

WORLD NATION 6 Trump threatens to jail adversaries in escalating rhetoric ahead of pivotal debate 8 Pakistan's defence minister says evidence against Imran points towards military trial 'Have suffered patiently': TMC MP Jawhar Sircar Accused wanted to discredit Indian democracy, get global attention

AASU wants full execution of Assam accord

State govt must put pressure on Centre to act on Sarma panel's recommendations: Samujjal

GUWAHATI, Sept 8: The Assam Accord must be completely implemented, according to the All Assam Students' Union (AASU), and the state administration is supposed to be proactive throughout the entire process. The development comes in the wake of announcement made by chief minister Himanta Biswa Sarma that 52 of the 67 recommendations made by the high-level committee headed by retired Justice Biplab Kumar Sarma regarding the implementation of the Assam accord's article 6 will be put into effect by April 15, 2025. "We want the Assam accord to be fully implemented. As one of the participants to the agreement in 1985, AASU will closely monitor its appropriate execution," said chief advisor of AASU Samujjal Bhattacharya stated on Sunday. He declared that the state governments could implement part of



the suggestions made by the Justice Sarma-led clause 6 panel, and the Central government is responsible for implementing the remaining recommendations. "The Central government established a high-level committee. The state government now needs to exert pressure on the central government to act

headed by Justice Biplab Kumar Sarma recommended that the post-1971 stream of declared foreigners be temporarily relocated outside of Assam until their expulsion process is completed. The panel also provided a definition of "Assamese". The committee stated that in order to properly carry out its recommendations, several parliamentary and constitutional modifications would be necessary. It has been said that changes will be necessary to the current Article 371-B of the Constitution. Enacted after a six-year foreigners' agitation (1979-1985), the Assam Accord states that all foreigners entering the state after March 25, 1971, will be deported, irrespective of their faith. Clause 6 of the Assam Accord states that appropriate constitutional, legislative and administrative safeguards will be provided to protect the cultural, social and linguistic identity and heritage of the Assamese people.

Former Assam Congress chief Ripun Bora returns to party



GUWAHATI, Sept 8: Former Assam Congress chief Ripun Bora, who had recently resigned as the state Trinamool Congress president, returned to the grand old party on Sunday. AICC general secretary in-charge of the state, Jitendra Singh, welcomed Bora back into the party fold at the beginning of an Extended Executive Committee

meeting at Charaideo. Besides Singh, state Congress president Bhupen Kumar Borah, leader of opposition Debabrata Saikia and other leaders were present on the occasion. "On behalf of AICC, I welcome Ripun Bora back into the party. It is a 'ghar wapsi' (returning home) for him," Singh said. He maintained that though Bora may have joined TMC and became its state president, Congress is in his DNA. "We are happy that he has returned without any condition. He is with us as a party member," Singh added. Bora, expressing happiness on returning to the Congress, said, "For whatever reasons, I had left Congress for two-and-a-half-years. But it is the demand of the state and country that BJP needs to be uprooted from power, and Congress is the only party which can do it." He maintained that remaining with TMC would only lead to opposition vote division, which will help the saffron party, and hence, he decided to return to his old party. "The people of Assam are fed up with the misuse of the BJP government. We will all work together to strengthen the Congress further and expose the ruling alliance's corruption and communalism before the people," Bora added. State Congress chief Borah said the return of the former leader has been facilitated after discussion with (CONTD. ON PAGE-2)

HT BRIEFS Deposit scheme

GUWAHATI: The Dibrugarh Police Station Case No. 352/2024, related to unregulated deposit schemes involving Bishal Phukan, has been officially handed over to the Criminal Investigation Department (CID) for an expeditious and thorough investigation, DGP GP Singh announced on Sunday. The director general of Police informed the transfer of the case on the micro-blogging site X ensuring a comprehensive investigation under the supervision of CID. DGP Singh also emphasised that the CID, headquartered at Ulubari, Guwahati, would form a Special Investigation Team (SIT) to lead the investigation. Additionally, the directive to transfer the case came from the Assam Police Headquarters, located in Ulubari, Guwahati. The order further stressed the need for a prompt and thorough investigation to bring the perpetrators to justice.

India-Singapore MoU

GUWAHATI: Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma hailed the India-Singapore partnership, calling it a "new developmental dawn", an official statement said on Sunday. The chief minister on the micro-blogging site X highlighted the significance of an MoU signed between the Govt of Assam and the Singapore Cooperation Enterprise (SCE), which aims to enhance urban planning and management in Guwahati. He wrote, "India-Singapore partnership to herald a new developmental dawn! During Hon'ble Prime Minister Shri @narendramodiji's recent visit to Singapore, the joint statement, issued along with Hon'ble Prime Minister of Singapore HE Lawrence Wong, appreciated the MoU between Singapore Cooperation Enterprise (SCE) and Govt of Assam in urban planning and management." Sarma further emphasised that the initiative would bolster Guwahati's urban infrastructure, ensuring that the city meets the growing needs of its population while promoting sustainable development.

ULFA-I linkman apprehended for planting bomb on I-Day

GUWAHATI, Sept 8: Assam Police arrested a linkman from the United Liberation Front of Asom—Independent (ULFA-I), a proscribed terrorist group, for allegedly planting explosives on Independence Day in several parts of the state, officials said on Sunday. As per the officials, the linkman was identified as Manab Kalita and was arrested in Jorhat district. During investigation, Kalita admitted that he was an active cadre of ULFA-I and that, on Independence Day, he took a proactive part in putting bombs in multiple locations in Guwahati. "The ULFA-I linkman was active in the region for the last several days. He demanded extortion money from the owner of a tea garden in the upper Assam area. However, initially, the authority of the

Mission Basundhara 3.0 to be launched on October 2: Himanta

Escalation matrix, e-Chitha, land valuation certificate, and community portal launched

GUWAHATI, Sept 8: Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma on Sunday asserted that Mission Basundhara 3.0 will be launched on October 2. He was speaking at a function held at Srimanta Sankardeva Kalakshetra where he launched escalation matrix, e-Chitha, land valuation certificate and community response portal of ASDMA. Speaking at the launching ceremony which was organised by Revenue and Disaster Management Department where a workshop for Mission Basundhara (MB) 3.0 was also organised, Sarma said that the services launched will revolutionise the public services delivery system in the state.



"These services will also help in effective implementation of Mission Basundhara 3.0 which will be launched on 2 October. Mission Basundhara 1.0 and Mission Basundhara 2.0 helped many landless

Assam govt merges SEBA and AHSEC

GUWAHATI, Sept 8: Assam government has merged the Board of Secondary Education Assam (SEBA) and Assam Higher Secondary Education Council (AHSEC), said chief minister Himanta Biswa Sarma on Sunday. Sarma said that the new board will synchronise school education tailored to the needs of the 21st century. "In a major milestone towards taking our education sector to new heights and in conformity with NEP 2020, we have merged SEBA & AHSEC to form a unified Assam State School Education Board," Sarma wrote on micro-blogging site X. Meanwhile, Assam Governor Lakshman Acharya has announced the nomination of RC Jain as the Chairman of the Assam State School Education Board and Rukma Gohain Baruah, Chairman, Assam Higher Secondary Education Council, as the vice-chairman of the Assam State School Education Board. (CONTD. ON PAGE-2)

Join India, we consider you our own unlike Pakistan: Rajnath Singh to PoK residents

JAMMU, Sept 8: Defence Minister Rajnath Singh on Sunday asked the residents of Pakistan-occupied Kashmir (PoK) to come and join India as "we consider you our own unlike Pakistan which treats you as foreigners". Addressing an election rally in the Ramban assembly constituency in support of BJP candidate Rakesh Singh Thakur, the Union minister asserted there is a sea change in the overall security situation in Jammu and Kashmir since the abrogation of Article 370 in August 2019. The senior BJP leader came down heavily on the National Conference-Congress alliance over its poll promise of restoring Article 370 and said it is impossible as long as the BJP is there. He said the "sea change" witnessed in the overall security situation in J-K since August 2019 means that youths now carry laptops and computers in their hands instead of pistols and revolvers. Now, nobody dares to fire bullets at people in Srinagar, he said. "Support the BJP to form the next government in J-K so that we can facilitate massive development in the region. There will be so much development that the people in PoK on seeing this should say that we do not want to live with Pakistan and instead will go to India," the defence minister said.



He said that recently an affidavit was filed by Pakistan's additional solicitor general in the neighboring country stating that PoK is a foreign land. "I want to tell PoK residents that Pakistan considers you foreigners, but the people in India do not consider you so. We consider you our own and so come and join us," he said. The defence minister's visit as a BJP star campaigner comes a day after home minister Amit Shah's two-day tour during which he released the party's manifesto, held a series of meetings with senior party leaders and also addressed a party workers' rally in the Ramban constituency. (CONTD. ON PAGE-2)

BJP accuses leaders of politicising grazing land issue in Karbi Anglong

DIPHU, Sept 8: The BJP East Karbi Anglong has accused leaders Angtong Engti Kathar and Litsong Rongphar of politicising the Professional Grazing Land (PGR)/Village Grazing Land (VGR) issue for publicity. While addressing a press conference, BJP East Karbi Anglong district committee spokesperson Laichan Englung responded to allegations made by Kathar and Rongphar regarding the lack of eviction in PGR/VGR areas in Kheroni, West Karbi Anglong. "Some leaders, such as Angtong Engti Kathar and Litsong Rongphar, are turning the PGR/VGR issue into a political matter to gain personal benefit," Englung added. He further opined that both Kathar and Rongphar had previously criticised the Karbi Anglong Autonomous Council (KAAC) for not initiating eviction drives despite notices being issued to encroachers. "In their press conference on September 7, they announced plans for a sit-in demonstration at the Dongkamukam Revenue Circle office on September 9, 10, and 11. They argued that the 15-day deadline for eviction had expired, and it is now up to the public to take action," he added. Englung responded by asserting that criticism of the KAAC is obstructing the eviction process. He clarified that chief executive member (CEM) of KAAC, Tuliram Ronghang, did not state that eviction would not be carried out. The matter is currently under review by the Guwahati High Court, and if the verdict is favorable to the KAAC, eviction will proceed. Englung further criticised Kathar and Rongphar's association with the 'Karbi Chingrum Amei' agitation, urging them not to use divisive tactics to create rifts within the community. In response to Rongphar's claim (CONTD. ON PAGE-2)

KNP to reopen for tourists on Oct 1

GUWAHATI, Sept 8: The Kaziranga National Park and Tiger Reserve in Assam will reopen for tourists on October 1 after the monsoon break, an official said on Sunday. Initially, only three ranges of the park will open for tourists with jeep safari facilities in view of the road conditions following the floods. Park director Sonali Ghosh said. Jeep safari will be allowed in the central or Kohora, western or Bagori, and Burapahar ranges in two shifts -- 7.30 am to 10 am and 1.30 pm to 3 pm. During the upcoming tourist season, the focus will be on enhanced visitor experience and safety, Ghosh said. Renowned for its breathtaking landscapes, rich biodiversity, (CONTD. ON PAGE-2)

Tributes paid to Bhupen Hazarika on birth anniversary

GUWAHATI, Sept 8: Rich tributes were paid to Bhupen Hazarika on his birth anniversary on Sunday, with compositions by the musical maestro reverberating across Assam as special programmes were organised to mark the occasion. Assam Governor Lakshman Prasad Acharya, in a post on X, said, "Like the ever-flowing waters of the Burhaluit, may the words of love, unity and harmony of Sudhakanth echo in the hearts of every Assamese." The Brahmaputra is also referred to as the Burhaluit, and the suffix 'Sudhakanth' (melodious voice) is used for Hazarika. "I pay my respects to the ever-green artist Bharat Ratna Dr Bhupen Hazarika on his birth anniversary," he added. Assam chief minister Himanta Biswa Sarma also paid his tributes on the micro-blogging site.



"The music of Dr Bhupen Hazarika transcends all barriers! His songs radiate the message of justice, harmony and brotherhood. Today on his Jayanti, we pay homage to the Bard of Brahmaputra," the state government organised a cultural programme at the Samadhi Kshetra of the 'Bard of Brahmaputra' at Jalukbari on the outskirts of the city. Assam cultural affairs minister Bimal Borah paid floral tribute to

the memory of Hazarika at the Samadhi Kshetra, where a cultural programme has also been organised. The Bhupen Hazarika Sangskritik Nyas also organised a programme to pay tribute to the late artist. Ninety-nine flags were hoisted by eminent people from different walks of life as part of the programme, while songs of the musical maestro were also performed on the occasion. Education minister Ranaj Pegu also hoisted a flag at the event, urging the people to imbibe and follow the ideals of brotherhood and harmony espoused by Hazarika in their lives. Tributes were paid to the legendary musician in different parts of the state, with programmes organised to commemorate the 98th birth anniversary of the legend. (PTI)

SEBI has lot to explain: Cong after Mauritius FPIs 'challenge'

NEW DELHI, Sept 8: The Congress on Sunday said the SEBI investigation into "the Adani Group's brazen attempt" to bypass regulations is still languishing and the capital markets regulator has a lot to explain. Congress general secretary in-charge communications Jairam Ramesh's remarks attacking SEBI came after a media report which claimed that two Mauritius-based foreign portfolio investors (FPIs), who were mentioned in the January 2023 report on the Adani Group by short-seller Hindenburg Research, have petitioned the Securities Appellate Tribunal, seeking urgent relief from

complying with SEBI's new foreign investor norms. "Two Mauritius-based foreign portfolio investors (FPIs), a part of the revelations in the still-unfolding Modani mega scam, have now petitioned the Securities Appellate Tribunal, seeking urgent relief from complying with SEBI's new foreign investor norms before the upcoming September 9th deadline," Ramesh said. Both the FPIs are alleged to be violating rules that require investors to not be over-invested in a single stock, he said. These rules are meant to ensure that black money routed through tax havens does not flood back into Indian capital markets, Ramesh said, adding they must be upheld at all costs. "These are the very same FPIs who stand accused of participating in the Adani Group's brazen attempt to bypass SEBI's regulations and amass benami stakes in its own companies. These are the very firms that benefitted from SEBI's removal of the requirement to identify the 'ultimate beneficial owner' of offshore funds, a decision that it was forced under public pressure to reverse in June 2023 in a tacit admission of its guilt," the Congress leader said in his post on X. "The basic fact is that a SEBI investigation into these violations that was supposed to be completed in two months and shared with the Supreme Court is still languishing 18 months later," Ramesh said. (CONTD. ON PAGE-2)

Adani floats China subsidiary for providing project management services

NEW DELHI, Sept 8: Adani Group has formed a subsidiary in China to carry out business of providing supply chain solutions and project management services, according to a regulatory filing.

Adani Enterprises, the group's flagship firm, in the filing said a Singapore-based step-down subsidiary incorporated a wholly-owned subsidiary, Adani Energy Resources (Shanghai) Co. (AERCL), domiciled in Shanghai, China on September 2, 2024.

"AERCL is incorporated to carry out business of providing supply chain solutions and project management services," it said without providing details.

The subsidiary was incorporated by Adani Global Pte (AGPTE), Singapore - a step-down subsidiary of Adani Enterprises Ltd (AEL).

AEL houses the conglomerate's mining, roads, airports, data center and water infrastructure businesses. "AERCL has been incorporated and registered under the laws



of Company Law of the People's Republic of China on September 2, 2024," the filing said. AERCL is yet to commence its business operations.

The new unit comes days after AEL set up a subsidiary in Kenya, Airports Infrastructure PLC (AIP) "to take over, operate, maintain, develop, design, construct, upgrade,

modernize and manage the airports" in the African nation.

The group, which currently operates seven airports in the country, is looking to expand overseas.

AEL had previously incorporated Global Airports Operator L.L.C., Abu Dhabi, to handle investment, acquisition, construc-

tion, operation, and maintenance of airports outside India. This unit has now set up the Kennia subsidiary.

Adani Group had reportedly submitted a proposal to the Kenyan government for investing in its main airport, the Jomo Kenyatta International Airport (JKIA) in Nairobi. It has proposed to invest USD 750 million for a new terminal and taxiway system by 2029 and an USD 92 million for improvements by 2035.

JKIA, which would be Adani's first airport outside of India, is a major hub in East Africa but has a crumbling infrastructure. It could provide Adani with a strategic advantage in the region, enhancing connectivity and trade routes.

Talks with the Kenyan government are ongoing. "AIP has been incorporated and registered under the laws of Kenya Companies Act, 2015 on August 30, 2024," AEL said. AIP is yet to commence its business operations. (PTI)

Over 1.4K accessibility complaints filed on govt app, 75% solved: Data

NEW DELHI, Sept 8: More than 1,400 complaints related to accessibility have been lodged through the government's flagship Sugamya Bharat mobile application since its launch in 2021, with approximately 75 per cent of those resolved, according to official data.

The Sugamya Bharat app, designed to assist people with disabilities and the elderly, allows users to report accessibility issues in public infrastructure, transportation and buildings by uploading photos.

Information revealed following a Right to Information (RTI) request filed by PTI showed that 1,441 complaints were received on the app between 2021 and 2024. Of these, 1,081 were addressed after being forwarded to the authorities concerned.

The RTI response revealed that 647 complaints were received in the 2021-22 period, of which 567 were resolved. The following year, 530 complaints were lodged and 391 resolved. The app recorded 264 complaints in 2023-24 while

123 were addressed.

To further improve the app's functionality, the government plans to redesign the platform, incorporating artificial intelligence (AI) features.

A senior Department of Disability Affairs official said the upgraded Sugamya Bharat app would become a comprehensive platform for people with disabilities, offering an AI-powered chatbot, a multilingual interface, and tools for complaint registration and feedback. (PTI)

Contd. from Page 1.

Former Assam Congress chief

the AICC and hoped that his coming back will strengthen the party further. Several top functionaries of state TMC also joined the Congress along with Bora. Bora, a former state cabinet minister and also an ex-MP who had left Congress in April 2022, had resigned from the Trinamool Congress on September 1, claiming that the people of the northeastern state consider it as a "regional party" of West Bengal and are "not willing to accept" it as their own. (PTI)

ULFA-I linkman apprehended

Sivasagar, Nagaon, and a few locations in Guwahati are among the locations. It has been discovered that ULFA-I dropped bombs in Guwahati city in at least eight locations.

The outlawed group in a statement said that due to some technical errors, the bombs were not blasted. According to a statement by ULFA-I, they intended to protest violently by detonating the explosives during Independence Day festivities. But between 6 am and 12 noon, "technical errors" prevented the bombs from detonating as intended. A list of the targeted areas and pictures of certain bomb sites, including one close to the state secretariat in Dispur in Guwahati, were also published by ULFA-I.

Mission Basundhara 3.0 to be

Basundhara 1.0 and 2.0 have enabled the government to take steps for making Mission Basundhara 3.0 more effective and beneficiary friendly. "All preparations have been taken for rolling out of Mission Basundhara 3.0. Moreover, the two-day workshop on the preparedness of Mission Basundhara 3.0 held at Srimanta Sankardeva Kalakshetra will also help all the stake holders to reorient themselves for the successful implementation of Mission Basundhara 3.0," he added. Sarma said that Mission Basundhara 1.0 which was launched on 2 October, 2021 benefited around eight lakh people. Moreover, Mission Basundhara 2.0 which was launched on 14 November, 2022 also benefited more than two lakh people.

"Taken together, Mission Basundhara 1.0 and 2.0 ensured land rights to around 84 per cent indigenous people, SC and ST of the state. Moreover, in Mission Basundhara 3.0, the cases will also be taken where offer of settlement could not be given to the beneficiaries in MB 2.0," Sarma stated.

The chief minister also said that one of the criteria for being considered for MB 3.0, a beneficiary should be living on the piece of land for three generations, adding, "However, this criterion would be exempted for the people belonging to tea tribes, Adivasi, Gorkha community and people belonging to six ethnic communities in the state. These classes will be declared as protected class and they will be considered for allotting land pattas under MB 3.0 without any evidence of three generation legacy associated with the piece of land. This move of the government will greatly benefit the indigenous people of the state."

He said that during MB 3.0, claims for land for educational institutions like colleges and universities will be given preference. Moreover, he said that it was observed that some of the beneficiaries even after being eligible for land pattas under Mission Basundhara 2.0 could not regularise their rights because of their inability to pay high premium of land. "Therefore, the government, decided that in MB 3.0 for the lands falling in towns and cities, the beneficiaries will be allowed to regularise their possession by paying less premium against the government rate. However, if they want to sell the land, the unrealized premium will have to be paid to the government from the amount thus realised from the sale of the land. This system will also ensure land rights to the indigenous people," Sarma avowed.

Coming to escalation matrix, it may be noted with the help of this portal time-frame will be set for handling and disposing of the matters contained in ARTPS Act. With the help of E-chitra through 'sewa setu portal', buyers will get the facility to get into the history of any piece of land like the names of its owners in Assam for the purpose of buying. Land valuation certificate will enable the buyers and sellers to get valuation information about a piece of land. The community response portal of ASDMA will help various NGOs, volunteers along with the government to provide aids to the disaster victims in times of any disaster.

Minister Revenue and Disaster Management Jogen Mohan also spoke on the occasion. Chief Secretary Dr. Ravi Kota, principal secretary Revenue and Disaster Management Department G D Tripathi and host of senior government officers were also present on the occasion.

Assam govt merges SEBA

As per an official notification, they have been nominated for a term of 3 years or up to 70 years whichever is earlier, from the date of issue of this notification.

KNP to reopen for tourists

and iconic inhabitants like the one-horned rhinoceros, Kaziranga has emerged as a top destination for families and wildlife aficionados, the official said. The park is closed every year in May at the onset of monsoon. Nearly 200 animals lost their lives this year due to the devastating flood. (PTI)

Join India, we consider you

the BJP's Thakur is up against the NC's Arjun Singh Raju and party's rebel Suraj Singh Parihar. The seat was last won by the BJP's Neelam Kumar Langeh who was denied a ticket by the party this time. Singh said the assembly polls are taking place in J&K after 10 years and not only the people of the country but outside are also watching it. "I firmly believe that the BJP will form the next government with a clear majority."

Praising the people of J&K as skilful, hardworking and dedicated, he said if the BJP comes to power, J-K will emerge as the number one and modern state in the country. "I am saying it on the performance of the central government after Narendra Modi took over as prime minister in 2014. India has moved to fourth (fifth) spot from the 11th in terms of economy."

"There is a requirement for a skilful and strong-hearted person at the post of PM and chief minister for smooth functioning of the government. There used to be an atmosphere of terror in Kashmir before 2019...today no one can dare to open fire from a pistol or revolver. This is the result of a strong leader being in power," he said.

Singh said when he was the home minister and PDP president Mehbooba Mufti was the chief minister in J-K, his only concern was to bring the security situation in J-K to normal.

"I led a parliamentary delegation to meet the Hurriyat Conference as we were ready for talks with them for restoration of peace. Sharad Yadav along with others went to meet the Hurriyat leaders but they shut their doors. People were demanding withdrawal of cases against innocent and minor children and I talked to Mehbooba and asked her to release them. We did everything but the way they (Hurriyat leaders) should have responded, they did not," he said.

In 2016, a delegation comprising CPI(M) General Secretary Sitaram Yechury, CPI leader D Raja, JD(U) leader Sharad Yadav and RJD's Jay Prakash Narayan had gone to meet headline Hurriyat leader Syed Ali Shah Geelani at his Srinagar residence where he was under house arrest. However, Geelani snubbed the delegation and did not even open the doors. Targeting PDP and NC, the defence minister said they used to say that the revoking of Article 370 will engulf the region into a devastating fire. "We did it boldly and nothing had happened."

"After independence, the rights of women and weaker sections including Pakistani refugees, sweepers were denied. But we ensured justice for them and they are going to vote in these elections. We also provided political reservation to Scheduled Tribes," he said.

Singh said a G20 event happened in Srinagar last year, projecting Kashmir as a "tourism hotspot instead of terrorism hotspot" as government focused on road and rail connectivity and infrastructure building.

