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- Hezbollah's acting leader vows to fight on after Nasrallah's death
- Xi Jinping pays tribute to fallen heroes ahead of 75th National Day of PRC
- 'Absolutely distasteful, disgraceful': BJP slams Kharge for remarks about PM Modi
- Shah should focus on serious issues like Manipur, caste census: Kharge

Maintain status quo, orders apex court bench

Violation of order on demolition drive: SC seeks replies from Assam govt, others

NEW DELHI, Sept 30: The Supreme Court on Monday sought the responses of the Assam government and others on a plea seeking initiation of contempt proceedings for the alleged violation of the apex court's order that had said there shall be no demolition of properties across the country without its permission.

A bench of Justices B R Gavai and K V Viswanathan also asked the parties to maintain status quo in the matter.

The top court had, on September 17, said there will be no demolition of properties, including of those accused of crimes, till October 1, without its permission.

The plea seeking initiation of contempt proceedings against the authorities concerned over proposed demolitions in Assam's Sonapur came up for hearing before the court on Monday.

Senior advocate Huzefa Ahmadi,



appearing in the court on behalf of the petitioners, said there has been an "egregious violation" and breach of the apex court's order that had categorically said there should be no demolition without its permission.

When the bench said it would issue a notice on the plea, Ahmadi requested that the status quo should be maintained. "Issue notice, return-

able in three weeks. In the meantime, parties shall maintain status quo," the bench said.

Several pleas, which have alleged that properties of those accused of crimes are being demolished in several states, are pending in the top court. While hearing these pleas on September 17, the court had observed that even one instance of il-

legal demolition was against the "ethos" of the Constitution.

"Till the next date of hearing, we direct that there shall be no demolition anywhere across the country, without seeking leave of this court," the bench had said and posted the pleas for hearing on October 1.

"We further clarify that our order would not be applicable if there is an unauthorised structure in any public place such as road, street, footpath, abutting railway line or any river body or water bodies and also, to cases where there is an order for demolition made by a court of law," the apex court had said.

Hearing the petitions on September 2, the court had questioned how anybody's house can be demolished just because he is an accused in a case. The court was hearing petitions filed by the Jamiat Ulama-i-Hind and others seeking directions to various states to ensure no further demolition (CONTD. ON PAGE-2)

Assam BJP ahead of all other state units in achieving membership target: Himanta

GUWAHATI, Sept 30: The Assam BJP is ahead of the party's other state units in achieving membership targets with 53 lakh people already enrolled, chief minister Himanta Biswa Sarma said on Monday.

Speaking to reporters after attending a meeting to review the membership exercise at the state BJP headquarters here, he said the entire drive was being conducted online, with physical form fill-up kept for a later stage.

"So far, 53 lakh members have already registered. With regards to fulfilling the target for membership set for different states, we have achieved 85 per cent of our target already and are at the top position," he said.

The membership target is set at 75 per cent of the total votes polled by the BJP in a particular state in this year's Lok Sabha elections, he added.

The party, which had bagged nine out of 14 seats in Assam, had polled over 63.25 lakh votes.

Sarma said the Assam unit had set a target of enrolling 40,000 members in each of the 126 assembly constituencies, and it has already been achieved in 71 constituencies.

"By October 9, we are hopeful that we will be able to cross 40,000 members in over 90 constituencies," he added.



He said Dibrugarh district has made the highest enrolment till date, while his Jalukbari constituency is the only one to cross the 1 lakh membership mark.

The enrolment figures have been low in Kokrajhar and Dhubri Lok Sabha constituencies, Sarma said.

It has also been slow in parts of the Diphu Lok Sabha seat, he said, attributing it to low mobile network coverage.

"To touch 53 lakh members already from 18 lakh last year is a big achievement. It has been possible due to our leaders and the team," the chief minister said. He said the physical membership drive will be initiated after the end of the online exercise on October 9 in parts where mobile network coverage is low. (PTI)

Taren Boro to receive National Award for contribution to literature and culture

HT Correspondent

HOWRAGHAT, Sept 30: Taren Boro, former President of the Boro Sahitya Sabha and Convener of the Boro Advisory Board of the Sahitya Academy, has been selected for the National Award in recognition of his outstanding contribution to literature and culture.

The award will be presented on October 2 in New Delhi, on the occasion of Gandhi Jayanti, at Pragati Maidan.

Born on November 1, 1955, in Kokrajhar, Taren Boro earned his MA from Guwahati University in 1978 and later retired from the Reserve Bank of India, Guwahati. He was an active member of the Central Committee of the Boro Sahitya Sabha from 1984 to 1990, holding several key positions, including secretary, joint secretary, treasurer, vice-president, and president. He also served as the Secretary of the Guwahati Branch of the All India Reserve Bank Employees Union in 2005.

A prominent writer, Boro has authored over 14 books, encompassing plays, short stories, novels, and poems. He has been honored with numerous awards from various institutions.

Among his accolades are the People's Leader Bhibhav Deuri Ekta Award, Mohammad Ibrahim Ali Literature Award, Assam Sports and Cultural Award, Ahmed Ali Baskhand Literature Award, and Best Social Worker Award. (CONTD. ON PAGE-2)

Assam embraces transparency, rejects corruption: CM

HT Bureau

GUWAHATI, Sept 30: Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma on Monday said that the state is progressing towards a new era of transparency as it has left behind an era of corruption.

Sarma was speaking during a programme at the Veterinary college field in Guwahati where he handed over the first instalment of ₹ 75,000 to 25,238 entrepreneurs under the Mukhyamantrir Atmanirbhar Assam Abhiyan.

"Assam is leaving behind an era of corruption and negativity, and is now on the path to peace, stability, and development," an official statement quoted Sarma as saying.

Sarma also reiterated the government's commitment to fulfilling its election promises, adding, "The present state government had

pledged to provide 1 lakh government jobs, a promise that has been successfully fulfilled with the recruitment of 1 lakh candidates".

"Furthermore, the state government has gone beyond this pledge by providing an additional 40,000 government jobs. The successful completion of several recruitment drives, including the Assam Direct Recruitment Exam, teacher recruitment, and ongoing police recruitment, all of which have boosted the morale of the state's youth," he added.

Emphasising transparency, Sarma noted that each recruitment process has been conducted without any malpractices, thereby instilling trust in the system.

"The state government has eradicated corruption in recruitment, from Anganwadi workers to ASHA

workers, as well as in the Assam Public Service Commission. The Assam Direct Recruitment Exam, in particular, has set new standards by allowing candidates to take home their question papers and providing the option of accessing OMR sheets for verification," the chief minister further said.

It may be noted that under the Mukhyamantrir Atmanirbhar Assam Abhiyan initiative, entrepreneurs with general qualifications would receive a total of ₹ 2 lakh, of which ₹ 1 lakh would be provided as a grant and the remaining ₹ 1 lakh as a loan.

"Entrepreneurs with professional qualifications, such as those holding degrees in engineering or medicine, are eligible for ₹ 5 lakhs, with ₹ 2.5 lakh as a grant and ₹ 2.5 lakh as a loan." (CONTD. ON PAGE-2)

Over 20k polling staff mobilised for final phase of assembly elections in J-K



JAMMU, Sept 30: Over 20,000 polling staff have been mobilised Monday across seven districts of Jammu and Kashmir on the eve of third and final phase of assembly elections which will decide the electoral fate of 415 candidates including two former deputy chief ministers Tara Chand and Muzaffar Beig, officials said.

The highlight of the voting will be participation of west Pakistani refugees, Valmiki Samaj and Gorkha community who got the voting rights in assembly, urban local bodies and panchayat elections only after the abrogation of Article 370. They have earlier voted in panchayat and urban local bodies polls in 2018.

Over 39.18 lakh voters are eligible to exercise their franchise at 5,060 polling stations in this crucial phase, covering 40 assembly segments in Jammu, Udhampur, Samba and Kathua in the Jammu region and Baramulla, Bandipora and Kupwara in north Kashmir, on October 1.

Additional Director General of Police (ADGP), Jammu zone, Anand Jain, said adequate security arrangements have been put in place in the poll-bound areas to ensure "terror-free and peaceful" polling.

Amid tight security arrangements, thousands of election staff along with poll material left their respective district headquarters this morning to take positions at their designated polling stations by this evening.

The voter turnout was robust in the earlier phases, with 61.38 per cent participation recorded in the

first phase on September 18 and 57.31 per cent in the second phase on September 26. This is the first Assembly election in Jammu and Kashmir since the abrogation of Article 370 of the Constitution in August 2019, with the results set to be announced on October 8.

According to J&K chief electoral officer Pandurang K Pole, more than 39.18 lakh voters are eligible to exercise their electoral franchise in the final phase across the 40 assembly constituencies – 24 in Jammu region and 16 in Kashmir valley.

In Jammu division, Jammu district accounts for the highest number of 11 segments (Bishnah-SC, Suchetgarh-SC, R S Pura, Jammu South, Bahu, Jammu East, Nagrota, Jammu West, Jammu North, Akhnour-SC and Chhamb), followed by six seats in Kathua district (Bani, Billawar, Basohli, Jasrota, Kathua-SC and Hirangpur), four in Udhampur district (Udhampur West, Udhampur East, Chenni and Ramnagar-SC) and three in Samba (Ramgarh-SC, Samba and Vijaypur).

Similarly in Kashmir division, 16 assembly constituencies including Karnah, Trehgam, Kupwara, Lolab, Handwara and Langate fall in Kupwara district, Sopore, Rafiabud, Uri, Baramulla, Gulmarg, Wagoora-Kreeri and Pattan in Baramulla district and Sonawari, Bandipora, Gurez (ST) in Bandipora district.

Pole said a total of 5,060 polling stations have been set up across the poll-bound districts. He said there will be 50 polling booths managed by women. (CONTD. ON PAGE-2)

M'laya proposes projects worth ₹ 1.2 lakh crore to 16th Finance Commission

SHILLONG, Sept 30: Meghalaya Chief Minister Conrad K Sangma on Monday proposed projects worth ₹ 1.2 lakh crore to the Arvind Panagariya-led 16th Finance Commission (XVI-FC), officials said.

Sangma proposed the projects while making a presentation before the XVI-FC, which will make its recommendations available by October 31, 2025, covering an award period of five years commencing April 1, 2026.

Lauding the presentation, Panagariya told reporters, "The chief minister was very engaged. One could see the passion and the engagement he has with the state's development. We were very impressed with what we saw. The presentation itself was very extensive. It covers numerous programmes relating to demography, geography and tourism."

"The state has some very specific suggestions and in particular, the pitch for a larger proportion of the state's share to be devolved based on forests. While the 15th Finance Commission has given a weight of 10 per cent to forest and ecology, Meghalaya's proposal is we raise it to 15 per cent," he said.

Panagariya said the state also suggested the introduction of a new criterion called the rural dispersion of the population.

"In this, they said 2.5 to 5 per cent weight be given. If we are able to do it then this will be a (CONTD. ON PAGE-2)

Rescue operations continue as over 200 people killed in floods, landslides in Nepal

KATHMANDU, Sept 30: Search and rescue operations continued in Nepal for the third consecutive day on Monday after monsoon-induced floods and landslides killed more than 200 people in one of the worst rain-related disasters in the Himalayan nation in recent years.

Incessant rainfall over the weekend triggered floods and landslides, wreaking havoc in Kathmandu and most of the districts of Nepal.

At least 205 people have been killed with 24 others still missing in the continuous rainfall, floods, landslides and inundation, Home Ministry officials said, adding that Kathmandu alone recorded 56 deaths related to the natural disaster.

According to the officials, 130 people have been injured nationwide in the disaster.

The Home Ministry said all security agencies have been deployed for relief efforts following the floods and landslides, and the Nepal Army, Nepal Police and Armed Police Force personnel have rescued around 4,500 disaster-affected individuals so far. While those injured are receiving free treatment, food and other emergency relief materials have been provided to others affected by the floods.

Hundreds of people are facing a shortage of food, safe drinking water and sanitation in Kathmandu following the natural disaster, according to eyewitnesses.

Market prices have also soared as vegetables coming from India and other districts of the country have been temporarily halted due to obstruction in major highways due to landslides.

At least 20 hydropower plants with a combined capacity of 1,100 MW suffered damages due to floods and landslides in the past three days, leading



to the disruption of power supply in Kathmandu and other major cities, officials said.

Meanwhile, Prime Minister K P Sharma Oli, who returned home from his visit to the US to attend the United Nations General Assembly on Monday, said the government will not leave any stone unturned in rescue and relief distribution works and urged all sides to cooperate with the government.

Earlier, an all-party meeting convened on Sunday by Officiating Prime Minister Prakash Man Singh at the Prime Minister's Office in Singha Durbar decided to enhance rescue, relief, and re-establishment efforts during the ongoing disaster caused by heavy rains. A task force was also formed to assess the details of the damage caused within a 15-day deadline.

The Disaster Management Executive Committee said it will provide a relief amount to the families of those missing. If the missing person is not found within 10 days, their family will be provided the same amount as that given to the kin of a person killed in the rain-induced (CONTD. ON PAGE-2)

39 sub-districts to become operational in Assam from Oct 4

GUWAHATI, Sept 30: Thirty-nine sub-districts of Assam, formed to increase administrative efficiency, will become functional from October 4, an official notification said. The headquarters of these sub-districts, called 'Xama-zilla' in Assamese, will also become operational on the same day, it said.

"The Governor of Assam is pleased to notify that the sub-districts are known as 'Xama-Zilla' in Assamese and 39 nos. of the following Sub-districts 'Xama-Zilla' along with the headquarters shall become functional with effect from 4th October 2024 in the public interest," said the notification, signed by General Administration Department commissioner and secretary MS Manivannan.

The sub-districts will be headed by an assistant district commissioner and aided by two assistant commissioners, besides officials and staff of various relevant departments.

The state government had earlier decided to create the sub-districts for administrative expediency to derive maximum synergy, productivity and efficiency at the grassroots level and in aid of a good citizen-centric administration. (PTI)

FM asks taxman to analyse cases lost at HCs, SC to draw lessons

NEW DELHI, Sept 30: Union finance minister Nirmala Sitharaman has asked the Income Tax Department to "analyse" court cases the taxman lost over the last decade in order to draw lessons and ensure litigation disputes are eliminated, official sources said Monday.

The minister has also asked the department to prepare a list of "expert" tax law advocates so that they can represent the I-T Department or the revenue side effectively at judicial forums including in insolvency cases before the National Company Law Tribunal (NCLT), the sources said.

The decisions were taken during a meeting of the top brass of the tax department and its administrative authority, the Central Board of Direct Taxes (CBDT), held in Delhi last month.

The principal chief commissioners and directors general of the I-T department apart from the CBDT chairman, members and officers were part of the meeting, they said.

The sources told PTI that finance minister Sitharaman directed the CBDT to "audit" the cases won or lost by the department at various high courts and the Supreme Court over the last 10 years.

She especially mentioned "analysing" the lost ones (by the revenue side) so that lessons can be learnt from them, corrective action be taken and litigation between the taxpayer and the taxman is minimised, according to the sources. She also sought an "analysis" of the duration of the cases pending at these two forums of higher judiciary along with the time taken to dispose these litigations, they said. The Modi government, since taking charge in 2014, has brought in a number of measures to reduce litigation in the I-T department after it was found (CONTD. ON PAGE-2)

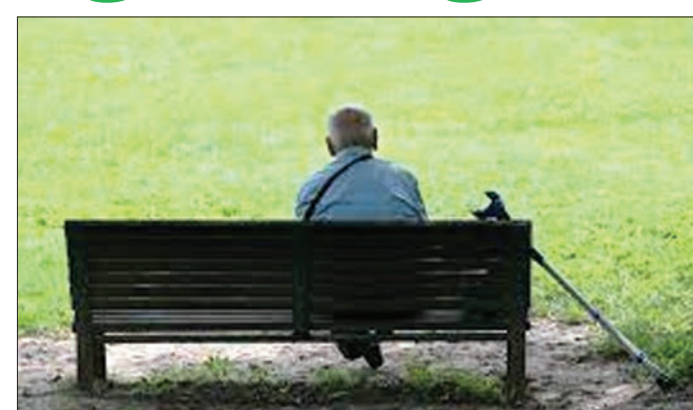
14.3 per cent of elderly respondents reported living alone

Study reveals growing trend of solo ageing among elderly in India

NEW DELHI, Sept 30: A recent study has shed light on the increasing trend of solo ageing among India's elderly population, one of the key reasons for this shift is the increasing preference for financial and social independence.

Conducted in September to coincide with the International Day of Older Persons on October 1, the study by Agewell Foundation titled 'Study on Solo Aging with Special Focus on the Status of Older People Living Alone' surveyed 10,000 elderly individuals across rural and urban areas.

