there being no precedent for this kind. A super friendly fun shoot happened in the tiniest of the towns, Chandri, where we stayed in guest-houses and schools, shot all over the town and played Mafia at nights. Many lasting bonds were formed," Raj said.

The writer-producer said it wouldn't have been possible without the coffee shop, failures, two-decade-old friendships, and the firm belief that "even our kind of stories can break mainstream norms".

"I guess every failure is an opportunity to grow. And every heartbreak is a chance to cleanse and recreate. Thank you, wholeheartedly, for everyone who backed us, believed in us and loved our stories," he wrote.

The success of "Stree", also backed by Dinesh Vijan of Maddock Films, spawned a franchise, the latest offering being "Stree 2", its sequel. (PTI)



Sathyaraj joins Rajinikanth in 'Coolie'



NEW DELHI, Sept 1: "Baahubali" star Sathyaraj is the latest addition to the cast of the upcoming Tamil movie "Coolie", fronted by superstar Rajinikanth.

The film, directed by Lokesh Kanagaraj, reunites the actor duo 38 years after the release of their film "Mr Bharath".

Production house Sun Pictures made the announcement on its X page on Saturday.

Sathyaraj, who was last seen in "Munjya" and "Weapon", will portray the role of Rajasekar in "Coolie".

"Introducing #Sathyaraj as Rajasekar, from the world of #Coolie'. @rajinikanth @Dir_Lokesh @anirudhofficial @anbariv @girishganges @philoedit @Dir_Chandru @PraveenRaja_Off," the banner said in the post.

Nagarjuna, Soubin Shahir and Shruti Haasan also round out the cast of "Coolie".

Anirudh Ravichander will compose music for the upcoming film, which will have stunts by action choreographer duo Anbumani and Arivumani, popularly known as 'Anbariv'. (PTI)

Haaland hat trick gives Man City early lead over Arsenal in EPL



LONDON, Sept 1: At the rate Erling Haaland is scoring, keeping up with Manchester City is going to be a difficult task in the English Premier League.

So while it's still only three games into the season, it felt significant when title rival Arsenal dropped points on Saturday and then saw City take full advantage thanks to another hat trick from Haaland.

The Norway striker netted his second treble in two games as City beat West Ham 3-1 to main-

tain its perfect start and move two points ahead of Arsenal, which was held 1-1 by Brighton after Declan Rice was sent off early in the second half.

"No words for him," City manager Pep Guardiola said about Haaland, who has seven goals in three games to start the season and 70 in total in the 69 league games he has played for the club.

With eight Premier League hat tricks, Haaland has as many as Thierry Henry (258 games), Harry Kane (320) and Michael Owen

(326) managed in their careers.

This was his first away from Etihad Stadium, though, and showed his wide range of finishing skills.

The opener came when he ran onto a pass from Bernardo Silva and beat goalkeeper Alphonse Areola with a low shot. After an own goal from Ruben Dias, Haaland made it 2-1 when he received a pass inside the area and hit a thumping strike into the roof of the net in the 30th minute. The hat trick was complete in the 83rd

when he went clear through on goal and lifted the ball past Lukasz Fabianski, who replaced Areola at halftime.

"I really liked the second goal. I have to be honest," Haaland said. "The second one was lovely. ... I like to shoot a bit hard sometimes, as well. Not only easy shots. So it's good to get a little bit of power out of my body."

While there's another 35 games left, Haaland's prolific form makes any small gap to City look tough to overcome.

So perhaps it's no wonder Arsenal manager Mikel Arteta was so frustrated after what he felt was a decisive refereeing decision. In the early kickoff, Arsenal was 1-0 up at Emirates Stadium and looked in control when Rice was shown a second yellow card in the 49th minute, apparently for nudging the ball to the side as Joel Veltman tried to take a quick free kick near the sideline deep in Brighton's half.

Veltman kicked Rice from behind in the process and the home crowd was screaming for the Brighton player to get sanctioned, only for referee Chris Kavanagh to show Rice a red card instead.

"I was amazed. Amazed, amazed, because of how inconsistent decisions can be," Arteta said, arguing that similar offenses went unpunished earlier in the game.