"The government under the leadership of Modi has decided to call the border villages as first villages of the country rather than last villages and we will ensure their fast development," he said, adding the border-fencing project will be completed to block infiltration. (PTI)

BJP accuses leaders of politicising

that chief minister Himanta Biswa Sarma is exploiting Karbi Anglong for personal gain. Englung countered that such allegations are unfounded. He highlighted the substantial financial support Karbi Anglong has received under the chief minister's special package, including ₹ 20,000 crore for development, ₹ 10 crore for sports complexes in each of the 26 MAC constituencies, ₹ 3 crore for the Karbi Youth Festival, and ₹ 33 crore for educational purposes. "If this support is a problem, one must ask: who is benefiting? Is it the Chief Minister or Karbi Anglong?" Englung said. On the other hand, BJP East Karbi Anglong media incharge Bidyasingh Rongpi also emphasised that the KAAC has already formed a High Power Committee to address the eviction matter, which is currently under way.

SEBI has lot to explain: Cong

SEBI has a lot to explain, quite apart from the multiple conflicts of interest of its Chairperson that are now unravelling, he said. Ramesh's remarks come weeks after Hindenburg Research launched a fresh broadside against market regulator SEBI chairperson Madhabi Buch, alleging that she and her husband had stakes in obscure offshore funds used in the Adani money siphoning scandal. SEBI Chairman Buch and her husband have denied the allegations levelled against them as baseless and asserted that their finances are an open book. Adani Group had also termed Hindenburg Research's allegations as malicious and manipulative of select public information, saying it has no commercial relationship with the SEBI chairperson or her husband. The Congress has been alleging financial regularities against the Adani Group and favours being given by the government to the conglomerate to augment its profits.

The opposition party has been persistent on its attack on the government, since Adani Group stocks took a beating on the bourses in the wake of the Hindenburg Research making a litany of allegations, including fraudulent transactions and share-price manipulation on the conglomerate headed by industrialist Gautam Adani. The Adani Group had dismissed the charges as lies, saying it complies with all laws and disclosure requirements. (PTI)

Apple's upcoming iPhone to break grounds with shift into age of AI

WASHINGTON, Sept 8: Apple's ubiquitous iPhone is about to break new ground with a shift into artificial intelligence that will do everything from smartening up its frequently dim-witted assistant Siri to creating customised emojis on the fly.

The new era will dawn Monday with the unveiling of the hotly anticipated iPhone 16 in a Cupertino, California, auditorium named after Apple co-founder Steve Jobs, who pulled out the first iPhone in 2007 and waved it like a magic wand while predicting it would reshape society.

Apple has sold billions of iPhones since then, helping to create about \$3 trillion in shareholder wealth. But in the past decade, there have been mostly minor upgrades from one model to the next a factor that has caused people to hold off on buying a new iPhone and led to a recent slump in sales of Apple's marquee product.

The iPhone 16 is generating a bigger buzz because it is the first model to be tailored specifically for AI, a technology that is expected to trigger the biggest revolution in the industry since Jobs thrust Apple into the smartphone market 17 years ago.

The advances included in



the iPhone 16 could set up Apple to be the gatekeeper of the consumer AI revolution, Wedbush Securities analyst Dan Ives wrote in a research note. Apple's pivot began three months ago with a preview of its new approach during a developers conference, helping to build anticipation for Monday's showcase.

Since that June conference, competitors such as Samsung and Google have made even more strides in AI. Google even took the unusual step of introducing its latest Pixel phones packed with their own AI magic last month instead of heaving to its traditional October timetable in an effort to upstage Apple's release of the iPhone 16.

In an attempt to set itself apart from the early leaders in AI, the technology being

baked into the iPhone 16 is being promoted as Apple Intelligence. Even so, Apple Intelligence is similar to the generically named AI already available on Google's Pixel 9 and the Samsung Galaxy S24 released in January.

Most of Apple's AI tasks will be performed on the iPhone itself instead of remote data centres a distinction that requires a special processor within the forthcoming models and the high-end iPhone 15s that came out a year ago.

That's why investors anticipate hot demand for the iPhone 16, spurring a surge in sales that has caused Apple's stock price to climb by 13% since Apple previewed its AI strategy in June. That spike has increased the company's market value by nearly USD 400 billion. (PTI)

Declining bank credit to hurt export; traders to flag issue to Goyal

NEW DELHI, Sept 8: The declining bank credit to exporters will hurt the sector, and traders will flag the issue prominently during their meeting with Commerce and Industry Minister Piyush Goyal on September 11, an industry official said on Sunday.

While exports grew by 15 per cent in the rupee terms between 2021-22 and 2023-24, the outstanding credit in March 2024 dropped by 5 per cent over the same month in 2022, according to exporters.

Apex exporters body Federation of Indian Export Organisation (FIEO) said the export credit growth is not keeping pace with rising exports of the country.

"We have seen a decline in export credit between March 2022 and March 2024 despite the need for more credit for longer duration due to hike in prices of commodities, sharp spurt in freight (both sea and air) and the Red Sea crisis, leading to longer voyage time and delayed payment," FIEO Director General Ajay Sahai told PTI.

According to FIEO, the value of export credit outstanding has come down to ₹ 2,17,406 crore in the March 2024 quarter from ₹ 2,27,452 crore in the same quarter last year.

"We will raise this issue during the meeting of the exporters community with the minister," Sahai said, adding that given a consistent decline in credit to exporters during recent times, the RBI should consider prescribing a sub-target for export credit within the existing 40 per cent target for priority sector lending (PSL).

This suggestion is worth considering as despite exports being under PSL, the flow of credit has not improved. It was ₹ 11,721 crore on June 28 this year against ₹ 19,861 crore on July 1, 2022, he added. FIEO also asked for the availability of pre/post-shipment credit in foreign currency (PCFC) at a competi-



itive price through IFSC (International Financial Services Centre) Banking Units (IBUs).

"This is likely to contribute to the difference in financing cost between Indian exporters and their overseas competitors (typically Chinese and ASEAN exporters) and adversely impact the pricing power of Indian exporters. Enabling Pre-shipment financing in foreign currency for Indian exporters from IBUs (along with the existing activity of post-shipment credit from IBU) can significantly boost trade financing volumes," Sahai said. Due to current geopolitical developments and China plus one policy of the multinational companies, Indian exporters are able to secure additional/new export orders from new or existing buyers, he added.

Fulfilment of such export orders requires additional working capital that is pre-shipment and post-shipment export credit.

"However, the credit risk assessment done by the exporters, banks may not be able to extend the required export credit. Our nation's exports can reach USD 2 trillion by 2030 through the sufficient availability of the required export credit," Sahai said.

India has a large access gap compared to advanced economies

with respect to non-recourse export credit and collateral-free export credit.

ECGC (Export Credit Guarantee Corporation) can play an important role by extending strong insurance cover to banks, which should become a substitute for collateral and other credit risk assessment-related aspects, an exporter said, adding the corporation is already extending insurance cover to mostly public sector banks.

"Our request is to increase the coverage to 90 per cent for all sectors, with stipulations on a case-to-case basis," the exporter added.

Further, Sahai suggested the government to popularise the gold card scheme for easy flow of credit to exporters.

It was rolled out by the RBI for bona-fide exporters with a proven track record. Such exporters are eligible for in-principle limit sanction for three years with a provision for automatic renewal subject to fulfilment of the terms and conditions of the sanction. "Unfortunately, banks are not encouraging exporters to avail the Gold Card. Banks may be asked to automatically issue gold cards to all eligible customers to extend the benefits flowing from such instruments," he said.

FIEO president Ashwani Kumar

BTC EM Dr Nilut Swargiary reinforces commitment to media welfare



HT Bureau
GUWAHATI, Sept 8: "Media is regarded as the fourth pillar of democracy, and our BTC government, under the visionary guidance of CEM Pramod Boro, is determined to support the welfare of media persons working in the Bodoland Territorial Region (BTR)," said Dr Nilut Swargiary, the BTC EM for Information and Public Relations, PHE, etc., while inaugurating the open session of the 3rd Annual Conference of the Bodoland Digital Journalists' Association at the Bengol College Auditorium in Chirang district on Sunday.

In his address, Dr Swargiary emphasised the importance of the media in upholding democratic values and detailed the BTC's ongoing commitment to supporting journalists. He remarked, "I am confident that the association will achieve great success in the days

ahead. The BTC is dedicated to improving the lives of media professionals through various initiatives. One of our key programs is the Journalists' Medical Insurance Scheme, which currently covers 82 media persons and their dependent family members to ensure their well-being."

Dr Swargiary also informed that the Information and Public Relations Department of BTC is planning to organise a media conclave to enhance the quality of media reporting, writing, editing, and broadcasting skills, as well as on Media Acts and rules. He further shared that the BTC is considering additional innovative schemes aimed at furthering the welfare of media personnel.

The open session was also addressed by the consulting editor of NK TV, Pranay Bordoloi, and senior TV journalist, Ranjan Lal Sarma.

Dr Bhupen Hazarika's 98th birth anniversary observed

Organisations across Nagaon and Tezpur host tributes, musical performances & literacy awareness events

HT Correspondent
TEZPUR, Sept 8: On the occasion of the birth anniversary of Bharat Ratna Dr Bhupen Hazarika, socio-cultural organisation 'Chatok', in collaboration with the Sonitpur district administration, organised a daylong program titled 'Sudhakanthar Surar Torit' in honour of the Bard of the Brahmaputra on Sunday.

The celebration began at 10 am with the lighting of earthen lamps and floral tributes in front of the statue of the legendary singer by Tezpur MLA Prithiraj Rava, additional district commissioner (ADC) Raj Boruah, prominent educationist Mahendra Nath Keot and Purneswar Nath, and AMTRON vice chairperson Ritu Baran Sharma, along with other dignitaries.

This was followed by a chorus performance by members of Chatok, directed by renowned musician Anil Kumar Bhat-tacharya.

A book titled 'Naba Prajanmar Shirat Bhupenda', authored by Ranu Hazarika from Tezpur, was released by MLA Prithiraj Rava, ADC Raj Boruah, educationist Purneswar Nath, and former chairperson of the Sadou Asom Lekhika Samaroh Samiti, Dr Charu Saharia Nath.

Addressing the gathering, MLA Prithiraj Rava shared anecdotes about the legendary singer.

ADC Raj Boruah provided a brief sketch of the singer's life and emphasised the importance of recognising him as a cultural icon.

Keynote speaker Purneswar Nath called Dr Hazarika the 'people's singer', whose songs resonate globally. Tezpur poet Ruma Devi recited a poem in his honour.

As September 8 is also International Literacy Day, a skit was performed with the



theme 'Promoting Multilingual Education: Literacy for Mutual Understanding and Peace' under the Beti Bachao Beti Padhao scheme, organised by the District Hub for Empowerment of Women, Department of Women and Child Development, in association with the Sonitpur district administration.

The skit highlighted the importance of girls' education and raised awareness about various government schemes aimed at furthering their education.

The event was attended by president of Sonitpur District Sahitya Sabha Dr Bhupen Saikia, president of Tezpur Sahitya Sabha Ramesh Chandra Kalita, renowned actor Arun Nath, president of Chatok Bijit Borthakur, and dignitaries from organisa-

tions like Tarun Asom Sangha, Asomiya Club, and Ban Theatre. Members of the district administration and Chatok were also present.

Meanwhile, Tarun Asom Sangha and Sudhakantha Dr Bhupen Hazarika Kala Sangeet Academy, in association with Gaharuporia Sahitya Sabha, observed the day with a program at 2 No Borpukhuri village under Thelamara Circle.

MLA of Borchala LAC Ganesh Kumar Limbu graced the event as the chief guest and discussed the unmatched contributions made by Sudhakantha Dr Bhupen Hazarika.

Our Nagaon correspondent adds: On Sunday, along with the rest of the state, various socio-cultural organisations in Nagaon enthusiastically celebrated the 98th birth anniversary of the legendary singer and musical maestro, Dr Bhupen Hazarika.

The Nagaon district committee of the Sangskritik Mahasabha, Assam, marked the day with a series of events at the Nagaon Swahid Bhavan.

The programme began with the unfurling of the flag by Pabitra Pran Sarma, president of the committee, followed by tributes to the revered artist.

A musical procession was carried out across the town, followed by a poetry recitation session in which several poets presented their own works dedicated to Dr Bhupen Hazarika.

The event was mentored by Pratap Hazarika, president of Sadou Asom Gramya Puthibharal Sangstha, and inaugurated by Dr Sarat Borkatoki, retired principal of Nowgong College.

A seminar titled 'Dr Bhupen Hazarika: Geetot Utkrishta Sahityar Prabhab' was also held, with Pabitra Pran Sarma presiding, while former AGP minister and educationist Girindra Kr Baruah inaugurated the session. Dr Sanjeev Sharma, professor of Dispur College, Guwahati, served as the keynote speaker.

Similarly, Silpi Somaj, Assam; Sangeet Silpi Somaj; and Asom Silpi Karon held celebrations with great pomp across the town. Silpi Somaj, Assam, began their events early on Saturday, organising a mass chorus of Dr Bhupen Hazarika's evergreen song 'Manuh Manuh Babe' at Nagaon Nehrubali field, with several thousand participants singing together.

The organisation also conducted a series of competitions on Dr Hazarika's songs at the Nagaon District Library Auditorium.

The celebration concluded with a cultural programme in the evening.

RPF of NF Railway rescues 44 minors and 3 women

HT Bureau
GUWAHATI, Sept 8: The Railway Protection Force (RPF) of NF Railway successfully rescued 44 minors and 3 women during ongoing checks and drives conducted from August 16 to 31, 2024 on different trains and railway stations over NF Railway.

From January to July 2024, 456 minors and 42 women were rescued by the RPF of NFR in coordination with the Government Railway Police (GRP) and Childline/NGOs.

The rescued children and women were handed over to the respective Childline/NGOs and GRP for further legal proceedings. Additionally, during the same period, a total of 8 human traffickers were arrested.

In an incident on August 16, 2024, the RPF team at Kishanganj rescued three runaway minor boys at Kishanganj Railway Station.

On August 24, 2024, the RPF team at Dibrugarh rescued four runaway minor boys at Dibrugarh Railway Station.

The rescued minors were later handed over to the Child Help Line at Kishanganj and Dibrugarh, respectively, for safe custody.

Preventive measures are being taken to act when children in need of care and protection are found on trains and railway premises.

The RPF continues its relentless fight against criminals in protecting railway passengers, remaining vigilant for suspected persons involved in human trafficking and the movement of children in suspicious circumstances, such as travelling alone or without a proper guardian.

Tezpur University hosts 'Resurgent Bharat: Insights from Northeast' conference

HT Correspondent
TEZPUR, Sept 8: "The international community is witnessing a pivotal moment where Bharat is no longer just a regional player, but a key architect of global norms and strategies," stated Assam University vice chancellor (VC) Prof Rajiv Mohan Pant. He was chairing a session titled 'Bharat's Century: An International Relations Perspective', held at Tezpur University (TU). The university organised a two-day conference titled 'Resurgent Bharat: Insights from Northeast' from Saturday, which brought together scholars, academicians, and policymakers on one platform.

Dr Chirayu Thakkar, the main speaker of the session and a researcher at the National University of Singapore, highlighted India's geopolitical rise and its increasing influence in areas such as technology, trade, and diplomacy. While Prof Pant discussed strategic initiatives like 'Act East', where the north-east has a major role to play, Dr Thakkar spoke on Bharat's growing presence on the global



stage and the country's strategic partnerships with major world powers.

The session was followed by a panel discussion titled 'Research for Resurgent Bharat'. Panellists Aloy Buragohain, former research scholar at the Tata Institute of Fundamental Research, Mumbai; Rouhin Deb, chief economist, Chief Minister's Secretariat, Government of Assam; and Dr Sanjeev Ningombam, centre head at Dr APJ Abdul Kalam Centre for Policy Research and Analysis, IIM Shillong, discussed how cutting-edge research can address the unique challenges faced by the nation.

They advocated for a robust ecosystem of inquiry and application, where research-driven solutions can empower people and set a path toward self-reliance and global relevance.

Other noted speakers present on the occasion included Prof Prabha Shankar Shukla, VC of Northeastern Hill University, as chief guest, and Prof Saket Kushwaha of Rajiv Gandhi University (RGU), Arunachal Pradesh, as guest of honour. Prof G Singaiah, VC of Birangana Sati Sadhani Rajyik Vishwavidyalaya, also attended the conference.

Speaking at the valedictory ses-

ion as chief guest, Prof Shukla said that India and the north-east region embody the true essence of unity in diversity, where countless cultures, languages, traditions, and beliefs coexist harmoniously. He urged the youth to focus on development, emphasising that the National Education Policy (NEP) aims to revolutionise the Indian education system by promoting reform-based education. "We need to adapt to the rapidly changing world," the NEHU VC added. Addressing the gathering as guest of honour, Prof Saket Kushwaha highlighted the need to promote genuine Indian research with a focus on Indian perspectives. "We need reference points that truly reflect the country's unique cultural and historical contexts," the RGU VC said.

Prof Shambhu Nath Singh, VC of TU, thanked the Students for Holistic Development of Humanity (SHDH) and TU organisers for holding the brainstorming workshop, where four VCs from the north-eastern region deliberated on various aspects.

Awareness camp addresses social issues in Dalgaoon



HT Correspondent
DALGAON, Sept 8: To help eradicate crimes from society, Gyanudaya Jatiya Vidyalaya organised an educational awareness camp on Saturday, addressing issues such as superstition, polygamy, illiteracy, gambling, crimes against women (including rape, teasing, domestic violence), and drug abuse. The event, held on the school's premises, was attended by more than a thousand people, including students and their parents.

In his address, Imran Hussain, founder and retired principal of Baruaajar HS School, emphasised that education is the only solution to combat these societal issues. AAMSU advisor Ainuddin Ahmed spoke on the challenges faced by the Miya Muslim community, stat-

ing that they have been oppressed by various groups in Assam due to their association with crime. He urged the community to improve their standards of living and focus on education to coexist peacefully with others in the state.

Mahibur Rahman, principal of Dhula HS School, was the chief guest of the program. He highlighted the root causes of the Miya community's marginalisation and suggested measures to overcome these issues. He encouraged students to focus on their studies rather than succumbing to bad habits like drug use and pan masala.

Other attendees included Fakaruddin Ali, assistant teacher of Baruaajar HS School; Fazal Hoque, headmaster of Jamalpur ME School; and Hafizur Rahman of Bechamari Girls High School, who all praised the school's initiative. The meeting was presided over by Abu Bakkar Siddique, assistant teacher of Bakultala High School. Meritorious students who passed HS and HSLC this year were also felicitated during the event.

Dibrugarh organises workshop for media professionals

HT Correspondent
DIBRUGARH, Sept 8: A sensitisation workshop on 'Cancer and Palliative Care' for media persons was organised by Pratishruti Cancer and Palliative Trust at Hotel Little Palace in Dibrugarh on Sunday. The workshop, held under 'Project Sanskaar' and supported by the Assam Science Technology and Environment Council, saw participation from numerous media professionals across Dibrugarh. "Today, we have organised a sensitisation workshop on 'Cancer and Palliative Care' for media persons. Over the last 6-7 years, we have realised that journalists are key figures in society. Whenever an incident occurs in the town or a remote village, people often turn to local journalists for information. These journalists try to assist using their existing knowledge, which is why it's im-

portant that they are also aware of their own health. Pratishruti has been working in this field for a long time, but there are still many misconceptions and superstitions about cancer and its treatment," said Dr Gayatri Gogoi, honorary program director of Pratishruti Cancer and Palliative Trust. She added, "Many people still believe cancer is a curse, which is a prejudice. We are working in rural areas and four districts of Upper Assam, reaching rural populations and tea tribe communities to provide a scientific understanding of cancer. Northeast India is often referred to as the 'cancer capital', with cancer incidence rates double the national average. As 66 percent of cases are diagnosed at a late stage, treatment is less effective, and that's where palliative care becomes crucial. Patients may be suffering from cancer, but they have every right to live."

One of the participants, Protima Rongpipi from Phumen Engti village, shared, "The food processing training was very clear and precise. We now feel confident using the recipes, equipment, and techniques—otherwise, even minor errors could change the overall quality of the processed products. We'll be able to process food, reduce waste, and that will help us financially and save time."

Another participant, Merina Kramsapi from Sarbura Singnar village, expressed her gratitude, saying, "We are obliged and grateful to Aaranyak for providing us with these free training platforms. We would love to join such programs again to acquire new knowledge. This is a huge benefit for our household and will help boost our local economy."

The program was made successful through the dedication and efforts of the entire team: Joshna Terangpi, Avinash Phangcho, Sarlongki Teron, Beauty Terangpi, Abhijeet Shil, and Dhoni Rongphar.

Aaranyak is committed to the conservation of biodiversity, ecosystems, and supporting the indigenous communities residing in the Kaziranga-Karbi Anglong Landscape and Manas Landscape through the promotion of alternative and sustainable livelihood activities, education, and awareness. This initiative is supported by IUCN-KfW and USFWs.

NTPC Bongaigaon and Assam Cancer Care Foundation launch cancer care program



HT Correspondent
KOKRAJHAR, Sept 8: NTPC Bongaigaon Salakati, in collaboration with the Assam Cancer Care Foundation (ACCF), has officially launched a comprehensive cancer care program in Kokrajhar district as part of its CSR initiative, aimed at providing essential healthcare services to communities across the region.

The program was inaugurated recently by Kabita Deka, additional district commissioner of Kokrajhar, in the presence of several dignitaries, including Akhilesh Singh, head of project, NTPC Bongaigaon; Dr NK Singha, medical superintendent of Assam Cancer Care Foundation; Haragobinda Boro from the Bodoland Territorial Council (BTC); and Sangeeta Singh, president of Bardwi Shikla Ladies Club.

During the event, Dr NK Singha guided Kabita Deka, Akhilesh Singh, and Sangeeta Singh on a tour of the cancer care facility, showcasing its potential to serve the local community's healthcare needs.

Speaking on the occasion, Akhilesh Singh emphasised the significance of the initiative, stating that it marked a critical milestone in NTPC Bongaigaon's commitment to community welfare.

He expressed confidence that the program, which aims to reach over 42,000 people across various villages, would significantly contribute to the early detection and treatment of cancer, ultimately creating a healthier future for all.

Kabita Deka, additional district commissioner, commended the collaboration between NTPC Bongaigaon and the Assam Cancer Care Foundation, noting that it addressed a pressing healthcare challenge in the region.

She highlighted the initiative's potential to bring much-needed services to remote areas and assured the district administration's full support in making the pro-

gram a success. Dr NK Singha, medical superintendent of the Assam Cancer Care Foundation, reiterated the foundation's commitment to fighting cancer through early detection, awareness, and timely intervention.

He explained that the program would focus on door-to-door screenings, awareness sessions, and home-based palliative care to create a comprehensive healthcare ecosystem for the people of Kokrajhar.

The event saw enthusiastic participation from Bardwi Shikla Ladies Club, led by its president, Sangeeta Singh.

The club has been a strong advocate for community health and welfare initiatives in Kokrajhar, and its members pledged their support in raising awareness about cancer prevention and early detection to ensure the program's success.

Key officials from NTPC Bongaigaon, including Dr Deepayan Paul, chief medical officer; Paresh Mathur, AGM (Technical Services); Madhurjya Singha Lahkar, senior manager (HR-Corporate Communication); Pranami Handique, senior manager (HR); and Aditya Thakuri, CSR executive, were present on the occasion and spoke about the advantages of the program.

The launch of this program follows the signing of a Memorandum of Agreement (MoA) between NTPC Bongaigaon and ACCF on August 27, 2024, marking a significant step toward enhancing healthcare in Kokrajhar.

With a project value of Rs 32.7 lakhs, the initiative aims to address the growing cancer burden by delivering preventive and diagnostic care services to a vast population across the district.

Covering four Block Primary Health Centers (BPHCs) and approximately 80 Health and Wellness Centers (HWCs) in Kokrajhar, the cancer care initiative focuses on the early detection of oral, breast, and cervical cancers through screenings by Accredited Social Health Activists (ASHAs), public awareness sessions, and home-based palliative care for cancer patients.