According to the study, 14.3 per cent of elderly respondents reported living alone, with a higher prevalence in urban areas (15 per cent) compared to rural regions (13.4 per



cent). Among those living alone, 41.9 per cent—including 46.5 per cent of elderly women—had been living independently for more than five years.

Despite the challenges of solo ageing, 46.9 per cent of these respondents expressed happiness with their lives, while 41.5 per cent admitted dissatisfaction.

One of the key reasons for this shift towards solo ageing is the increasing preference for independence, both financial and social, the study said.

More than 31 per cent of elderly respondents stated that people opt to live alone for independence, while 26.7 per cent pointed to the socio-economic changes such as the migration of younger generations and the rise of nuclear families.

Additionally, 21.5 per cent noted that privacy and personal space were critical factors in choosing to age alone.

The study also highlighted the emotional and mental health challenges associated with solo ageing.

Nearly 41 per cent of elderly respondents living alone reported that

their mental health had been negatively affected, while approximately 32 per cent felt it had improved. Loneliness remains a pervasive issue, with 10.4 per cent of respondents saying they always feel lonely, and 21.2 per cent admitting to feeling lonely often.

Furthermore, 35.6 per cent of elderly individuals reported that loneliness was a significant drawback of solo ageing.

In terms of societal impact, 51.3 per cent of respondents claimed that the growing trend of solo ageing had negatively affected society, while 28.5 per cent viewed it positively. Himanshu Rath, founder chairman of the Agewell Foundation, emphasised the need for inter-generational (CONTD. ON PAGE-2)

TASL signs deal for production of wheeled armoured platform for Morocco's armed forces

NEW DELHI, Sept 30: Tata Advanced Systems Limited on Monday announced entering into a strategic partnership with Morocco's Royal Armed Forces for the production of wheeled armoured platforms in Casablanca that is expected to provide the firm an opportunity to look for similar ventures in other African countries. It will be Morocco's first large defence manufacturing plant and the first production facility by an Indian defence original equipment manufacturer outside India.

Tata Advanced Systems Limited (TASL) said its local unit will produce a significant number of the specialised vehicle systems for Morocco and potentially, for other countries in Africa.

"The TASL platform 8x8, which has been developed jointly by Tata Advanced Systems and Tata Motors with DRDO (Defence Research and Development Organisation), is itself a successful example of Indian private sector and government partnership," the company said in a statement.

"This will generate production in India while also starting final assembly of a defence platform in Morocco," it said.

The production facility is expected to be operational over the next 12 months to deliver the contracted quantity of units.

TASL said a significant volume of content of the platform will be exported from India, while also meeting a commitment for local



employment, value addition and support in Morocco.

It said the production facility in Casablanca covering 20,000 square metres has been identified.

While the initial contracted quantity is entirely to meet the needs of the Royal Moroccan Army, the facility will be a 100-per cent subsidiary of TASL and become an export hub to meet the requirements of other countries, especially in Africa.

Sukaran Singh, the chief executive officer and managing director of TASL, said the company is "extremely proud" to sign this partnership with the Moroccan government.

"This contract is of significant size and of strategic importance for us. This not only enables TASL to help initiate Morocco's defence ecosystem but also acts as a launch point for TASL into the rest of Africa for select defence systems,"

he said.

"We would like to acknowledge the progressive and industry-friendly policies of the Kingdom of Morocco that made it viable for TASL to sign this landmark production and supply agreement," he added.

In its statement, TASL said it will work closely with the Moroccan government to develop a robust ecosystem that would include engaging with the local supply chain partners and vendors, training and skill development of the workforce.

The company will also focus on building related capabilities and maintaining the systems.

Further, the facility will adopt global standards in line with the best international practices.

The TASL platform 8x8 incorporates state-of-the-art critical technologies like a high-power, integrated power pack with auto-

matic transmission, with modularity and scalability, which can be easily customised to cater to various missions and operating conditions of Morocco's armed forces.

Morocco's minister in-charge of National Defence, Abdelatif Loudiyi, said the partnership with TASL marks a "new era" in the development of the country's defence industry.

"It is a strategic step that will not only contribute to our national self-reliance but also our ability to scale up our defence industry quickly and reliably," he said.

"We are committed to creating a robust industrial ecosystem that drives economic growth and delivers tangible benefits to our investors and industry partners, similar to the successful model of the automobile industry," he added. TASL, a wholly-owned subsidiary of Tata Sons, is a significant player in aerospace and defence solutions in India.

The company offers a full range of integrated solutions across aerospace and aero-engines, airborne platforms and systems, defence and security, and land-mobility equipment.

It has a strong portfolio of partnerships and joint ventures with leading global aerospace and defence firms, making it an integral partner in the international supply chain and in some instances, a global single source provider for leading aerospace and defence OEMs. (PTI)

OPPO India tops customer satisfaction in after-sales service survey

HT Bureau
GUWAHATI, Sept 30: OPPO India has secured the top spot for customer satisfaction in after-sales service, with 62% of its customers rating their experience as 'very satisfactory,' according to a survey conducted by Counterpoint Research. The survey, carried out in August 2024, covered over 2,000 customers from India's leading smartphone brands, assessing their experiences with after-sales services. OPPO India emerged as a leader in key areas such as repair quality, resolution speed, transparency, and multilingual support. The brand's customer-first approach and commitment to providing top-tier service through its next-generation service centres played a significant role in achieving this recognition. The survey, conducted across 13 Tier 1 and Tier 2 cities, measured the after-

sales service experiences of customers using OPPO, Samsung, vivo, Xiaomi, and realme smartphones. OPPO India outperformed its competitors by resolving 35% of customer issues within an hour, slightly ahead of Samsung. It also led in transparency, with 78% of repairs being performed in the presence of the customer. This commitment to transparency, combined with strong repair quality and multilingual communication, contributed to its leadership position in the survey.

Savio D'Souza, Head of Product Communications at OPPO India, expressed pride in the company's achievement, stating, "Being recognized as the No. 1 brand in India for customer satisfaction in after-sales service is a validation of our efforts to provide timely, transparent, reliable, and cost-efficient service to our users." OPPO India's

after-sales network spans over 560 exclusive service centres in more than 500 cities across 25,000 pin codes. The company has also embraced a digital-first approach with the launch of the OPPO Self-Help Assistant in March 2024. This innovative digital service allows customers to resolve smartphone issues without visiting a service centre, covering all OPPO handset models launched within the last five years. In addition, OPPO India introduced its new generation 3.0 service centres in 2022, which emphasize a transparent service experience by offering product demonstrations and face-to-face repairs. These initiatives, along with OPPO's extensive service centre network and focus on innovation, have set a high benchmark in the industry, making it the preferred choice for after-sales service among smartphone users across India.

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Maintain status quo, orders

of properties of those accused in cases of rioting and violence. The Muslim body had also filed a petition in the apex court seeking directions to the Uttar Pradesh government to ensure that no further demolition of properties of those accused of violence was carried out in the state. It had said no demolition should be carried out without following the due process of law and sans prior notice. (PTI)

Taren Boro to receive National

The award ceremony will be attended by Union ministers Kiren Rijju and Hardeep Puri, along with Madhya Pradesh chief minister Mohan Yadav.

Assam embraces transparency

The chief minister added. "In today's distribution, 25,064 entrepreneurs with general qualifications and 147 with professional qualifications received the first instalment of ₹ 75,000. The beneficiaries represented a wide range of sectors, including 1,156 individuals engaged in agriculture and horticulture, 502 in fabrication or hardware businesses, 3,522 in aquaculture, 4,855 in services and other miscellaneous sectors, 326 in packaging, 21 in bamboo and other plant species cultivation, 10,321 in poultry and livestock farming, 1,015 in garment manufacturing, 654 in self-employment through vocational education, 2,509 in the paper and stationery business, and 163 in wood-based furniture enterprises. The funds disbursed under this scheme are aimed at helping these entrepreneurs take their first significant steps towards self-employment," the statement added.

Minister for Environment & Forests etc. Chandra Mohan Patowary, minister of education etc. Dr Ranajit Pegu, minister of Panchayat & Rural Development etc. Ranjeet Kumar Dass, minister of Finance etc. Ajanta Neog, minister of Housing & Urban Affairs etc. Ashok Singhal, minister of Industries & Commerce etc. Bimal Borah, minister of Water Resources etc. Pijush Hazarika, minister of Tourism etc. Jayanta Mallabarah, minister of Agriculture etc. Atul Bora, minister of Transport etc. Keshab Mahanta, minister of Handloom & Textiles etc. U G Brahma, minister for Power etc. Nandita Garlosa, minister of Tea Tribes Welfare etc. Sanjoy Kishan, MPs, BJP Assam Pradesh President and MLA Bhabesh Kalita, chief secretary Dr Ravi Kota, and other dignitaries were present in today's event.

M'laya proposes projects worth

new criterion," he said. He said it was very impressive how the state dramatically brought down the maternal mortality rate.

"There is a programme under which apparently the state has recorded every single pregnant woman, and they follow and they have that data on first, second, third trimester," he said. The presentation also highlighted the programme on early childhood development under which kids are trained for different sports from an early age, he added.

Panagariya also noted that the state's debt to GDP ratio is high as well as its fiscal deficit. On the ambitious Mission 10 initiative of the state government, he said, "The state has a very ambitious plan... and the commitments it has to the people of Meghalaya. The state is targeting to take the GDP to USD 10 billion by 2028, which would bring its per capita income close to about USD 3,000, which is quite good." The three autonomous district councils in the state also proposed grants worth over Rs 8,000 crore during separate presentations to the commission. (PTI)

Rescue operations continue

disaster. Numerous roads throughout the nation are severely damaged, and all routes leading to the capital city, Kathmandu, are still blocked, leaving thousands of travellers stranded. Home Ministry spokesperson Rishiram Tiwari said efforts are underway to clear the obstructed highways to resume transportation.

"Heavy rains since Friday have caused widespread flooding across Kathmandu Valley, and across Nepal. This is the worst flooding experienced in recent years," said Jagan Chapagain, the chief executive officer and secretary general of the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies, in a post on X.

"In response to the crisis, local branches of the @NepalRedCross are working closely with authorities and (the) Emergency Operations Centre of Nepal Red Cross to coordinate rescue and relief operations," he added. (PTI)

Over 20k polling staff

known as Pink Polling Stations, 43 polling stations manned by specially-abled persons and 40 polling stations manned by youths.

Also, there will be 45 green polling stations in order to spread the message about environmental concern and 33 unique polling stations, he said, adding 29 polling stations are established near the Line of Control or International Border for border residents.

"The purpose behind these special polling stations is to spread awareness among sections of society like women, specially-abled persons and first-time young voters to come forward and exercise their right to vote," he said.

He said over 1.07 lakh saplings have been planted in the premises of all polling stations.

Four election staff, including presiding officer, will be stationed in every polling station, he said, adding more than 20,000 polling staff will be deployed on duty for the third phase election. A total of 39,18,220 lakh voters eligible to exercise their franchise include 20,09,033 male voters, 19,09,130 female voters and 57 third gender voters, the CEO said, adding as many as 1.94 lakh youth between the age 18 and 19 years, along with 35,860 Persons with Disabilities (PwDs) and 32,953 elderly voters above the age of 85 are also eligible to exercise their franchise in this phase. (PTI)

FM asks taxman to analyse cases

that this organisation was among those which had a huge pile up of legal disputes in the government of India. Only this month, the I-T department had hiked the minimum threshold for filing appeals by the department at various tribunals, high courts and the Supreme Court. This move came after Sitharaman, in her July Budget speech, declared this policy decision.

The CBDT, while increasing these thresholds, had said that an appeal should not be filed merely because the tax effect in a case exceeds the prescribed monetary limits and instead should be decided on merit of the case.

"The officers concerned shall keep in mind the overall objective of reducing unnecessary litigation and providing certainty to taxpayers on their income tax assessments while taking a decision regarding filing an appeal," the CBDT had said in a circular. Sitharaman, during the meeting with the top I-T brass in August, also asked the Board to prepare a list of advocates who were "experts" in direct tax laws after it was stated in the meeting that the lawyers assigned to the I-T Department by the Ministry of Law and Justice for representing the department before the NCLT were "not upto the mark". It was also discussed to hike the fee that is paid to special legal counsels of the department as it was found that their current remuneration was "low".

The minister also approved a proposal of the department to have the name of the assessing officer printed in the faceless assessment orders issued by the department after it was flagged that having no name was leading to "lack of ownership" of the document and "demotivation" among the officials. The FM approved that the faceless assessment orders of the I-T department will now bear the name of the assessing officer at the end of the document, the sources said.

Tax officials manning the faceless assessment regime also flagged to the FM that the jurisdictional assessment officers (JAOs) and Faceless Assessment Officers (FAOs) should be merged in order to streamline the work of the department and also lessen the workload on the former. The JAOs, as the name suggests, look after routine tax work in their assigned jurisdiction while the FAOs only deal with faceless assessment cases.

It was also stated by an officer of the department, the sources said, that the digitisation of I-T documents should have been completed before the faceless assessment scheme was launched in 2019-20. The faceless assessment of I-T scheme was launched by the Modi government with an aim to eliminate instances of high handedness and corruption as the assessee (taxpayer) and the assessor (taxman) will not come face-to-face and tax processes could be completed over the Internet with the taxpayer not required to go to an I-T office. (PTI)

Study reveals growing trend

dialogue to address these challenges. "There is an urgent need to sensitize younger family members towards the needs of elderly family members and encourage intergenerational interaction so that both generations can prepare for a better tomorrow," he said.

The study made several key recommendations, including enhancing healthcare services tailored to the elderly, creating programmes to address their emotional well-being, and advocating for laws that ensure their protection and financial security.

Additionally, the report suggested fostering community engagement through volunteer networks and increasing the use of technology to improve the quality of life for older individuals. As the number of elderly individuals living alone continues to rise, addressing their emotional, social, and healthcare needs becomes a critical issue for policymakers and society at large. (PTI)

Sudesh Poddar re-elected as president of HRAEI for 2024-25

HT Bureau
GUWAHATI, Sept 30: The 63rd Annual General Meeting of the Hotel & Restaurant Association of Eastern India (HRAEI) was held today at the Park Hotel, Kolkata, where Sudesh Poddar was re-elected as President for the term 2024-2025. Poddar, a prominent figure in the hospitality industry with properties in Kolkata, has previously served as President of the Federation of Hotel & Restaurant Associations of India (FHRAI). Originally from Dibrugarh, his extensive experience has made him a key representative of HRAEI in several influential bodies, including the Hotel & Restaurant Approval & Classification Committee (HRACC), West Bengal State Tourism Task Force, Food Safety and Standards Authority of India (FSSAI), and the Airport Advisory Committee. Under his leadership, HRAEI has actively advocated for the interests of its members by engaging with government officials and industry stakeholders to address crucial issues. Poddar expressed his commitment to continue driving growth in the sector, stating, "I am honoured to continue serving as President of HRAEI. Together with my team, we will work towards overcoming industry challenges and promoting sustainable growth." The newly elected leadership team includes Aneel Goenka as Senior Vice President, Manoj Gouda as Vice President, Pranav Singh as Honorary Secretary, and Deepak Kapoor as Honorary Treasurer. Supporting them are Souvik Raha as Honorary Joint Secretary and Harbans Singh Bagga as Honorary Joint Treasurer.

Sensex, Nifty tumble nearly 1.5 pc as bank stocks slump on weak Japanese markets

MUMBAI, Sept 30: Equity benchmark indices Sensex and Nifty tumbled nearly 1.5 per cent on Monday due to heavy selling in banking, finance and auto stocks amid rising geopolitical risks in the Middle East and weakness in Japanese markets.

Besides, profit-taking in frontline stocks like Reliance Industries after a record-breaking rally and foreign fund outflows added to the gloom, analysts said.

Declining for the second straight session, the BSE Sensex tumbled 1,272.07 points or 1.49 per cent to settle at 84,299.78. During the day, it plunged 1,314.71 points or 1.53 per cent to 84,257.14.

A total of 2,223 stocks declined, 1,819 advanced and 151 remained unchanged on the BSE.

The NSE Nifty tanked 368.10 points or 1.41 per cent to 25,810.85. "Nifty-50 had its worst day in nearly two months on Monday fuelled by weak Asian markets (led by Japan), rising tensions in the Middle East and fear of funds moving to China based on recent measures taken by its government," Deepak Jasani, Head of Retail Research, HDFC Securities, said. From the 30 Sensex firms, Reliance Industries and Axis Bank declined over 3 per cent each. ICICI Bank, Nestle, Tech Mahindra, Mahindra & Mahindra, Maruti, Bajaj Finserv, State Bank of India and Tata Motors were the other major laggards. In contrast,

JSW Steel, NTPC, Tata Steel, Titan and Asian Paints were the gainers.