"It was a really, really hard one to take." That decision turned the game completely and Joao Pedro equalized from a rebound in the 58th after David Raya saved a shot from Yankuba Minteh.

Kai Havertz put Arsenal ahead in the 38th with a lob over goalkeeper Bart Verbruggen and had a chance to restore Arsenal's lead when he ran through on goal again in the 74th but his low shot was saved that time.

Last-placed Everton could only lament its own inconsistencies — and inability to defend crosses — after giving up a 2-0 lead in the final minutes to lose 3-2 at home against Bournemouth, while Brentford showed again that it can cope just fine without Ivan Toney by beating Southampton 3-1. (AP)

Local lad Sumit Rathie to lead Mohun Bagan in promotional derby vs East Bengal in Lucknow

LUCKNOW, Sept 1: Son of soil Sumit Rathie, who hails from Muzaffarnagar, will add local flavour by wearing the captain's arm-band when Mohun Bagan take on arch-rivals East Bengal in a promotional derby here on Monday.

The 23-year-old Rathie, who was part of the Mohun Bagan's ISL Winners Shield grabbing squad last season, has been named the captain as a "special honour."

"He is the son of the soil and the only player from Uttar Pradesh who plays for Mohun Bagan. He will also add local flavour to the match. It's fitting that he leads the side in this one-off match," an official told PTI.

The match is part of the initiative by the All India Football Federation (AIFF) in association with the Government of Uttar Pradesh, the Uttar Pradesh Football Sangh, and Krida Bharti to develop football across the state.

With the top-tier Indian Super League (ISL) slated to start in two weeks' time, both the teams have sent their developmental squads which were competing in the Premier Division Calcutta Football League.

Mohun Bagan coach Deggie Cardoza said the match would be played with all seriousness.

"A derby always excites the fans, whenever and wherever it is played," said Cardoza. "We want to prepare well, play the match seriously, and return home as the

winners."

"I hope this match will inspire more youngsters to take up football, and in the future, we get a lot more quality players from UP," he added.

East Bengal head coach Bino George also promised a tough fight.

"East Bengal and Mohun Bagan are traditional rivals with huge fan bases. Whenever the two teams meet, the fans get emotional."

"The emotion is generated in footballers too. After all, this is a Derby and will be fought with its usual flair and keenness. Fans have already begun messaging us on the match. This is going to be an extremely serious affair," said George.

The 'City of Nawab' is home to hockey legend KD Singh 'Babu', star athlete Henry Rebello and champion shuttler Syed Modi, to name a few but big time football is making its maiden foray into Lucknow.

"It is such a big state with so many districts. If we can popularise football there even a bit, we could see so many talented players coming through. I really appreciate this initiative by the AIFF to bring such a big match to Lucknow," George said.

Mohun Bagan and East Bengal have clashed against each other 340 times in 22 cities spread all over the country since their classical rivalry began in Kolkata in 1925. (PTI)

Never thought I would hit world record 19 sixes; focus is on timing the ball: Badoni

NEW DELHI, Sept 1: South Delhi Superstar skipper Ayush Badoni, who hit a record 19 sixes, believes his ability to time the ball is the reason behind a record-smashing 55-ball 165 runs effort in the Delhi Premier League match against North Delhi Strikers. The 24-year-old right-hander's superb effort guiding his team to a 112-run win on Saturday. Ayush, who also shared a 286-run partnership with opener Priyansh Arya for the second wicket, bettered the record for most sixes by a batter in an innings which stood in the name of West Indian great Chris Gayle and Estonia's Sahil Chauhan. They had both hit 18 maximums in T20 games. "I was just looking to time the ball well, I never thought I would end up hitting 19 sixes in an innings. I just focus on timing the ball and not trying to hit the ball hard," Badoni told PTI Videos. Badoni, who plays for Lucknow Super Giants in the IPL, has had a decent run with the bat in the lucrative league in his short cricketing career. After his heroics in the ongoing DPL, the batter would be on the radar of several

franchises.