This collaboration demonstrates NTPC Bongaigaon's unwavering commitment to the health and well-being of the communities it serves. The project aligns with Schedule VII, Sub-section (j) of the Companies Act 2013, and the CPSE common theme for 2024-25, 'Health & Nutrition', as prescribed by the Department of Public Enterprises (DPE).

It also contributes to the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) 3 (Good Health and Well-being) and 17 (Partnerships for the Goals).

Food processing training conducted to empower women in Karbi Anglong

HT Bureau
GUWAHATI, Sept 8: Aaranyak organised a one-day food processing training program in collaboration with CRMHS at the Community Resource Centre, Chandrasing Rongpi village, Karbi Anglong.

The aim of the event was to equip rural women with techniques for processing different kinds of food products from readily available raw materials for commercial purposes as well as a source of alternative livelihood options.

The training session was attended by 20 local women from the Kohora River Basin and Diring River Basin.

The comprehensive food processing training session introduced alternative and sustainable livelihood options by equipping participants with essential skills and knowledge in food processing.

This holistic program covered a wide range of topics, including basic food safety and hygiene, local produce identification and selection, various preservation techniques, value-added product development, packaging, and labelling.

By focusing on locally available produce and incorporating traditional knowledge, the training ensured relevance and sustainability.

The training sessions were coordinated by two local experts, Mina Tokkipi from Engle Pathar village and Larbin Timungpi from



Bakring Engti village, both of whom have experience in these operations.

Joshna Terangpi of Aaranyak also shared various techniques and processes, including quantification and requirements for the value addition of farm products.

The program taught participants the steps and processes involved in making three common value-added products: pickles, jam, and chilli sauce.

The training was successful because these newly acquired skills will enable the women to convert locally available, often underutilised resources into value-added products, creating a sustainable source of income.

The focus on business acumen alongside technical skills empowers the women not only to produce but also to effectively market and sell their products, fostering financial independ-

QUOTE OF THE DAY

Beware the fury of a patient man.
—John Dryden

CBI lawyer's dilly-dally

In a significant development in the RG Kar Medical College rape-murder case, the Sealdah court recently expressed its displeasure with the conduct of the Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI) lawyer. The incident has raised questions about the effectiveness of the legal process in such a critical case. The case centers around Sanjay Roy, the prime accused in the horrific rape and murder of a 31-year-old trainee doctor. The court's frustration stemmed from the CBI lawyer's delayed arrival, which could have jeopardized the proceedings. If the court had granted bail during the 50-minute delay, it would have been a severe setback in a case that has gripped the city of Kolkata. The delay in the CBI lawyer's appearance in court highlights a broader issue of accountability within the legal system. While the court's anger is understandable, the threat of granting bail to a prime accused like Sanjay Roy as a consequence of the lawyer's tardiness raises ethical concerns. Granting bail to a person accused of such a heinous crime could have far-reaching implications, not only for the case itself but also for public trust in the justice system.

The court's reaction underscores the immense responsibility that comes with judicial power. The Additional Chief Judicial Magistrate, Pamela Gupta, expressed her frustration with the CBI's "lethargic approach." While the CBI lawyer eventually arrived and opposed the bail plea, the delay had already created a tense situation in the courtroom. The court's warning, though ultimately not acted upon, serves as a reminder of the delicate balance between judicial discretion and the pursuit of justice. The CBI's investigation into this case has also come under scrutiny. Critics have questioned why the agency has shifted its focus from the rape-murder case to investigating corruption charges against the Principal of RG Kar Medical College. The court had previously emphasized the gravity of the situation and the need for prompt action. The public is left wondering if the CBI's diversion of attention is hindering the pursuit of justice in the case of the murdered trainee doctor. The political implications of the case cannot be ignored. The Trinamool Congress has accused the CBI of sabotaging justice, pointing fingers at the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) and the Modi government. The political blame game only adds to the complexity of the case, with allegations that the BJP is trying to exploit the situation for political gain. Meanwhile, Sanjay Roy remains behind bars, but the lack of concrete evidence against him continues to raise questions.

At the heart of this case is the tragic loss of a young life. The court's decision to deny bail and remand Sanjay Roy to judicial custody is a step toward ensuring justice is served. However, the episode serves as a stark reminder that delays and missteps in the legal process can have serious consequences. The public's trust in the justice system is fragile, and cases like this one test its limits. While the court ultimately made the right decision, the incident should prompt reflection within the legal community. The pursuit of justice requires diligence, responsibility, and, above all, a commitment to ensuring that those accused of heinous crimes are held accountable without unnecessary delays. This case also underscores the need for better coordination between legal authorities to prevent delays that could jeopardize crucial proceedings.

The education system of Assam - a perspective

Education is the main driving force of progress and development of human society, the main safeguard of social life. If this arm is not strong, it is natural to disrupt academic and social life. Therefore, every welfare country in the world has accepted education as a basic need. In fact, the prosperity and progress of a country depends on a quality education system. No matter how rich a country is, if education is poor, it can never progress.

In recent times, globalization has placed great emphasis on education around the world and various measures have been taken to implement the 'Education for All' system for the overall development of education. It has emphasized the need for the expansion and influence of science and technology in the modern education system and has made it progressive by expanding vocational education, enabling people to find new paths in the complex pace of life.

Under Article 45 of the Constitution of India, free and compulsory primary education for all children aged 6 to 14 years is adopted as the guiding policy and various schemes are adopted to achieve the objectives of universal primary education. These schemes include Operation Blackboard, Restructured and Restructured Teacher Training System, District Primary Education Scheme, Mid-Day Meal Scheme, Non-formal education; Education Guarantee Schemes, Alternative and Innovative Education Systems, Janshala Schemes and Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan have contributed significantly to bridging the gaps in achieving the goals of universal education.

The 86th Amendment to the Constitution of India, 2002 paved the way for the enactment of the right to free and compulsory education in The Act of 2009 seeks to create an environment for every child to receive quality education without any discrimination and exclusion so that quality education and appropriate education systems are implemented for all. As a result, quality education, equality, non-discrimination and the right to education ensure the freedom of children.



Similarly, since the middle of the twentieth century, a considerable number of primary, secondary and higher secondary schools have been established in our state of Assam and continue to shape the future generations of Assam. This is a pleasant thing. But once schools are established, once students come to school to learn, once teachers come to school to teach, can our future generation develop themselves as a true human resource? They never can.

In short, the true picture of the educational environment will shine and effectively shine gold only on the coordination of teachers, students, parents, administrators and government departments involved in this intellectual practice. The strong leadership, creativity and hard work of the Head of the institution plays a major role in this regard and only then can it be said that the educational aspect is complete.

Currently, the Central Government has taken various steps to improve the quality of education, construction of school buildings, supply of furniture, drinking water supply, and toilet facilities etc. to make the education system more effective at the primary and secondary levels. In order to run a school properly, it is essential that the school building and its surroundings are environmentally friendly and equipped with the minimum necessary furniture and teaching equipment. There is no doubt about it.

However, even these can never improve the educational quality of a school. The most important thing is to entrust the responsibility of teaching to the right people. In fact, the quality

of education will improve if every teacher can develop himself as a real educator and only then will the students be able to receive real education.

It cannot be denied that there has been a major decline in education in our state from primary to secondary level recently. The stage that should be given higher priority in order to improve the quality of education has been neglected in our state. As a result, education has deteriorated and been adversely affected. Needless to say, if the foundation itself is weak, it will never be possible to improve the quality of education as a whole. Therefore, teachers should be recruited in each school according to the needs with proper consideration to improve the quality of education. Teachers must be made great with proper training.

The most important issue is the lack of teachers in many educational institutions in our state. Some schools have science teachers, but no art teachers. In some schools, the opposite picture again in another school. As a result, although various steps have been taken to improve education, the desired results have not been achieved. As per the policy of the Central Government, the teacher-student ratio is 1:30 in primary, 1:35 in upper primary and 1:40 in secondary. This means that one teacher should be recruited for every thirty to forty students from primary school to secondary school respectively. But is this equal arrangement in the educational institutions of Assam? Have well-planned schemes

been implemented in this regard? Today, one of the most discussed issues at the primary level is the recruitment of class-wise teachers. There are still many primary schools in rural areas with more than forty students but only two teachers. The headmaster is busy with everything from shopping for lunch to various office works have to attend various departmental discussions and meetings at different times.

Therefore, most of the time the assistant has to teach all the classes of the school from class Kaman to class V and take care of all aspects of the students. Everyone can understand how effective teaching and learning will be in such circumstances. There is no reason why a teacher should teach six classes at the same time. There are also many schools where the number of teachers is relatively higher than the number of students.

Everyone has already acknowledged that proper development of primary education in

Assam will not be possible unless teachers are recruited in Classwise or

at the primary level. There is a need to take immediate action on all these issues. In 2017, the Government of Assam adopted a scheme to assess the quality of schools in schools from class I to class VIII called 'Gunotsav'. Our state of Assam is the second state in India to celebrate Gunotsav and has implemented the program with the objective of improving the quality of primary and upper primary education and attracting the people towards the government education system and spreading a message of hope and it has been successful. The results of the Gunotsav, which was conducted in four phases with the aim of identifying educational gaps and taking diagnostic education measures, have already been published.

Government schools are not suitable for receiving education; there is no possibility of any change in the education system in government schools taking

this into consideration, it is appropriate to take steps to improve government schools and to continue these efforts in the future this will lead to progress in the field of education.

In fact, the most flawed and offensive aspect of the education system in Assam is the system of formulation, publication and distribution of textbooks. All the measures taken so far in the name of textbook reform seem to have been done for experimentation. There is also widespread talk that the examination methodology and all the work that needs to be done up to the announcement of the results is flawed.

However, to encourage students, laptops are provided to students who secured places or star marks in high school examinations, scooters are provided to higher secondary students, bicycles are distributed to poor students, free clothes are provided to class VIII, merit scholarships are provided schemes etc. are quite encouraging. Although a number of schemes have been adopted and implemented by the government, there is a need for the government to be aware of whether these schemes are being implemented in a timely manner. It is essential to ensure that students do not see the picture of corruption and irregularities at the school level in the interest of future generations. In the field of secondary education, the Mudaliar Commission (1952-53), the Kothari Commission (1964-66) and the National Education Policy (1986) formed after independence in Assam have been trying to make the development of education interesting that has been discussed at all levels.

In conclusion, it can be said that it is very important for the conscious educated people, parents and the teaching community to come together to bring to life this primary and secondary level education system, which is the foundation of life and the Education Department should also come forward to take a well-planned system of schemes to remove the anarchies in the academic world. (The writer is CRCC of Nalbari Cluster, Biswanath Education Block, Education Department, Assam)

How can UPA meet the dreams of its team members?

By: Dipak Kurmi

The Old Pension Scheme (OPS) placed a significant financial strain on both the central and state budgets. As part of economic reforms, OPS was phased out for new government employees from 2004 onwards, replaced by the National Pension Scheme (NPS). Under NPS, employees are required to contribute 10% of their salary throughout their service period. Initially, the government matched this contribution with an equal 10%, which was later raised to 14%. The accumulated pension funds are invested in a range of assets, including government securities, equities, and corporate bonds, with their value updated daily, similar to mutual funds. Upon retirement, individuals must use at least 40% of their accumulated corpus to purchase an annuity. Unlike OPS, the NPS does not guarantee a monthly pension amounting to 50% of the final salary received.

The shift from the Old Pension Scheme (OPS) to the National Pension Scheme (NPS) sparked significant discontent among government employees, and opposition parties, notably Congress, saw an opportunity to challenge the BJP-led central government. Congress, in its election manifesto, promised to restore OPS in states where they achieved power, alongside various other incentives. Montek Singh Ahluwalia has publicly warned that reinstating OPS for employees who joined service after 2004 could severely damage the nation's economy, a perspective echoed by many experts. Although Congress won the Himachal Pradesh Assembly election with a pledge to revert to OPS, this promise was not fulfilled. Furthermore, in the Telangana elections and the 2024 Lok Sabha elections, Congress did not mention the revival of OPS in their manifestos.

Following disappointing Lok Sabha results in Maharashtra, Rajasthan, Haryana, and Uttar Pradesh, the BJP had to navigate a challenging situation, seeking a compromise between the Old Pension Scheme (OPS) and the National Pension Scheme (NPS). The central government is now proposing a new initiative, the United Pension Scheme (UPS), which aims to offer a pension equivalent to 50% of the average salary from the last twelve months of service for employees with 25 years or more of service. This pension will be adjusted for inflation through dearness

allowance twice annually. Additionally, the scheme includes a provision for a 60% family pension for the dependents of deceased employees. However, it excludes those with less than ten years of service. For retirees with a minimum of ten years of service, the scheme guarantees a monthly pension of Rs 10,000. An extra incentive is also introduced with a lump sum payment based on the length of government service.

The new United Pension Scheme (UPS) is set to launch on April 1, 2025, and will be available to 23 lakh central government employees who choose to participate. Should all states adopt the scheme, it could benefit up to 90 lakh employees nationwide. The Maharashtra government, which is preparing for an upcoming Assembly election, has already committed to implementing UPS. Like the National Pension Scheme (NPS), UPS is a contributory plan where employees' contributions will remain at 10%, but the government's matching contribution will rise from 14% to 18.5%.

For an employee with a monthly salary of Rs 50,000, the annual growth of their pension corpus is projected at 3%, translating to a compound annual growth rate of 8%. The State Bank of India (SBI), Life Insurance Corporation (LIC), and Unit Trust of India (UTI) manage the pension corpus for employees. SBI provides an interest rate of 9.75%, while LIC offers 9.56%. Under the current National Pension Scheme (NPS), government employees can choose from three investment options, with 95% of subscribers opting for a portfolio consisting of 65% in government securities, 15% in equities, and 20% in corporate debt. Given that the corpus may not generate enough to provide 50% of the average salary over the last twelve months, the government has increased its matching contribution from 14% to 18.5%. Cabinet Secretary TV Somanathan described the United Pension Scheme (UPS) as "definitely fiscally more prudent," noting that it maintains the structure of a contributory funded scheme.

The key distinction lies in the nature of the schemes: the Old Pension Scheme (OPS) is an unfunded, non-contributory plan, whereas the new scheme is a funded, contributory one. The primary adjustment made is to provide a more reliable assurance rather than relying on the uncertainties of market fluctuations.

"The UPS incorporates the most advantageous features of both the

OPS and NPS," he noted. Economists believe that UPS effectively balances fiscal responsibility with employee expectations. The scheme addresses rising living costs by ensuring that the real value of the pension remains constant, as it is indexed to inflation. In contrast, under the NPS, rising inflation can reduce the real value of the pension. However, implementing the UPS will initially impose an additional financial burden of Rs 6,250 crores on the government in its first year. This move aims to appease the 23 lakh beneficiaries, a significant and vocal political constituency that no party can afford to disregard. It is anticipated that most states will opt for the UPS, even if it means accepting the additional financial burden.

In response to the announcement of the UPS, opposition parties are intensifying their calls for a return to the Old Pension Scheme (OPS). Economists have consistently warned that reinstating OPS could slow economic growth and hinder national progress, while also adversely affecting poorer populations. The Economic Advisory Council to the Prime Minister has cautioned that reverting to OPS could be disastrous for low-income groups and could deter private investment in states that adopt it. Additionally, the Reserve Bank of India had raised concerns in January 2023 about the financial implications for states considering a return to OPS.

The Reserve Bank of India had already warned that reverting to the Old Pension Scheme (OPS) could lead to a buildup of liabilities, posing significant future risks. The RBI also projected that pension expenditure for states would increase by 16%, reaching Rs 4,63,436 crores compared to Rs 3,99,813 crores the previous year. Under the National Pension Scheme (NPS), pension outgo is Rs 4 lakh crores, but this would surge to Rs 17 lakh crores if OPS were reinstated. Currently, Rajasthan, Chhattisgarh, and Punjab have reverted to OPS. However, with the BJP regaining power in Rajasthan and Chhattisgarh, it is anticipated that these states will continue with the NPS and adopt the United Pension Scheme (UPS) starting April 1, 2025. Punjab, governed by the Aam Aadmi Party (AAP), prioritizes maintaining power over financial concerns, which may influence its approach to pension reforms. (The writer can be reached at dipakkurmigpltd@gmail.com)

Muhammad Yunus has read the writing on the wall

By: Saleem Samad

Commemorating the Monsoon Revolution by the students who deposed Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina, the Nobel laureate Dr Muhammad Yunus made a scorching remark. He told Delhi to shut Hasina's mouth while living in exile in India.

In an interview with the Indian news agency PTI, Dr Yunus also gave a message that the Iron Lady would be extradited to Bangladesh to face the music of justice for the deaths of more than nearly a thousand students and youths during the July massacre, the enforced disappearance, extrajudicial deaths of opponents and critics.

"She [Hasina] has to be brought back, or the people of Bangladesh won't be at peace. The atrocities she has committed must be addressed through a trial here," said the inventor of microcredit, the founder of Grameen Bank.

This was a slap on Delhi's "Sarkar", which India did not expect from the interim government—a big embarrassment for India.

Hasina hastily fled, when the students and protesters on August 5 marched to Gonobhaban, the official residence of the Bangladesh Prime Minister. Tens of thousands from east, west, north and south joined the rally, the Bangladesh Army responsible for her security, forcibly whisked her away to a military airfield, a kilometre away and air dashed her to an air force base, adjacent to Dhaka International Airport. She boarded a transport plane and flew to Delhi, sinking her party's boat (election symbol). She also abandoned thousands of leaders and millions of members of her party, the Awami League.

In the absence of a backup plan, the dumbstruck leaders and members of the Awami League either went into hiding and many tried to leave the country. Few managed to fly away. Some paid a hefty price to human traffickers and crossed the porous international border to India. At Hindon Air Base near Delhi, where the Bangladesh Air Force transport plane landed, there she is still living in a safe house

for a month. After hectic negotiations with several "friendly" Western countries, one after another her requests were turned down. A top Indian diplomat stationed in Dhaka said what India would do when all countries have refused her applications for refugee status (political asylum). The United States promptly revoked her 10-year multiple visa. Bangladesh's new regime invalidated her Red and Green passports. Hasina is a stateless person. Delhi is now in a fix!

It is understood that Hasina is apparently under house arrest. She is not allowed to venture out of the safe house to take a stroll around the place, nor allowed to buy essentials from a military super shop nearby.

Her daughter Saima Wazed, who is employed as Regional Director of the World Health Organisation (WHO) South-East Asia office in New Delhi, has not been able to meet her.

Saima in posts on Twitter (X) has given several excuses for her tight schedule and unable to hug her mother. Her elder brother in Washington DC had announced to visit Delhi and meet her mother. Unconfirmed news claims that Sajeeb Wazed Joy was asked not to arrive in Delhi, as he may not be able to meet her.

Many political observers say after Dr Yunus had a telephonic conversation with Prime Minister Narendra Modi, the Indian authorities decided to sever all communications with the outside world and stay away from her. Phones in the safe house are disconnected and she is unable to contact her loved ones as well as her party central leaders, who have fled the country. Both her son and daughter are conspicuously silent over Hasina's incommunicado in India.

Except for Indian national security advisor Ajit Doval, none of the Indian officials and opposition leaders has paid a courtesy call to their loyal guests. This gives a clear message that India is uncomfortable with the status of their guest. Dr Yunus will have an opportunity to meet with Modi at the Bay of Bengal Initiative for Multi-Sectoral Technical and Economic Cooperation

(BIMSTEC) Summit in Bangkok this weekend. He will once again raise the issue of Hasina with Modi.

BIMSTEC links five countries from South Asia (Bangladesh, Bhutan, Nepal, India and Sri Lanka) and two from South-East Asia (Myanmar and Thailand).

Earlier, he cautioned Indian media not to play the Hindu card and invited journalists from India to visit Bangladesh. Indian media was agog on the persecution of Hindus, vandalism of Hindu business establishments and desecration of Hindu temples in expressing anger after the downfall of Hasina.

In a clever decision, Dr Yunus urged foreign journalists, especially Indian journalists to visit Bangladesh. Indian media has stopped beating in the bush. In several interviews, Dr Yunus has told the international media, that the elections will be held only after a series of reforms are made to block autocratic government from taking control of the state institutions, which has been politicized and exploited by the ruling parties.

The politicization of state institutions—especially the judiciary, bureaucracy, law enforcement agencies and state media—was nothing new. Both the Begums—Khaleda Zia and Sheikh Hasina—kept the institutions on their lap to dominate and dictate terms with loyalists.

The interim government has entrusted a think tank and several pundits to the White Paper Committee, which is responsible for identifying the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats.

The White Paper Committee on the economy has sought public opinion through social media. They sought feedback on the accuracy and reliability of government statistics; current challenges in macroeconomics; review of GDP growth; inflation trends and their impacts; poverty, inequality and vulnerability; internal resource extraction; assessment of priorities in the allocation of government expenditure; foreign exchange balance and credit capacity; evaluation of mega-projects, the actual condition of the banking sector;

energy and power sector situation; business environment and private investment; illegal money and money laundering; labor market dynamics and youth employment; foreign labour markets and migrant workers' rights. Plans are afoot to make the election commission an independent institution and reforms of the electioneering system would allow inclusivity and transparency. Hasina during her tenure failed to hold free, fair, credible and inclusive elections in 2014, 2018 and 2024, which were all flawed.

She deliberately kept the opposition out of the electioneering and jailed 10,000 leaders and members of the Bangladesh Nationalist Party (BNP) and Jamaat-e-Islami—an Islamist party—accused of terrorism and attacks on government properties, which enabled the government to keep the opposition languishing in prison for a long time.

The Yunus administration has repealed the ban on the Jamaat-e-Islami and its student wing Islami Chhatra Shibir, stressing that the organisations are not involved in terrorist activities. This decision has invited backlash from Mukti Bahini, the 1971 war veterans and secularists.

Dr Yunus, who is the chief adviser of the interim government, in an address to the nation on September 5 in commemoration of a month of minus Hasina's autocratic regime, said the biggest challenge now is to heal the wounds created by misrule and autocracy.

He appealed for unity and coordination. "We all pledge that, as a nation, we will not allow the blood of the martyrs and the sacrifices of our injured brothers and sisters to be in vain."

He pledged, "I want to assure them that we will never betray the dreams of the martyrs." (The author is an award-winning independent journalist based in Bangladesh. A media rights defender with the Reporters Without Borders (@RSF inter). Recipient of Ashoka Fellowship and Hellman-Hammett Award. He could be reached at saleem-samad@hotmail.com)

Diet rich in fruits and vegetables may reduce heart and kidney disease risk

By: Deep Shukla

Hypertension, commonly known as high blood pressure, is the leading preventable risk factor for cardiovascular disease, such as heart disease and stroke. Based on 2017-2020 data, 47% of U.S. adults are estimated to have hypertension.

Uncontrolled high blood pressure can also lead to the occurrence and progression of chronic kidney disease. The early adoption of lifestyle modifications, such as dietary changes, can reduce the risk of complications of uncontrolled hypertension and the need for drug therapy. However, such dietary interventions are often under-utilized.

A new 5-year follow-up study published in The American Journal of Medicine involving high blood pressure patients with chronic kidney disease shows that incorporating 2 to 4 additional cups of fruits and vegetables in their daily diet along with drug therapy resulted in lower blood pressure, a larger reduction in cardiovascular risk factors, and a greater preservation of kidney health than drug therapy alone.

The patients were specifically prescribed fruits and vegetables that increase blood pH levels after their metabolism. The protective effects on kidney health in the group consuming the diet rich in fruits and vegetables were also seen in participants who were administered an oral sodium bicarbonate tablet daily.

Sodium bicarbonate also increases the blood pH, and these results suggest that rebalancing of plasma pH could have potentially mediated the effects of increased fruit and vegetable consumption on kidney health.

However, while both were

shown to improve kidney health, only consuming fruits and vegetables, and not sodium bicarbonate, reduced blood pressure and improved cardiovascular disease risk factors.

The study's author, Dr. Donald Wesson, a professor of internal medicine at The University of Texas at Austin, said, "The study supports redoubling our efforts to make diets high in fruits and vegetables foundational to the treatment of hypertension, with drugs added as needed to achieve blood pressure goals and to prevent kidney and cardiovascular complications."