"This sharp decline was primarily driven by profit booking after recent highs and heightened geopolitical tensions that have unsettled investor sentiment. The biggest drag on the index was Reliance Industries, which fell by 3 per cent, significantly contributing to the overall market decline," Vikram Kasat, Head - Advisory, PL Capital - Prabhudas Lilladher, said.

The BSE midcap gauge declined 0.28 per cent, while smallcap index climbed 0.07 per cent.

Among the indices, auto tumbled 1.91 per cent, bankex (1.82 per cent), realty (1.80 per cent), financial services (1.40 per cent), services (1.22 per cent) and telecommunication (1.19 per cent).

Metal and commodities were the winners.

"Global markets turned topsy-turvy under the threat of rising geopolitical risk in the Middle-East and plausible increase in Yen interest rate which can reduce cross country investments in equity.

"On the contrary, the Chinese market had a resurgence due to a large stimulus package and cheap valuation. India also weakened under the global pressure and premium valuation while metals are expected to outperform in the near-term," said Vinod Nair, Head of Research, Geojit Financial Services. (PTI)

Apollo hospitals Guwahati wins 'Multi-Speciality Hospital of the Year (East)'

HT Bureau
GUWAHATI, Sept 30: Apollo Hospitals, Guwahati, a premier healthcare institution in the region, has been named Multi-Speciality Hospital of the Year (East) at The Economic Times Healthcare Awards 2024. The accolade recognizes the hospital's exceptional contribution to healthcare and its commitment to providing world-class medical services in Eastern India. The Economic Times Healthcare Awards is a prestigious platform honouring innovation and excellence in the Indian healthcare sector. Apollo Hospitals Guwahati

was chosen for its consistent performance in offering cutting-edge medical care across various specialties, its advanced infrastructure, and a patient-first approach.

Manoj Roy, COO, Apollo Hospitals Guwahati, expressed gratitude for the award, saying, "We are deeply honoured to receive this recognition from The Economic Times. It reflects our dedication to delivering the highest standards of healthcare, supported by advanced technology and a team of skilled professionals. This motivates us to continue raising the bar for healthcare excellence." Apollo Hospitals

Guwahati provides a wide array of services, including Cardiac Sciences, Neuro Sciences, Orthopaedics, Renal Sciences, Gastro Sciences, and Critical Care. With its multidisciplinary team and innovative patient care practices, the hospital has become a trusted name in managing complex medical conditions across the northeastern region. This award further cements Apollo Hospitals Guwahati's position as a leader in healthcare, not only in Assam but throughout the region. It also highlights its role in advancing healthcare quality and patient satisfaction.

BharatPe settles with Ashneer Grover, co-founder not be associated with BharatPe

NEW DELHI, Sept 30: Fintech firm BharatPe has reached a settlement with its former co-founder Ashneer Grover, ending months of acrimonious legal and public dispute, the two sides said on Monday. As part of the settlement agreement, Grover will not be associated with BharatPe in any capacity nor be a part of the shareholding of the company.

Grover will transfer a part of his shareholding to the BharatPe board and the rest will be managed by a family trust, keeping him off the company's capital table. Also, the two sides will not pursue legal cases, BharatPe and Grover said in separate statements.

The settlement comes days after the Economic Offences Wing (EOW) of the Delhi Police arrested Deepak Gupta on charges of misappropriation of fintech Unicorn's funds. Gupta is the husband of Madhuri Jain Grover's sister.

"Certain number of shares held by him will be transferred to the Resilient Growth Trust for the benefit of the company and his remaining shares will be managed by his family trust.

"Both parties have decided not to pursue the cases filed," BharatPe said in a statement.

It all started in January 2022



when Grover had to go on leave following allegations of using abusive language against Kotak Mahindra Bank staff and fraudulent practices, which he denied.

BharatPe had roped in SAM, Alvarez and Marsal (A&M) and PwC for governance review in February 2022 after sending Grover on leave.

In a report by A&M, it was alleged that Madhuri Jain Grover and her family members, brother Shwetank Jain and brother-in-law Deepak Jagdishram Gupta were involved in financial irregularities at the company.

BharatPe sacked its head of con-

trols and Grover's wife Madhuri Jain Grover on February 23, 2022, for alleged financial irregularities ranging from producing fake invoices to billing the company for personal beauty treatment and trips abroad. These followed allegations of illegitimate payments to bogus human resource consultants linked to Madhuri Jain's brother Shwetank Jain. Also, there were allegations of inflated transactions, undue payments through pass-through vendors, sham transactions in input-tax credit, illegal payments to travel agencies, forged invoices etc.

Grover quit as managing direc-

tor of the firm on March 1, 2022, after an emergency arbitrator in the Singapore International Arbitration Centre (SIAC) held that there was no ground to stop governance review at the fintech firm. His resignation did not stop BharatPe from sacking him from all positions as well as stripping him of the co-founder tag. That followed months of bickering by both sides.

Grover in a post on X said, "I have reached a decisive settlement with BharatPe. I repose my faith in the management and board, who are doing great work in taking BharatPe forward in the right direction. I continue to remain aligned with the company's growth and success. I will no longer be associated with BharatPe in any capacity, nor be part of the capital table."

Grover, who had previously accused the BharatPe board of mismanagement, ended the post with "Peace!"

BharatPe had filed a criminal complaint in December 2022 against Grover, his wife Madhuri, her brother Shwetank, Suresh Jain (father-in-law of Ashneer) and Deepak Gupta.

EoW filed an FIR against them in May 2023 in the alleged ₹ 81 crore fraud case. (PTI)

Workshop on climate change kicks off under Green Bodoland Mission

BTC and GBM officials, along with experts, convene to address environmental challenges & promote sustainable practices in BTR



HT Correspondent

KOKRAJHAR, Sept 30: A two-day workshop on 'Climate Change and its Impact on Life and Livelihood' under the Green Bodoland Mission commenced on Monday at the Bodofa Cultural Complex in Kokrajhar—the city of peace in the Bodoland Territorial Region.

Gautam Das, the executive member of the Bodoland Territorial Region, lit the lamp to inaugurate the event amidst the presence of a

large number of participants, including BTC principal secretary Akash Deep and other dignitaries. The event was organised by the Green Bodoland Mission (GBM), a flagship program of the BTR government aimed at making Bodoland greener across the region.

In his speech, BTC principal secretary Akash Deep encouraged participants to adopt minimalist life choices to safeguard the environment and conserve resources for future generations. He emphasised that environmen-

tal degradation is not limited to a specific region and called for collective responsibility to restore ecological balance.

Gautam Das, the executive member of BTR, highlighted the steps taken by the BTR government to combat climate change, particularly through the Green Bodoland Mission led by CEM of BTR, Pramod Boro.

He noted that the workshop aims to raise awareness about climate change, promote conservation efforts, and advocate for sustainable resource management, with special attention to the involvement of women, youth, and students. He said that the BTR government is committed to working for the all-round development of a greener and smarter Bodoland across the region.

The program was attended by notable dignitaries, including joint secretary Ractim Borgohain, Mission director of the Green Bodoland Mission Manoranjan Das, as well as experts in the field such as Dr Mrinal Saikia, associate director of Research at Assam Agricultural University, Jorhat, Utsav Pradhan, founding gardener of TIEEDI, and Dr Ranjan Das, principal scientist at AAU Rice Research, Jorhat, among others.

Northeast Frontier Railway announces festival special trains



HT Bureau

GUWAHATI, Sept 30: Northeast Frontier Railway is set to operate 26 festival special trains to accommodate the excess footfall of passengers and facilitate a smooth travel experience during the forthcoming festivals of Durga Puja, Diwali, and Chhath Puja, from October 1 to November 30, 2024.

Accordingly, train nos 05736/05735 and 05734/05733 will connect Amritsar with Katihar during the festive season. Similarly, train no 05633/05634 will run from Narangi in Guwahati, connecting Gorakhpur in Uttar Pradesh.

Train no 05831/05832 will run from Rangpara North in Northeast, connecting Prayagraj in Uttar Pradesh. Train no 05638/05637 will run from Silchar to Naharlagun in Arunachal Pradesh. Similarly, train no 05628/05627 will connect Agartala and Guwahati.

Train no 05639/05640 will run from Silchar to Kolkata. Additionally, train nos 02525/02526 and 05671/05672 will run from Guwahati to Anand Vihar. Similarly, train no 05952/05951 will connect Assam with the southern part of the country, operating from New Tinsukia to Bengaluru.

Train no 05932/05931 will run from Dibrugarh to Kolkata. Train no 05636/05635 will run from Guwahati to Shri Ganganagar, connecting Assam and Rajasthan, and train no 05698/05697 will run from Guwahati to New Jalpaiguri, connecting the northern part of West Bengal.

These festive special trains will also boost interconnectivity within the zone and other parts of the country during this period. Over the next two months, these special trains will ensure that passengers travelling by train reach their destinations safely and seamlessly with comfort.

Indian Railways operates special trains every year during festivals, and this year it is set to operate more than 6,000 special trains for the forthcoming festive season from October to November 2024. It is noteworthy that during Durga Puja, Diwali, and Chhath festivals, millions of passengers travel across the country.

Dr Karabi Deka Hazarika honoured with Dr MI Borah Award 2024



HT Correspondent

SIVASAGAR, Sept 30: Dr Moidul Islam Borah Literary Award 2024 was presented to prominent poet, writer, and former head of the Laxminath Bezbaruha Chair of the Assamese department at Dibrugarh University, Professor Dr Karabi Deka Hazarika, by the Arunodoi Sahitya Sabha and Dr Moidul Islam Borah Memorial Society, Sivasagar, jointly in a function held at the Sivasagar Press Club on Monday.

Dr Nahendra Padun, former principal secretary of the Asom Sahitya Sabha, formally presented the award to Dr Karabi Deka Hazarika.

Dr Karabi Deka Hazarika expressed her deep satisfaction and thanked the organisers, stating that it was one of the greatest honours of her life. She added that the literary works initiated by Dr MI Borah should be resumed and continued by new writers.

The event was attended by Dr Kandarpa Kumar Deka, husband of Dr Karabi Deka Hazarika and former vice-chancellor of Dibrugarh University, prominent poet Prem Gogoi, journalist MI Borah of the Dr Moidul Islam Borah family, Himangshu Neog, secretary of the Sivasagar Press Club, Khairuddin Ahmed, president of Arunodoi Sahitya Sabha, and many other dignitaries.

BTC is committed to holistic development: Dr Swargiary

HT Correspondent

KOKRAJHAR, Sept 30: On Monday, the EM of BTR for the Information & Public Relations department, Dr Swargiary, inaugurated several schemes in Udalguri district, which will benefit the people of the greater Udalguri area.

During the inauguration of the CC Block Road from Ramesh Daimari House to Jamuguri Bathou Mandir, Dr Swargiary stated, "This road, constructed at a cost of ₹ 18.95 lakh, will greatly enhance connectivity in our re-

gion and empower the people by making access to essential services more efficient." This project, part of the Gelabil VCDC in the Mazbat Development Block, is one of many development schemes currently being rolled out throughout BTR. Earlier, Dr Swargiary also inaugurated a Community Toilet at Pauripota High School in Saikiachubri Primary, located within the Rowta Constituency.

In his inaugural remarks, he emphasised, "Proper hygiene and sanitation are essential for our

schools, as they are foundational for a healthy society, and we are working in this line to ensure a brighter future for the community."

"The Bodoland Territorial Region, under the leadership of the CEM of BTR, Pramod Boro, is relentlessly working to promote holistic development in the Bodoland region, focusing on both infrastructure and essential facilities that contribute to the overall quality of life for the community," said EM of Bodoland Territorial Region, Dr Nilut Swargiary.

Assamese dancers to grace Gandhi Jayanti celebration in Pune



HT Correspondent

NAGAON, Sept 30: Elora Bora, a noted expert in Bharatanatyam, and her disciple, the budding dancer Moyukhi Bezbaruha, both from Assam, have been invited to perform at the week-long grand Gandhi Jayanti celebrations in Pune, Maharashtra. The event, organised by the Maharashtra Gandhi Smarak Nidhi, will take place from October 2 to 8 at Gandhi Bhavan in Pune.

Elora Bora and Moyukhi Bezbaruha will present a cultural evening, showcasing classical dance performances, including Pushpanjali, Jyotiswaram, Ashtapadi, Shreeman-

narayan, and Shabdam on October 4, 2024. Additionally, they will perform dance adaptations of legendary musician Dr Bhupen Hazarika's humanitarian songs like 'Manuhe Manuhor Babe'.

It was informed by artiste Ranjan Bezbaruha that this Gandhi Jayanti celebration, themed 'World Non-Violence Day', will be attended by prominent figures, including Sharad Pawar, former chief minister of Maharashtra, and Union minister Dr Ashok Bajpayee, as well as eminent poet Dr Kumar Saptarishi and several Gandhi leaders, educators, artists, and intellectuals from across the country.

CSIR-North East Institute of Science and Technology celebrates 83rd Foundation Day

MoU signed with Rabindranath Tagore University for research collaboration

HT Correspondent

JORHAT, Sept 30: CSIR-North East Institute of Science and Technology, Jorhat, celebrated the 83rd Foundation Day of its apex body, the Council of Scientific & Industrial Research (CSIR), with much zeal and enthusiasm on Monday.

In his lecture on 'Leadership in Academia', Padma Shri awardee Professor Vinod K Singh, chair professor at IIT Kanpur and chairman of RAB (CSIR), emphasised the importance of developing leadership qualities in research and academics. He stated that creating new leaders in science and academia is crucial and a pressing need for countries like India.

Professor Vinod K Singh, who was the chief guest on the occasion, also stressed the importance of work, responsibility, and time management.

He mentioned that traits of a great leader, such as clarity in thought and presentation, the ability to make the right decisions, and an understanding of governance and management, must be accompanied by respect for peer groups, ethics, morals, honesty, and integrity.

Professor Singh delivered his address at a special program held at the Dr JN Baruah Au-



ditorium in the morning, which was attended by an august gathering of dignitaries, invitees, and eminent personalities from Jorhat district, as well as the CSIR-NEIST fraternity.

Dr VM Tiwari, director of CSIR-NEIST, presided over the function.

In his welcome address, Dr Tiwari conveyed his greetings on the occasion. He briefly spoke about some of CSIR's significant contributions over the years and urged everyone to pledge to work unitedly with renewed vigour to create a better CSIR for a new and vibrant India.

He also highlighted the significant technological interventions of CSIR-NEIST over the years in various S&T sectors.

He specifically mentioned the contributions

SITA vice chairman reviews progress of herbal garden project at Rangia College

HT Bureau

GUWAHATI, Sept 30: Vice chairman Narayan Chandra Borkataky of the State Innovation & Transformation Aayog (SITA), Assam, visited Rangia College, Rangia, on Monday, for a survey of the Botanical Garden for the ongoing SITA-sponsored project entitled 'Ex-Situ Cultivation of Medicinal Plants & Conservation of Rare and Endangered Plants – Setting up a Herbal Garden'.

With logistical support from SITA, Rangia College aims to create an awareness drive about medicinal plants among the common people by establishing a herbal garden and cultivating rare or threatened plants outside their natural habitat.

This will help future generations understand the environmental degradation caused by deforestation and industrialisation.

The project also aims to raise awareness among the public about income generation through herbal gardens, encourage farmers and researchers to pursue patent rights, and accelerate research and development in the subject by involving various institutions.

The goal is to establish a herbal garden on the college campus. It is worth mentioning that the MoA for this project was signed on May 5, 2022, between SITA, government of Assam, and Rangia College.

During his visit to the college campus, the vice-chairman inquired about the rare and endangered plants collected from different areas of Assam.

Some of the RET plants already planted in the college campus garden include Hollong (State tree), Sia

Nahor (Endemic), Rudraksha, Agaru (Sanchi), Dhuna, Holokh, All spice, Rauwolfia serpentina, Kalmegh, Lemon grass & Citronella, Boch, Red & white sandalwood, and many other important fruit, medicinal, and spice plants.

He expressed great satisfaction after learning about the extended work being done in neighbouring areas under the SITA project.

He also praised and encouraged Dr Ranjita Tamuli Talukdar, principal investigator, and Dr Snigdha Sarkar, member of Rangia College, along with their entire team for their dedicated efforts.

Following the garden visit, a review meeting was held with the Teachers' Unit at Rangia College, where Dr Brajendra Saikia, principal of Rangia College, delivered his welcome speech.

Addressing the gathering, vice-chairman Narayan Chandra Borkataky, SITA, delivered inspiring comments about the project, offering fruitful suggestions for its future development.

He expressed hope that through the project, people would understand the usefulness of herbal plants and be encouraged to establish herbal gardens for income generation and research purposes.