"I am not thinking about the (IPL) mega auction yet; my focus is on winning the Delhi Premier League right now as a skipper," he said. "Playing in the IPL has made life a lot easier for me as a batter here (DPL). We face world-class bowlers there, and then coming here and playing becomes relatively easy."

LSG assistant coach Jonty Rhodes compared Badoni to former Proteas hard-hitting batter Herschelle Gibbs.

"Jonty and I have a great relationship. I want to thank him for his kind words and just want to say that 'see you soon, Jonty'."

Badoni has led South Delhi Superstarz from the front. He along with Priyansh Arya have amassed 1,091 runs in the inaugural edition of the DPL. The skipper conceded that good partnerships take the pressure off batters coming down the order. "I know that Priyansh and I have done well and our batting does help take the pressure off the team. But they come and tell me after the game that they too are eager to contribute with the bat." (PTI)

Raphinha hits hat trick as Barcelona rout Valladolid 7-0

BARCELONA, Sept 1: Brazil forward Raphinha scored a hat trick and set up another goal as Barcelona routed Valladolid 7-0 and remained perfect with four wins in as many games under new coach Hansi Flick on Saturday.

The early leader of the Spanish league rolled over newly promoted Valladolid at home, with Robert Lewandowski, Dani Olmo, Jules Koundé and Ferran Torres also finding the net.

Lamine Yamal, who starred in Spain's European Championship title run, set up two goals and was way too much for Valladolid to handle from Lionel Messi's old spot on the right flank.

Raphinha had already started the season strong with a pair of assists before he powered the big win over Valladolid with his first career treble. And that came after the club was reported to have been interested in securing a blockbuster transfer for Athletic Bilbao winger Nico Williams, another Spain stand-out.

If Williams had arrived, Raphinha would have likely been the odd man out.



"I have been working hard since I came back from the summer holidays. I knew that this season would be very important," the former Leeds player said.

"The game today showed that we don't need new players to come in. We are in good shape and working hard in practice and games. And this shows where we are right now."

It was 3-0 by halftime and the final score could have been even

worse for the hapless visitor. Olmo, making his first start for Barcelona, hit the woodwork twice and Lewandowski also rattled the post.

When Barcelona fired Xavi Hernández and brought in Flick, president Joan Laporta said his team needed a change.

So far, so good.

The German coach has found a slick attacking unit of Lewandowski, Raphinha and Spain trio Yamal, Olmo, and

Pedri, that could give its fans reason to hope Barcelona will challenge defending champion Real Madrid despite the addition of Kylian Mbappé.

Flick gave a fourth debut to the products of the club's famed La Masia academy. This time it was the turn of 19-year-old defender Sergi Domínguez, who went on in the second half.

Raphinha used his chest to control a lobbed pass by 17-year-old defender Pau Cubarsí, who helped Spain win an Olympic gold, and opened the scoring in the 20th minute.

Lewandowski quickly doubled the lead from a cross by Yamal to give the Poland striker four goals in this campaign.

Koundé put the result beyond doubt in first-half injury time.

Raphinha scored from passes by Lewandowski and Yamal in the 64th and 72nd to make it a blowout.

Olmo, who also stood out for Spain at Euro 2024, took his second goal in as many games since joining from Leipzig. Substitute Torres capped the demolition by side-footing in a low cross from Raphinha. (AP)

Theegala calls penalty on himself, but still lies third as Scheffler leads by five

ATLANTA (USA), Sept 1: Indian-American golfer Sahithi Theegala moved up one more place, into third spot, at the Tour Championship here despite calling a two-shot penalty on himself in the third round.

As world No. 1 Scottie Scheffler birdied four of his last five holes in the third round for a 5-under 66, which brought him closer to finishing the season with a USD25 million FedExCup prize, the conversation centred around Theegala who called a two-shot penalty on himself for touching the sand on the third with his club while coming out of the bunker.

The video was not clear but Theegala decided to inform the officials about the infraction, and his par turned into a double bogey. Had the Indian-American not informed the officials, he could have been two shots closer to the golfers ahead of him.