"An additional benefit of including extra fruits and vegetables in hypertension management appears to be that lower doses of anti-hypertensive drugs will be needed to achieve these health benefits," said Dr. Wesson.

Link between hypertension and chronic kidney disease

Besides cardiovascular diseases, uncontrolled high blood pressure is also a risk factor for chronic kidney disease. High blood pressure is associated with the narrowing and stiffening of blood vessels in the body, including the kidneys.

While the body possesses mechanisms to limit kidney damage in response to changes in systemic blood pressure, once blood pressure increases beyond a certain threshold, it can cause the blood vessels in the kidney to harden and influence their function.

Specifically, prolonged high blood pressure can cause damage to the glomeruli, the specialized blood vessels in the kidney that filter wastes and water from the blood. High blood pressure can thus impair kidney function, hampering its ability to filter wastes from the

blood. In addition, chronic kidney disease is also characterized by the excretion of proteins in the urine.

The progression of chronic kidney disease further increases the risk of cardiovascular disease, with cardiovascular disease being the leading cause of death in patients with kidney disease. This highlights the importance of the management of high blood pressure and protecting kidney function.

Role of diet in managing hypertension

Lifestyle changes, including adopting healthier dietary patterns, are the recommended first line of treatment for managing high blood pressure. For instance, the Dietary Approaches to Stop Hypertension (DASH) diet, promoting the consumption of fruits, vegetables, lean protein, and low-fat dairy products, has been developed to help lower blood pressure in patients with hypertension.

Moreover, the DASH diet can reduce overall cardiovascular disease risk and prevent or slow down the progression of chronic kidney disease. In addition, medications, such as angiotensin receptor blockers, are typically prescribed to patients with high blood pressure and other conditions like chronic kidney disease or heart failure.

In general, studies suggest that diets rich in fruits and vegetables, such as the DASH diet, are linked to a reduced risk of chronic kidney disease occurrence and progression and lower cardiovascular disease risk. In the present study, the researchers further examined the protective role of fruits and vegetables in individuals with hypertension and chronic kidney disease.

How acid-producing foods affect kidney health

Most plant-based foods, including fruits and vegetables, produce basic (alkaline) compounds after digestion, leading to a net increase in blood pH levels. So, these foods are referred to as alkaline foods.

In contrast, most animal products and grains, consumed in large amounts in Western diets, tend to produce acid and decrease blood pH levels after their metabolism. These are referred to as acidic foods.

The kidneys contribute to the maintenance of blood pH levels by excreting acids and reabsorbing bases. However, the kidneys can only excrete a limited amount of acid to maintain the body's pH, and the higher consumption of acid-producing foods can potentially impair kidney function.

"Our animal studies showed years ago that mechanisms used by kidneys to remove acid from the blood can cause kidney injury if the animals were chronically exposed to an acid-producing diet. Our patient studies showed similar findings: that is, an acid-producing diet (one high in animal products) was kidney-harmful, and one that is base-producing (one high in fruits and vegetables) is kidney-healthy," explained Dr. Wesson. Observational studies also suggest that consuming a diet rich in acidic food is associated with negative health outcomes, including increased risk of cardiovascular diseases.

"Other investigators showed that a diet high in fruits and vegetables is heart-healthy. We hypothesized that one way that fruits and vegetables are both kidney- and heart-healthy is that they reduce the amount of acid in the diet and therefore the amount of acid that kidneys have to remove from the body," Dr. Wesson further noted.

Consistent with this hypothesis, some studies have suggested that dietary acid reduction using oral sodium bicarbonate (baking soda) can slow down the progression of chronic kidney disease. However, more research is needed to better understand the role of dietary acid load in preventing and managing chronic kidney disease.

In the present study, the researchers compared the effectiveness of increased consumption of fruits and vegetables with sodium bicarbonate in slowing the progression of chronic kidney disease, controlling blood pressure, and improving cardiovascular health in high blood pressure patients with established kidney disease.

2 to 4 cups of fruit a day

The present randomized controlled study involved 153 individuals with high blood pressure and chronic kidney disease. The study only included participants with an elevated urine albumin-to-creatinine ratio (200mg/g). Albumin is a protein present in blood, whereas creatinine is a byproduct of muscle metabolism that is normally excreted via the urine. High levels of albumin in the urine can indicate chronic kidney disease, and these patients are at an increased risk of cardiovascular diseases and further progression of kidney disease.

Although these patients had kidney disease, they still showed normal glomerular filtration rates, placing them in a category likely to benefit the most from kidney-protective interventions. The participants were randomly assigned to either the fruits and vegetables intervention, oral sodium bicarbonate treatment, or the usual treatment groups.

The participants in the fruits and vegetables group consumed 2 to 4 additional cups of base-producing fruits and vegetables daily, in addition to their regular daily diet. Individuals in the sodium bicarbonate group were given an oral dose that would have a similar effect on blood pH levels to that observed after the digestion of 2 to 4 cups of fruits and vegetables.

All participants received usual care, which involved statins to protect cardiovascular health and anti-angiotensin II blockers to preserve kidney health. The patients were tracked over a period of five years to assess changes in kidney and cardiovascular health.

Health impact of eating more fruits and vegetables

During the five-year follow-up period, the researchers tracked changes in glomerular filtration rates to assess kidney function and in urine albumin-to-creatinine ratio to monitor kidney disease progression. They also looked at cardiovascular disease markers.

The researchers found that the individuals in the usual treatment group showed a greater decline in kidney function and a larger increase in the urine albumin-to-creatinine ratio than both the fruits and vegetables and sodium bicarbonate intervention groups.

The researchers did not observe a difference in kidney function or urine albumin levels between the fruits and vegetables intervention and sodium bicarbonate group. These results suggest that both increased consumption of fruits and vegetables, as well as oral sodium bicarbonate intake, had a greater protective effect on kidney health and function than drug therapy alone.

Morevoer, both the fruits and

vegetables intervention and the sodium bicarbonate groups showed higher plasma bicarbonate levels than the usual treatment group, which may indicate better acid-base balance in the body. This suggests that both increased fruit and vegetable consumption and oral sodium bicarbonate could potentially exert protective effects on kidney health through changes in the acid-base balance.

Participants in all three groups showed a decline in systolic blood pressure during the follow-up period, but the fruits and vegetables intervention group showed the largest reduction. In addition, the fruits and vegetables intervention group showed greater improvements in other cardiovascular markers, including body mass index and low-density lipoprotein (LDL) cholesterol, than the oral sodium bicarbonate and usual treatment groups.

Lastly, participants in the fruits and vegetables intervention group had superior health outcomes despite being on lower doses of blood pressure medication than the sodium bicarbonate and usual treatment groups. "This study demonstrated that a diet high in fruits and vegetables can significantly lower important indices of cardiovascular disease risk such as high blood pressure, LDL cholesterol, and BMI. These results further support our recommendations to eat a diet rich in fruits and vegetables as part of a 'heart-healthy diet.'" — Dr. Cheng-Han Chen, MD, a board-certified interventional cardiologist and medical director of the Structural Heart Program at MemorialCare Saddleback Medical Center in Laguna Hills, CA. (Courtesy: *Medicla News Today*)

Understanding Coronary Angiography & Angioplasty

By: Dr T. S. Kler

Heart attack is one of the leading causes of death globally. The reasons for Heart Attack are many but mainly it occurs by narrowing or blockage of coronary arteries, which supply blood to the heart muscle. This blockage is usually due to the buildup of cholesterol, fatty deposits (plaque), and other substances that form atherosclerosis. When a plaque ruptures, it can create a blood clot (thrombus) that blocks the artery and deprives the heart muscle of oxygen-rich blood, leading to a heart attack.

Understanding Coronary Angiography and Angioplasty: Procedures and benefits in heart disease

Coronary angiography and angioplasty are critical procedures used to diagnose and treat heart disease, particularly in cases where there is a suspicion of blockages or narrowing in the coronary arteries. These procedures play a vital role in assessing the severity of heart disease and restoring blood flow to the heart muscle, thereby preventing complications such as heart attacks and improving overall heart function.

Coronary Angiography: Exploring the heart's arteries

Coronary angiography, also known as cardiac catheterization, is a procedure used to visualize the coronary arteries—the blood vessels that supply oxygen-rich blood to the heart muscle. It involves the insertion of a catheter (a thin, flexible tube) into an artery, usually in the groin or wrist, and guiding it to the coronary arteries under X-ray guidance.

Procedure Steps:
1. **Preparation:** Before the procedure, the patient is given sedatives to relax and local anesthesia to numb the area where the catheter will be inserted.

2. **Insertion of Catheter:** A small incision is made, and the catheter is threaded through the artery towards the heart. Contrast dye is injected through the catheter, which helps to visualize the coronary arteries on X-ray images (angiograms).

3. **Imaging:** X-ray images (angiograms) are taken as the contrast dye flows through the coronary arteries, highlighting any blockages or narrowing.

4. **Assessment:** The images obtained during coronary angiography allow

cardiologists to assess the extent and location of blockages or narrowing in the coronary arteries.

Uses and Benefits:

- **Diagnosis:** Coronary angiography is used to diagnose coronary artery disease (CAD) by identifying the presence and severity of blockages or narrowing in the arteries.

- **Guidance for Treatment:** It provides crucial information for guiding further treatment decisions, such as coronary angioplasty or bypass surgery.

- **Risk Assessment:** Helps in assessing the risk of heart attack and other complications based on the severity of coronary artery disease.

Coronary Angioplasty: Restoring blood flow to the heart

Coronary angioplasty, also known as percutaneous coronary intervention (PCI), is a minimally invasive procedure performed during coronary angiography to open blocked or narrowed coronary arteries and restore blood flow to the heart muscle.

Procedure Steps:

1. **Insertion of Balloon Catheter:** During coronary angiography, if a significant blockage or narrowing is identified, a balloon-tipped catheter is inserted through the same artery as the angiography catheter and positioned at the site of the blockage.

2. **Balloon Inflation:** The balloon is inflated at the site of the blockage, which compresses the plaque against the artery walls, widening the artery and restoring blood flow.

3. **Stent Placement (if needed):** In many cases, a stent—a small mesh tube—is inserted into the newly opened artery to help keep it propped open. Stents can be bare-metal or drug-eluting, which releases medication to prevent re-narrowing (restenosis) of the artery.

4. **Completion Angiography:** After the balloon inflation and possible stent placement, another angiography is performed to confirm the improvement in blood flow through the treated artery.

Uses and Benefits:

- **Immediate Relief:** Provides immediate relief from symptoms such as chest pain (angina) by restoring blood flow to the heart muscle.

- **Prevents Heart Attack:** Reduces the risk of heart attack by opening blocked arteries that could potentially lead to myocardial infarction.

- **Improves Heart Function:** Enhances overall heart function by increasing blood supply to the heart muscle, thereby improving its pumping ability.

- **Advancements and innovations in Angioplasty techniques**

Over the years, advancements in technology and techniques have significantly improved the safety and effectiveness of coronary angioplasty. These include:

- **Drug-Eluting Stents:** Release medication to prevent scar tissue from forming inside the artery, reducing the risk of restenosis.

- **Minimally Invasive Approaches:** Access through the radial artery (wrist) instead of the femoral artery (groin), leading to faster recovery and fewer complications.

- **Imaging Technologies:** Enhanced imaging techniques such as intravascular ultrasound (IVUS) and optical coherence tomography (OCT) provide detailed images of the inside of arteries, aiding in precise stent placement.

Patient care and recovery

After coronary angiography and angioplasty, patients are monitored closely for complications such as bleeding or damage to the artery. Most patients recover quickly and can resume normal activities within a few days to a week, depending on the complexity of the procedure and individual health factors. Cardiac rehabilitation programs may be recommended to promote heart health through exercise, diet, and lifestyle changes.

Coronary angiography and angioplasty represent pivotal advancements in interventional cardiology, offering both diagnostic clarity and therapeutic intervention in the management of heart disease. These procedures not only help in identifying and treating coronary artery disease but also play a crucial role in preventing heart attacks and improving the quality of life for patients with heart disease. As technology continues to evolve, the future holds promise for further refinements in these procedures, ensuring better outcomes and enhanced patient care in the realm of cardiovascular medicine. (The author is the Chairman & HOD - BLK-Max Heart & Vascular Institute, Chairman Pan Max - Electrophysiology, BLK-Max Super Speciality Hospital, Delhi)

Hidden health crisis of Gallbladder Cancer

By: Dr. Neeraj Chaudhary

Gallbladder cancer, although less talked about compared to other cancers, is a serious condition that requires more attention and awareness. Gallbladder cancer is a significant health concern in India. In 2022, India reported 21,780 new cases of gallbladder cancer, making it the second-highest in the world after China. With its subtle symptoms and aggressive nature, early detection is key to improving patient outcomes and survival rates.

Understanding gallbladder cancer

Gallbladder cancer starts in the gallbladder, a small organ beneath the liver. Although it is rare, its diagnosis often comes at an advanced stage, making it particularly deadly. The gallbladder's location deep within the body means early tumours often go undetected until they cause significant symptoms.

Risk factors

Several factors can increase the risk of developing gallbladder cancer, including chronic inflammation from gallstones, which is a major risk factor. Women are more frequently diagnosed with gallbladder cancer than men,

and the risk increases with age, particularly in those over 65. Excess body weight is also linked to an elevated risk. Additionally, a family history of gallbladder cancer can increase the likelihood of developing the disease.

Symptoms to watch for

Early stages of gallbladder cancer are often asymptomatic, but as the disease advances, symptoms may emerge, including abdominal pain, particularly in the upper right section, jaundice (characterized by yellowing of the skin and eyes), nausea and vomiting, bloating, and unexplained weight loss.

Diagnosis and treatment

Diagnosing gallbladder cancer typically involves imaging tests such as ultrasound, CT scans, and MRIs, followed by a biopsy to confirm the presence of cancerous cells. Blood tests may also be conducted to check for liver function and tumor markers.

Treatment options for gallbladder cancer vary based on the cancer's stage and the patient's overall health. For early-stage cancer, the primary treatment is surgical removal of the gallbladder (cholecystectomy), while advanced cases may require removal of part of the liver and surrounding tissues.

Yellow food dye can make living tissue transparent – these methods could one day improve cancer treatment

By: Guosong Hong

Why isn't your body transparent? Some animals such as jellyfish, zebra fish and some glass frogs have see-through bodies. But most mammals, including humans, aren't transparent. While the idea of a transparent body might seem odd or even a bit creepy, it could actually be really helpful for doctors. If our bodies were transparent, doctors could easily see inside to diagnose diseases in organs such as the liver, spleen and brain. They wouldn't need invasive procedures such as biopsies or expensive machines such as CT scanners and MRIs.

I'm a materials scientist, and my team and I work on how new materials can aid biomedicine. My colleagues and I have wondered whether it's possible to make living tissue transparent temporarily to aid in medical treatments and other uses.

We discovered that by dissolving certain dye molecules, including a food dye commonly used in snacks called FD&C Yellow 5, into water, we can change the way light travels through the water. We used this phenomenon to make organic tissue – specifically the thin skin of mice – transparent in our study, published in September 2024 in Science.

Refractive indices

Our bodies, like those of most mammals, aren't transparent mainly because of how light interacts with our tissues. Normally, light travels in a straight line through the air. But when light hits the human body, it doesn't go very far before its path gets scattered. The light bounces around in different directions instead of

traveling straight through. If light passed through us without scattering, our tissue would be transparent. This scattering happens because human tissues are made up of many different components, including water, fats and proteins. Each of these components slows down light differently, a property known as the refractive index.

For example, water has a refractive index of about 1.33, while fats and proteins have a higher refractive index of around 1.45 in the visible spectrum. So, light travels more slowly in lipids than in water.

The key to making living tissue transparent would be to reduce the differences in how light moves through different parts of the tissue – specifically between water and fats and proteins.

Kramers-Kronig relations

A principle in physics known as the Kramers-Kronig relations explains how if a material absorbs more light of one color, such as blue, this increased absorption will change how light of a different color, such as red, moves through it. Kramers-Kronig relations say that the colors of light are not independent of each other but connected.

FD&C Yellow 5 absorbs blue light strongly, which yields its characteristic orange-to-red color when dissolved in water. This happens because the blue part of the light is absorbed, leaving only the orange-to-red part visible. As a result of the Kramers-Kronig relations, this absorption of blue light increases the refractive index of water for red light. The water's refractive index increases from 1.33 and matches that of fats and proteins, around 1.45.

When the refractive indices

match, red light no longer scatters as much. It travels in water the same way that it does in fats in the tissue. So, the whole tissue appears as a single, uniform material. This process can make the tissue look transparent, even though it's normally opaque.

Turning tissue transparent

My research team applied this idea in an experiment using a scattering phantom, which is a material designed to mimic the opaqueness of human skin. As we added more FD&C Yellow 5 dye to the phantom, it became more orange-red in color, just as we expected.

However, something else happened. It became more transparent to red light. This increased transparency allowed us to see the grid pattern on the table underneath the phantom.

We then decided to test this idea on a piece of chicken breast from the grocery store. Unless it's sliced very thin, chicken meat usually looks opaque. When we soaked the chicken breast in a solution containing FD&C Yellow 5 dye, something amazing happened. It became more transparent, allowing us to clearly see a Stanford sign placed underneath.

Finally, we used this idea to make the skin of a mouse optically transparent. We applied the FD&C Yellow 5 dye to different parts of the mouse's body. When we added it to the mouse's scalp, we could see the blood vessels in its brain. When we added it to the mouse's belly, we could see its gut. When we added it to the mouse's limbs, we could see its muscle fibers. All this experiment took was gently massaging a solution of the dye into the mouse's skin and a bit of patience.

This process is noninvasive because it doesn't require tissue removal or surgery, and the skin returns to its normal opacity once you rinse off the dye with water. Although it's a fascinating technique, we strongly advise against trying this on yourself.

While the use of Yellow 5 is approved by the FDA, some people have raised concerns about its potential health risks. These include allergic reactions – particularly in people with asthma – hyperactivity in children and potential links to cancer. But researchers will need to conduct more tests to determine whether there are any dangers.

Future uses

So what could this approach be used for? Right now, it works best on very thin layers of skin, like that of a mouse.

Unfortunately, human skin is much thicker, so this method isn't quite ready for practical use on people yet. Also, the red color of the dye means that the colour balance isn't quite right and the transparency isn't perfect across the entire visible spectrum. The dye still blocks blue light.

It could also aid in the early detection of skin cancer, enhance light delivery into deep tissues for photodynamic and photothermal therapies and simplify laser-based tattoo removal. In photodynamic and photothermal therapies, doctors use a laser to kill cancerous and precancerous cells. But light from the laser penetrates only so far into the tissue, so these therapies aren't suitable for organs deeper in the body – yet. All of these applications could benefit from a reversible, on-demand transparency window into the body. (Courtesy: *Down To Earth*)

Trump threatens to jail adversaries in escalating rhetoric ahead of pivotal debate

MOSINEE, Sept 8: With just days to go before his first — and likely only — debate against Vice President Kamala Harris, former President Donald Trump posted a warning on his social media site threatening to jail those “involved in unscrupulous behaviour” this election, which he said would be under intense scrutiny.



“WHEN I WIN, those people that CHEATED will be prosecuted to the fullest extent of the Law, which will include long term prison sentences so that this Depravity of Justice does not happen again,” Trump wrote, again sowing doubt about the integrity of the election, even though cheating is incredibly rare.

course. On Friday, he delivered a stunning statement to news cameras in which he brought up a string of past allegations of sexual misconduct, describing several in graphic detail, even as he denied his accusers’ allegations. Earlier, he had voluntarily appeared in court for a hearing on the appeal of a decision that found him liable for sexual abuse, turning focus to his legal woes in the campaign’s final stretch.

Trump’s message represents his latest threat to use the office of the presidency to exact retribution if he wins a second term. There is no evidence of the kind of fraud he continues to insist marred the 2020 election; in fact, dozens of courts, Republican state officials and his own administration have said he lost fairly. Just days ago, Trump himself acknowledged in a podcast interview that he had indeed “lost by a whisker.”

While Trump’s campaign aides and allies have urged him to keep his focus on Harris and make the election a referendum on issues like inflation and border security, Trump in recent days has veered far off

Pope Francis to use handmade chairs by Indian-origin carpenter during Singapore visit

SINGAPORE, Sept 8: During his visit to Singapore next week, Pope Francis will use two handmade chairs crafted by an Indian-origin carpenter here for his inter-religious dialogue sessions.

the Pope’,” Muthiah recalled. Pope Francis will be in the city-state from Sep 11 to 13, in the last leg of his 12-day four-nation Asia-Pacific tour to Indonesia, Papua New Guinea, Timor-Leste, and Singapore. It is his longest trip away from the Vatican since he became head of the worldwide Catholic Church in 2013.

The chairs are made by 44-year-old Govindharaj Muthiah, who took his passion for woodworking full-time in 2019, according to a Channel News Asia report last week.

In Singapore, the 87-year-old Pope’s itinerary includes meeting President Tharman Shanmugaratnam and Prime Minister Lawrence Wong, presiding over mass at the National Stadium, and holding an interreligious dialogue session with youth at Catholic Junior College.

Muthiah said when he received the fortuitous call from the Roman Catholic Archdiocese of Singapore around end-July, he did not expect to be presented with the coolest addition to his CV to date.

The chairs will be used during the interreligious dialogue. So, it is perhaps fitting that Muthiah, a practising Hindu, approached temples and mosques that had just undergone renovation for leftover lumber he could repurpose.

Even though he completed both “100 per cent handmade” chairs within a whirlwind month, Muthiah said the news of being assigned to do the chairs still had not sunk in.

Muthiah said when he eventually put pencil to paper, he wanted the final design to be “very vintage”, inspired by furniture from the 18th century. A “normal chair” was a no-go. The headboard of one chair was inspired by the distinctive frontage of the old Novena Church here, also known as Church of St Alphonsus. The base of the other chair was inspired by the facade of Basilica of San José de Flores, a catholic church located in Pope Francis’ birthplace of Buenos Aires, Argentina. This chair also has a B-shaped armrest — an homage to Pope Francis’ family name, Bergoglio. (PTI)

Shooting attack at the West Bank-Jordan border crossing kills 3 Israelis

ALLENBY CROSSING (West Bank), Sept 8: Three Israelis were shot and killed Sunday at the border crossing between the West Bank and Jordan, Israeli officials said, in what appeared to be an attack linked to the 11-month-old war in Gaza.

The military said the gunman approached the Allenby Bridge Crossing from the Jordanian side in a truck and opened fire at Israeli security forces, who killed the assailant in a shootout. It said the three people killed were Israeli civilians. Israel’s Magen David Adom rescue service said they were all men in their 50s.

Jordan is investigating the shooting, its state-run Petra News Agency reported. The Western-allied Arab country made peace with Israel in 1994, but is deeply critical of its policies toward the Palestinians. Jordan has a large Palestinian population and has seen mass protests against Israel over the war in Gaza.

The Allenby crossing over the Jordan River, also known as the King Hussein Bridge, is mainly used by Palestinians and international tourists, as well as for cargo shipments. The crossing has seen very few security incidents over the years, but in 2014 Israeli security guards shot and killed a Jordanian judge who they said had attacked them.

Authorities in Israel and Jordan said the crossing was closed until further notice, and Israel later announced the closure of both of its land crossings with Jordan, near Beit Shean in the north and Eilat in the south.

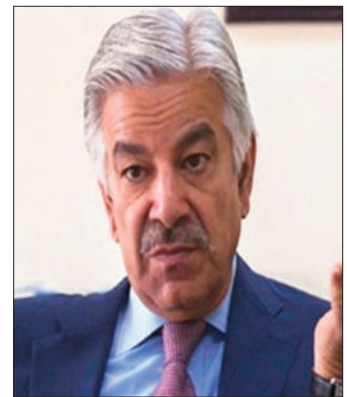
Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu condemned the attack and linked it to Israel’s larger conflict with Iran and allied militant groups, including Hamas in Gaza and Hezbollah in Lebanon.