Dwijendra S Hazari, Alakesh Kakati, along with other officials of SITA and members of the Rangia College Teachers' Unit, were also present at the review meeting.

The meeting was conducted by Deepak Kalita, secretary of the Teachers' Unit, Rangia College, with a vote of thanks.

Assam Rifles conducts medical camp on World Heart Day



HT Correspondent

BISWANATH CHARIALI, Sept 30: Assam Rifles organised a medical camp in observance of World Heart Day at Sonitpur on Monday, stated a press release. The medical team of Assam Rifles focused on cardiovascular dis-

eases and their prevention. The event began with an informative lecture on heart health, emphasising the importance of early detection and preventive measures to reduce the risk of heart disease. The lecture was followed by a thorough medical check-up for the attendees, ensuring that their health concerns were addressed by professionals. The camp concluded with the distribution of necessary medicines. A total of 165 people from the villages benefited from the camp. This initiative underscored Assam Rifles' commitment to enhancing community health and promoting awareness about cardiovascular diseases, making a significant impact on the local population's well-being.

Residents alarmed as rainwater fills large pothole in Demow

HT Correspondent

DEMOW, Sept 30: The residents of Demow in Sivasagar District are increasingly concerned about the long-delayed completion of the four-lane road construction in their area. It has been alleged that negligence by the construction companies and the concerned department has led to the incomplete state of the project.

According to sources, several construction companies have undertaken the task of building the Hanjani to Demow stretch, but none have successfully completed the work, with some even abandoning the project.

Potholes frequently appear on NH-37 in Demow, often drawing media attention. While the construction companies have filled these potholes in the past, they continue to reappear.

A particularly large pothole has emerged once again on NH-37 in Demow.

After heavy rainfall, this large pothole fills with water, causing significant difficulties for both pedestrians and drivers.

On Sunday evening, an e-rickshaw fell into the water-filled pothole, though fortunately, no one was injured.

A few days ago, workers from the construction company dug a trench near NH-37 in Demow using a JCB to help drain the water that collects in the pothole.

They placed a barricade around the dug area but left the job incomplete.

There is a risk of accidents, particularly at night, as the water-filled pothole is hard to see.

The locals have appealed to the concerned authorities to fill the pothole on NH-37 and complete the four-lane road construction as soon as possible.

Dhing College celebrates 59th Freshman Social

HT Correspondent

NAGAON, Sept 30: The 59th Freshman Social of the historic Dhing College was held with a two-day-long programme at the college premises. The event was organised by the college students' union, featuring a variety of activities.

During the programme, over four books penned by college faculty members were ceremonially released. Additionally, the college newsletter 'Verve' and five campus newsletters were also released during the event.

Dr Satyendra Nath Barman, principal of B Boroah College, Guwahati, attended as the chief guest, while Professor Mohini Mohan Deka, retired professor of Dimoria College, attended as the guest of honour.

The open session was chaired by Dinesh Nath, president of the college governing body, and Dr Biman Hazarika, principal of the college, delivered the welcome address.

The event concluded with a cultural show dedicated to the memory of noted Assamese singer and artiste, the late Digen Mahanta. The cultural programme was inaugurated by Dr Sukdev Adhikary, principal of LOKD College, Dhekiajuli, as stated in a press note.

Sivasagar Bar Association elects new Executive Committee

HT Correspondent

SIVASAGAR, Sept 30: A new Executive Committee of the Sivasagar Bar Association was recently elected for the next two years. Among the lawyers, 37 contested for various posts in the election.

Earlier, the committee nominated senior advocate Luit Prakash Dutta as president, Girish Neog and Bikash Dey as vice-presidents, while elections were held for the rest of the posts. A total of 392 out of 476 voters cast their votes. Bidyut Gogoi was elected as the general secretary for the second time.

Bishnu Sharma and Anjal Bharali were elected as joint secretaries, and Ranjit Saikia won the post of assistant secretary.

Bhaskar Jyoti Neog, Azim Ahmed, Srimanta Gogoi, Dhiraj Dutta, Ujjal Sharma, Karabi Kalita, Biju Sharma, Dipanjal Duwari, Prakashyoti Saikia, Chandan Phukan, Ranjit Dutta, Shikharani Dutta, Bhaskarjyoti Neog, Ashish Konwar, and Gayatri Borbarua were elected as the executive members.

IGBRIMH, Tezpur observes Hindi Pakhwada

HT Correspondent

TEZPUR, Sept 30: Hindi Pakhwada was observed at Lokopriya Gopinath Bordoloi Regional Institute of Mental Health, Tezpur, from September 14, 2024, to September 30, 2024.

The 4th All India Official Language Conference was attended by Dr Indrajeet Banerjee, in-charge of the Hindi Cell, at Bharat Mandapam, New Delhi, on September 14-15, 2024.

The closing ceremony of the program was held on Monday, at the Cafeteria building of the institute from 10:00 am to 11:00 am.

The Hindi Cell of the institute organised the event, in which Dr KK Tamuli, deputy medical superintendent; Dr Debahuti Sabhapandit, assistant medical superintendent-I; and Dr Bipul Sharma, assistant medical superintendent-II chaired the event and addressed the attendees.

Dr Indrajeet Banerjee, in-charge of the Hindi Cell, students, and employees of the institute were also present.

The chairpersons and other speakers expressed their views on the use of the official language, Hindi, in the office and urged everyone to adopt Hindi in their communication.

The Hindi Cell of the institute also conducted Hindi essay writing and slogan competitions on the occasion of Hindi Pakhwada for the employees, and the winners were felicitated during the event.

QUOTE OF THE DAY

Nothing has more strength than dire necessity.
-Euripides

Nasrallah's assassination

Hassan Nasrallah, one of the Arab world's most prominent and charismatic leaders, was a figure who could stir emotions far beyond his homeland. His assassination, killed by a barrage of the US-made bombs dropped by Israel, has sent shockwaves through the Muslim world. For some, including Kashmiri politicians Mehbooba Mufti and Omar Abdullah, the news hit close to home, symbolizing a deeper conflict that transcends borders. However, Mehbooba and Abdullah, both prominent figures in Jammu and Kashmir, remained notably restrained in their reactions. They did not name the United States, which has steadfastly supported Israel. Yet, a young Kashmiri girl's reaction on social media was markedly more emotional. In a defiant statement, she warned that "a Nasrallah will be born in every Kashmiri home," a clear indication of the admiration Nasrallah commanded even beyond Lebanon. Her conviction and fiery expression left a powerful impact, with her words resonating like a 5,000-watt bulb in the region marked by its own struggles. Nasrallah, widely regarded as the most eloquent orator in the Arab world, met his end in a manner devoid of the grandeur that marked his life. He was killed in his Beirut bunker, alongside his daughter, in a devastating airstrike. Nasrallah's speeches, once sold like hotcakes in Lebanon, made him a symbol of resistance for many. For over 32 years, Nasrallah built Hezbollah into a formidable force, shaking the boots of Israel and its Western allies. His assassination, therefore, was not just a military action but a political earthquake that reverberated across continents.

India, like much of the international community, has reacted with a level of indifference that frustrates many Muslims. Nasrallah wasn't merely a militia leader, but a figurehead of the resistance against Israeli and Western intervention in the Middle East. Mehbooba Mufti's silence could be interpreted as caution, but her sentiments may well align with the popular refrain: "Nasrallah is dead, but Hezbollah lives on." The United States, already heavily invested in the Middle East, has deployed more troops to the region in the wake of Nasrallah's assassination. Hezbollah's leadership, already decimated by previous strikes, now faces a critical turning point, as experts warn that Nasrallah's death could trigger an all-out war. Yet, the circumstances leading to Nasrallah's death point to a failure of Hezbollah's military wing. Israeli intelligence had successfully carried out a slew of targeted assassinations and airstrikes, seemingly lowering Hezbollah's guard. Nasrallah's bunker, previously thought to be impenetrable, became his tomb, courtesy of 5,000-pound U.S.-made bunker-busting bombs.

Nasrallah, who wore the distinctive black turban symbolizing his descent from the Prophet Muhammad, was not just a military leader but a symbol of Shia resistance. He, along with Iranian general Qassem Soleimani, was a key strategist of the so-called "Axis of Resistance." Now, with his death, Israel has turned its attention to other enemies, including the Houthis and Islamic fighters in Syria and Lebanon. Hezbollah remains a significant force, with over 50,000 fighters still ready to take up arms, and a new leader will undoubtedly rise to take Nasrallah's place—just as Abbas al-Musawi did when Israel assassinated him in 1992. Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, speaking from New York at the United Nations, took responsibility for the strike, calling Hezbollah a "quintessential terrorist organization." His message was clear: Israel will defend itself at any cost. And in the wake of Nasrallah's death, the United States has doubled down on its support for Israel, despite previously speaking of a ceasefire.

A decade of financial inclusion

THE EXTRAORDINARY JOURNEY OF PRADHAN MANTRI JAN DHAN YOJANA

“ Sukhasya Moolam Dharma, Dharmasya Moolam Artha, Arthasya Moolam Rajyam” (The root of happiness is Dharma, the root of wealth is the state), Prime Minister Narendra Modi quoted this Sanskrit verse in his Independence Day speech on August 15, 2014, drawing from ancient wisdom. He emphasized the government's responsibility to connect citizens with the nation's economic activities, declaring, "This Government has accepted this responsibility." Over the past decade, the government has delivered on this promise, achieving remarkable progress in driving economic growth and inclusivity.

In a monumental achievement that underscores India's steadfast commitment to financial inclusion, the Pradhan Mantri Jan Dhan Yojana (PMJDY) has been recognized by the Guinness World Records for an extraordinary accomplishment - opening a staggering 18,096,130 bank accounts within the span of just one week. This remarkable feat, spearheaded by the Department of Financial Services, reflects the government's relentless efforts to bridge the financial divide in the country. By extending essential banking services to previously underserved and remote areas, the initiative reaffirms India's resolve to provide equitable access to financial resources for all its citizens, fostering greater economic empowerment and inclusivity nation-wide.

August 2024 marked the completion of a decade since the PMJDY was launched by Hon'ble Prime Minister Narendra Modi from the Red Fort on August 28, 2014. This ambitious initiative aimed to empower economically disadvantaged citizens by providing them with universal access to banking services, fostering a culture of savings and giving people the tools to break free from poverty. The initiative's central goal was to democratize access to financial systems, enabling millions of Indians to participate in the formal economy.

Since its inception, PMJDY has opened more than 52.81 crore bank accounts, transforming the lives of individuals, families, and entire communities by enabling direct financial access. These accounts serve as a foundation for direct benefit transfers, social security schemes, and economic empowerment, and have contributed to a nationwide reduction in poverty. The initiative's impact has been felt across the country, bringing financial dignity to millions who were previously unbanked. At the heart of the initiative is a simple, yet powerful tool: basic savings accounts that require no minimum balance and still earn interest like regular accounts. These accounts come with RuPay debit cards and accident insurance coverage, which was initially set at ₹ 1 lakh but later increased to ₹ 2 lakh for accounts opened after August 28, 2018.

Moreover, account holders are eligible for an overdraft facility of up to ₹ 10,000, providing a safety net for emergencies. These accounts are integrated with other government financial schemes such as Direct Benefit Transfers (DBT), the Pradhan Mantri Jeevan

linked to the Jan Dhan accounts, now ensures that 100 percent of benefits are deposited directly into the beneficiaries' accounts. This transformation has not only sealed the cracks in the system but has also ushered in an era of unprecedented transparency, accountability, and governance efficiency. The pandemic presented an extraordinary challenge for India, particularly for women who faced a disproportionate loss of economic opportunities. In response, the Central Government implemented a swift and targeted cash transfer program under the Pradhan Mantri Garib Kalyan Yojana (PMGKY), aimed specifically at women with PMJDY accounts. Within 10 days of the nationwide lockdown, more than 20 crore women received a direct benefit transfer of ₹ 500 per month for three months, providing essential financial relief to millions of households.

In Assam, Hon'ble Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma's integration of Direct Benefit Transfer (DBT) with the state's Orunodoi

DEGREE OF THOUGHT
By: Ashok Singhal

Jyoti Bima Yojana (PMJJBY), Pradhan Mantri Suraksha Bima Yojana (PMSBY), Atal Pension Yojana (APY) and the MUDRA loan scheme, offering a comprehensive package of financial support.

Reflecting on India's pre-digital era, former Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi once famously remarked that only 15 paise of every rupee allocated for welfare benefits reached the intended beneficiaries, with the remaining 85 paise being siphoned off by intermediaries. This glaring inefficiency has been dramatically reversed under Prime Minister Modi's Digital India initiative. The implementation of DBT,

more, India has now become a global leader in digital payments, accounting for more than 40 percent of the world's real-time transactions.

As I reflect on the journey of Pradhan Mantri Jan Dhan Yojana, I am reminded of the profound impact it has had on millions of lives. This initiative is not merely a financial inclusion scheme; it represents a revolutionary change in how we view governance and its role in the upliftment of society. Under the far-sighted leadership of our honorable Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Hon'ble Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma, we have not only bridged the financial gap but also empowered marginalized communities, offering them dignity, opportunity and hope.

I recall the tears of joy in the eyes of a young widow, who received her first direct benefit transfer, and the smile on the face of a small farmer who accessed credit for the first time. These moments are a testament to the spirit of PMJDY, a spirit that believes in the potential of every individual and strives to unlock it.

As we look to the future, let us continue to carry forward this mission - ensuring that no one is left behind and that every citizen has the opportunity to thrive. Together, we are building an India where financial inclusion is not just a goal, but a reality for all. (The author is a Cabinet Minister, Govt. of Assam who can be reached at pro.ashoksinghal@gmail.com)

SBI's move to buy equity in big defaulter company SIIIL is preposterous

By: C.H Venkatachalam

In a move that has surprised corporate watchers, State Bank of India (SBI) will take a dual role in the debt restructuring of defaulter Supreme Infrastructure India Ltd (SIIL). This development marks an unprecedented step in India's corporate debt resolution landscape, as the country's largest public sector bank transitions from being SIIL's primary creditor to becoming an equity stakeholder.

State Bank of India has been SIIL's largest lender, with the infrastructure company defaulting on a substantial ₹ 1,023.42 crore of SBI loans. Now, in a surprising turn of events, SBI is poised to invest ₹ 24.33 crore in SIIL's preferential allotment, acquiring 28,55,771 shares at ₹ 85.23 per share.

This investment will give SBI approximately a 2.49 percent stake in the restructured AIBE's Banking News Bulletin from All India Bank Employees' Association company. The move represents a shift from being a creditor facing a substantial write-off to becoming an equity participant in SIIL's potential recovery. According to Company Announcements SBI's decision to take an equity stake in a company that has defaulted on its loans is an extraordinary development in Indian banking history.

This move raises several critical issues. Its eagerness to invest equity in a company that has already defaulted on over Rs 1,000 crore of its loans suggests a strange risk assessment process. The bank appears to be betting on SIIL's long-term recovery potential. As a public sector bank, its decision to use public funds to take an equity position in a distressed company may face scrutiny. The bank will need to justify this investment strategy to its shareholders and regulatory bodies. SBI's dual role as a creditor and shareholder could potentially lead to conflicts of interest in future decision-making processes regarding SIIL.

On July 8, 2024, it was reported that SIIL filed a plea with the national company law tribunal (NCLT) seeking approval for a new resolution plan to settle its debts with financial creditors within a 90-day timeframe. Following the creditors' meeting, SIIL's outstanding debt to financial creditors has been dramatically reduced from ₹ 2,200.36 crore to ₹ 464 crore as the settlement amount. Its 'composite scheme of compromise and arrangement' received overwhelming support, with 92 percent of financial creditors voting in favour.

This scheme was initially approved by the company's board of directors in 2022. The company is now awaiting final approval from the NCLT to proceed with the restructuring plan. Post-NCLT clearance, the company plans to implement the resolution by monetizing company and promoters' assets, raising equity from existing or new investors and utilizing promoters' contributions to finance the settlement amount. It aims to achieve debt-free status by the end of September 2024. Vikram Sharma, managing director of SIIL, expressed gratitude towards the company's partners and creditors for their trust and support. He stated, "With a strong restructured resolution plan, we are confident about obtaining NCLT clearance and achieving a debt-free status for Supreme Infrastructure by the end of September 2024." The company's total bank outstanding stood at ₹ 7,093 crore, including ₹ 2,200 crore in principal debt and ₹ 4,893 crore in funded interest term loans and unapplied interest.

The settlement amount of ₹ 464 crore represents a substantial haircut of 93.45 percent for the lenders. The rationale behind such a SBI Suffers settlement amount of ₹ 464 crore represents a substantial haircut of 93.45 percent for the lenders. The rationale behind such a significant write-off and its long-term implications for the banking sector and other corporate defaulters remain unclear. Its annual report received a qualified opinion from auditors in FY 22-23, highlighting issues with loan confirmations and interest accruals. The auditor report also highlighted that SIIL has not recognized financial liability for ₹ 1,533 crore in corporate guarantees given to its subsidiaries and group companies.