Scheffler, who started the week at 10-under as per the FedExCup format, is now 26-under with rounds of 65-66-66 in the three rounds. He was five ahead of Collin Morikawa (66-63-67), who started the week at 4-under and is now 21-under, while Theegala, who started the week at 3-under, has moved to 17-under with 67-66-66.

"Pretty sure I breached the rules, so I'm paying the price for it, and I feel good about it. I'm not 100 per cent sure. But I'd say I'm 98-99 per cent sure that some sand was moved," said Theegala.

Theegala, who birdied the second, saw his par turn to double bogey on the third. He parred the next seven holes till the 10th. Then he had seven birdies and a bogey in the next eight holes with a back-nine of 6-under 30 for a round of 66. At 17-under, he is nine shots behind Scheffler.

Indian-American Akshay Bhatia (71) and Aaron Rai (72) are placed tied-22nd at 5-under.

Morikawa, who began the week six shots behind Scheffler, got within two shots of the lead when he holed a birdie putt from just inside 10 feet on the par-5 sixth hole. Scheffler then took over.

Scheffler holed a 15-foot birdie putt on the seventh, while Morikawa came up short of the green and then missed a 3-foot par, which meant a two-shot swing that swelled the lead to four. (PTI)

Minority athletes hope their Olympic journeys will sway intolerant hearts and minds

PARIS, Sept 1: Before she cut the air on the world's biggest sporting stage with head-spinning, gravity-defying moves, Logan Edra, aka B-Girl Logistix, held herself with a razor-sharp focus. Brows furrowed and hands anchored at her hips, Team USA's youngest breaker this year seemed more serious than some of her competitors at the Paris Olympics. This was not just a contest for the 21-year-old daughter of Filipino immigrants, but a pressure-packed chance to bring her cultural heritage into a traditionally American art form for all to see.

Representing both Filipinos and immigrant families more broadly was "the most overwhelming part" of breaking on the Olympic stage, Edra said, calling it "a different layer of love."

As the spotlight now shifts to the Paralympics, athletes like Edra shoulder not only their countries' hopes for gold, but the responsibility of representing their identities and cultures, which spectators increasingly

scrutinize.

Edra did not advance past the quarterfinals in the Paris b-girl competition, but her Olympic journey and current No. 10 world ranking clearly showcase her skill. When an athlete excels at this level, she said, stigma and judgment often give way to respect.

"If someone's doing a crazy move on their elbows, and they spin on their head — clearly it takes so much human strength. You can't deny that," Edra said.

However, this effect of positive exposure can unravel if a minority athlete becomes politically outspoken. It's a real dilemma: Voicing opinions on a sensitive topic can jeopardize the breadth of their influence, yet remaining silent can feel like betraying their true selves. Navigating this balance between embracing authenticity and preserving respect is a constant challenge.

Social scientists call this dynamic the "parasocial contact hypothesis," which suggests prejudice can be reduced through



positive exposure to athletes or other members of marginalized or stigmatized groups.

Researchers tested the theory by exploring soccer's influence on Islamophobia in British culture. After Egyptian striker Mohamed Salah, known for his prayers on the pitch, was instrumental in a decisive Liverpool win, viral videos showed British fans celebrating with chants like "I'll be Muslim, too," and "Mohamed Salah, a gift from Allah."

Salma Mousa, a political scientist at University of California,

Los Angeles, who specializes in prejudice reduction and who co-authored the 2021 study, pointed out the limitations of this influence — she said Salah maintained a "completely apolitical" stance on controversial issues at the time. "Practically this does place a burden on minority players," said Ala Alrababah, another co-author of the study and a political scientist at Bocconi University. "As a Muslim player, as a Black player, as an LGBTQ+ player, or as any other minority, knowing that playing well can improve attitudes or playing badly can worsen attitudes — this is adding pressure. This is tough." Whether it's their intention to or not, minority Olympians become emblematic figures for entire ethnicities or religions.

Gabby Douglas and Simone Biles have ignited waves of Black participation in gymnastics. Sunisa Lee, who in Tokyo became the first Hmong-American and first Asian American to win women's all-around gold, sparked surges in Google

searches for "Hmong" and "What is Hmong descent?" And when Lee began battling an incurable kidney condition after her 2021 win, she raised awareness about high rates of kidney disease among the Hmong American population.