The Israeli-occupied West Bank has seen a surge of violence since Hamas’ Oct 7 attack out of Gaza triggered the war there. Israel has launched near-daily military arrest raids into dense Palestinian residential areas, and there has also been a rise in settler violence and Palestinian attacks on Israelis.

In Gaza, meanwhile, an Israeli airstrike early Sunday killed five people, including two women, two children and a senior official in the Civil Defence first responders who operate under the Hamas-run government. (AP)

Pakistan’s defence minister says evidence against Imran points towards military trial

ISLAMABAD, Sept 8: Pakistan’s Defence Minister Khawaja Asif has said that the evidence against jailed former prime minister Imran Khan points towards a military trial in the cases concerning the violence on May 9 last year, a media report said on Sunday.



Speaking to a private news channel on Saturday, Asif said that military trials had taken place before and will continue to do so in future as well, Geo News reported.

“Evidence against founder Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf party founder (Imran Khan) points towards military trial,” Asif said.

His remarks come after 71-year-old Khan - fearing a military trial over his alleged involvement in the May 9 riots - filed a petition in the Islamabad High Court (IHC) to stop his potential trial in military courts.

However, the IHC registrar’s office raised objections over Khan’s plea, saying that neither it mentioned any specific first information report (FIR) nor any documentation or order was attached to the petition and how a petition be filed in a high court while the matter of military trials is sub judice in the Supreme Court.

It is not the first time that the ruling Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N) expressed such a possibility. Several leaders of the party have accused Khan of orchestrating the May 9, 2023 violence.

On September 2, Asif had said that a military trial of Khan was “possible”. He had said that during the Khan-led government, military trials of the civilians were held and he remembers cases of 24 civilians who went through the process of facing military court.

On May 9 last year, violent protests erupted after the arrest of the PTI founder by paramilitary Rangers

from the premises of the Islamabad High Court in connection with an alleged corruption case.

His party workers allegedly vandalised a dozen military installations, including the Jinnah House (Lahore Corps Commander House), the Mianwali airbase and the ISI building in Faisalabad. A mob also attacked the Army headquarters in Rawalpindi.

Khan’s party has ruled out the possibility of him being subjected to a military trial.

The Supreme Court in December 2023 suspended its October 23, 2023, order wherein it declared civilians’ trials in military courts null and void in connection with the May 9 riots. The verdict was announced on intra-court appeals filed by the federal and provincial governments and the defence ministry against the top court’s verdict.

The December order stated that military court trials would be conditioned on the Supreme Court’s final verdict on the intra-court pleas.

Speaking on the issue, the defence minister said that he lacked access to the investigation related to the PTI founder as they were confidential.

“The army was targeted in cities where demonstrations took place [...]”

“The general had an acquaintance with the PTI founder [and] he must be speaking about this following his arrest,” the minister said, noting that the former spy chief would attempt to shift the blame on someone else.

“He (Faiz) might say that even if he was part of the conspiracy then the objectives (of conspiracy) were of the PTI founder’s and not his,” Asif said.

“Both of them tried to take over the country after losing power. Both failed to create an uprising within the military,” he added.

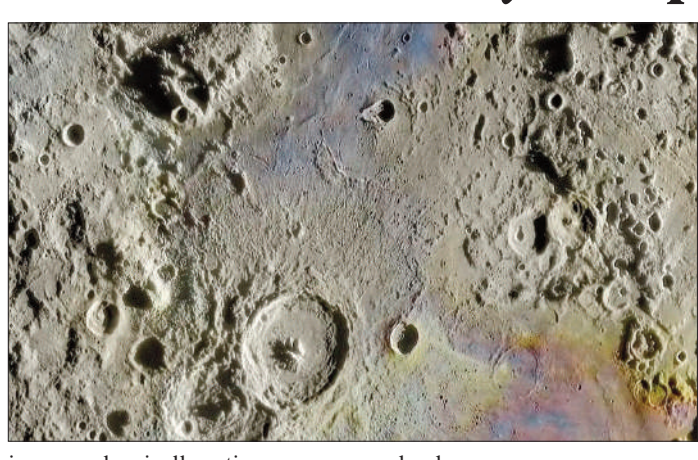
Khan was arrested on August 5 last year after his conviction in the first Toshakhana corruption case filed by the Election Commission of Pakistan. Since then, he has been in jail in different cases. (PTI)

All available evidence suggests that Venus is currently volcanically active

Moon had surprisingly recent volcanic activity, samples from Chinese space mission confirm

LANCASTER (UK), Sept 8: Volcanoes were erupting on the Moon as recently as 120 million years ago, evidence collected by a Chinese spacecraft suggests. Until the last few years, scientists had thought volcanic activity ended on the Moon around 2 billion years ago.

satellite Io, and Earth’s satellite, the Moon.



The findings, published in Science, come from analysis of lunar rock and soil delivered to Earth by China’s Chang’e 5 spacecraft in 2020. While these results are difficult to reconcile with the accepted history of lunar volcanism, it’s possible some areas of the Moon’s interior were more enriched in radioactive elements that generate the heat that drives volcanic activity.

thus causing the crater-counting method to give ages that were too young.

Lunar eruptions should have involved high lava fountains like those commonly seen erupting in Hawaii, for example. While most of these droplets would have accumulated into lava flows, some would have been thrown out for tens of kilometres to other parts of the Moon’s surface.

The crater-counting technique relies on the fact that craters form randomly and uniformly across planetary surfaces, so highly cratered terrains are considered older. The results suggest that Mars, which is half the size of Earth, is volcanically active every few million years.

This is expected, because larger bodies conserve heat better than smaller ones. On this basis Mercury, which is a third of Earth’s size, and our Moon, a quarter the size of Earth, should have been volcanically dead for about 2 billion years.

is very volcanically active as a result.

The simplest explanation for this was that these IMPs were young, typically about 100 million years old. This is 20 times younger than the 2 billion-year youngest age that had been expected.

The three volcanic droplets identified in the Chang’e 5 sample were probably not erupted from the same vent as the bulk of the rock and soil delivered to Earth. This would explain why these droplets are much younger than the lava flow at Chang’e 5’s landing site. These three glassy droplets are the first physical evidence we have for anomalously recent volcanic activity on the Moon.

The region where Chang’e 5 landed, called Oceanus Procellarum, may be one such area where rocks were enriched in these heat-producing elements.

Volcanism is a major way in which all rocky planetary bodies lose their heat. The rocky bodies in our Solar System are Earth, Venus, Mars, Mercury, Jupiter’s

early observers.

Analyses of the composition and age of samples returned from these mare areas by the six Apollo missions and three Soviet robotic probes were consistent with the belief there had been no geologically recent volcanic activity on the Moon.

In an attempt to reconcile these observations with the accepted history of lunar volcanism, it was pointed out that the lack of any atmosphere on the Moon would make eruptions there significantly different from those on Earth. The lack of confining pressure would have allowed erupting lavas to release almost all of the gaseous compounds dissolved in them, allowing some lava flows to contain very large numbers of gas bubbles to the extent of being a foam.

Meteoroid impacts into this soft foam would produce much smaller craters than in solid rock,

thus causing the crater-counting method to give ages that were too young.

“Lunar eruptions

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Manipur CM urges Centre to protect State's integrity

Rejects Kuki administration demand

IMPHAL, Sept 8: Amid a fresh bout of violence in Manipur, Chief Minister N Biren Singh on Sunday appealed to the Centre to take steps to protect territorial integrity of the state, according to an official. Singh also urged the central government not to give in to the demand for a separate administration raised by Kuki Zo groups, said the official on condition of anonymity.

The chief minister made these appeals in a memorandum submitted to Governor Lakshman Prasad Acharya when he, along with a number of MLAs and the assembly speaker, called on him at Raj Bhavan and held a meeting.

In the memorandum to Acharya, Singh said the Centre should ensure peace in Manipur and give adequate power to the elected state government, according to the official. Singh also called for revoking the Suspension of Operations (SoO) agreement.



The SoO pact was signed by the Centre, the Manipur government and two conglomerates of Kuki militant outfits – Kuki National Organisation (KNO) and United People's Front (UPF). The pact was signed in 2008 and extended periodically thereafter.

The Raj Bhavan said in a statement that Singh met the governor along with his cabinet colleagues

and submitted a memorandum. However, neither Raj Bhavan nor the chief minister shared the contents of the memorandum.

The statement said that besides over 20 MLAs, Singh was accompanied by assembly speaker Thokchom Satyabrata Singh during the meeting that lasted about an hour.

The meeting happened amid fresh violence in the state, in

which at least five people were killed in Jiribam district on Saturday. The chief minister had met the governor on Saturday night as well and briefed him about the situation.

According to police, militants entered the house of a person and shot him dead in his sleep. Following the murder, a heavy exchange of fire broke out between members of the warring communities, leading to the deaths of four armed men.

Ethnically diverse Jiribam which was earlier largely untouched by the ethnic clashes in Imphal Valley and adjoining hills erupted in violence after a 59-year-old man belonging to one community was killed allegedly by militants of another community in June.

Clashes between Meitei and Kukis left over 200 people dead and thousands homeless since May last year. (PTI)

Liquor shops near national highways to be relocated: Tripura CM

AGARTALA, Sept 8: In a bid to check fatal road accidents caused by drunken driving, Tripura Chief Minister Manik Saha on Sunday directed law enforcement agencies to prepare a comprehensive report on liquor shops operating within 100 metres of national highways following which his government would take steps to relocate the outlets.

In December 2018, the Supreme Court banned the sale of liquor within 500 metres of the outer edge of national and state highways and the limit was reduced to 220 metres for locations with a population of 20,000 or less.

"Tripura recorded 1,340 deaths and 3,824 injuries in 3,308 road accidents in the last six years. Although the number of road accidents seems less in the state compared to the number of vehicles (8, 88,203), police and other law enforcement agencies must work to reduce fatal road mishaps," he said at a programme here on road safety. Saha said law enforcement agencies must prepare a list of liquor shops functioning within 100 metres of the outer



edge of national highways as drunken driving also contributes to fatal road accidents.

The chief minister also asked the police to enforce the use of seat belts while driving cars, which he said was not being practiced in the state.

"Prepare a comprehensive report on the liquor shops functioning within 100 metres of national highways and the government will take steps to shift these outlets," he told the senior officials present at the function.

Transport Minister Sushanta Chowdhury, while voicing concern

over road accidents, underlined the need for awareness to avoid such mishaps in the northeastern state.

"Tripura witnesses 800 to 850 road accidents each year while 200 to 250 deaths of people are reported annually. Out of the 8, 88,203 vehicles, there are over five lakh two-wheelers plying the roads.

"It has been reported that most of the deaths took place for not wearing helmets. We are using modern equipment to reduce the number of fatal road accidents but awareness is required to address the problem," he added. (PTI)

23 houses gutted in major fire in Seppa



ITANAGAR, Sept 8: At least 23 houses were completely gutted in a devastating fire in Seppa in Arunachal Pradesh's East Kameng district, police said. The incident happened in Abotani Colony around 8 pm on Saturday, Superintendent of Police Kamdam Sikom said.

The reason behind the fire is yet to be ascertained but an electric short-circuit is suspected to be the cause, he said. The SP, however, said that no casualty was reported in the incident. A relief camp has been set up at LBS-II School for those who lost their houses in the blaze, he said.

Chief Minister Pema Khandu said the government was closely monitoring the situation. "Saddened to learn that 23 houses were destroyed in a devastating fire incident in Seppa. Please don't panic; we are closely monitoring the situation," Khandu posted in X.

"I have asked the East Kameng district administration officials to provide all possible assistance as per norms. A relief camp has been set up. I appeal to all the affected people to make use of the camp and also to maintain safety precautions so that such incidents don't recur," he added. (PTI)

Congress urges JPC inquiry into 'Adani Mega Scam' during Changlang protest

HT Bureau
GUWAHATI, Sept 8: The Changlang District Congress Committee (DCC) and Changlang District Youth Congress in Arunachal Pradesh led a demonstration at the Moh-Mol festival ground on Saturday, demanding a joint parliamentary committee (JPC) probe into the alleged "Adani mega scam."

Addressing the rally, Arunachal Pradesh Congress Committee (APCC) president Tarh Johnny alleged a "Modi-Adani nexus" and demanded the immediate formation of a JPC to thoroughly investigate the alleged Adani scam.

He said that the caste census, as advocated by Leader of Opposition Rahul Gandhi, is not merely a document but a blueprint for ensuring social, economic, and political equality for all sections of society.

Johnny further called for genuine respect for the Indian Constitution, emphasizing the importance of equality of opportunity for all individuals, regardless of their so-



cial, economic, or political background.

He also urged the Arunachal Pradesh and Assam governments to immediately repair the dilapidated Margherita-Namdang road, a 10-kilometre stretch that has become a nightmare for daily commuters.

The rally was attended by over 200 party workers, including senior district leaders such as DCC President Sethai Sena, APCC Secretaries Chatu Longri and Pinna K Singpho, and party leader Khimshom Mossang.

Bangladeshis held in Tripura for illegal entry

HT Bureau
GUWAHATI, Sept 8: In a swift operation, Tripura Police apprehended four Bangladeshi nationals in the early hours of Saturday for illegally crossing the India-Bangladesh border. The arrests took place in Kumarghat, Unakoti District, after the group was spotted behaving suspiciously in the area.

The apprehended individuals, identified as Mohammad Hanif (50), Mohammad Yusuf Ali (35), Parul Begum, and Jasmine Akhtar, all from different parts of Bagerhat district in Bangladesh, had reportedly entered India through a border town. They had traveled by auto-rickshaws throughout the night before being

dropped off near the LIC office in Dharmanagar. Upon questioning, the group revealed that they had been lured to India by a man named Rubel from Dhaka, who had promised them employment opportunities in Bangalore.

The deteriorating economic conditions in Bangladesh are believed to have motivated the individuals to seek better prospects in India.

The arrested individuals have been presented before a local court, and legal proceedings are underway. Tripura Police is continuing its investigation into the matter and is working to identify any potential human traffickers involved in the illegal entry.

ANSAM condemns Kuki-Chin-Mizo Rally

Accuses community of historical distortion and provocation

SENAPATI, Sept 8: The All Naga Students' Association, Manipur (ANSAM) said on Sunday that it took strong exception to the "outrageous demands and unwarranted provocations of a particular community including the recently concluded rally of Kuki-Chin-Mizo in the hill areas on August 31, across Nagas homeland that poses serious political implications and threat to the already turmoil situation of the state". The Naga student body said it issued this statement to put across its "serious concerns and dismay over their continued demands and claims based on blatant lies and invention of lop-sided history".

In a statement made available to Newmai News Network on Sunday, the Naga student body said, "Time and again, the Nagas are perturbed by the circulation of fabricated information, distorted statements and historical accounts contained in every press release and memorandum issued by the Kuki community which is tantamount to assault on Naga history and insult to the Naga people".

It also said, "Indeed, it is very unfortunate and alarming that endless fabricating stories and concoction of history has been trending far and wide put forth by the Kuki-Chin-Mizo recklessly to suit their wild imaginary dream, taking undue advantages over the civility and understanding of Nagas towards them".

The ANSAM then said it has also seriously viewed on the "contumacious behaviour and chilling provocation" of Kuki-Chin-Mizo protesters towards the Naga leaders in and around Tumaopokpi areas on August 31, while they were conveying "gentle caution and advisory" not to provoke Nagas to avert any possible confrontation between the two communities.

The ANSAM then questioned the veracity of including the names of Naga tribes- Anal, Aimol, Chiru, Chothe, Lamkang, Moyon, Monsang, Kom etc. in the flyer of the recently concluded August 31,



2024, Global-Wide Rally by the Kuki-Zo Community.

The Naga student body said it was nothing but trying to baselessly portray "their geography and demography" to suit their wildest demands of Kuki land within Naga areas which clearly prove their lies and false territorial claims. The ANSAM cautioned that such "acts of blasphemy" should be stopped forthwith or else they will only bring chaos and enmity amongst the communities.

"Instead of all these, with deep concern, we advise the Kuki-Chin-Mizo brethren to acknowledge and respect the traditional land ownership of the Nagas as in the olden days, so that we can continue to share and remain as a good neighbour for the rest of the centuries," the ANSAM added. Whereas, the ANSAM also said the continued effort of raising "their demand on false territorial foundation" and attempts to befool the various concerned authorities with concocted history is a direct aggression to the Nagas and a burgeoning threat to Northeast India, "a region of indigenous peoples".

Once again, the ANSAM cautioned all concerned that any community or individual may have their own aspiration and demand democratically within their own share, but the same action and in-

action should not infringe the rights, interest and position of others by way of distortion and fabrication. Further, any untoward consequences or collateral eventualities that arise in this regard shall solely held responsible by those who engineered the crisis, the Naga student body warned.

The ANSAM then urged the Government of India to show their sincerity in handling the present crisis in the state of Manipur and must look at the issues and evolving demands and claims in the right perspective based on historical truth. It also said the history of land and people in the state of Manipur is loud and clear on record and any authority at the helm should not be confused in this regard. As such, the ANSAM said it placed the position of the Naga people squarely that "we will not accept any further bifurcation of Naga areas while attempting to address any other demand of other communities".

The Naga student body added by saying, "That, bifurcation of Naga's ancestral homeland or adversely affecting the Nagas in any form while addressing the demand of other communities will have serious ramifications that will provoke further senseless violence with different communities". (NNN)

Security heightened in Manipur, anti-drone systems deployed

IMPHAL, Sept 8: Security was heightened in Manipur on Sunday following the fresh bout of violence that left several people dead, official's said. The situation was tense but under control, they said.

"No new incidents of violence have so far been reported on Sunday. SPs of various districts in coordination with security forces are continuously monitoring the situation," an official said.

The Assam Rifles has deployed anti-drone systems in the fringe areas of the Imphal Valley to repel any "rogue drones", he said.

The CRPF handed an anti-drone system to the state police for deployment, he added. The use of drones to mount attacks was new to the ethnic clashes in Manipur that left over 200 people dead since May last year.

The use of the remote-controlled small flying device as a weapon was first seen on September 1 in Koutruk village in the Imphal West district. In the attack, in which guns were also used, two persons were killed and nine others injured.

Drones were used again in Sen-

jam Chirang, around 3 km away, the next day, injuring three persons. Meanwhile, prohibitory orders were imposed in Jiribam district on Saturday night, preventing the gathering of five or more persons, according to a notification.

Five people were killed in fresh violence in Jiribam on Saturday.

According to police, militants entered the house of a person and shot him dead in his sleep. Following the murder, a heavy exchange of fire broke out between members of the warring commu-

nities, leading to the deaths of four armed men.

Ethnically diverse Jiribam, which was largely untouched by the ethnic clashes in Imphal Valley and adjoining hills, erupted in violence after a 59-year-old man belonging to one community was killed allegedly by militants of another community in June.

Thousands had to relocate to relief camps due to incidents of arson by both sides. A CRPF jawan was also killed in an ambush by militants in mid-July. (PTI)

USTM commemorates 98th anniversary of Dr Bhupen Hazarika



HT Bureau
GUWAHATI, Sept 8: The University of Science and Technology Meghalaya (USTM) enthusiastically celebrated the 98th birth anniversary of Bharat Ratna Dr Bhupen Hazarika, the iconic bard and globally acclaimed singer. Organized by the Cultural Forum of USTM, the event was marked by deep reverence and vibrant participation from the university community.

To honor Dr Hazarika's legacy, a ceremonial lamp was lit, followed by floral tributes. The occasion featured performances of his timeless compositions by faculty members and students, paying homage to the "Bard of Brahmapu-

tra." A highlight of the event was the Bhupendra Sangeet competition, held at the NKC Auditorium, where students from various departments showcased their talents. Simasri Sharma from the Department of English secured the first prize, followed by Swapnanil Kalita from the department of pharmacy in second place, and Kritika Bujarbaruah from the department of business administration in third.

The gathering in the NKC Auditorium concluded with heartfelt addresses by faculty and students, reflecting on Dr Bhupen Hazarika's profound contributions to music, culture, and humanity.

'Have suffered patiently': TMC MP Jawhar Sircar

'They want no politics; they just want justice and punishment'

KOLKATA, Sept 8: TMC MP Jawhar Sircar on Sunday wrote to West Bengal CM Mamata Banerjee, the chief of his party, and said he has decided to quit Rajya Sabha and leave politics altogether, describing the steps taken by the state government in handling the rape and murder of the doctor at RG Kar hospital "too little and quite late".

In the letter, Sircar said he became increasingly "disillusioned" with the state government as it seemed "quite unconcerned" about corruption and "strong-arm tactics" of a section of leaders.

Termining the protests over the doctor's death spontaneous, the retired IAS officer said he had not seen "such angst and total no-confidence" against a government, even when it was saying things that were correct or factual.

"The primary purpose of joining as an MP, without any direct involvement in party politics, was that it offered an excellent forum to carry on the struggle against the autocratic and communal politics of the BJP and its Prime Minister. To that extent, I have some satisfaction and my several interventions in parliament..." he said in the letter.

Sircar said that in 2022, a year after he joined the TMC, he was "quite shocked" to see the "open evidence of corruption" that former education minister Partha Chatterjee had indulged in.

"I made a public statement that corruption must be tackled by the



party and government, but I was heckled by senior leaders in the party. I did not resign then as I had hoped that you would carry on your public campaign against 'cut money' and corruption that you had started a year earlier," he said.

The former bureaucrat said that he was persuaded by well-wishers to remain an MP to "carry on the battle" against "a regime that is the greatest ever threat to Indian democracy and civil liberties".

"Though I carried on my task in parliament with fervour, I became increasingly disillusioned as the state government seemed quite unconcerned about corruption and the increasing strong-arm tactics of a section of leaders," he said.

Noting his middle-class way of living, Sircar said he was amazed

to see that several elected panchayat and municipal representatives of the TMC acquired big properties and moved around in expensive vehicles.

"This hurts not only me, but the people of West Bengal," he said.

"It is also true that leaders in other parties and other states have amassed much more wealth, but West Bengal is unable to accept this extravagant corruption and domination. I know that the present Central regime thrives on the multi-billionaires that it has enriched, and not a day goes when I do not accuse it of dirty crony-capitalism. I just cannot accept some things, like corrupt officers (or doctors) getting prime and top postings. No," he added.

Referring to the protests over the rape and murder of the doctor, he said the "spontaneous outpouring of public anger" is against this unchecked overbearing attitude of the "favoured few and the corrupt".

"In all my years, I have not seen such angst and total no-confidence against the government, even when it says something correct or factual," he said.

Sircar said he had "suffered patiently" for a month since the incident at RG Kar hospital, hoping for direct intervention with the agitating junior doctors, "in the old style of Mamata Banerjee".

"It has not happened and whatever punitive steps that government is taking now are too little and quite late. I think normalcy may have been restored in this state much earlier, if the caucus of the corrupt doctors was smashed and those guilty of taking improper administrative actions punished immediately after the scandalous incident happened," he said.

Sircar said the agitation was non-political and spontaneous and it was not correct to take a "confrontational stand, by labelling it political". "They want no politics; they want justice and punishment. Let us analyse frankly and realise that the movement is as much for Abhaya (name given to the victim) as it is against the state government and the party. This calls for course correction immediately or else communal forces will capture this state," he said.

Sircar claimed he wrote the let-

ter as he did not get the opportunity to speak privately with Banerjee for months.

"I express my gratitude again for the opportunity you gave me to raise Bengal's issues in parliament for 3 years, but I do not wish to continue as MP at all. My commitment to fight corruption, communalism and authoritarianism in the Centre and the States is simply non-negotiable," he said.

He said he would soon visit Delhi, and offer his resignation to the Rajya Sabha chairperson, disassociating himself from politics.

TMC leader Kunal Ghosh said the party respects Sircar's decision, and he was hopeful that the leadership would address the issues that were raised, and take strong, clear, and positive actions.

"We are also mindful of the other issues Sircar has recently highlighted and understand that as a person of integrity and deep emotion, he is entitled to respond as he sees fit," said Ghosh.

The BJP said it would be unwise for it to comment before Sircar submits his resignation to the Rajya Sabha chairperson.