This significant offbalance-sheet risk could potentially un-

dermine the effectiveness of the current restructuring plan. SIIL is issuing up to 8,80,44,460 equity shares at ₹ 85.23 per share, along with 1,78,63,430 convertible warrants. This preferential allotment aims to raise approximately ₹ 750.40 crore. The issuance of 1,78,63,430 convertible warrants adds another layer of complexity to this restructuring. These warrants, primarily allocated to promoters and select investors, have the potential to significantly alter SIIL's ownership structure in the future. The warrant structure, which requires only 25 percent payment upfront with the remaining 75 percent due within 18 months, provides these select investors a low-risk option to increase their stake if the company's performance improves. This structure could be seen as a backdoor for further promoter control, potentially at the expense of existing minority shareholders.

According to an insolvency expert the table below shows that SIIL was insolvent and defaulting to banks at least since FY-2016 as is evident from the table below: According to the insolvency expert an analysis of SIIL's financial history reveals a troubling pattern of insolvency that dates back to at least FY15-16. Despite clear signs of financial distress, there is no evidence that banks, including SBI, ever initiated insolvency proceedings under the Insolvency and Bankruptcy Code (IBC). Instead, it was an operational creditor, Vikas Shutting Store Private Limited that finally dragged SIIL into insolvency proceedings in November 2018 for accumulated defaults of merely ₹ 14.26 crore. This action, taken for a relatively small amount compared to the company's total debt, highlights the apparent reluctance of major financial institutions to take decisive action. The Corporate Insolvency Resolution Process (CIRP) order was passed on September 30, 2019, followed by a disputed mutual settlement for ₹ 9.50 crore.

The outcome of this settlement remains unclear, further underscoring the opacity surrounding SIIL's financial dealings. According to the insolvency expert given SIIL's precarious financial condition according to the insolvency expert it was logical to expect a standard CIRP with the promoters being ineligible under Section 29A of the IBC. However, it appears that the promoters reached a settlement with the lenders under Section 12A of the IBC. While such settlements can include asset and financial restructuring, including debt-to-equity conversion, the terms of this particular deal raise serious concerns. The insolvency expert also highlighted that the decision by SBI to subscribe to SIIL's fresh equity at a premium is particularly alarming. Typically, in such 5 restructuring scenarios, lenders are expected to recover their debt while leaving minimal equity value for the promoters.

SBI's investment in equity at a premium suggests that the bank may have written off an excessive amount of debt, inadvertently leaving substantial value for the very promoters responsible for the company's financial troubles. According to the insolvency expert this arrangement between SBI and SIIL creates a dangerous precedent in India's corporate debt landscape. It potentially encourages other defaulting companies to seek similar deals, where they can retain control and value even after significant defaults. Moreover, it raises questions about the effectiveness of India's insolvency resolution framework and the role of public sector banks in managing distressed assets.

The situation bears hallmarks of what some experts are terming a "financial Stockholm syndrome," where the lender (SBI) appears to be aligning itself with the interests of the defaulting borrower (SIIL) rather than prioritizing the recovery of public funds. The unusual nature of this debt restructuring and equity investment calls for immediate regulatory scrutiny.

The Reserve Bank of India (RBI) needs to step in and examine SBI's decision-making process in this matter. There is a pressing need to ensure that public sector banks maintain strict discipline in their approach to debt resolution and avoid creating moral hazards in the financial system. This is a watershed moment in Indian corporate debt resolution. This move blurs the traditional lines between lenders and equity holders, potentially opening up new questionable avenues for dealing with distressed assets. (IPA Service)

The crisis of leadership in Kashmir: A legacy of broken trust and compromises

By: Er. Shahzada Athar Ishaq Shah

Kashmir, a region with a long and tumultuous history, has been shaped by leaders who have repeatedly compromised the aspirations of its people. The National Conference (NC) under Sheikh Muhammad Abdullah and the People's Democratic Party (PDP) under Mufi Mohammad Sayeed have both played major roles in this. These parties have let down the people of Kashmir by making compromises on their ideologies and aligning with powers in Delhi for personal gains, while neglecting the region's demand for autonomy self-determination and liberty.

Sheikh Muhammad Abdullah, hailed as the "Lion of Kashmir," began his political career as a leader who championed the cause of the oppressed Kashmiri Muslims. His early years were defined by his advocacy for Kashmiri autonomy and self-rule, particularly through the establishment of the All Jammu and Kashmir Muslim Conference in 1932.

However, his transition to the National Conference in 1939 marked the beginning of his ideological shift, as he sought to present himself as a secular leader, aligned with the Indian National Congress, though some see that as a change towards better ideology.

Abdullah's departure from the aspirations of the Kashmiri people began after the partition of India in 1947. Initially, he had leaned towards a plebiscite for Kashmir, but his relationship with Jawaharlal Nehru, India's first Prime Minister, ultimately resulted in the Instrument of Accession, whereby Jammu & Kashmir became a part of India, albeit with special status under Article 370. This move, while maintaining a degree of autonomy for Kashmir, tied its fate to the Indian Union. Critics argue that Sheikh Abdullah had entered into a Faustian bargain that allowed for the gradual erosion of Kashmir's autonomy. Through this, the Indian constitution's laws seeped into the state, diminishing its self-governance.

In 1952, Sheikh Abdullah entered into the Delhi Agreement with Nehru, which confirmed that Jammu and Kashmir would enjoy special privileges, including its own constitution, flag, and Sadr-e-Riyasat (the state's head of government). However, this agreement was seen as another betrayal, as it effectively conceded several important powers to the central Indian government. This left the state's autonomy under threat from right-wing parties and the Indian government alike. For many Kashmiris, this agreement was a clear signal that Sheikh Abdullah was more interested in holding onto power than in securing the full autonomy of Kashmir.

Sheikh Abdullah's downfall came swiftly in 1953 when he was dismissed and imprisoned. This occurred after it was believed that he was contemplating an independent Kashmir or leaning towards Pakistan, something that alarmed Nehru

and Indian leadership. Abdullah's political games and power struggles led to his isolation, with his old ally, Bakshi Ghulam Mohammad, replacing him. Abdullah had hoped to maintain his unchallenged rule, but his ambiguous policies led to his ouster, reinforcing his image as a leader who compromised the aspirations of the Kashmiri people for personal power.

The 1987 Jammu and Kashmir Legislative Assembly elections represent another troubling chapter in the history of the National Conference's broken promises. Sheikh Abdullah's son, Farooq Abdullah, took over the reins of the party after his father's death in 1982. The elections were widely rigged to ensure the victory of the NC-Congress alliance, and this event is often seen as a turning point that shattered the people's faith in democracy.

The election fraud led to the rise of armed insurgency in Kashmir. Opposition leaders, particularly from the Muslim United Front (MUF), were harassed, and votes were manipulated. Many leaders of the MUF, who had tried to engage in peaceful political processes, turned to militancy after losing faith in the system. This betrayal by the NC directly fueled the insurgency, leaving Kashmiris disillusioned and pushing the region into decades of violence.

Mufi Mohammad Sayeed's career, like that of Sheikh Abdullah, is marked by a series of ideological compromises. Initially a member of the Congress Party, Mufi Sayeed rose to prominence by supporting the Indian narrative on Kashmir. His tenure as India's first Muslim Home Minister from 1989 to 1990 was marked by controversy, especially the kidnapping of his daughter, Rubaiya Sayeed, by militants. The release of militants in exchange for her freedom was seen by many as a major compromise, further undermining his credibility in Kashmir.

However, Mufi's most significant ideological shift came in 1999 when he formed the People's Democratic Party (PDP). This new party positioned itself as a moderate voice advocating for dialogue and reconciliation between India and Kashmir. While the PDP initially attracted support by promoting the idea of "self-rule" and peace talks, many saw this as a calculated attempt by Mufi to rebrand himself and gain political power in a post-insurgency Kashmir, however some considered it as embracing a more progressive viewpoint.

The most controversial decision in Mufi Sayeed's political career came in 2015 when he formed a government in alliance with the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP), a party with a starkly different vision for Kashmir. The BJP, known for its stance on the complete integration of Kashmir into India and its opposition to Article 370, was seen as an enemy of Kashmiri aspirations for autonomy.

By entering into an alliance with the BJP, Mufi Sayeed and the PDP betrayed the trust of the Kashmiri people who had

supported the PDP as an alternative to the NC and Congress. This alliance was deeply unpopular, with many Kashmiris feeling that Mufi had compromised his principles for power. The PDP's decision to align with a party that was actively seeking to dismantle Kashmir's autonomy alienated many of its supporters and led to widespread protests in the region.

The history of the National Conference and the People's Democratic Party is one marked by compromises and unfulfilled commitments. From Sheikh Abdullah's alignment with the Indian government in 1947 to Farooq Abdullah's rigging of the 1987 elections, and Mufi Sayeed's alliance with the BJP in 2015, these leaders have repeatedly chosen personal and political gain over the aspirations of the Kashmiri people. Their legacies are marked by broken promises and unfulfilled hopes, leaving Kashmir in a state of unresolved conflict and disillusionment.

But it's not just the NC and PDP anymore. Several leaders who were once part of these parties have broken away to form their own factions, now serving as proxies for the central government. These newer parties and leaders are simply a continuation of the unfulfilled promises we've witnessed for decades, who are now aligned closely with the ruling party at the Centre, further deepening the manipulation and erosion of local authority.

These parties—both old and new—claim they will restore Article 370, but this is nothing more than political theatre. They know full well that the constitutional amendment that removed our special status cannot easily be reversed. Yet they continue to make empty promises, preying on the hopes of the people. Their claims are hollow, designed to exploit our pain and frustrations for their own electoral gain.

Moreover, these leaders have not been courageous enough to speak for the voiceless in Kashmir. The real issues—unemployment, lack of development, and the suppression of civil liberties—are often ignored. The common people are left in a state of fear, unable to raise their voices against the injustices they face daily. These parties prefer to stay silent on these matters because addressing them would mean going against the powers that be, something they are unwilling to do.

What Kashmir needs now is true leadership—individuals who will advocate for the rights of the people, not for personal or political gain. We need leaders who have the courage to speak about the suppressed issues, those that common people cannot discuss openly due to fear. This suppression cannot continue if we are ever to see lasting peace and prosperity. The graveyard silence that currently pervades our land is not peace. Real peace comes from justice, equality, and the freedom to express our desires for a better future. We deserve leaders who will fight for this, not just for their next electoral win. (The author can be reached at shahather98@gmail.com)

How Hanoi became a hub for French scholars studying India



By: Ajay Kamalakaran

The French first arrived in India in the 17th century, but for another 100 years or so, they had no interest in its civilisation. India was just another source of trade for them — until Abraham Hyacinthe Anquetil-Duperron came along.

Anquetil-Duperron, the son of a spice importer, had dedicated himself to classical studies and philology. He travelled to India in 1754 and ended up spending eight years in the country, learning Persian, Sanskrit and other Indian languages as well as Zoroastrian theology. He published the first European translation of the Avesta and became the first professional French Indologist. It was he who conceived the institutional framework for the profession.

"It is true that a few missionaries have already produced some work on Asia that is important and even essential in its genre," Anquetil-Duperron wrote. "European scholars have also extended the field of our knowledge in the same area.

However, their work suffers from certain drawbacks. On the one hand, these relate to the duties attached to the state of being a missionary. On the other, there are drawbacks such as being deprived of the company of Orientals, and the advantages of being able to do all things they do, and seeing things with their eyes."

Anquetil-Duperron insisted that another way had to be tried or else these disadvantages would prevent France from having a "satisfactory understanding" of Asian countries. "This gulf will never be bridged by simple travellers' tales from soldiers, sailors or traders," he warned.

His solution was straightforward: "It is professional scholars who are needed, scholars who travel." "But how will they be able to do this? We know that communication helps to increase understanding, and that distant countries sometimes have needs that require informed and prompt help. A way that might be advantageous to both sides could be to set up what I might call travelling academies."

Anquetil-Duperron died in 1805, with his wish to establish such academies unfulfilled. But his work became popular in France. The Collège de France in Paris introduced Sanskrit as a subject in 1814, followed by others such as the École Pratique des Hautes Études, which was established in 1868, and the École des Langues Orientales.

At these schools, the emphasis "was on the study of classical languages and texts or written documents taken out of their original context," write Catherine Clémentin-Ojha and Pierre-Yves Manguin in their book *A Century in Asia: The History of the École Française D'extrême-Orient* (2007).

It was Anquetil-Duperron's ideas that provided the framework for the École Française D'extrême-Orient (or the French School of the Far East, abbreviated as EFEO). This institute played a priceless role in enabling Indologists and Sanskrit scholars from France to engage in research and conservation in what was called "Further India".

The EFEO was established in Hanoi in 1900 while it was under French colonial occupation. Its first researchers were either Indologists or Sinologists, many of whom knew Sanskrit.

Although it opened in French-occupied Indochina, the EFEO had a pan-Asian outlook from the start. "The goal was to deepen knowledge about the civilisations of India and China and their influence in Southeast Asia," Clémentin-Ojha and Manguin say.

The school followed Anquetil-Duperron's vision. "In a university setting where Asia was studied through texts and from Europe, the EFEO saw itself as playing an original role," Clémentin-Ojha and Manguin say. "From the time of its foundation, it allowed its members to conduct their prolonged research in situ and facilitated their direct contact with Asians on the very site where their traditions had evolved."

New generation

One of the co-founders of the EFEO was Sylvain Lévi. A "brilliant Indologist" who was "prodigiously erudite", Lévi became "a professor at the Collège de France at the age of 31," say Clémentin-Ojha and Manguin.

Lévi was a master of Sanskrit as well as Japanese and classical Chinese. He taught and inspired a whole generation of Indologists such as George Coedès, who was the director of the EFEO from 1929 to 1947 and whose book *The Indianized States of Southeast Asia* is a definitive text on the subject.

About his mentor Lévi, Coedès said, "His intellectual brilliance was supported by an unflinching memory, a rare ability to assimilate knowledge and an uncommon power to work without flagging."

"As competent as a pandit in Sanskrit, he still found time to learn Chinese in spite of his workload, as he considered a knowledge of that language indispensable in his studies of Buddhism," Coedès added. "For the same reason later on, he felt he had to learn Japanese. He was always ready to make the effort needed to acquire a new tool for his work."

In 1911, Lévi took a critical look at how the "Orient" was seen in France. "In principle this is simply a geographical term," Lévi

explained. "In fact, it is a brutal conception that sweepingly divides up humanity into two halves, in the vein of the old hellenistic idea of barbarians. Its crude symbolism conveys a sense of the smug pride of the West that scorns the whole world outside its borders."

Even in the early 20th-century France, there was little understanding of the great civilisations of Asia, such as India and China. Knowledge of these countries was "not ranked highly in institutions of higher learning," Clémentin-Ojha and Manguin write. "Certainly, a discipline focussing on the Orient had existed from the second half of the 17th century but Oriental studies and orientalism had a marginal place in comparison with the Classical studies which were considered an integral part of the education of any cultivated man."

Nehru's request

While a large number of French scholars focused on the Indian influence in Indochina, one of Lévi's best students, Jules Bloch, was determined to follow in Anquetil-Duperron's footsteps and live in India. Bloch, who graduated from the École des Langues Orientales, majoring in Hindi and Tamil, became a member of the EFEO in 1905 and lived in Hanoi for three years before moving to India.

Bloch's first stop in India was the French colony of Pondicherry, where he put his knowledge of Tamil to good use. "His first port of call in India was Tamil Nadu but eventually he settled in Maratha country at Poona with R.G. [Ramakrishna Gopal] Bhandarkar, and a group of philologists gathered around him," Clémentin-Ojha and Manguin write.

His book titled *Caste et dialectes en tamoul* (Caste and Tamil Dialects) was published after he returned to Paris. The book illustrates "how sociological and linguistic research could happily go hand in hand," says the EFEO on its website.

In 1914, he published his thesis titled *La formation de la langue marathe* (The Formation of the Marathi Language), which the EFEO calls "the greatest fruit of his stay in India". This was turned into a book in 1919 and translated into Marathi in 1941 and English in 1970.

"In his second major work published in 1934, *L'indo-aryen, du Veda aux temps modernes* (The Indo-Aryan, from the Vedas to Modern Times), he describes the languages of India in direct relation to Sanskrit, and Sanskrit itself, in all its forms and with its Iranian connections," the EFEO says.

Bloch moved back to Paris in 1937, where he was appointed professor of Sanskrit language and literature at the Collège de France. This was the same position Bloch's mentor Lévi had held until his death two years earlier.