Biles waited until after she had won a sixth gold medal at Paris before posting an apparent reference to the U.S. presidential campaign on X, writing "I love my black job."

"All sports go way beyond what happens on the field of play, but that is true to a factor of 10 for the Olympic Games," USA Gymnastics spokesperson Jill Geer said.

Some civil society groups recruit minority athletes to be ambassadors in prejudice reduction campaigns. Show Racism the Red Card — the U.K.'s largest anti-racism educational charity — offered a 53-page guide on "using the Olympics and Paralympics to educate against prejudice" to teachers across England, Scotland and Wales. (PTI)

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Sukant sets up semifinal clash with Suhas in semis; Nitesh too win, Krishna out

PARIS, Sept 1: India's Sukant Kadam set up a men's singles SL4 semifinal clash against compatriot Suhas Yathiraj to assure India of a medal in para badminton but Krishna Nagar's title defence ended in agony following an ankle injury at the Paris Paralympics.

There was heartbreak in store for mixed doubles pair of Sivarajan Solaimalai and Nithya Sre Sumathy Sivan as the second seeded duo squandered an opening game advantage to go down 21-17 14-21 13-21 to USA's Miles Krajewski and Jayci Simon in SH6 semifinals on Saturday.

The Indian duo will now play in the bronze medal play off.

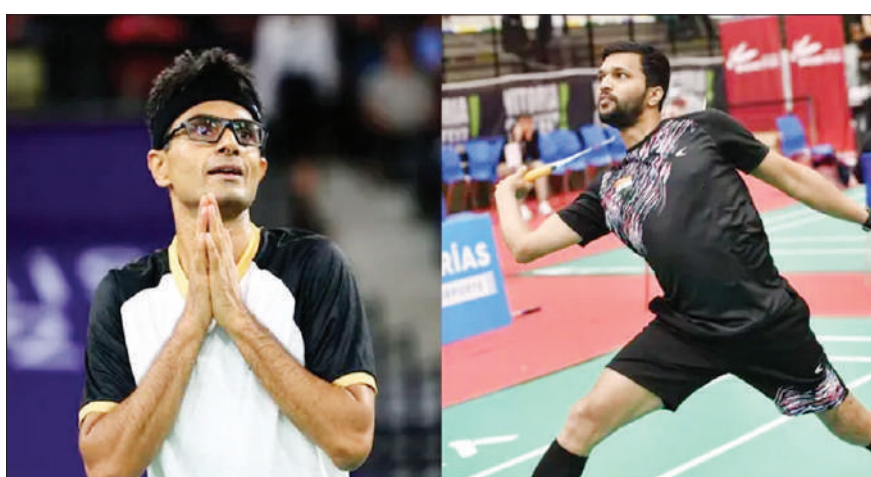
Earlier, debutant Sukant thrashed Thailand's Teamarom Siripong 21-12 21-12 to top group B and will clash with Suhas, a Tokyo silver medalist, in the semifinal to ensure a final finish for India in SL4 class, which is meant for athletes with lower limb impairments and minor balance issues in walking or running.

Nitesh Kumar, who had won a silver medal in the Asian Para Games last year, also qualified for the semifinals of men's singles SL3 category after recording a straight-game win in his last group match.

Nitesh topped Group A after outplaying Mongkhon Bunsun of Thailand 21-13 21-14, notching up his third successive win.

However, it was a heartbreaking end to Krishna's campaign as he twisted his ankle during his must-win SH6 group B match against Thailand's Meechai Natthapong.

Following his loss against Miles Krajewski, Krishna needed to win the match with a good point difference to stay in the hunt but he sustained the injury while lagging 20-22 3-11 and was forced to retire.



"I had to win in straight games to reach knockout, but I lost the opening game but luck hasn't been on my side. My ankle twisted in second game, so I had to retire. I will try to comeback stronger next time," Krishna said after the match.

For Sukant, this was his second consecutive win in the three-player group.