"This is not the first time, earlier also he had expressed his desire to resign from the party and give up his membership of Parliament. Later he backtracked. Let us see what happens now. But if he really does so, the people of Bengal would be happy that at least he had the spine to stand against the corrupt regime," BJP MP Samik Bhatnagar said. (PTI)

Will emerge as primary political force in TN: Vijay

CHENNAI, Sept 8: Tamizhaga Vetri Kazhagam party founder-president and top Tamil actor Vijay on Sunday announced that the Election Commission has duly registered his outfit and expressed confidence of emerging as the primary political party of Tamil Nadu.

Underscoring that equality is the basic principle of his new party, Vijay said that an application was filed with the EC on February 2 to register Tamizhaga Vetri Kazhagam (TVK) as a political party. After legally considering it, the EC has now registered the TVK as a political party and "has given permission to take part as a registered party in electoral politics. I am happy to share this with you." The popular actor, in a statement posted on X, said the "first door has opened for us, which heralds all round success." Furthermore, he said that by pursuing the path of defined principles and by breaking barriers, his party would rise as the key political party of the Tamil people in Tamil Nadu.

The actor said preparatory work to hold TVK's first state conference, which will declare the party's ideology, has commenced and, "please wait for a formal announcement about it." The TVK leader's comment comes against the background of his party functionaries approaching authorities seeking permission to hold the state conference this month at Vikravandi in Villupuram district and police reportedly clearing the decks to conduct the rally. (PTI)

Raut criticises Fadnavis, says he won't understand workings of Sharad Pawar's mind



MUMBAI, Sept 8: Shiv Sena (UBT) leader and Rajya Sabha MP Sanjay Raut on Sunday slammed Maharashtra Deputy Chief Minister Devendra Fadnavis, saying even if the latter took 100 births, he wouldn't be able to understand what goes on in NCP (SP) supreme Sharad Pawar's mind.

Raut's remarks have come days after Fadnavis's claim that Sharad Pawar had shortlisted three to four names for the chief minister's post ahead of the state assembly elections, but Uddhav Thackeray was not one of them.

Talking to reporters here, the Sena (UBT) leader said, "In 2019, did Fadnavis know what Sharad Pawar was thinking and planning? Even if he is born 100 times, Fadnavis will fail to bathom what goes on in Sharad Pawar's head.

If there is any courage left with the ruling dispensation in the state, they should give a call for the election."

Raut alleged that Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Union Home Minister Amit Shah orchestrated recent splits in political parties and even within families leading these parties. The allegation has come in the wake of Maharashtra Deputy

Waqf committee meetings become battleground of contesting claims

NEW DELHI, Sept 8: The Joint Committee of Parliament meetings on the Waqf (Amendment) Bill have turned out to be a battleground for contesting claims, as several government bodies have accused Waqf boards in the country of laying ownership on properties belonging to them and drawn sharp counterclaims.

Opposition members in the committee have claimed that a large number of Waqf properties have been in fact in "unauthorised" possession of government bodies, including the Archaeological Survey of India (ASI).

AIMIM's Asaduddin Owaisi, one of the more vocal and articulate opposition voices in the

meetings, submitted a list of 172 Waqf properties in Delhi alone, which, he said, were in the unauthorised possession of the ASI, sources said.

His submission to the committee's chairperson and BJP member Jagdambika Pal came following the country's premier archaeology body's assertion that over 120 of its protected monuments are claimed by different Waqf boards. The ASI also accused them of unauthorised constructions.

The urban affairs and road transport ministries, besides the Railway Board, have also levelled similar charges against Waqf boards, as

they supported the proposed amendments in the law.

The ASI in the last meeting of the committee on Friday shared a list of 53 of its protected monuments, with different state Waqf boards declaring them as their properties decades after the ASI's proclamation, sources added.

With the committee holding day-long meetings regularly in its bid to hear out all stakeholders and meeting the deadline to complete its recommendations by the first week of the Parliament's Winter Session, a few contentions have been common in the submissions of those opposed to the Bill in its current form. (PTI)

Congress was not good enough for NC in J&K, till Mufti Sayeed made it so: Mehbooba

SRINAGAR, Sept 8: PDP president Mehbooba Mufti on Sunday said the National Conference forged an alliance with Congress, its nemesis, in the 1980s, only after her late father Mufti Mohammad Sayeed turned the national party into a viable option in the valley.

Addressing an election rally in Kokernag assembly segment of Anantnag district, Mufti recalled the time when the National Conference enforced a social boycott of Congress workers in Jammu and Kashmir. "There was a social boycott. Daughters of (some) Congress workers were divorced... The barber would not provide his service to Congress workers. But Mufti Mohammad Sayeed organised the party and Congress protested against the rising corruption. Six people were martyred when Farooq Abdullah was the chief minister," she said.

"When Farooq Abdullah realised that Congress is becoming a

viable option and will take the place of the National Conference, he put Congress in his pocket (through an alliance) and it is struggling to come out of it till date," she added. The former Jammu and Kashmir chief minister said the alliance between National Conference and Congress for the 2024 assembly elections is not based on principles but a pact for sharing power.

"If it were an alliance based on principles, then Kokernag would have been a Congress seat. The NC left the seat for Congress but fielded its own candidate as Independent," she said.

Mufti said if her father had not formed the Peoples Democratic Party, the NC would have still been continuing with its "authoritarian" ways. On BJP leaders targeting the PDP, she said the ruling party at the Centre knows that people are angry with it for abrogation of Article 370. (PTI)

Cong leaders seem to be preparing for race to become CM, in case of leadership change in Karnataka

BENGALURU, Sept 8: As Karnataka Chief Minister Siddaramaiah's petition challenging the Governor's sanction for his prosecution in a site allotment case is being heard in the High Court, some Congress leaders seem to have chosen to weigh in for the top post in the event of leadership change. All Congress leaders and Ministers are, however, maintaining that Siddaramaiah will continue in the post.

A verbal duel of sorts has erupted between two senior Ministers -- M B Patil and Shivanand Patil -- about seniority as the yardstick to become the Chief Minister.

"There are people senior to me, but seniority is not the only yardstick. There is no question of change in Chief Minister now, Siddaramaiah is there as the Chief Minister, he will be there, and will continue in the future too, so the talk about changing CM is irrelevant," M B Patil said.

Speaking to reporters, he said, "However, in becoming the Chief Minister, seniority or juniority is not a major (yardstick). I'm also a senior in Congress, I'm in the Congress party even before 1991, I have been about 35 years now. So, I'm also a senior, but seniority is not the only yardstick."

"One day or the other I will become the Chief Minister, I have desire, but don't have greed. As per Shivananda Patil's logic, if seniority has to be considered -- he has said I will have to wait, let's agree to it. But, he has recently come to the party from Janata Dal, BJP, he is not in the line. From Vijayapura district, if someone has to become CM, it is me, no one else," he added, while rejecting Shivanand Patil's statement as "personal opinion".

Earlier, noting that he has no desire to become CM, Shivanand Patil, when asked if he supported M B Patil, said that there were

Parl security breach chargesheet

Accused wanted to discredit Indian democracy, get global attention

NEW DELHI, Sept 8: The December 13, 2023 Parliament security breach accused wanted to discredit India's democracy, gain instant global fame, usurp power and achieve "richness and glory" by targeting the "very symbol of democracy", according to the chargesheet filed in the court by Delhi Police.

The accused first met on social media and planned their move for nearly two years before executing it last year on the anniversary of the 2001 Parliament attack. According to the chargesheet, a source said, their first in-person meeting was held in February, 2022 at Mysuru. Citing from the chargesheet, sources told PTI, that in total they held five meetings in Mysuru, Gurugram and Delhi to decide to finalise their plan and arrive at a modus operandi.

The chargesheet, spread over 1,000 pages, was filed before the Patiala House Court in June and the court took its cognisance last month. A supplementary was filed in July. The chargesheet mentioned that the group of young people, led by Manoranjan D, a resident of Karnataka, met on social media.

Manoranjan is among the six accused arrested by the Delhi Police Special Cell, sources said.

Manoranjan, according to the chargesheet, is suspected to be among the main conspirators of the parliament breach, who allegedly "instigated and motivated" the young people by promising them "richness, glory and wealth" and by targeting the "very symbol of democracy".

While citing the chargesheet, a source said that driven by his "ultra Maoist-inspired thinking" Manoranjan decided to target the Parliament building to gain immediate and lasting attention.

The source said the accused wanted to send out a wider message that the "Indian Democracy is ineffective and needs to be replaced". The major security breach took place on the anniversary of the 2001 Parliament terror attack. The accused launched coordinated gas attack both inside and outside the parliament house during the

Zero Hour on December 13, 2023.

Two persons -- Sagar Sharma and Manoranjan D -- jumped into the Lok Sabha chamber from the public gallery and opened canisters that released yellow gas in the House. They also shouted slogans before parliamentarians overpowered them.

Outside the Parliament premises around the same time, two other accused -- Amol Shinde and Neelam Azad -- also sprayed coloured gases from canisters while shouting "tanashahi nahi chalegi (dictatorship won't be allowed)".

Manoranjan, Sagar Sharma, Amol Shinde and Neelam Azad were arrested on the same day as they were caught soon after their acts. Lalit Jha and Mahesh Kumawat were arrested on December 15 and 16, respectively. All the accused are lodged in the Tihar jail.

They have been booked under sections 16 and 18 of the Unlawful Activities Prevention Act (UAPA) and other sections of the Indian Penal Code by the Delhi Police's anti-terror unit, Special Cell.

Citing the chargesheet, a source said that Manoranjan dropped out of an engineering course and travelled to Comodia in 2014 where he stayed for eight months.

The source said that after coming back to India, he travelled to Ladakh on a motorcycle in 2015, which "mirrors" the famous "Motorcycle Diaries" penned by Che Guevara, a Cuban revolution communist icon.

During his trip to Ladakh, a Chinese student, who was then studying at Hyderabad, also accompanied him as a pillion rider to Delhi, via Madhya Pradesh and Rajasthan.

Citing the chargesheet, the source further said the first meeting of the accused was held in February, 2022 in Mysuru at a flat of Manoranjan's friend which was attended by 10 people including Manoranjan D, Sagar Sharma, Amol Shinde, Lalit Jha and Mahesh Kumawat. In this meeting, Manoranjan showed some videos of violent protests to the participants, and floated the idea of building an organisation. (PTI)

maiah too, like him, came to Congress from another party -- JD(S), Shivanand Patil said, M B Patil seems to have forgotten that. While, Deputy Chief Minister and state Congress President D K Shivakumar is seen as a prime contender for the post in case of any change in leadership, names of senior Ministers like Home Minister P Garameshwara and PWD Minister Satish Jarkiholi too are doing rounds, especially following their recent meeting with party leadership in New Delhi.

With M B Patil stating that Congress President M Mallikarjun Kharge, Siddaramaiah and R V Deshpande are seniors to him, and reiterating that Siddaramaiah will continue as CM, Jarkiholi said that he never claimed to be a senior or junior.

He said he will wait till 2028, and the talk of CM change is irrelevant now, as Siddaramaiah will continue. (PTI)

Can't forecast things that will follow J&K polls: Karra on possibility of National Conference CM

NEW DELHI, Sept 8: Jammu and Kashmir Congress chief Tariq Hameed Karra on Sunday said the assembly polls are not just about forming a government or adjusting leaders in the dispensation but about "restoration of statehood and powers of the assembly" as well as "our lost dignity".

Karra was also non-committal on whether the chief minister would be from the National Conference (NC) in case the Congress-NC alliance wins the polls, saying "we can't forecast things that have to follow after the elections".

In an interview with PTI, Karra exuded confidence that the Congress-NC combine would form the government crossing the magic mark in the 90-member assembly and the Mehbooba Mufti-led PDP would not be able to hamper their chances much.

The Jammu and Kashmir Pradesh Congress Committee chief also asserted that the Ghulam Nabi Azad-led Democratic Progressive Azad Party (DPAP) is a "closed case" and "doesn't have a future". "I have been on record to say that as far as DPAP is concerned, it is a closed case now. Whatever they had been doing was to cause fragmentation which they failed in. So I don't think they have any future anymore," he said.

Asked that with NC being the senior partner in the alliance, was it a foregone conclusion that the chief minister will be from that



party, Karra said, "We have an understanding as far as going into elections is concerned. We have a seat arrangement which we call as pre-poll alliance but the result would speak for itself that what would follow. We can't forecast about things which have to follow after the elections." On whether he was in the chief ministership, Karra said, "You can't say it now."

The NC and the Congress have agreed on a seat-sharing arrangement for the 90 assembly seats, with the National Conference set to contest 51 of them and the Congress 32. They are having a friendly fight on a few seats.

On the Centre significantly strengthening the authority of the lieutenant governor in Jammu and Kashmir, Karra claimed that the BJP realised that it would not be

forming the government and some other combination would be doing so and therefore, before handing over the power to the next government, they thought it is better to curtail powers.

"This is a politically motivated attempt," the J-K Congress chief told PTI over phone.

He asserted that while restoration of statehood is the paramount concern, as far as the curtailment of powers of the government is concerned, "we shall have to get it reviewed and the assembly will also decide about it". On the main plank of the polls, Karra said today's elections are not (just) about forming the government or adjusting our leaders in the government, but it has different contours and parameters.

"The parameters are restoration

of statehood, restoration of powers of the assembly, restoration of our lost dignity, restoration of our identity. This is not just a development-based election, developments do happen under LGs, during governor's rule. Ours is a totally different kind of election this time," he asserted.

Talking about the security situation of Jammu and Kashmir, Karra lashed out at the BJP, alleging that it is "simply parroting" that the situation is normal on the ground but everyone has seen that only the goal posts have changed from Kashmir to Jammu division.

"It is an utter failure of the government of India and the local administration. They have always been glorifying their double engine governments and it (the security situation) is a simple case of the failure of those double engine governments," the Congress leader said. "For the last few months everybody is seeing that how much damage is being done in the Jammu division while all along it had been a peaceful area but for their utter failure and in their jingoism, they have been using it for their electoral political gains," he said. "So, I think it is their moral responsibility to accept their failures," Karra added.

He also slammed the BJP promises made in its manifesto and said they have been "selling" the situation of Kashmir all over the country and till a few months back they had succeeded in that but now the situ-

ation has changed. "This juggling of words and jingoism of years has no takes anymore. Whatever they have been promising and whatever they have been selling, I think the shelf life of that is over now," Karra said.

On whether the People's Democratic Party (PDP) could hamper the chances of the Congress-NC alliance, Karra said their tie-up has been a continuation of the previous alliance for parliamentary polls.

"I think we had quite a good result in parliamentary polls except for a setback of Omar Abdullah losing and they (PDP) had a big setback of Mehbooba Mufti losing. I don't think there is going to be any change of that perception which was created in the previous election. I think it (our result) would be better than the previous result," he said. Pressed further about the PDP possibly playing spoiler, Karra said, "When there is a multi-cornered contest things become difficult but I won't accept this that they (PDP) will totally hamper it."

Karra is contesting the polls from Central Shalteng that will go to polls on September 25. The Jammu and Kashmir Assembly elections are scheduled to be held in three phases with voting for the first phase to be held on September 18 followed by the second phase on September 25 and the third phase on October 1. The results of the polls would be announced on October 8. (PTI)

Community radio becomes new tool in fight against 'sarpanch pati' practice

NEW DELHI, Sept 8: To enhance its outreach among the rural population, the Panchayati Raj Ministry is using community radio to spread awareness about a range of issues, including combating the "sarpanch pati" practice and promoting digital initiatives.

The "sarpanch pati" system is a practice in which the husband of an elected woman sarpanch wields the actual power. According to officials, the pilot project for using community radio has been started in three states -- Bihar, Karnataka and Maharashtra -- and have received a good response.

"Jan Jan Tak Jankari", a series of community radio programmes launched by the Ministry of Panchayati Raj, aims at involving the local populace in grassroots governance by providing them with updates on various activities, interventions, and initiatives spearheaded by the government, an official told PTI.

Five community radio stations have been engaged in different districts of the three states, the min-



istry official said.

In Bihar, the pilot project is being run through five community radio stations -- Radio Snehi, Siwan, Radio Active in Bhagalpur, Radio Rimjhim in Gopalganj, Radio Mayur in Chapra, and Radio Risarch in Munger.

Similarly, Radio Sarang, Radio Manipal, Radio Shivamogga, Nammadhvani Radio, and Antaranvani Radio have been engaged in

different places of Karnataka.

In Maharashtra, Radio Manbhavan in Jalgaon, Guruwani CRS in Kalyan, Radio Vishwas in Nashik, Radio Wardha in Wardha, and Radio Nagar in Ahmednagar have been engaged.

"The objective is to actively involve the local populace in grassroots governance by providing them with critical updates on various activities, interventions, and

initiatives spearheaded by the Ministry of Panchayati Raj," the official told PTI.

"Even in the digital era, radio continues to be a powerful mass medium, reaching millions of listeners. Rural communities, in particular, still rely heavily on radio for information and entertainment," the official said.

The official added this initiative is part of the ministry's broader effort to involve local communities in advancing towards self-sustaining models of Smart Panchayats.

The issues being raised through the community radios include eliminating unwarranted practices like "Sarpanch Pati", "Pradhan Pati", and "Mukhiya Pati", a practice where male relatives of Elected Women Representatives (EWRs) such as their husband, exert undue influence on the woman representative, the official said. Augmenting Own Source of Revenue (OSR) for Panchayats, and popularising digital interventions such as the Meri Panchayat app, eGramSwaraj 2Bhashini, Pan-

chayat NIRNAY, Vibrant Gram Sabha will also be covered through the programme.

Localisation of Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) will also be covered, which includes having poverty-free villages with enhanced livelihood, healthy, child and women friendly, water sufficient, clean and green village, with self-sufficient infrastructure, socially just and socially secured environment, and good governance.

The official added that the ministry has requested the state departments of Panchayati Raj to support the community radio initiative by providing inputs and finalising content in local languages to maximize outreach. The effort is being coordinated by the Community Radio Association (CRA).

"The response to this initiative has been overwhelmingly positive, as reported by the CRA. They have observed a phenomenal engagement rate among the communities, indicating a strong resonance with the content being aired," the official said. (PTI)

Lucknow building collapse: Toll rises to 8

CM Adityanath to visit injured at hospital

LUCKNOW, Sept 8: The death toll in the building collapse here has climbed to eight with rescuers pulling out three more bodies from the debris, officials said on Sunday. Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath will visit Lok Bandhu Hospital here to meet those injured in the incident, after returning from Ambedkar Nagar, Director, Information, Shishir said.

Joint Commissioner of Police Amit Verma said there is minimum possibility of someone still being trapped inside.

A three-storey building housing godowns and a motor workshop collapsed in the Transport Nagar area here on Saturday, leaving 28 people injured. Five bodies were recovered from the spot.

As the rescue operation continued overnight, teams of National Disaster Response team (NDRF) and State Disaster Response Force (SDRF) recovered the bodies of three people, who were identified as Raj Kishore (27), Rudra Yadav (24) and Jagrup Singh (35), Relief Commissioner G S Naveen said.

The eighth body was recovered around 3 am on Sunday, officials said. Joint CP Verma said, "We are now focusing on ensuring that no one else is trapped under the rub-

ble," he said. "NDRF and SDRF teams are removing the debris that will take time. The possibility of someone still inside the debris is less. Had there been someone, their family members would have contacted us by now," he said.

Police said the building was constructed around four years ago and some construction work was underway at the time of the incident. Most of the victims were working on the ground floor when the incident occurred at 4:45 pm on Saturday. The injured have been admitted to various hospitals, including Lok Bandhu Hospital, in the district.

According to the officials, the building had a motor workshop and warehouse on the ground floor, a medical godown on the first floor and a cutlery warehouse on the second floor.

Akash Singh, who worked in the medical godown and was among the injured, said a pillar of the building had developed a crack.

"We had come down to the ground floor because it was raining. We noticed that a pillar of the building had developed a crack. Suddenly, the entire building collapsed on us," he said. (PTI)

Train splits into two in Bihar's Buxar



PATNA, Sept 8: The coupling of Magadh Express from New Delhi to Islampur broke, splitting the train into two in Bihar's Buxar district on Sunday, an official said. No one was injured in the incident which occurred between Twininganj and Raghunathpur railway stations in Buxar district, Chief Public Relations Officer (CPRO) of East Central Railway, Sharswati Chandra told PTI.

The incident took place at around 11.08 am and rail traffic was restored by 2.25 pm, Chandra said. "The restoration work, including the coupling of the Magadh Express (20802) from New Delhi to Islampur, was completed and the same train started from the site at 2.25 pm... after that movement of other trains was also allowed on the down line", said the CPRO.

An inquiry has been ordered to probe the exact cause of the incident, he said, adding the incident disrupted rail traffic for more than three hours. The incident had occurred when the train passed Twininganj. It uncoupled between coach no S-7, the 13th from the train engine and coach no S-6, the 14th from the engine between Twininganj- Raghunathpur in the down line. A rescue team as well as technical teams immediately reached the spot and rectified the snag, said the CPRO. (PTI)

Chancellor Scholz to open Hamburg Sustainability Conference in Oct: Top official

NEW DELHI, Sept 8: The key Hamburg Sustainability Conference that will bring together experts from around the world to discuss "ideas and innovations" to accelerate efforts to achieve the SDGs will take place around the first week of October, a top German official here said.

In an interview to PTI, Uwe Gehlen, Head of Development Cooperation, German Embassy in India, also said the conference will be opened by Chancellor Olaf Scholz. The Hamburg Sustainability Conference is scheduled to be held on October 7 and 8, and India will participate in it, both from the public and private sectors.

Gehlen took part in a panel discussion 'Financing the Renewable Energy Revolution' at the International Solar Festival here on Friday and spoke about Germany's role in helping India realise its renewable energy goals by 2030.

Later interacting with PTI, he spoke about the progress made in the Green and Sustainable Development Partnership (GSDP) between the two countries and the significance of the upcoming visit of Chancellor Scholz late in October. Gehlen described the relationship between India and Germany in the clean and renewable energy sector as "marvellous".

He also shared details about the Hamburg Sustainability Conference, which will take place in Germany ahead of Chancellor Scholz's scheduled visit to India next month. "We got to the conclusion, specifically from the development anchor that we would like to take up efforts to qualify a little bit more beyond the existing for-

mat, the discussion about innovation in SDGs," the top German official told PTI on the sidelines of the festival. The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, adopted by all United Nations Member States in 2015, provides a shared blueprint for peace and prosperity for people and the planet, now and into the future.

At its heart are the 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), which are an urgent call for action by all countries - developed and developing - in a global partnership. "They recognise that ending poverty and other deprivations must go hand-in-hand with strategies that improve health and education, reduce inequality and spur economic growth all while tackling climate change and working to preserve our oceans and forests," the SDGs website reads. Gehlen said the SDGs are meant to be fulfilled in 2030 and it's not that the stakeholders are struggling, but it would be "very challenging" road ahead. "So, more activities needed, more networks needed, more good ideas needed, more innovations needed and the idea from the leadership in my ministry together with the chancellor was setting up a format where these discussions could happen, so we developed this format," he said.

"And, it will take place now first time, in Hamburg, and will be opened by our Chancellor Olaf Scholz, so, we are very proud about that," Gehlen added.

The German official said that an entire range of thematic sessions related to a whole lot of questions "we ask ourselves continuously" have been planned.

The key conference will see gathering of "very high-ranking participants" from all over the world, but also a lot of people who are not so famous, but having good ideas, he said.

"We need a new era of sustainability, new alliances with business leaders, global policymakers, and society. Halfway from the adoption of the SDGs in 2015 on the path to 2030, the Hamburg Sustainability Conference is establishing a new global platform to speed up the implementation of the SDGs and deliver result-oriented solutions," reads a description on its official website. Asked if India's participation will be from both public and private sectors, Gehlen said, "yes".

India-Germany relationship is based on "tremendous amount of trust, friendship and shared responsibility", bringing both countries forward as well making contribution to the world, and the upcoming visit of Chancellor Scholz is in line with it, he said.