The outbreak of the Second World War and the subsequent German occupation of Paris forced Bloch out of the institution. He returned to the Collège de France and his professorship once the city was liberated in 1944 and stayed on for the next seven years. His most notable work in the post-war years was *Structure grammaticale des langues dravidiennes* (Grammatical Structure of Dravidian Languages). Published in 1946, the book was translated into English by Ramakrishna Harshe in 1954.

The EFEO, encouraged by Jawaharlal Nehru, finally set up its first centre in India in Pondicherry in 1955. By this time, thanks to the efforts of Indologists like Lévi, Coedès and Bloch, India studies had become well established in France.

"The aspiration was simply to set up a great French research centre in India that would be comparable to that of the Mecca of Orientalism, the Asiatic Society of Calcutta," Clémentin-Ojha and Manguin write. "Unlike the British, for lack of any dedicated base in India, French Indologists had great difficulty carrying out long-term studies in their chosen country. They had to work principally outside the frontier of the subcontinent. Some studied the effects of the expansion of Buddhism or Brahminism in Southeast Asia or 'Further India' as the regions which had undergone Indian influence were then known."

Although India, after attaining independence in 1947 from Britain, pushed France to leave its colonies in the country, the French scholarship in further establishing the ancient links between India and South East Asia was appreciated. Indian diplomat and historian KM Panikkar, for instance, praised the work of the EFEO while serving as India's first ambassador to China: "Whatever its lack of success in other domains, France in the Orient stands out for its sympathetic understanding in the cultural domain." Panikkar added that the EFEO had earned the "gratitude of the peoples of Asia for the magnificent work of its scholars in the restoration and conservation of monuments, the collection, publication and interpretation of inscriptions and other related activities".

The opening of the centre in Pondicherry led to an increase in French scholarship of India, cementing France's place as one of the leaders in Indology. (Courtesy: [Scroll.in](#))

Why do Indians not use the right terms for sex?

By: Vibha

India is known for its stereotypical nature and judgment, all because you have to act a certain way. Using terms like "vagina," "penis," or "sex" sounds wrong, and children are taught different words. This lack of sex education in India has resulted in a lack of awareness where people are grown adults and don't know what terms like consent, rape, or porn addiction mean.

As a fifth grader, each of us found it surprising—both boys and girls—what this "workshop" was that only girls were allowed to attend while the guys sat back and listened in class. Oh, it was just about periods.

Now, why do we think that it's wrong for men to learn about it? Okay, fine, they learnt it later in seventh grade but separately. Why are we teaching growing children gender stigma and making it a belief? Why do licensed doctors and educated teachers feel the need to be ashamed to talk about something so important?

When you think about it, sex ed teachers only talked about hormones or hair growing out of some place. Yes, that is important, but sex ed, as it is, is more important. Women and men should know the terms, the ways, and how to protect themselves. I think ninth graders are well enough aware of it, but what a licensed doctor teaches about our anatomy a YouTuber or a porn movie/video can never teach.

In India, about 9% of girls between the ages of 15 and 19 get pregnant annually. This is about 8-14% of all pregnancies in India. According to one study, 32% of adolescents had at least one sexually transmitted infection (STI). The most common STIs were chlamydia (23%), trichomoniasis (5.6%), herpes simplex (4.6%), and gonorrhea

(3.1%).

This study found that STIs were more common among adolescents who were illiterate, lived in rural areas, or came from poor or middle-class families. These statistics prove that a lack of awareness will result in consequences. Also, to remind you, many do not report their cases because of embarrassment or they just don't know about it.

When will we learn that Western culture has consumed us, and that is okay until the fact that we can raise awareness just the same way? Sex has become a need to the youth for pleasure, and it is not anyone else's right to judge them. I am not saying that sex should be encouraged, but contraceptives exist, and if the time comes, support your loved ones if they want an abortion.

How Do We Promote Using Correct Terminology?

1. Sex Education in Schools:

Sex ed should be incorporated in schools at early ages so both boys and girls are aware of consent, social stigma, healthy relationships, and having a secure feeling. The speaker should be a licensed doctor, and they should provide an unbiased medical opinion rather than a cultural one.

2. Sex Education at Home:

It is not only a teacher's duty to give information about sex ed, but also the parents' responsibility to have an open conversation about personal safety or concerns. This can help avoid rape or sexual violence or help figure it out.

3. School Counselors:

Having a licensed therapist or counselor in the school is important not only for sex/body-related questions but for anything that matters. They should not reveal anything, even to the principal, as that has become the main reason why the youth

doesn't trust therapists.

4. Social Media Awareness:

There are still many out there who believe that using these words is shameful, embarrassing, or just weird, but it's not.

Changing Mindsets About Sex

Now, how do we change the mindsets of people who have long believed that sex is only for procreation? The first thing is that love is more than sex. Consent should matter rather than cultural or traditional belief.

Most religious texts, unfortunately, give fewer rights to women, and we don't know who actually wrote that. Sex has become a moral compass-related issue—like even more than rape. Using euphemisms can lead to conflict.

Some don't know about these euphemisms, like "banana" or "apple," and while it may seem childish, funny, or silly to some, it could actually end up violating someone else. Especially when communicating about sex, one should never use euphemisms because obviously not everyone is aware of them. This could lead to violations of consent, misunderstandings, misinformation, feelings of insecurity, and even loneliness or the belief that it was your mistake and that you feel dirty. Always remember that you are not alone and that there is someone who will listen to you.

Although right now remaining ignorant can be your choice, in a few years issues like this will arise. As the world develops, so do people's mindsets. Especially the Generation Z—the ones who will have kids later—have already planned out that they'll educate their kids. Terms aren't weird or gross, because as a teen or an adult, you have to learn to understand your body and the opposite gender's body as well. (Courtesy: [Youth Ki Awaaz](#))

What are the early signs of multiple sclerosis (MS)?

By: Jayne Leonard

MS is a relapsing or progressive disease of the central nervous system (CNS). It occurs when the body's immune system mistakenly attacks the healthy nerves of the brain and spinal cord. According to the National Multiple Sclerosis Society (NMSS), the disease affects nearly 1 million adults in the United States. Most people with MS experience their first symptoms in their 20s or 30s.

Early intervention offers the best chance at preventing long-term disability. So it is crucial to recognize the initial symptoms of MS and seek prompt medical attention.

Vision changes with MS

The National Institute of Neurological Disorders and Stroke reports that vision problems are often the first symptom of MS. Inflammation and demyelination disrupt vision when it affects the optic nerves.

Possible vision changes include:

- blurred vision
- double vision
- red color distortion
- loss of vision
- pain with eye movement when looking up or to the side

Fatigue and weakness with MS

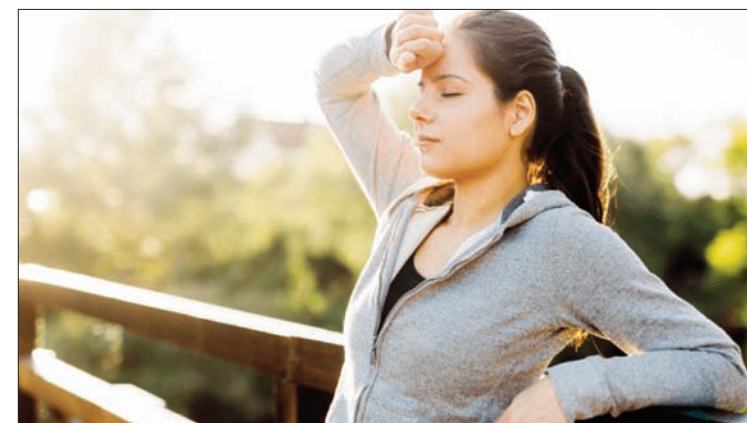
Most people with MS experience fatigue and weakness. Nerve damage in the spine and brain results in long-term, or chronic, fatigue. Weakness most commonly affects one extremity at a time before affecting other body parts. The symptom may be very bothersome for several days to a few weeks or barely detectable to start with and worsen over time.

Tingling and numbness with MS

Tingling and numbness are other common early warning signs of MS. These symptoms most often occur in the:

- arms
- face
- hands
- legs

Initially, the numbness and tingling may be very noticeable. However, this can become painful over time. Most of the time, these symptoms are not disabling ini-



tially. Symptoms can come and go in periods of exacerbation, when they worsen, and remission, when they lessen in severity but do not resolve completely.

Pain and spasms with MS

Up to two-thirds of people with MS worldwide report experiencing related pain. Examples of short-term pain include:

- trigeminal neuralgia, a sudden, severe pain in the face
- Lhermitte's sign, a brief, electric shock-like sensation from the back of the head down the spine
- neuropathic pain, a burning or sharp sensation around the body
- MS hug, a sensation of pressure around the ribs

Dizziness and loss of balance with MS

Dizziness and balance problems affect many people with MS. They may experience:

- feeling off balance
- frequent falls
- near-falls, such as tripping
- a feeling of falling toward one side or the other

These symptoms can cause people to lose their balance, fall, or find it difficult to walk. Less commonly, people with MS experience vertigo, which is the sensation that the surroundings are spinning.

Bladder and bowel issues with MS

The majority of people with MS experience some degree of bladder dysfunction. Bladder issues occur when lesions affect nerve signals that control the bladder and urinary function.

Symptoms typically include:

- increased urinary frequency
- urinary urgency
- difficulty starting urination
- nighttime urination
- incontinence
- difficulty emptying the bladder

Bowel issues are also common in people with MS. Most experience constipation or loss of bowel control.

Sexual problems with MS

Sexual arousal begins in the CNS when the brain sends messages to the sex organs. Damage to these nerves causes some people with MS to notice changes in their levels of sexual desire, sexual activity, and ability to orgasm. Other symptoms of MS, such as fatigue and pain, may also reduce sexual desire.

Cognitive and emotional changes with MS

Approximately half of all people with MS will notice cognitive changes that cause:

- difficulty finding words
- memory loss
- difficulty with the speed of processing information

Other symptoms of MS

Less common symptoms that affect people with MS include:

- headaches
- hearing loss
- speech problems
- trouble swallowing
- walking difficulties
- itching feelings
- loss of taste

Risk factors for MS

MS is an autoimmune disease that damages the CNS. The exact cause is not clear. However, genetic and environmental factors

likely play a role in its onset. Factors that increase the risk of developing MS include:

- **Age:** MS most commonly appears in people aged between 20 and 40 years. However, it can occur at any age.
- **Sex:** The condition affects three times as many women as men, according to the NMSS.
- **Family history:** A person who has a family member with MS may have a higher chance of developing it.

• **Infection:** Several viruses may increase the risk of MS, including an abnormal immune reaction to the Epstein-Barr virus, which causes infectious mononucleosis.

• **Geographic region:** MS is more common in temperate climates than in sunny regions. Within the U.S., the condition is more common in northern states.

• **Race:** MS can affect people of any background. Recent research indicates the incidence of MS among Black people is consistent with the rate among white people.

When to contact a doctor

Anyone with early symptoms of MS should consult a doctor without delay. Damage to the CNS can occur before a person experiences symptoms.

Early diagnosis and treatment can provide the best chance of preventing disability. Many treatments can help slow the progression of MS, and medication can help alleviate symptoms such as pain, fatigue, and bladder problems.

Summary

The signs of MS can vary widely. Most people who develop MS have symptoms in their 20s or 30s. Early signs include vision changes, numbness and tingling, and weakness. However, people may experience these symptoms at any point, or they may recur throughout the course of the disease. Some MS effects, such as muscle spasms, chronic pain, and emotional disturbances, only occur later.

Anyone concerned about symptoms that may indicate MS should talk with their doctor. The sooner a person starts treatment, the more effective it will likely be. (Courtesy: [Medical News Today](#))

Social media age limit: Will banning children be enough?

By: Asha Iyer Kumar

Australia's recent proposal to introduce a minimum age for children to use social media has sparked a global debate about how best to protect young people from its negative effects. With the government suggesting an age limit between 14 and 16, the intention is clear: shield children from the social harms linked to excessive screen time, mental health issues, and unrealistic social comparisons. But is an outright ban the answer? Can we expect this move to be effective, or are we merely sweeping the problem under the carpet?

In theory, setting an age limit seems like a straightforward solution to mitigate the risks associated with social media. However, the reality is far more complex. One of the most significant challenges in enforcing an age limit on social media is the sheer difficulty of verifying users' ages reliably. Most platforms already have minimum age requirements. Yet, we all know that younger children are active on these platforms, often bypassing age restrictions by simply entering a false birth date during registration.

It's a loophole too easy to exploit, and without a robust verification system, raising the age limit can't be a solution. Some platforms have attempted to introduce measures such as ID verification or even facial recognition, but these solutions come with their own set of concerns.

For instance, YouTube Kids requires credit card information to verify the parent's identity. While well-intentioned, this method raises privacy concerns and is far from foolproof. Moreover, tech-savvy children often outsmart such measures using VPNs. Banning social media for children without a watertight system to monitor and regulate their access is like locking the front door while leaving the back door wide open. When discussing social media and its impact on children, parental oversight inevitably comes into play. Parents are expected to monitor and control their

children's access to these platforms, but can they realistically do so in this hyper-connected world?

The answer, unfortunately, is no. Even the most diligent parents cannot be expected to oversee every minute of their children's online activity. A well-meaning ban on social media might give parents a false sense of security, but it doesn't change the reality that children will find ways to access these platforms.

If we push them off regulated, mainstream platforms, they may seek refuge in the darker, unregulated corners of the internet—spaces where risks of cyberbullying, exposure to harmful content and even predatory behaviour are even greater. Social media is, undeniably, a double-edged sword.

On the one hand, it exposes children to unrealistic portrayals of life, leading to anxiety, depression, and a constant need to measure up to others. On the other hand, it provides a space for young people to connect, express themselves, and access educational resources. Banning it outright may remove the toxic aspects but also deny them these valuable opportunities.

As parents and educators, our challenge is to strike a balance. Instead of rushing towards a ban, it might be more prudent to focus on equipping children with the skills they need to navigate the online world responsibly. Digital literacy, mental health education, and open conversations between parents and children can go a long way in protecting young minds from the pitfalls of social media.

Rather than looking at social media as an enemy to be vanquished, we should view it as a tool that requires careful handling. Age restrictions, when implemented properly, can help shield younger users, but without holistic solutions—ranging from better parental support to more reliable age verification methods—their efficacy will be limited. (Courtesy: [The Pioneer](#))

Xi Jinping pays tribute to fallen heroes ahead of 75th National Day of PRC

BEIJING, Sept 30: Chinese President Xi Jinping and other state and party leaders paid floral tributes on Monday to fallen heroes to mark Martyrs' Day at the sprawling Tiananmen Square in central Beijing.

The Martyrs' Day was observed ahead of the 75th National Day of the People's Republic of China (PRC) on Tuesday.

Xi, along with Premier Li Qiang, and other leaders was joined by

representatives from all walks of life to pay tributes to the monument built in memory of martyrs of the revolutionary struggle during the 19th and 20th centuries leading to the formation of PRC on October 1, 1949, headed by the ruling Communist Party of China (CPC) founder Mao Zedong.

China will observe a week shut down from Tuesday to mark the national day holidays.

Marking the occasion, Xi, 71, on

Sunday awarded the highest state honours to several Chinese veterans.

He also presented China's Friendship Medal to Dilma Rousseff, former Brazilian president and the Chair of the Shanghai-based New Development Bank of BRICS (Brazil, Russia, India, China, and South Africa).

Lauding Rousseff as an outstanding representative of China's old and good friends, Xi said the

Chinese people will never forget international friends who have significantly contributed to the country's development and the friendship between the Chinese and foreign people.

The Chinese people stand ready to work together with people from various countries to safeguard world peace and promote common development, he said.

Xi said the CPC has led the Chinese people in creating the twin

miracles of rapid economic growth and long-term social stability.

China is now in a crucial period for building a great modern socialist country in all respects and achieving national rejuvenation through modernisation, he said.

"All party members and people of all ethnic groups should take heroes and role models as examples, unite and strive forward to form a mighty force to build a strong China," Xi said. (PTI)



France's Le Pen denies wrongdoing as she, her party go on trial accused of embezzling EU funds

PARIS, Sept 30: French far-right leader Marine Le Pen denied violating any rules as she and her National Rally party and two dozen others went on trial accused of embezzling European Parliament funds.

Arriving at the court in Paris on Monday, Le Pen said "we have not violated any political and regulatory rules of the European Parliament" and vowed to present "extremely serious and extremely solid arguments" in the trial.

The case has the potential to derail her political ambitions. The nine-week trial will be closely watched by Le Pen's political rivals as she remains a strong contender in the race to succeed Emmanuel Macron when the next presidential election takes place in 2027.