"It's my debut tournament. I am so happy to qualify for the semifinals," said Sukant, who had won a bronze in the Asian Para Games last year.

"I was well prepared for today's game. The first match was much tougher than this. And against him I have played plenty of times and I was very confident. So, I wanted to go one point at a time and then I played really well."

In the men's SL4 competition, only the toppers from each of the four groups qualify for the semifinals.

In SL3 class, which is meant for players

with severe lower limb disability competing on half-width court, the top two finishers from each of the two groups qualify for the semifinals.

Therefore, apart from Nitesh, Bunsun also qualified for the semifinals as the second-place finisher from group A.

In the group A, Tokyo Paralympics bronze medalist Manoj Sarkar, who has already bowed out of the tournament, beat Yang Jianyuan of China 21-1 21-11. Manoj had earlier lost to Bunsun and Nitesh.

In SL4, Tarun Dhillon, however, couldn't make it to the semifinals after finishing second in group D following his 7-21 16-21 loss to France's Lucas Mazur, who topped the group.

In men's SL4 competition, only the toppers from each of the four groups qualify for the semifinals.

Meanwhile, Mandeep Kaur entered the

quarterfinals of the women's singles SL3 category after defeating Australia's Vinot Celine Aurelie in the women's singles SL3 event on Saturday.

Mandeep regrouped to win her last group B match 21-23 21-10 21-17 against her Australian rival. She had lost her opening match to Nigeria's Bolaji Mariam.

The Indian finished second in the three-player group B to book a quarterfinal spot. Mariam topped the group to enter the semifinals.

The toppers of group A and C directly advanced to the semifinals. The top two teams in group B as well as second-place finishers in group A and C compete in the quarterfinal for the two remaining semifinal spots.

In women's singles SU5 which is for athletes with upper limb impairments, second seed Manisha Ramadass suffered a 15-21 7-21 loss to Yang Qiu Xia to finish second in group C.

The Indian, whose right arm got damaged even before she was born due to a clinical mistake by doctor, thus will be playing the quarterfinals, while the Chinese moved into the semis after topping the group.

Nithya Sre Sumathy Sivan, the top seed in women's singles SH6, went down 20-22 18-21 against Lin Shuangbao of China in her third match to finish second in the group.

The 19-year-old from Tamil Nadu, who won two bronze medals at the 2022 Asian Para Games, will play the quarterfinals, while her opponent will get a bye into the semifinals.

In men's singles SH6, Sivarajan Solaimalai ended his campaign with a third successive loss, going down 12-21 10-21 to Krysten Coombs of Great Britain. (PTI)

Manisha sets up semifinal duel with Thulasimathi to assure India another medal; Palak, Mandeep bow out

PARIS, Sept 1: India were assured of a second medal in badminton with Manisha Ramadass setting up a women's singles SU5 semifinals duel with compatriot Thulasimathi Murugesan at the Paris Paralympics here on Sunday.

The 19-year-old Manisha, who was born with Erb's palsy which affected her right arm, had no trouble in dispatching Japan's Mamiko Toyoda 21-13 21-16 in the quarterfinals.

Erb's palsy is a nerve disorder in the shoulder and arm that results in weakness or loss of muscle function.

The second seeded Indian left-hander needed 30 minutes to down her unseeded rival.

In the last four, Manisha will meet top seed Thulasimathi, who had defeated Portugal's Beatriz Monteiro in group A on Saturday.

In SU5 category, the players have impairment of the upper limbs. The impairment could be on the playing or non-playing hand.

On Saturday, Sukant Kadam earned the right to take on compatriot Suhas Yathiraj in SL4 semifinals to assure the country its first medal in badminton from this edition of the Games.

However, Mandeep Kaur and Palak Kohli were eliminated following contrasting defeats in their respective quarterfinals here on Sunday.

Competing in SL3 category, Mandeep hardly posed a challenge to Nigeria's third seed Bolaji Mariam Eniola, losing the contest 8-21 9-21 in 23 minutes.

It was the second consecutive defeat for Mandeep against Eniola, having lost to the Nigerian in the group stage as well.

SL3 category is for players with severe lower-limb disability competing on a half-width court.