German Chancellor Scholz and Prime Minister Narendra Modi had in May 2022 signed the German-Indian Green and Sustainable Development Partnership (GSDP), which gears cooperation between the two countries across different sectors towards the objectives of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the Paris Agreement. Scholz is set to visit India in October to hold wide-ranging talks with Modi, with a focus on boosting bilateral trade and economic relations. He said the upcoming "visit of our Chancellor with parts of the German Cabinet will push us forward. I am very much looking forward to it". (PTI)

WW2 veteran turns 100, Indian Army celebrates his centennial birthday



NEW DELHI, Sept 8: Lance Naik Charan Singh (red), a World War II veteran who served the Army for 17 years and received the prestigious Burma Star Award has turned 100.

The Army celebrated his centennial birthday on Saturday at his home in Himachal Pradesh, marking a century of extraordinary life and service.

Born on September 7, 1924, Singh's journey with the Army began on August 26, 1942, at Ferozepur Cantonment, when he got enrolled in the Indian Army, a senior official said on Sunday.

His distinguished military career saw him serve with the Army Service Corps during the World War II. His service took him from Singapore to Lahore and eventually to Yol Cantonment in Himachal Pradesh, he said.

The World War II was fought from 1939-45, and Indian soldiers were sent by the then British Indian Army to take part in various campaigns.

"Over the years, his dedication was recognised with the prestigious Burma Star Award and the Indian Independence Medal. After 17 years of valiant service, he retired from the Indian Army on May

17, 1959," the Army said.

Now residing in Dekwala village of Himachal Pradesh's Ropar district, Singh lives surrounded by his four sons and two daughters, the official said.

On Singh's centennial birthday, the Army said, "As we celebrate this milestone, it is a poignant reminder that soldiers never truly retire -- they remain forever a part of the extended Indian Army family, and a responsible member of Indian society."

A Brigadier-led team joined his family in the celebrations, and a cake was cut in festive atmosphere.

The Indian Army is known for rich traditions and their commitment to honouring its veterans and acknowledging their contributions to the nation, the official said. Celebrating Lance Naik Charan Singh's centennial is a way for the Indian Army to convey that "once a soldier, always a soldier, forever a part of the Army family," he added.

"We must remember that our veterans are yesterday's soldiers, who have not just served the nation but have set standards of dedication and sacrifice for all soldiers and citizens alike," the Army said. (PTI)

12 dead in Kutch from pneumonitis, say officials

BHUJ, Sept 8: Twelve persons, including four children below the age of 12, have died in Lakhpat taluka in Gujarat's Kutch district days after the region was battered by heavy rains, with officials on Sunday saying the cause of death primarily appears to be pneumonitis. Some local district panchayat members, however, said doctors had not been able to accurately diagnose the fever, which was also causing difficulty in breathing.

Medical services in the taluka, which is located near the border with Pakistan, have been intensified with the deployment of 22 surveillance teams, doctors and obtaining samples from residents to rule out possibility of H1N1, swine flu, Crimean-Congo fever, malaria and dengue, Kutch Collector Amit Arora said.

"Primarily, the deaths appear to have been caused by pneumonitis. It does not appear to be from contamination nor does it seem like a communicable disease. Twenty-two health department teams are working in the affected areas, including those brought on deputation from two community health centres as well as rapid response teams from Rajkot PDU medical college," he added. Kutch district panchayat member Meenaba Jadede, in a letter to Gujarat Congress chief Shaktisinh Gohil, claimed 12 persons in the 5-50 age group have died between September 3 and 9 due to fever in Bekhada, Sanandro, Morgar and Bharavandh villages in Lakhpat taluka. (PTI)

UNESCO experts debate consequences of Covid-induced shift to tech in education

'Sudden shift to ed-tech also accelerated a concerning transfer of authority'

NEW DELHI, Sept 8: The COVID-19 pandemic pushed the teaching-learning process from schools to educational technologies at a pace and scale that has no historical precedent, resulting in numerous unintended and undesirable consequences, UNESCO's education team has said in a report.

The report titled "An-Edtech tragedy", also published as a book, examines the numerous adverse and unintended consequences of the shift to ed-tech.

It documents how technology-first solutions left a global majority of learners behind and details the many ways education was diminished even when technology was available and worked as intended.

The missed schooling is expected to reverberate for years, both personally for individuals and at the level of countries, regions and local communities.

Experts from the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization's (UNESCO's) Education team told PTI that the book extracts lessons and recommendations to ensure that technology facilitates, rather than subverts, efforts to ensure the universal provision of inclusive, equitable and human-centred public education.

"For millions of students, formal learning became fully dependent on technology -- whether on Inter-



net-connected digital devices, televisions or radios. The massive uptake of educational technologies that could be used outside schools was anchored in a hard truth about disease transmission: strictly speaking, people are biohazards and technology used in isolation is not," the report said.

"So while schools were forced to close because they put large numbers of children and adults in close physical proximity, learners were asked to use technology because it accommodated social distancing and stay-at-home

directives," it said.

The report stated that as technology-mediated education replaced face-to-face learning in schools as the locus of formal education, technology use was widely mandated by governments in line with commitments to make education compulsory. Even families that had no previous experience with ed-tech or saw it as purely peripheral to school-based education commonly operated under the assumption that they needed to secure and use technology for educational purposes, the report observed.

"With a speed that few had anticipated, technology, rather than schools, became the primary interface for education," it added.

The experts noted that during the pandemic, students' academic progress was dramatically less than what would have been expected without school closures.

"This 'lost' education -- along with the wider socio-emotional tolls of the pandemic -- carried individual, familial, social and economic consequences, especially in contexts where the average years of school completion are already low."

In countries where learners typically complete only a few years of formal education, the COVID-19 disruption to schooling and failure or insufficiencies of ed-tech to provide alternatives translated into some students missing a sixth or more of their lifetime education, the report said.

"Although connected technology supported the continuation of education for many learners, many more were left behind. Exclusion soared and inequities widened. Achievement levels fell, even for those with access to distance learning. "Educational experiences narrowed. Physical and mental health declined. Privatization accelerated, threatening education's unique standing as a public good and human right," it said.

According to experts, automation replaced human interactions with machine-mediated experiences while technology production and disposal placed new strains on the environment.

Visions that technology could form the backbone of education and supplant school-based learning -- in wide circulation at the outset of the health crisis -- had promised better outcomes.

"Ed-tech proponents held that the immense challenges of school closures could be met with technology and that deeper technology integration would transform education for the better. But these high hopes and expectations unravelled when ed-tech was hurriedly deployed to maintain formal education as Covid-19 tore across countries," the report said.

"The sudden shift to ed-tech also accelerated a concerning transfer of authority away from teachers, schools and communities and towards private, for-profit interests," it said.

Additionally, the censorship, data extraction, advertising, top-down control, intimidation and surveillance that so often characterize current models of digital transformation have made education less free and, arguably, less capable of facilitating critiques of and positive changes to the status quo, the report added. (PTI)

21 cities under NCAP cut PM10 pollution by over 40 pc since 2017-18, shows CPCB data

NEW DELHI, Sept 8: Ninety-five of the 131 cities covered under the National Clean Air Programme have shown an improvement in air quality, with 21 reducing PM10 pollution by more than 40 per cent compared to 2017-18 levels, CPCB data shows.

The Central Pollution Control Board (CPCB) also said that only 18 of the 131 National Clean Air Programme (NCAP) cities adhered to the National Ambient Air Quality Standards (NAAQS) for PM10, set at 60 micrograms per cubic metre. The 21 cities and urban agglomerations that achieved more than 40 per cent reduction in PM10 pollution are Varanasi, Dhanbad, Byrnihat, Bareilly, Firozabad, Dehradun, Tuticorin, Nalagarh, Moradabad, Khurja, Trichy, Kohima, Lucknow, Kanpur, Kadapa, Sivasagar, Sunder Nagar, Agra, Greater Mumbai, Rishikesh and Parwanoo.

Fourteen cities, -- Ahmedabad, Ghaziabad, Rajkot, Jalandhar, Raebareilly, Amritsar, Kolkata, Jammu, Silchar, Vijayawada, Naya Nangal, Dimapur, Baddi and Jodhpur -- reduced PM10 pollution by 30-40 per cent, compared to 2017-18 levels. Khanna, Durgapur, Kurnool, Dera Baba Nanak, Vadodara, Allahabad, Asansol, Hyderabad, Gorakhpur, Ranchi, Bengaluru, Akola, Ananthapur, Durg Bhilai Nagar, Surat and Noida recorded a 20-30 per cent reduction in PM10 levels during the same period, the data showed.

A 10-20 per cent reduction in PM10 pollution was recorded in 21 cities -- Delhi, Howrah, Thane, Latur, Nellore, Gajraula, Alwar,

Chittur, Kala Amb, Mandi Gobindgarh, Amravati, Patiala, Jaipur, Ongole, Chandrapur, Nashik, Jhansi, Sangli, Kota, Devanagere and Rajahmundry.

India launched the NCAP in 2019 with a target to reduce particulate pollution by 20-30 per cent by 2024, using 2017 as the base year. The target was later revised to a 40 per cent reduction by 2026, using 2019-20 as the base year.

In practice, only PM10 concentration is being considered for performance assessment. Surat was on Saturday ranked as the top major city in India for air quality improvements, followed by Jabalpur and Agra.

The Union environment ministry presented the National Clean Air City Awards during the Swachh Vayu Survekshan - 2024, held at a national workshop celebrating the International Day of Clean Air for Blue Skies in Jaipur.

While Surat, Jabalpur and Agra secured the top three positions among cities with populations of more than 10 lakh, Firozabad (Uttar Pradesh), Amravati (Maharashtra) and Jhansi (Uttar Pradesh) were recognised as the best among cities with populations between three and 10 lakh. Raebareilly (Uttar Pradesh), Nalgonda (Telangana) and Nalagarh (Himachal Pradesh) topped the list among cities with populations under three lakh.

Swachh Vayu Survekshan is an initiative by the environment ministry to rank cities based on the implementation of activities approved under the city action plan and air quality in cities covered under NCAP. (PTI)



WAS SUPPOSED TO SING ONLY ONE SONG FOR 'UMRAO JAAN': ASHA BHOSLE

NEW DELHI, Sept 8: Music icon Asha Bhosle, a firm believer in destiny, says she was meant to sing only one song for the 1981 classic "Umrao Jaan" but ended up lending her voice to the entire soundtrack.

Directed by Muzaffar Ali and starring Rekha in the title role, the film earned Bhosle her first National Film Award for best female playback singer.

The singer, who turned 91 on Sunday, sang chartbusters such as "Dil Cheez Kya Hai", "Inn Aankhon Ki Masti Ke", "Ye Kya Jagah Hai Doston", "Jab Bhi Milti Hai", and "Justuju Jiski Thi". Khayyam composed the music of "Umrao Jaan" and Shahryar penned the lyrics.

Bhosle said she "became Umrao Jaan" after reading the 1905 Urdu novel "Umrao Jaan Ada" on which the film was based.

"I had one song in the film. I said ok and the producer gave me the 'Umrao Jaan' book. All the songs were set in one tone. I read it and became Umrao Jaan.

"I was supposed to sing just one song and I ended up singing for all the songs in the film. This is destiny, isn't? All songs were hits," the illustrious singer told Doordarshan in an interview.

At 91, what keeps her going?
"I don't do anything to look young like it happens these days. Someone who is happy from within and is positive, they have a good outlook towards life. I stay positive, embrace learning,

and only pursue what I love, guided by my unwavering faith in God."

Bhosle said she and her elder sister, the late melody queen Lata Mangeshkar had "somewhat similar" voices but she always wanted to have her own identity. "Had I sung like her, it would appear as if I was imitating her. You shouldn't imitate, you should make your own name. So, I listened to English songs, Punjabi songs, songs from different parts of the country and world.



"If you ask Didi to do staccato, she would do that. But she wouldn't change her voice, she didn't like doing it. But I did it for 'Eena Meena Deeka' ... I was also thorough in Classical singing. Whatever people are singing today, they are modelling it on whatever they have heard me sing," she added.

One must keep their personal and professional life separate, said Bhosle, known for a diverse variety of songs such as "Piya Tu Ab To Aaja", "Tora Man Darpan Kehlaye", "Mera Kuch Samaan", and "Le Gayi Le Gayi".

"The sorrow in your life shouldn't reflect in your songs. As an artist, you are supposed to change according to the emotion. That's why in playback singing, Didi and I maintained our position for so many years. Didi started and then I came in."

In the interview, the industry veteran also spoke about her frequent collaborator music composer-husband RD Burman, fondly known as Pancham.

"There are few music directors who would understand what's going on in the mind of an artist and then make them sing. Pancham was one of them. Once I asked him to give me a simple song.

"He said, 'Anyone can sing simple songs, but no one is like you. If you won't sing these songs, I'll stop composing them'. But I also liked taking up challenges in life and every song by Pancham was a challenge," she added. (PTI)

ELTON JOHN GIVES UPDATE ON HIS EYE INFECTION, SAYS IT'S BEEN 'DISTRESSING'

LOS ANGELES, Sept 8: Singer Elton John, who recently revealed that he is left with limited vision in one eye after a severe infection, said he was unable to watch his new documentary properly when it had its world premiere at the Toronto International Film Festival 2024.

Co-directed by his manager and husband David Furnish and filmmaker R J Cutler, "Never Too Late" was screened at the gala on Friday.

The documentary takes an intense look at the first five years of John's career in the 1970s and juxtaposes them with his recent "Farewell Yellow Brick Road" tour.

In his first public appearance since announcing his diagnosis on social media, the 77-year-old told Variety: "I couldn't really see it because of my eye, but I sensed it, I'd seen it before. I don't know. Seeing it with an audience is far more emotional than just sitting with a bunch of people. I got more out of it last night than I did when I saw it the first time, and it hit harder."

The eye infection is a roadblock to his daily routine.

"What's happened with my eye has been very... just, it's been very distressing because I'm used to getting out in the morning, looking at all the newspapers, looking at the charts, looking at everything, how the world is doing creatively, and I've lost that for the time being. It's been seven weeks since I've been able to see all of this, but the prospect is good. I had a hell of a time," the multiple award-winning musician added.

In his Instagram post shared earlier this week, John had said while he is on the road to recovery, it will take some time before sight in the affected eye returns.

"Never Too Late" is slated to stream on Disney on December 13. (PTI)



Directors' body suspends Bengali filmmaker Arindam Sil over sexual harassment charge

KOLKATA, Sept 8: Bengali filmmaker Arindam Sil was suspended by the Directors' Association of Eastern India (DAEI) following a complaint of sexual misconduct by an actress. Sil was the first big name in the Bengali film industry, also called Tollywood, against whom action was taken after allegations of sexual harassment shook the entertainment industries of the southern states.

The suspension came into force with immediate effect, said a letter sent by DAEI late on Saturday.

"Due to certain allegations made against you, and prima facie evidence we have with us, which are of deep concern and is maligning to the entire organisation, DAEI has decided to suspend you from membership for indefinite period or till the allegations against you are cleared," said the letter sent by

DAEI president Subrata Sen and secretary Sudeshna Roy.

Sil, who is also a well-known actor, told reporters that what was being construed as misbehaviour was unintentional.

He said the incident being referred to happened recently when he was explaining a scene to the actress during the shooting of a film. "No one objected to my actions or conduct at that time," he claimed.

The DAEI took up the matter after the actress filed a complaint with the West Bengal Commission for Women.

In a letter to the commission, which sought his reply on the allegation, Sil expressed his apology.

Sil also told reporters that everyone who worked in the film and was present at the time of the incident would testify that his action was "unintentional". He said that before he

could present his case to the DAEI, it suspended him.

"I always explain scenes to my actors and actresses before taking a shot. After the particular incident, the actress concerned willingly took part in the shoot for four more hours," he said.

The DAEI secretary said they took a considered view of the matter after talking to all sides and prima facie found merit in the complaint.

The actress told NEWS18 Bangla that she had full faith in the commission.

"Let me ask him why one has to be physical to explain a shot. We are all professional actors. The rest I will state before the commission whenever needed in the future," she said. Sil is known for his detective films such as 'Har Har Byomkesh' and 'Mitin Mashi', besides the Shabor series. (PTI)

Tributes paid to Bhupen Hazarika on birth anniversary

GUWAHATI, Sept 8: Rich tributes were paid to Bhupen Hazarika on his birth anniversary on Sunday, with compositions by the musical maestro reverberating across Assam as special programmes were organised to mark the occasion. Assam Governor Lakshman Prasad Acharya, in a post on X, said, "Like the ever-flowing waters of the Burhaluit, may the words of love, unity and harmony of Sudhakanth echo in the hearts of every Assamese." The Brahmaputra is also referred to as the Burhaluit, and the suffix 'Sudhakanth' (melodious voice) is used for Hazarika. "I pay my respects to the evergreen artist Bharat Ratna Dr Bhupen Hazarika on his birth anniversary," he added. Assam Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma also paid his tributes on the micro-blogging site. "The music of Dr Bhupen Hazarika transcends all barriers! His songs radiate the message of justice, harmony and brotherhood. Today on his Jayanti, we pay homage to the Bard of Brahmaputra," he wrote. The state government organised a cultural programme at the Samadhi Kshetra of the 'Bard of Brahmaputra' at Jalukbari on the outskirts of the city. Assam Cultural Affairs Minister Bimal Borah paid floral tribute to the memory of Hazarika at the Samadhi Kshetra, where a cultural programme has also been organised.

The Bhupen Hazarika Sangskritik Nyas also organised a programme to pay tribute to the late artist. Ninety-nine flags were hoisted by eminent people from different walks of life as part of the programme, while songs of the musical maestro were also performed on the occasion. (PTI)



Women in Cinema Collective to propose code of conduct in Malayalam film industry

THIRUVANANTHAPURAM, Sept 8: The Women in Cinema Collective, an outfit of women professionals working in the Malayalam film industry, on Saturday said it would soon come up with a set of recommendations to "rebuild" the industry as an equal and safe workspace.

In a Facebook post, the WCC expressed hope that all industry members would come in open solidarity and spirit to adopt a 'cinema code of conduct'.

The Collective said in the wake of the publication of the Justice K Hema Committee report, it would commence a series with its proposed recommendations in this regard.

"To rebuild the Malayalam film industry as an equal and safe workspace for all, we are commencing a series today with our proposed recommendations.

"We hope all industry members will come together in open solidarity & spirit to adopt a Cinema Code of Conduct that will help transform our film industry onscreen & offscreen for the better. Stay tuned!" the FB post said.

The outfit's action came weeks after the publication of the Justice K Hema Committee report which shed light into the alleged exploitations and ill-treatment of women in the Malayalam film industry.

The committee was constituted by the Kerala government after the 2017 actress assault case and its report revealing instances of harassment and exploitation of women in the Malayalam cinema industry.

Following the allegations of sexual harassment and exploitation cropping up against several actors and directors, the state government on August 25 announced the establishment of a seven-member special investigation team to probe them. (PTI)



Thanks to plenty of firsts and proven performers, India emerges as Paralympic power in Paris

PARIS, Sept 8: Differently-abled but exceptionally resolute, India's para-athletes would look back at their Paralympics campaign with pride as most of the established names lived up to expectations and many talented greenhorns made the big stage their own in a record-smashing medal haul of 29. Seven of these 29 medals are gold, which is another first for the country that started to make its presence felt only in the 2016 edition, where it won four medals. The upswing in performance after that has been meteoric with Tokyo yielding 19, a number that was surpassed this time.

Not to forget, a lot of medal-winning performances here

were record efforts and personal bests, demonstrating that the athletes have made significant progress as far as their self-belief is concerned.

The 29 medals in five sports, including a whopping 17 at the track and field events, have ensured that the country will end in the top 20 of the mega-event that was once again dominated by China with over 200 medals.

India is still far away from becoming a force at the Olympic level but the nation has certainly emerged as a force to be reckoned with in the competition for the differently-abled. The contingent of 84 ensured plenty of firsts for India in Paralympic history including medals in track events with

sprinter Preethi Pal winning a bronze in the women's 100m T35 and 200m T35 class.

T35 classification is meant for athletes who have coordination impairments such as hyper-tonia, ataxia and athetosis. Preethi was born with weak legs and it became progressively worse as she grew up.

Another first ever medal came via Kapil Parmar in Judo. He made India proud by securing a bronze in the men's 60kg J1 class.

His was another story of remarkable resolve as the 24-year-old lifted himself from a life altering accident in his childhood when he got electrocuted while playing in the fields of his village. Kapil was forced

to sell tea as well later in his life to make ends meet but he turned things around and how.

Archery and club throw prop up India in medals tally.

The likes of Harvinder Singh and Dharambir pushed India considerably higher up the medals tally by securing path-breaking gold medals in archery and club throw respectively.

Armless archer Sheetal Devi, who was born without arms,

was already a beacon of hope to millions but with her mixed team bronze, the 17-year-old gave her community another reason to never give up.

No wonder she became a crowd favourite in Paris as she left everyone in awe using her legs instead of arms to hit the bulls' eye.

The crowd was left hugely disappointed as she narrowly lost her 1/8 elimination contest in the singles event.



India face Syria, aim for successive Intercontinental Cup titles

HYDERABAD, Sept 8: Hosts India and Syria will go head to head in the winner-takes-it-all third and final game of the Intercontinental Cup trophy here on Monday.

India, who began the competition with a goalless draw against Mauritius on Tuesday, are eyeing their second consecutive Intercontinental Cup triumph, and third overall.

Syria beat Mauritius 2-0 on Friday, which means they hold a slight advantage heading into the final game as the Eagles of Qasoun require only a draw to claim the trophy.

Syria have a long history of playing tournaments in India, but the title has always evaded them. The West Asians lost back-to-back Nehru Cup finals to India in 2007 and 2009 before finishing fourth in 2012.

In their last trip to India in the 2019 Intercontinental Cup, Syria ended in third place. But for the Blue Tigers to deny them a first silverware on Indian soil, they will need to end a winless streak stretching back to November last year.

"It will be a difficult game for both sides. It's a friendly game, but the team who wins the game wins the trophy. We expect to play a good game



and win the tournament," said India head coach Manolo Márquez, who celebrated his 56th birthday on Saturday.

But the Spaniard also noted

that the need of the hour for the national team is to play good football, and the results will follow.

"If you ask me, I prefer to

play a good game than to win the tournament. I don't want to win it 1-0, scoring with the hand. I want that, in this moment, the team understands

our ideas and we play better because finally, it's not about winning or losing.

"You need to arrive at a style of play and that's what we are focusing on. Obviously when you win, the confidence grows and then it's easier. But finally now it's about that we believe that we can compete against all the teams.

"When you have time to work, the possibilities for success are more," Márquez explained in the pre-match press conference.

Defender Jay Gupta concurred with his coach's words.

"Obviously, it's a game where we have to fight for the cup, but we're just focused on how we adapt to what the coach wants as soon as possible." Having completed a week's training in Hyderabad, the 22-year-old shared that the mood in the dressing room is positive after the arrival of Márquez at the helm.

"I think a lot of players have already been under coach Manolo for a longer time (in the clubs), so they would know how to adapt to him. But I just wanted to say the atmosphere in the dressing room is really, really positive," said Gupta. (PTI)

New Zealand seek to exploit Afghanistan's red-ball inexperience in one-off Test

GREATER NOIDA, Sept 8: New Zealand will aim to exploit Afghanistan's relative inexperience in red-ball cricket, in the one-off Test starting here from Monday, and gather momentum ahead of their upcoming World Test Championship challenges in the sub continent.

New Zealand's first-ever Test against Afghanistan will kick off a challenging couple of months for the Black Caps who play six long-format matches on the bounce in the subcontinent, something they haven't done in 40 years.

With their underwhelming sub-continent record in mind (40 losses in 90 matches), New Zealand would want to hit the straps straightaway.

Senior batter Kane Williamson has emphasised on the need to adapt to conditions and with three games under their belt, they would be well prepared for the marquee series against India next month.

Spin is expected to dominate proceedings and New Zealand have come well prepared with five slow bowling options.

Left-arm spinner Ajaz Patel, who returns to India for the first time since his 10-wicket haul in Mumbai in 2021, is expected to make the playing XI.

Rachin Ravindra, who has been sweating it out in CSK High Performance Centre in Chennai, is expected to be handy with bat and ball while all-rounders Glenn Phillips, Mitchell Santner and Michael Bracewell are vying to fill the remaining spinners' spots.