The stakes are high for Marine Le Pen as she and other officials from the French far-right party National Rally go on trial Monday over accusations of embezzling European Union funds. The case has the potential to derail her political ambitions.

The nine-week trial will be closely watched by Le Pen's political rivals as she remains a strong contender in the race to succeed Emmanuel Macron when the next presidential election takes place in 2027.

It comes as a new government dominated by centrists and conser-

vatives just came into office in the wake of June-July legislative elections. Some observers expect the trial could prevent National Rally lawmakers, including Le Pen herself, from fully playing their opposition role in Parliament as they would be busy focusing on the party's defense.

Since stepping down as party leader three years ago, Le Pen has sought to position herself as a mainstream candidate capable of appealing to a broader electorate. Her efforts have paid off, with the

party making significant gains in recent elections at both the European and national levels. But a guilty verdict could seriously undermine her bid to take the

Elysee.

The National Rally and 27 of its top officials are accused of having used money destined for EU parliamentary aides to pay staff who instead did political work for the party between 2004 and 2016, in violation of the 27-nation bloc's regulations. The National Rally was called National Front at the time.

Le Pen, whose party has softened its anti-EU stance in recent years, is accused of wrongdoing and claims the case is politically driven.

"Parliamentary assistants do not work for the Parliament. They are political assistants to elected officials, political by definition," she argued in her defence. (AP)



As dy secy-gen, Naim Kassem now is the acting leader of Hezbollah until a replacement for Nasrallah is chosen

Hezbollah's acting leader vows to fight on after Nasrallah's death

BEIRUT, Sept 30: Hezbollah's acting leader vowed on Monday to continue battling Israel and said the militant group was prepared for a long fight even after much of its top command was wiped out, including its leader Hassan Nasrallah.

Israeli strikes have killed Nasrallah and six of his top commanders and officials in the last 10 days, and have hit what the military says are thousands of militant targets across large parts of Lebanon.

Over 1,000 people have been killed in Lebanon in the past two weeks, nearly a quarter of them women and children, according to the Health Ministry.

Early Monday, an airstrike hit a residential building, wiping out one apartment, damaging others, and killing three Palestinian militants in central Beirut, as Israel appeared to send a clear message that no part of Lebanon is out of bounds.

Despite the heavy blow Hezbollah has suffered in recent weeks, acting leader Naim Kassem said in a televised statement that if Israel decides to launch a ground offensive, the group's fighters are ready — noting that the commanders killed have already been replaced.

"Israel was not able to affect our (military) capabilities," Kassem said in his first speech since Nasrallah was killed. "There are deputy

commanders and there are replacements in case a commander is wounded in any post."

He added that Hezbollah anticipated "the battle could be long".

A founding member of Hezbollah who had been Nasrallah's longtime deputy, Kassem will remain in his acting position until the group's leadership elects a replacement. The man widely expected to take over the top post is Hashem Safiedine, a cousin of Nasrallah who oversees the group's political affairs.

Hezbollah has significantly increased its rocket attacks in the past week to several hundred daily, but most have been intercepted or fallen in open areas. Several people have been wounded in Israel. There have been no fatalities since two soldiers were killed near the border on September 19.

But Hezbollah's capabilities remain unclear. As recently as two weeks ago, a strike like Monday's in central Beirut — outside of the main areas where Hezbollah operates and next to a busy transportation hub normally crowded with buses, taxis and vans — would have been seen as a major escalation and likely followed by a long-range Hezbollah strike into Israel.

But the unspoken rules of the long-running conflict are no longer



clear. It's possible that Hezbollah is holding back to save resources for a bigger battle, including a threatened Israeli ground invasion. But the militant group might also be in disarray after Israeli intelligence apparently penetrated its highest levels.

In the past week, Israel has frequently targeted Beirut's southern suburbs, where Hezbollah has a strong presence — including the massive strike on Friday that killed Nasrallah — but had not hit locations closer to the city centre.

The strike early Monday killed three members of the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine, a small, leftist faction that has not been meaningfully involved in months of fighting between Israel and Hezbollah in Lebanon. Israel has not claimed the strike but is widely assumed to have carried it out.

Also on Monday, Hamas announced that its top commander in Lebanon, Fatah Sharif, was killed with his family in an airstrike on the Al-Buss refugee camp in the southern port city of Tyre. The Israeli military confirmed that it had targeted him.

Hezbollah began firing rockets, drones and missiles into northern Israel after Hamas' October 7 attack from Gaza into Israel sparked the war there. Hezbollah and Hamas are allies and both supported by Iran, and Hezbollah said it would continue the attacks in solidarity with the Palestinians until there was a cease-fire in Gaza.

Israel has responded to the rockets with airstrikes in Lebanon, where Hezbollah is based, and the fighting has steadily escalated over the past year. The Lebanese government says the fighting may have displaced up to a million people, although the UN estimate is around

200,000.

Tens of thousands of Israelis have also been displaced. Israel has vowed to keep fighting until the attacks stop and its citizens can return to their homes.

The United States and its allies have called for a cease-fire, hoping to avoid further escalation that could draw in Iran and set off a wider war. But Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu has shown little interest, as his country racks up military achievements against a longtime foe.

Some Israelis broke into spontaneous celebrations after Nasrallah's death was announced. Videos circulated of crowds at bars singing a song in Hebrew mocking him. A news anchor on a pro-Netanyahu station sang and danced as the studio audience joined in with him while a commentator on Israel's largest TV station offered co-panelists celebratory shots.

Hezbollah, which boasts tens of thousands of battle-hardened fighters and long-range missiles capable of hitting anywhere inside Israel, has long been seen as the most powerful militant group in the region and a key partner to Iran in both threatening and deterring Israel. Hezbollah fought Israel to a month-long stalemate in their 2006 war. (AP)

Russia targets 11 Ukrainian regions as it steps up drone attacks

KYIV, Sept 30: Russia fired missiles and drones at 11 regions of Ukraine, the Ukrainian air force said on Monday, in a 33rd consecutive night of aerial attacks behind the front line and set a new monthly record of drone barrages.

In Kyiv, multiple explosions and machine gun fire could be heard throughout the night as the Ukrainian capital's air defences fought off a drone attack for five hours. No casualties were reported in Kyiv or elsewhere, though a "critical infrastructure object" caught fire in the southern Mykolaiv region, Gov. Vitalii Kim said, without elaborating. Russia has increasingly deployed Shahed drones, rather than more expensive missiles, in its aerial bombardment of Ukrainian cities since its full-scale invasion of its neighbour in February 2022.

It launched more than 1,300 Shahed drones at Ukraine in September alone — the highest number of drone attacks in a single month since the war began. Ukraine, too, has developed a new generation of drones for the battlefield and for long-range strikes deep inside Russia. More than 100 Ukrainian drones were shot down over Russia on Sunday, Russian officials said. Also Monday, Russian President Vladimir Putin released a video marking the second anniversary of the annexation of four Ukrainian territories and again accused the West of turning Ukraine into "a military base aimed at Russia".

Putin was speaking to mark the annexation of the Donetsk, Luhansk, Kherson and Zaporizhzhia regions of Ukraine after a referendum held in 2022 which was denounced by the West as a sham. Russia also illegally annexed Crimea in 2014.

Since 2022, Putin said, businesses in the occupied areas are being "actively restored" and hospitals and schools are being rebuilt. Thousands of Ukrainians fled from the four regions as a result of Russia's invasion, but Putin said Russia's military operation in the country was to defend residents' "well-being" and the "future for our children and grandchildren". (AP)

Biden says he hopes to visit Helene-impacted areas this week if it doesn't impact emergency response

WASHINGTON, Sept 30: President Joe Biden says he will visit Hurricane Helene-impacted areas this week as long as it does not disrupt rescue and recovery operations.

Biden was briefed again on Sunday evening about the impact of the devastating storm on an enormous swath of the Southeast.

In a brief exchange with reporters, he described the impact of the storm as "stunning" and said that the administration is giving states "everything we have" to help with their response to the storm.

Biden planned to speak about the administration's response efforts in remarks from the White House on Monday.

The White House also said Vice President Kamala Harris will visit the storm-ravaged areas "as soon as it is possible without disrupting emergency response operations."

At a Las Vegas rally Sunday night, Harris spoke about the impact of Helene, saying, "I know everyone here sends their thoughts and prayer for the folks who have been so devastated by that hurricane."

She added: "We will stand with

these communities for as long as it takes and make sure they are able to rebuild."

Harris was spending Sunday night in Las Vegas and had planned campaign stops in the city on Monday. But her office announced that she'd instead head back to Washington earlier than expected and will attend a briefing on the damage caused by Helene at the headquarters of the Federal Emergency Management Agency.

A North Carolina county that includes the mountain city of Asheville reported earlier on Sunday that 30 people were killed due to the storm, pushing the overall death toll to at least 91 people across several states.

Biden on Sunday evening made calls to several state and local government officials in areas impacted by the hurricane, including Georgia Gov. Brian Kemp; North Carolina Gov. Roy Cooper; Valdosta, Geor-

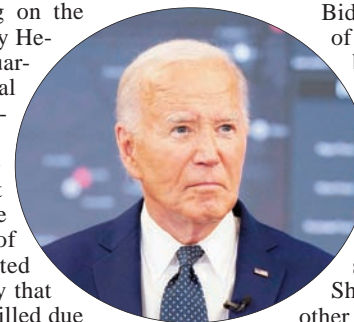
gia Mayor Scott Matheson; and Taylor County, Florida Emergency Management Director John Louk.

Biden told the officials the administration "will continue providing support to impacted communities — for as long as it takes," according to the White House.

Biden, who spent much of the weekend at his beach house in Delaware, has received frequent updates on the storm from FEMA administrator Deanne Criswell, homeland security adviser Liz Sherwood-Randall and other officials.

Harris received similar briefings while on board Air Force Two, according to the White House.

The White House said Biden directed Criswell to figure out what can be done to accelerate support to isolated communities that are having difficulty accessing assistance. (AP)



Japan's likely next leader says will call election for Oct 27 once he takes office

TOKYO, Sept 30: Shigeru Ishiba, the head of Japan's governing party, said on Monday he plans to call a parliamentary election to be held on October 27 after he is elected as prime minister on Tuesday. Ishiba was chosen as the Liberal Democratic Party's leader on Friday and is assured to also succeed Fumio Kishida as prime minister because the party's coalition controls parliament. Ishiba mentioned the election date as he announced his top party leadership lineup Monday ahead of forming his Cabinet. The plan is not official since he is not prime minister yet, but Ishiba said he mentioned the date early for the logistical convenience of those who have to prepare on relatively short notice.

Considered a defence policy expert, Ishiba secured a come-from-behind win against Economic Security Minister Sanae Takaichi, a staunch conservative who hoped to become the country's first female prime minister, in Friday's vote. The LDP has had a nearly unbroken tenure governing Japan since World War II. The party members may have seen Ishiba's more centrist views as crucial in pushing back challenges by the liberal-leaning opposition and winning voter support as the party reels from corruption scandals that drove down outgoing Kishida's popularity.

Ishiba is a defence and security expert and has proposed an Asian version of NATO military alliance. He has also advocated for more equal Japan-US security alliance, including joint management of US bases in Japan and having training bases for Japanese forces in the United States. (AP)

Flooding deaths in Nepal reach 193 as recovery work is stepped up



KATHMANDU, Sept 30: The number of people killed in Nepal by flooding and landslides triggered by heavy rainfall over the weekend reached 193 while recovery and rescue work stepped up on Monday.

Many of the deaths were in the capital, Kathmandu, which got heavy rainfall, and much of southern part of the city was flooded. Police said in a statement that 31 people were still reported missing and 96 people were injured across the Himalayan nation.

A landslide killed three dozen people on a blocked highway about 16 kilometers (10 miles) from Kathmandu. The landslide buried at least three buses and other vehicles where people were sleeping because the highway was blocked.

Kathmandu had remained cut off all weekend as the three highways out of the city were blocked by landslides. Workers were able to temporarily open up the key Prithvi highway, removing rocks, mud and trees that had been washed from the mountains. The home minister announced temporary shelters would be built for people who lost their homes and monetary

help would be available for the families of those killed and to the people who were injured by the flooding and landslides. Prime Minister Khadga Prasad Oli was returning home Monday from attending the U.N. General Assembly meeting and has called an emergency meeting, his office said. Improved weather has allowed rescue and recovery work to be stepped up.

Residents in the southern part of Kathmandu, which was inundated on Saturday, were cleaning up houses as water levels began to recede. At least 34 people were killed in Kathmandu, which was the hardest hit by flooding.

Police and soldiers were assisting with rescue efforts, while heavy equipment was used to clear the landslides from the roads. The government announced it was closing schools and colleges across Nepal for the next three days.

The monsoon season began in June and usually ends by mid-September. Meanwhile, in northern Bangladesh, about 60,000 people were affected by flooding in low-lying areas because of rains and rising water from upstream India.

People have taken shelter on roads and flood protection embankments in Lalmonirhat and Kurigram districts, the English-language Daily Star reported. The River Teesta that crosses the border was overflowing at some points and the Dharala and Dudhkumar rivers in the Rangpur region were rising but remained below danger levels, the Dhaka-based Flood Forecasting and Warning Center said Monday. Waters could start receding in a day or two, it said.

Bangladesh is a low-lying delta nation crisscrossed by about 230 rivers, including more than 50 that cross borders. (AP)

SKorean court sentences to prison 3 police officers over deadly 2022 Halloween crush

SEOUL, Sept 30: A South Korean court gave three police officers prison sentences on Monday over their botched handling of a 2022 Halloween crush in a Seoul nightlife district that killed nearly 160 people.

It was the first conviction of officials over the failure by authorities to prevent or adequately respond to the overcrowding that occurred in the popular Itaewon district. No top-level officials have been charged or held accountable, prompting criticism from bereaved families and opposition politicians.

The crush, one of the biggest peacetime disasters in South Korea, caused a nationwide outpouring of grief. The victims, who were mostly in their 20s and 30s, had gathered in Itaewon for Halloween celebrations.

The Seoul Western District Court sentenced Lee Im-jae, the former chief of Seoul's Yongsan police station, whose jurisdiction includes Itaewon, to three years in prison. It sentenced another Yongsan police officer to two years in prison and gave a third officer a suspended two-year term.

The three officers were convicted of professional negligence resulting in death. The court ruled that the crush wasn't a natural disaster and could have been prevented or the toll reduced if the three officers had prepared properly for the crowd, alerted others of the danger quickly and supervised other police officers appropriately.

The police officers and prosecutors can both appeal the ruling. The court also ruled that Park Hee-young, head of the Yongsan ward office, and three other ward officials were not guilty. It said a ward office was unlikely to have a legal right to control or break up a crowd of people. (AP)

Rwanda reports 8 deaths linked to Ebola-like Marburg virus days after declaring outbreak

KIGALI (RWANDA), Sept 30: Rwanda says eight people have died so far from the Ebola-like and highly contagious Marburg virus, just days after the country declared an outbreak of the deadly hemorrhagic fever that has no authorized vaccine or treatment.

Like Ebola, the Marburg virus originates in fruit bats and spreads between people through close contact with the bodily fluids of infected individuals or with surfaces, such as contaminated bed sheets.

Without treatment, Marburg can be fatal in up to 88 per cent of people who fall ill with the disease. Rwanda, a landlocked country in central Africa, declared an outbreak on Friday and a day later the first six deaths were reported.

So far 26 cases have been confirmed, and eight of the sickened people have died,

Health Minister Sabin Nsanzimana said on Sunday night.

The public has been urged to avoid physical contact to help curb the spread.

Some 300 people who came into contact with those confirmed to have the virus have also been identified, and an unspecified number of them have been put in isolation facilities.

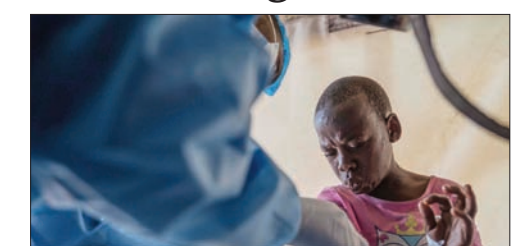
Most of the affected are healthcare workers across six out of 30 districts in the country.

"Marburg is a rare disease," Nsanzimana told journalists. "We are intensifying contact tracing and testing to help stop the spread."

The minister said the source of the disease has not been determined yet.

A person infected with the virus can take between three days and three weeks to show symptoms, he added.

Symptoms include fever, muscle pains, diarrhea, vomiting and, in



some cases, death through extreme blood loss.

The World Health Organisation was scaling up its support and will work with Rwandan authorities to help stop the spread, WHO's Director-General Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus said on Saturday on the social media platform X.

The US Embassy in Rwanda's capital of Kigali has urged its staff to work remotely and avoid visiting offices. Marburg outbreaks and individual cases have in the past been recorded in Tanzania, Equatorial Guinea, Angola, Congo, Kenya, South Africa, Uganda and Ghana, according to the WHO.