In SL4 category, para world championship bronze medalist Palak went down fighting 19-21 15-21 to Indonesia's Khalimatatus Sadiyah in 28 minutes.

SL4 is a class for athletes competing while standing with less severe impairment than in SL3.

Later in the day, Nithya Sivan Sumathy will compete in the last-eight stage in SH6 category against Poland's Oliwia Szmigiel.

The men's singles semifinal in SL4 category will be an all-Indian affair with Yathiraj and Kadam clashing against each other.

Nitesh Kumar will fight it out with Japan's Daisuke Fujiwara in the men's singles semifinal in SL3 category. (PTI)

Purani Dilli 6 beat West Delhi Lions by 6 wickets, climb to 3rd place in DPL

NEW DELHI, Sept 1: Purani Dilli 6 defeated West Delhi Lions by six wickets to register their fourth win in the ongoing Delhi Premier League at the Arun Jaitley Stadium here.

Purani Dilli 6 on Saturday bowled out West Delhi Lions for 139 and then chased down the target with 11 balls to spare.

Kesha Dalal played a match-winning knock as he smashed 47 runs off 30 balls. Ayush Singh was the pick of the bowlers, taking four wickets for Purani Dilli 6.

Chasing 140, Purani Dilli 6 got off to a good start with the openers scoring 40 runs in four overs.

However, Arpit Rana departed in the fifth over. Manjeet and Yug Gupta stitched a brief 27-run stand before the latter got out in the eighth over.

Purani Dilli lost two more wickets in the coming overs as West Delhi Lions got hold of the match.

But Keshav and Lalit Yadav built an unbeaten 59-run partnership to seal the game for Purani Dilli 6. (PTI)

Boxing's future hangs in balance after Asian body votes in favour of IBA

AL AIN (UAE), Sept 1: Boxing's already uncertain Olympic future was thrown into further jeopardy after the sport's Asian governing body voted against leaving the suspended International Boxing Association (IBA) to join the rival association.

The polling was held via a secret ballot on Saturday with 21 countries voted to continue with IBA, while 14 cast their ballot in favour of joining World Boxing (WB), a breakaway body which is aiming for recognition of the International Olympic Committee (IOC). There was one invalid vote.

Besides India, which participated as an observer, the other countries whose names figured on the roll call included, Bahrain, Bhutan, Brunei, Cambodia, China, Chinese Taipei, Timor Leste, Hong Kong, Indonesia,

Iran, Iraq, Japan, Jordan, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Laos, and Lebanon.

Other members present were Macau, Malaysia, Myanmar, Nepal, Pakistan, Palestine, Philippines, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, Singapore, Sri Lanka, Syria, Tajikistan, Thailand, Turkmenistan, United Arab Emirates, Uzbekistan, Vietnam and Yemen.

The IOC has time and again reiterated its threat to leave boxing out of the 2028 Olympics if national federations continue to align themselves with the suspended IBA.

World Boxing has 42 members currently while suspended IBA has more than 100 affiliated units. With the Asian Boxing Confederation (ASBC) refusing to join the IOC 'promoted' WB, the Olympic future of the sport hangs in a balance.



However, Boxing Federation of India (BFI) president Ajay Singh, who was present at ASBC's extraordinary congress, is confident WB will get to the 50-member mark it requires to receive the provisional recognition by the end of the year.

"India is taking all possible steps to ensure that boxing remains a part of the Olympic movement. It is clear that the International Olympic Committee will not accept IBA as the international parent body for boxing," Singh told PTI on Sunday.

"India has chosen to support World Boxing as the only viable alternative. Yesterday's vote showed that 14 countries that are part of the ASBC are keen to join World Boxing."

"We are confident that World Boxing will soon have the requisite strength to apply and be accepted by IOC as the governing body for boxing," he added.

It is also learnt that a few of the 14 Asian countries that voted in favour of joining WB will be putting in their application to join the breakaway body soon. (PTI)



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মাননীয় বিধায়ক, মৰিগাঁও





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তাৰিখ : ২ ছেপ্টেম্বৰ ২০২৪
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