Matt Henry is New Zealand's best seamer at the moment but captain Tim Southee's dip in Test form will be a concern. Will O'Rourke, or express pacer Ben Sears may be given a go.

New Zealand will need to shake

off the rust as they haven't played Test cricket since early March and the tenacious Afghanistan side is poised to pose a strong challenge.

For Afghanistan, who obtained Test status in 2017, this will be only their 10th ever outing in the traditional format.

They head to the clash having lost their last three Tests against Bangladesh, Sri Lanka and Ireland. But in their brief Test journey they have managed to beat Ireland, Bangladesh and Zimbabwe.

Afghanistan have made significant strides in white-ball cricket, but some players will now need to swiftly make the transition from T20 to Test format.

The disparity in Test experience between Afghanistan and New Zealand is substantial, but

Hashmatullah Shahidi and his team will look to gain from familiarity with the Shahid Vijay Singh Pathik Sports Complex in Greater Noida, where they have previously played five ODIs and

six T20Is.

Talismanic all-rounder Rashid Khan is not there to bowl his menacing leg-breaks, which is a huge blow for them, while T20 regulars Rahamullah Gurbaz, Mohammad Nabi, Fazalqar Ferooqi, Mujeeb ur Rahman, Noor Ahmad and Naveen-ul-Haq are also not available.

Ibrahim Zadran, Rahmat Shah and skipper Shahidi, who averages 44.09 in Tests, will burden the batting responsibilities.

Seam-bowling all-rounder Azmatullah Omarzai is likely to make his Test debut, while Zia-ur-Rehman, Zahir Khan, Khalil Ahmed, Qais Ahmad, Shahidullah Kamal and Bahir Shah are the spin options.

With rain and thunderstorms forecast throughout the week, the match is likely to be affected. (PTI)



Defending champions India beat China 3-0 in Asian Champions Trophy opener

HULUNBUR (CHINA), Sept 8: The Indian men's hockey team dished out a dominant performance to launch its title defence with a commanding 3-0 win over hosts China in the Asian Champions Trophy here on Sunday.

Sukhjeet Singh (14th minute), Uttam, Singh (27th) and Abhishek (32nd) were the goal-scorers for India.

Coming into the tournament after securing a second successive bronze at the Olympics, India looked the more enterprising side, grabbing opportunities up front and was rock solid in defence to emerge winners.

"I think we played very well. We created some good chances but the best part is that we kept a clean sheet," captain Harmanpreet Singh said.

"Some new faces got an opportunity to perform and I think they played very well. It's a good opportunity for them to play with the Asian teams and gel with the senior team. They are skillful and very talented. I wish them the best for the future," he said.

India were slow off the blocks as China created an early counter attack opportunity but an alert Krishan Pathak saw the ball sail wide harmlessly.

Halfway through the quarter, Abhishek forced a penalty corner from China but Harmanpreet's drag flick was saved and China initiated a blistering counter attack which was thwarted by the Indian defence.

China received a penalty corner with six minutes left but squandered the opportunity.

India pegged China back in the last few minutes of the quar-

ter, registering a few circle entries. But no clear chance was made until Jugraj Singh thundered the ball into the shooting circle and Sukhjeet deflected it into the top corner to make it 1-0 for India.

India were visibly alert in the second quarter with Abhishek unleashing an early shot that was saved by the Chinese goalkeeper Caiyu Wang.

India began controlling the tempo of the game, pushing China into their own half. With minutes to go for the half-time break, Uttam doubled the lead for India, slotting a stray ball into the net after Raheel's close range shot was battered away.

India came out swinging in the third quarter. Manpreet found Abhishek at the top of the circle, who rifled the ball to sound the backboard on the half turn and make it 3-0 for his side.

In this period, India continued to recycle the ball through the backline in search of another goal from the young forwards.

A rare counter by China, with three minutes left in the quarter, resulted in a penalty corner but Chinese captain Jiasheng Gao slotted the ball wide of the goalpost. China's spirits, buoyed by the attempt, led them to manufacture a 3-on-3 counter but Jugraj averted the danger.

In the last quarter with 12 minutes left in the game, Gurjot Singh bamboozled the Chinese defence on the left wing and found Abhishek whose reverse shot whisked past the goalpost.

India created regular chances through circle entries for the rest of the quarter, resulting in a

penalty corner with six minutes left in the game. (PTI)

We deserve same respect: Navdeep after turning taunts into triumph

PARIS, Sept 8: Navdeep Singh, who suffered from dwarfism, endured not just the usual rigours of training but cruel taunts from onlookers while growing up in his village in Haryana's Panipat district.

On Saturday, having turned those taunts into his biggest triumph on sport's grandest stage, the four feet four inches tall para athlete expressed his concerns with the indignities visited upon people whose bodies don't fit the usual moulds, and demanded "same respect" for them.

The 23-year-old Indian javelin thrower won an unparalleled gold in the F41 classification at the Paris Paralympic Games. "Humein bhi utna darja milna chahiye, maine bhi desh ka naam roshan kiya hai (We deserve the same respect, I too have brought glory to the country," Navdeep said, flashing his gold medal in a video shared by the Paralympic Committee of India (PCI).

"My aim is to educate society that we also exist in this world and nobody should make fun of us, which is often the case. We also can make our country proud." There were a lot of hurdles initially but I kept at it and strengthened myself, which led to good results. This is the biggest moment of my life, I feel proud to sign off with a gold medal," he added.

As the track and field competitions concluded at the Paris Games, Navdeep's golden throw in the final ensured the halloved Stade de France echoed with the Indian national anthem.

His personal best effort of 47.32m initially placed him in second position but it was up-



graded to gold after the top finisher, Iran's Sadegh Beit Sayah, was disqualified for repeatedly displaying an objectionable flag. It was a defining moment for Navdeep who silenced all his doubters.

Born prematurely in 2000, Navdeep's struggles began from the start.

It wasn't until he was two years old that his parents realised their son had dwarfism, setting the stage for a life filled with both struggles and triumphs. His father, Dalbir Singh, a national-level wrestler, kept motivating him and saw his son as an extension of his own aspirations. Navdeep started his athletic journey at the age of 10, dabbling in wrestling and sprinting before finding his true calling in javelin throw after being inspired by national icon Neeraj Chopra.

"The first thing that comes to

my mind is my dad (Dalbir Singh). I really miss my family now. Initially, it felt like a burden. I wondered why I couldn't enjoy life like others -- go to school and have fun.

"But he (dad) kept me motivated and on track. In this journey, I can't credit just one person. Champions are made with support, so my coach, my family, the government -- all contributed to our success, taking our medal tally beyond the expectation of 25, reaching 29 already."

Navdeep made his international debut at the Asian Youth Para Games, clinching his first gold medal and setting the stage for a remarkable career.

He continued to train tirelessly at the Sports Authority of India (SAI) centres in Gandhinagar and Bangalore, honing his skills and refining his technique. (PTI)

Duleep Trophy: Pacers shine as India B beat India A by 76 runs

BENGALURU, Sept 8: KL Rahul's gumption, which helped him pile a patient fifty, found no resonance among his colleagues as India B pacers led by Yash Dayal pushed India A to a 76-run defeat on the fourth and final day of their Duleep Trophy match here on Sunday.

Chasing 275, India A were bundled out for 198 in their second innings as left-arm seamer Dayal (3/50), with able support from his colleagues Mukesh Kumar (2/50) and Navdeep Saini (2/41), led the India B attack.

Rahul top-scored for 'A' with a 51.

In the first session of the day, India B made 184 all out in their second essay to muster a handy overall lead of 274.

The India A chase began on a shaky note as Mayank Agarwal departed in the second over itself, wafting Dayal away from his body to Nitish Kumar Reddy, who made a wonderful diving catch at second slip.

That brought Rihan Parag to the middle and the right-hander followed the path set on Saturday by Rishabh Pant and Sarfaraz Khan.

Parag took on the bowlers and pacer Mukesh bore the brunt of his aggression, getting smoked for two sixes and the second maximum touched the roof of the Chinnaswamy Stadium over the mid-wicket region.

Parag added 48 runs for the second with a rather subdued Shubman Gill,



who was dropped by Nitish Reddy at slips off Mukesh on 16, and 31 came off the former's bat in just 18 balls.

But the approach was tough to sustain considering the kind of assistance the bowlers were getting here, and soon his massive hoick off Dayal took an edge off Parag's bat en route to stumper Rishabh Pant.

Gill (21) departed soon, falling to

Saini for the second time in the match and on this occasion, he edged the pacer to Pant.

Dhruv Jurel poked Dayal well outside off-stump to Yashasvi Jaiswal at gully, as India batters perished to a combination of bowlers' persistence on that channel and their own carelessness.

They took the lunch at a queasy 76 for four that soon transpired into 99 for six

after the dismissal of Shivam Dube and Tanush Kotian, an hour into the lunch.

However, Rahul batted out 180 minutes 121 balls and milked 42 runs for the seventh wicket with Kuldeep Yadav to delay the inevitable.

The standout shot in an otherwise dour innings was a whistling on drive off Mukesh that fetched him a boundary.

But Mukesh had his revenge soon when Rahul feathered a cut off him to Pant, who completed five catches in this innings, soon after reaching his fifty with a single off Saini.

It effectively signalled the end of the road for India A, though Akash Deep (43, 42b, 3x4, 4x6) gave a few moments of fun with a cavalier innings.

But beyond the entertainment value, it always was a case of when more than if.

Earlier, resuming from their overnight score of 150 for six India B could only 34 runs more to the total before getting bundled out.

Pacer Akash, whom Sarfaraz Khan carted around for five fours in a row the previous day, found his mojo to add the scalps of Washington Sundar and Saini to complete a five-wicket haul (5/56).

The spell will keep his name floating among the contenders when the selectors sit together soon to pick up squad for two-match Test series against Bangladesh. (PTI)

Randhir Singh becomes first Indian to be elected as OCA president

NEW DELHI, Sept 8: Veteran sports administrator Randhir Singh on Sunday became the first Indian to be elected as the president of the Olympic Council of Asia (OCA) during the 44th General Assembly of the continental body here.

A five-time Olympic shooter, Randhir was the lone eligible candidate for the OCA president's post. His tenure will run from 2024 till 2028, and his election was unanimous.

The 77-year-old Randhir has been the OCA acting president since 2021, filling in for Kuwait's Sheikh Ahmad Al-Fahad Al-Sabah, who was handed a 15-year ban from sports administration in May this year over ethics breaches.

Randhir, who held different administrative posts in Indian and Asian sports bodies, was officially named OCA president in the presence of Sports Minister Mansukh Mandaviya and top sports leaders from all 45 countries of Asia.

He hails from Patiala in Punjab and belongs to a family of sportspersons.

His uncle, Maharaja Yadavindra

Singh, played Test cricket for India and was an IOC member. His father Bhalindra Singh, also a first-class cricketer, was an IOC Member between 1947 and 1992.

Randhir was also a member of the IOC between 2001 and 2014, after which he continued as the honorary member of the global sports body.

"Congratulations to all my team. I sincerely thank you all from the bottom of my heart. Asia is one family. Thank you all for all support. We will try to carry on for long," Randhir said after his election.

"Special congratulations to all the ladies who have joined the team. I wish to express my deepest gratitude to all of you for your dedication to the Olympic course.

"Let's all work together towards a future where the Olympic values of excellence, friendship and respect are celebrated," he added.

The post of president, five vice presidents for the five zones and five executive board members were all uncontested.

The electronic voting, by tablet,

required a simple majority of 50 per cent plus one from the 45 National Olympic Committees.

Randhir received 44 out of the 45 votes, with one abstention and no "No" votes.

The session was also graced by BJP president JP Nadda and minister of state for sports, Raksha Khade.

A total of 45 nations from Asia participated in the General Assembly.

The elected OCA vice presidents were: East Asia: Timothy Fok (Hong Kong, China); South-east Asia: Dr Norza Zakaria (Malaysia); South Asia: HRH Prince Jigyel Ugyen Wangchuck (Bhutan); West Asia: Dr Thani Al-Kuwari (Qatar); and Central Asia: Otabek Umarov (Uzbekistan).

The elected executive members were:

East Asia: Mikako Kotani (Japan);

Southeast Asia: Dr Supitr Samahito (Thailand); **Central Asia:** Olga Rybakova (Kazakhstan); **West Asia:** Noora Al Jassmi (United Arab Emirates). (PTI)

Jhajharia's 'winning tip' played its part in Navdeep's win

PARIS, Sept 8: A "small yet powerful advice" from India's celebrated javelin thrower Devendra Jhajharia proved to be crucial for Navdeep Singh, who clinched a historic gold medal at the Paris Paralympics.

This was India's first-ever gold in the F41 category, which is meant for athletes of short stature.

"Sir ke paas bahut experience hain, aur woh hamesha fise huye match nikalte hain, so maine mere problems bataye (Sir has loads of experience, he always finds a way to win difficult matches, so I discussed my problems with him)," Navdeep recalled their conversation in a video shared by the Paralympics Committee of India.

"Ek choti si salah di but ain mein pata chala sach mein yeh toh bahut tagda point bataya hai (He gave me a simple piece of advice that ultimately proved to be very effective. It turned out to be a crucial insight."

Despite his impressive muscle power and speed, the 23-year-old Navdeep struggled with technique, a shortcoming that led to a disappointing fourth-place finish at the Tokyo Paralympics and the Asian Para Games.

PCI president Jhajharia, a double Paralympic gold medalist, explained to Navdeep that while many believe the javelin is thrown primarily with the hands, the real power comes from the legs.

"I told him just one thing: Remember, while people say you throw the javelin with your hands, it's actually driven by your legs.

"I instructed him to fully engage his right leg to release power from the ground," Jhajharia told Navdeep who throws with his left-hand.

"This technique helps generate force from the ground, which is then transferred through the throw, resulting in greater power and accuracy."

This insight played a significant role in Navdeep's performance, helping him achieve a personal best throw of 47.32 metres and secure the gold medal in the men's javelin F41 category.

"Whatever I say about Navdeep is not enough it has taken our tally to 29 medals. We will aim for more than 29 medals in 2028 Paralympics," Jhajharia said.

Navdeep was initially placed second but it was upgraded to gold just before the medal ceremony as Iran's Beit Sadegh, who topped with a throw of 47.64, was disqualified for "unsporting/improper conduct". (PTI)

I-League: KAMFC on a winning streak

HT Bureau

DIPHU, Sept 8: On day 3 of group D clash in the ongoing I-League held at the Karbi Anglong Sports Association (KASA) stadium on Saturday evening, the host team Morning Star Football Club (KAMFC) scored a perfect win against the visitors team Jaipur Elite FC. Played under floodlights, the KASA stadium was fully packed with crowds cheering the host team taking on Jaipur Elite. To allow the KAMFC fans and supporters to witness the match, the club president, Sengkan Ronghang made a free entry last evening.

The match started with a 'go' from the referee. The host team got their first goal in the 24th minute from forward Kevisanyu Penseyia with a stunning goal through an excellent pass from Komolson Rongphar. Though attacks and counter attacks were made by both sides, neither could score goals and at the end of first half, the Morning Star was leading by 1-0.

The second half witnessed dominance by the blue giants taking control of the game. Kevisanyu scored his second goal in the 47th minute through an assist by Komolson Rongphar.

In the 61st minute the third goal for the host team came from a score by Singdoulion Khongsai.

With this the blue giants put themselves on a commanding position. Jaipur Elite FC's team gave their efforts in countering attacks, but could not make through the blue giants' solid defense. For the host team the fourth and winning goal came in the 67th minute from forward H. Robinson Khongsai. This sealed the fate of the visitors and finally the match ended with a score of 0-4 in favour of KAMFC.

Earlier, in the afternoon match held at 2 pm, played between Keinou Library & Sports Association (KLASA FC) Manipur and Mumbai Kenkre FC, the match ended with a 1-1 draw. Kangkabam Lannamba Singh scored for KLASA FC in the 8th minute, while midfielder Atharva Ashish Rewale equalised for Mumbai Kenkre FC in the 82nd minute, after coming in as a substitute in the 78th minute.

KAMFC is on a winning streak with two wins in a row, including Sunday's game securing 6 points. They will be taking on KLASA, Manipur on September 9.

Paralympics: Canoe sprinter Pooja misses final

India sign off with record 29 medals



PARIS, Sept 8: Pooja Ojha failed to finish inside the top-three to miss the final berth of the women's kayak single 200m KL1 sprint canoeing event, bringing an end to India's record-breaking campaign at the Paralympics here on Sunday.

India thus concluded the Paris Paralympics with a record haul of seven gold, nine silver, and 13 bronze medals, set to finish 18th in the overall medals tally.

The final addition to India's unmatched medal count came from the athletics arena late on Saturday, where Navdeep Singh's silver medal in the men's javelin F41 category was upgraded to gold, capping a spectacular finish to the Games. At the last edition in Tokyo, India were ranked 24th with five gold, eight silver and six bronze medals.

On the concluding day of the Paralympics at the Vaires-sur-Marne Stadium, Pooja was the last Indian in fray and she

finished her semifinal 1 with a timing of 1:17.03, which was 7.03 seconds behind the third-placed Eleonora de Paolis of Italy.

The top-three make the final. Brianna Hennessy of Canada (57.00) and Maoson of China (57.26) claimed the top-two spots of semifinal 1.

During the Heats, Pooja had finished in the fifth place. As a result of this contemporary result, India's para-canoeing stint in the event has ended.

Besides her, Prachi Yadav was another canoe sprinter who, on Saturday, had finished eighth in the women's VL2 200m.

India's only male canoe sprinter, Yash Kumar, had settled for the fifth spot in the KL1 200m semi-final on Saturday.

The KL1 category is primarily for canoe sprinters who propel with their arms only, with very limited or no trunk function and no leg function. (PTI)

Sub junior boys National football Championship begins at Jorhat Stadium



HT Correspondent

JORHAT, Sept 8: Assam and Telengana entered into the second round defeating Madhya Pradesh and Lakshyadeep respectively in National Football Championship (Sub Junior Boys). In the inaugural match played in the ground of Jorhat Stadium on September 7, Assam defeated Madhya Pradesh by 6-1 goals and Telengana beat Lakshyadeep by 7-3 goals. Semual Daimari netted 2 goals and Rahul Balmiki, Tonmoy Borua, Sahir Kumar, and Tomash Daimari

netted one goal each in favour of host team Assam.

Solitaire goal for Madhya Pradesh was scored by Rohit Kumar. Earlier, in the morning match Sayad Riyan netted 4 goals (with hatrick), Faizal Khan two and Mustafa Khan one goal lead the Telengana to win the match. Sinap, Thopic, M Yasin scored one goal each in favour of Lakshyadeep. The national championship tournament was inaugurated by Sarbananda Sonowal, Minister of Port and shipping water ways where Naba Kumar Doley president, Assam Olympic Association, Rupiyoti Kurmi MLA and many dignitaries were present. Notably the final match will be played on September 20 at Jorhat Stadium. Around 500 players and officials are participate from 17 States in the game. Jorhat District Sports Association act as a host in the mega game.

Morocco's El Idrissi smashes women's marathon world record on last day of Paralympic Games

PARIS, Sept 8: Morocco's Fa-

tima Ezzahra El Idrissi has smashed the world record in the women's marathon for runners with visual impairments on the last day of the Paralympic Games. El Idrissi finished in 2 hours, 48 minutes and 36 seconds on Sunday, beating the previous record from Japan's Misato Michishita in Hofu City in December 2020 by nearly 6 minutes.

"I wasn't running for a time, only for a medal," the 29-year-old Moroccan said. "I wasn't aiming to get the world record, just to get the gold, and now I have both."

Compatriot Meryem En-Nourhi was just over 9 minutes behind, followed by Michishita, almost 15 minutes behind the winner.

Elena Congost thought she'd won bronze, but the Spanish run-

ner was later disqualified for releasing the tether to her guide, Mia Carol Bruguera, before the finish. Michishita only found out she was upgraded to bronze after doping control.

"I just couldn't believe it," said the Japanese runner, who said she got injured after winning the last edition in Tokyo and wasn't certain she'd be able to race in Paris. Tunisia's Wajdi Boukhili won the men's T12 marathon.

The 25-year-old Boukhili finished in 2 hours, 22 minutes and 5 seconds, ahead of Spain's Alberto Suarez Laso and Paralympic record holder El Amin Chentouf of Morocco. All three ran season-best times.

Swiss wheelchair racers Catherine Debrunner and Marcel Hug won the women's and men's marathons for the T53/54 categories. (AP)

Gabinda Basumatary FC lift football trophy

HT Correspondent

KOKRAJHAR, Sept 8: Gabinda Basumatary FC, Jaraguri defeated the Banjar FC, Kachugaon 2-1 goals to lift the trophy of the Dibakar Chandra Narzary Memorial Football Trophy in the final match being held at the Binyakata ME School playground in Kokrajhar district on Sunday.

Gabinda Basumatary FC netted two goals against Banjar FC in the first half, and led the match 1-0 goal till the first half.

During the second half, Banjar FC reduced a goal by scoring a goal against the Gabinda Basumatary FC, and lost to the Gabinda Basumatary FC 1-2 goals.

The football trophy was organised by the Binyakata Mouza Club cum Library in memory of Late Dibakar Chandra Narzary, noted social worker in the greater Binyakata area.

A total eight teams participated in the tournament, and created sporting amusement amongst the football lovers in the area which started on second September.

The championship team was awarded cash ₹ 31,000 and a trophy while the runners up team was given cash ₹ 21,000 and a trophy respectively.

Dr Kumud Ranjan Basumatary, principal of Gossaigaon College, MCLA Rahindra Brahma, Raju Kumar Narzary, son of late Dibakar Chandra Narzary, Birphung Narzary, son of late Dibakar Chandra Narzary were graced as guests in the prize distribution ceremony, and handed over the trophies to the championship and runners up team.

Indian cricket is extremely powerful because talent comes from everywhere: Dravid

BENGALURU, Sept 8: The legendary Rahul Dravid on Sunday said that Indian cricket has evolved into an "extremely powerful" force, thanks to the growing talent pool that now extends to even the remotest corners of the country.

Dravid, who masterminded India's triumph in the T20 World Cup, said a strong club cricket culture has a lot to do with bucking the old trend of city cricketers dominating the passage to the national team.

"If you look at Indian cricket today, Indian cricket is extremely strong, it's extremely powerful. One of the big reasons for that is that talent comes from everywhere, from all over the country," said Dravid during the 50th year celebration of Mount Joy Cricket Club.

"I think if you go back to the time of say GR Vishwanath or even when I was starting out my career, most of the talent came from the big cities or from few other states.

"Even if they were talented boys in smaller places, they had to come to the big cities to play cricket. But today I think you see in Indian cricket that boys are coming from everywhere," he added.

Dravid said it's getting reflected in the standards of domestic cricket in India.

"You just look at the standard of the Ranji Trophy. In the old days when you played in



the South Zone, other than playing Hyderabad or Tamil Nadu, I think it is fair to say, without being disrespectful, that a lot of other teams you could take it not for granted

but you could certainly take it a little bit more lightly.

"I don't think there is any team in the South Zone today that you can walk in and

say that you will comfortably beat," he added.

Hailing the club cricket structure in the country, particularly in Karnataka, Dravid said the system has allowed the sport to remain accessible to all.

"We need clubs to be strong. We need cricket not to be concentrated in the hands of a few people. We need cricket to be egalitarian, we need it to be all over the place.

"You cannot have talent or you cannot have facilities concentrated only in one or two places. To get the best out of talent, we need to ensure that young boys and girls are getting access to good infrastructure in every part," he noted.

The 51-year-old former Indian captain then briefly revisited his club career when he was young to underscore the need for that system to thrive.

"After the practice, HAL (Hindustan Aeronautics Limited) would give us two eggs and one small glass of milk. I would always stay back for that glass of milk and those eggs. Not because I wanted the milk and eggs.

"But because I wanted to sit and listen to the likes of BK Kumar or Nandan talking about cricket. And it used to be great fun to listen to them and learn so much from them," said Dravid. (PTI)