The rare virus was first identified in 1967 after it caused simultaneous outbreaks of disease in laboratories in Marburg, Germany, and Belgrade, Serbia.

Seven people died who were exposed to the virus while conducting research on monkeys. Separately, Rwanda has so far reported six cases of mpox, a disease caused by a virus related to smallpox but that typically causes milder symptoms. Mpox, previously known as monkeypox because it was first seen in research monkeys, has also affected several other African countries in what the WHO has called a global health

Arbitrary creation of 7 districts 'undemocratic and divisive'

UNC announces 40-hour 'total bandh' in Manipur

SENAPATI, Sept 30: The United Naga Council (UNC) made an announcement on Monday evening to call a 48-hour "total bandh" under its jurisdiction from midnight of October 3, 2024, "to register our resentment and demand for an immediate rollback of the arbitrary creation of 7 new districts".

In a statement issued to Newmai News Network this evening, the UNC "sets the record straight" that an ultimatum was set for redressal of the pending issues of the "arbitrary creation of 7 new districts" in Manipur demanding rollback of the said districts created on December 8, 2016, in the spirit of the standing four Memoranda of Understanding between Government of Manipur and the Naga people, assurance from the Government of India, and various round of tripartite talks amongst the stakeholders.

Mention may be made that, in the backdrop of this arbitrary creation of 7 (seven) new districts by bifurcating parent districts on December 8, 2016, during the Congress regime "without the informed consent and knowledge of the stakeholders - dishonouring the four (4) memoranda between the government of Manipur and the Naga people



besides the assurance from the government of India in 2011," the UNC said. Consequently upon this, a mammoth protest, hartals and an economic blockade were launched on all the national highways for 139 days in the state and as many as 10 (ten) rounds of tripartite talks amongst the Government of Manipur

(GoM), United Naga Council (UNC) and Government of India (GoI) had been taken place to redress the issue.

The last talk was held on March 9, 2019, with the assurance that a concrete proposal shall be placed by the government of Manipur in the next round of talks supposedly

proposed to be held by the last week of July 2019, the UNC statement also said.

Further, the UNC had made its stance loud and clear through media outlets, reiterating its rigid position "against the arbitrary, undemocratic and divisive declaration of 7 new districts on December 8, 2016, by the then Government of Manipur and any subsequent decision or ruling passed by any institution or authority on the matter stands rejected," the statement asserted.

The UNC then said the Naga people believe in dialogue and had therefore repeatedly appealed to the concerned authority including the last ultimatum to redress the grievances through talks but having no concrete response to their plea thus far, the Naga people have resolved to call for 48 hours total bandh to register our resentment and demand for an immediate rollback of the arbitrary creation of 7 new districts in all Naga areas with effect from midnight of October 3, 2024.

Essential services, media and emergency cases shall be exempted from the purview of the bandh. "Towards this end, prompt response and cooperation from the entire Naga populace is solicited," it added. (NNN)

AFSPA extended in Manipur for six more months

Probability of public criticism high if mishandled



IMPHAL, Sept 30: The government on Monday extended the Armed Forces (Special Powers) Act (AFSPA) by another six months in Manipur excluding 19 police station areas falling under the Imphal valley and a region that shares its boundary with Assam.

In a notification, the state government's home department said the extension will come into effect from October 1.

"The state government is of the opinion after analysing the prevailing law and order situation in the state that it is not expedient to have a detailed assessment on the ground as security agencies are preoccupied with maintenance of law and order," the notification said.

"The issue of declaration of Disturbed Area status is very sensitive and may likely attract public criticism and resistance if proper care is not taken," it said.

"The governor of Manipur hereby accords approval to declare the entire state of Manipur excluding the areas falling under the jurisdiction of 19 police stations... as Disturbed Area for a period of six months with effect from 1st October," the notification signed by Commissioner (Home) N Ashok Kumar read.

The police station areas where

the Disturbed Areas have not been imposed include Imphal, Lamphel, City, Singjamei, Sekmai, Lam-sang, Patsoi, Wangoi, Porompat, Heingang, Lamlai, Iribung, Leimakhong, Thoubal, Bishnupur, Nambol, Moirang, Kakching and Jiribam.

The areas that have been kept out of the purview of AFSPA are dominated by the majority Meitei community.

The disturbed area tag was first withdrawn from the Imphal Municipality areas in 2004 and was removed from 15 police stations in six districts in April 2022.

The disturbed area was removed from the other four police stations in April 2023.

The AFSPA gives sweeping powers to the armed forces operating in disturbed areas to search, arrest and open fire if they deem it necessary.

More than 200 people have been killed and thousands rendered homeless since ethnic violence between Meiteis and Kukis broke out in Manipur on May 3 last year.

Meiteis account for about 53 per cent of Manipur's population and live mostly in the Imphal valley, while tribals, including Nagas and Kukis, constitute 40 per cent and reside mostly in the hill districts. (PTI)

Tripura witness dip in crime rate: DGP

Action taken against 3 lakh offenders

HT Correspondent

AGARTALA, Sept 30: In the last three years, the Tripura Police have taken action against 3 lakh anti-social elements, while witnessing a nearly tenfold rise in arrests of border touts, according to Tripura Director General of Police (DGP) Amitabh Ranjan.

DGP Ranjan provided this update after a review meeting on law and order with Tripura chief minister Dr Manik Saha at the Police Headquarters on Monday.

"The Chief Minister held an in-depth discussion on border issues, law and order, and other concerns. He emphasized that there should be no compromise when it comes to maintaining law and order. We must ensure a peaceful Durga Puja and take firm action against extortion. District SPs have been directed to closely monitor incidents, visit camps and areas, and ensure the welfare of police personnel," DGP Ranjan stated.

During the meeting, the CM particularly emphasized the importance of tackling drug trafficking and dealing with the issue of Rohingya infiltration. The CM also stressed the need for annual inspections, addressing property crimes and small thefts, and improving border coordination.

DGP Ranjan highlighted a notable reduction in overall crime. Comparing data from 2014-2016 (up to August) with 2022-2024 (up to August), he reported that crime figures, which once stood at 10,000, have dropped to 9,000.

"In 2014, the overall crime count was 4,026, but by August 2024, it had reduced to 2,700. Despite population growth and various constraints, we have managed to control and reduce crime," he added.

Crimes against women have also seen a significant drop. In 2014-2016, there were 2,700 such cases, while by August 2024, the figure had been brought down to 1,500. Similarly, offences involving physical violence have dropped from 2,800 to 2,500, and property crimes have decreased from 1,240 to approximately 800.

The DGP also emphasized the state's focus on combating drug-related crimes. Tripura has recorded the highest seizure rates of narcotics in the Northeast re-

gion, despite challenges posed by its position on the international highway that facilitates drug trafficking through the "Golden Triangle" to Bangladesh.

Between 2014 and 2016, there were 83 NDPS (Narcotic Drugs and Psychotropic Substances) cases; that number has now surged to 512, underscoring the state's intensified crackdown.

Over the past three years, the police have detained around 2,000 people for illegal infiltration, with a significant number being touts who assist individuals in crossing the border.

"From 2022 to 2024, the arrest of touts has risen by 10 times. We have taken preventive action against 1.70 lakh people, and prosecution reports have been submitted for over 1 lakh offenders. Altogether, nearly 3 lakh anti-social elements have been dealt with, which is a record high in the past 15 years," the DGP added.

The chief minister has instructed the police to maintain close coordination with central agencies, border security forces, and other entities to further bolster security at the borders. Senior police officers are actively present on the ground to ensure these measures are enforced effectively.

Moreover, the CM told the state police to take steps to increase their conviction rate. He said only arresting criminals won't do as they need to be convicted in court.

Saha told police officers to talk to lawyers about how to increase the conviction rate.

"There is no point of arrest if the conviction rate could not be increased. I exhorted the police officers to keep close contact with lawyers on how to increase conviction rate in the state," he told reporters after a law and order review meeting with the top police officers at police headquarters.

Currently, the conviction rate of Tripura police is 35-40 per cent.

The chief minister said he instructed the police officers to re-open all closed cases in police stations so that justice could be delivered.

"People are waiting to get justice for long years. We must deliver justice to them and there will be no leniency to crime. Whatever I said we will implement it," he said.

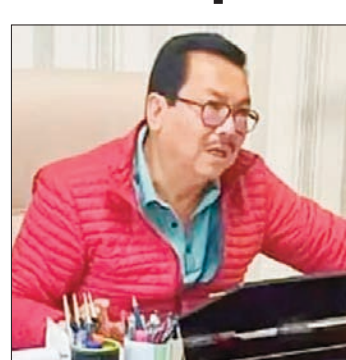
Arunachal seeks more funds from Centre for development projects

ITANAGAR, Sept 30: Arunachal Pradesh deputy chief minister Chowna Mein on Monday urged the Centre for more funds for development projects in the absence of assistance from agencies such as the World Bank due to protests by China.

Speaking at a meeting chaired by union finance minister Nirmala Sitharaman at the civil secretariat here, Mein said the state has been deprived of externally aided projects from organisations such as the World Bank, ADB and JICA due to protests by China.

"This not only deprives us of financial benefits but also of the technical knowledge that comes along with externally aided projects which is a big deterrent in our developmental activities. The ministry may kindly make suitable alternative arrangements to meet the gap," he said.

Mein, who also holds the Finance, Planning and Investment portfolios, urged Sitharaman for a special one-time assistance of Rs 2,000 crore for the replacement of about 5,500 dilapidated semi-permanent type (SPT) residential



quarters for government officials.

"Most of the SPT residential buildings and official buildings for the government officials were constructed during the NEFA days by the CPWD. It is proposed to replace the dilapidated SPT quarters and district offices with multistoried RCC buildings for accommodating the present strength of state government employees and integrate working of different departments in a single place," he said.

This will ease the working process and improve the turnaround time of the movement of files hence increasing the effi-

ciency of the work of the district administrative office, he said.

Mein said the replacement of SPT buildings with multistoried ones will also retain more government land in the district for the development of other important developmental infrastructures.

"Due to the paucity of resources with the state, a special one-time assistance may be considered please," he said.

Mein also urged Sitharaman to give due weightage to the cost disability index while allocating resources among the states, especially the hilly states.

"The state's inhospitable topography, challenging climatic conditions and communication bottlenecks make the cost of creation and maintenance of infrastructure extremely high. It is estimated that the unit cost of service provisioning in the hilly areas is 2.5 times more than the plain area. The cost of construction is escalated not only because of high transportation expenses but also due to non-availability of local skilled and un-skilled manpower," he said. (PTI)

Demands flood relief measures for victims

Tripura Congress holds rally against 'double-engine' govt



HT Correspondent

AGARTALA, Sept 30: The Tripura Congress on Monday expressed strong dissatisfaction with the Central government, accusing it of failing to provide adequate financial aid for those affected by the recent floods in the state. The party called for urgent financial and relief measures to assist the flood victims.

In response to the crisis, the Congress organised a series of protest rallies across Tripura, urging the government to take swift action. Addressing the media, Congress MLA and former minister Sudip Roy Barman highlighted the severe losses suffered by farmers, labourers, livestock keepers, and fish farmers due to the floods.

"The so-called 'double-engine' government, especially the Central administration, has not provided

even a single penny to the state for flood relief. This shows how little importance the Central government places on Tripura. People are starving, they've endured devastating losses, and in places like Gandacherra in the Dhalai district, the Durga Puja celebrations were completely cancelled. People are in deep distress, and no one is paying attention," said Roy Barman.

He further alleged that Congress workers were attacked while advocating for flood victims in Mohanpur, West District. "Nine individuals were seriously injured and are currently receiving treatment. BJP goons attacked us inside the SDM office while we were there to speak on behalf of the flood victims. This is beyond fascism. We stand with the people and are fighting for their rights," Roy Barman added.

The Congress has organized rallies across 23 subdivisions in the state. Additionally, the party is demanding a freeze on power tariff hikes for the upcoming year and the withdrawal of additional fees imposed on Vidyaloy students, citing the dire state of Tripura's economy. "We will visit the SDM and submit a deputation," Roy Barman said, underscoring the party's commitment to pushing for relief and reform.

Union Minister meets M'laya Gov to discuss skill development

SHILLONG, Sept 30: Jayant Chaudhary, union minister of state (Independent Charge) for skill development and entrepreneurship, called on the Governor of Meghalaya, C.H. Vijayashankar today at Raj Bhavan, Shillong.

During the meeting, the union minister and the Governor discussed key initiatives to enhance skill development and entrepreneurship opportunities in Meghalaya.

Chaudhary highlighted the Union government's ongoing schemes aimed at empowering the youth with market-relevant skills, fostering job creation, and promoting entrepreneurship in the region, a Raj Bhavan source said.

The Governor expressed his appreciation for the ministry's focus on skilling the youth, particularly in Meghalaya, where there is significant potential for developing talent across diverse sectors such as agriculture, tourism, and traditional crafts, it further stated. (NNN)

Tour operators in Meghalaya determined for peaceful atmosphere

SHILLONG, Sept 30: Tourism organisations including tour operators in Meghalaya have unanimously resolved to maintain a peaceful atmosphere in the state for the benefit of all tourism stakeholders and visitors.

The decision was taken at a meeting convened by the Tour Operators Association of Meghalaya (TOAM) and attended by 11 tourism organisations and tourist taxi associations at the State Convention Centre, Shillong on Saturday.

The discussion focused on issues faced by tourist taxi drivers, particularly concerns raised by the All Khasi Meghalaya Tourist Taxi Association (AKMTTA).

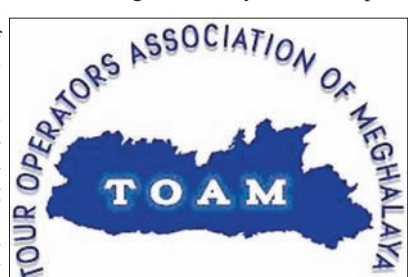
"After extensive deliberations, the members of all the organisations agreed on the importance of maintaining a peaceful atmosphere in Meghalaya for the benefit of all

tourism stakeholders and visitors. They reaffirmed their commitment to ensure the safety and security of tourists visiting the state," said a statement issued after the meeting.

The 11 tourism organisations of Meghalaya also comprise the Meghalaya Tourism

Development Forum (MTDF), All Khasi Meghalaya Tourist Taxi Association (AKMTTA), Tour Guides Association of Meghalaya (TGAM), All Shillong Tourist Taxi Drivers Union Organization (ASTTUO), Meghalaya Tourist Taxi Association (MTTA),

Federation of Shillong Hotels (FOSH), Sohra Region Tourism Association (SRTA), Jaintia Tourism & Environment Society (JTES), Khasi Hills Tourist Taxi Association (KHTTA), and Ri Bhoi Tourism & Environment Development Forum (RBTEDF). (NNN)



No.FA/TR/Tender/2024-25/1044

NOTICE INVITING TENDER

Date 23/09/2024

Sealed Tenders are invited affixing a non-refundable Court Fee Stamp of Rs. 8.25 (Rupees Eight paise Twenty Five) only are invited from the registered Contractors along with self-attested copy of up to date Contractor's Registration, GST Registration, Income Tax Return (last 3 years), Annual Turnover (last 3 years), Bank Solvency, Previous experience etc. along with the Tender which will be received by the undersigned through speed post/courier/registered post/ tender box till 15.10.2024 up to 2 PM (I.S.T.) and will be opened on 15.10.2024 at 2:30 P.M. (I.S.T.) in the O/o the Field Director, Manas Tiger Reserve, Barpeta Road as details below:

Sl. No.	Particulars	Specification	Offered rate including GST, transportation and other charges.
1	Installation and commissioning deep boring along with submersible solar water pump including all accessories.	Boring/drilling bore well of required diameter for casing/strainer pipe by suitable strainer pipe including hire and running charges of all equipment, tools, plants & machineries required for the job all complete as per direction of the Range Officer in charge. Providing & fixing CPVC pipes having thermal stability for hot & cold water supply including all CPVC plain & brass threaded fittings. Voltage: 220 V AC Power: 3 HP Type: DC submersible Pump head: 60-90 meter Solar Panel: 3 KW Controller: 1 set Output voltage: 30-85 V Input Power: 3000 W DC Warranty: Minimum 5 years for complete system	Rate to be quoted per running meter in addition to fitting and installation of pipes etc. which should be shown separately. Rate to be quoted per unit mentioning brand and warranty period.

In the event of any unusual occurrence due to strike, bandh, holiday etc. the same will be received and opened on the next working day at the same place and same time.

Sd/-
Field Director,
Manas Tiger Reserve

IPR(BTC)/C/2024-25/627

'Absolutely distasteful, disgraceful': BJP slams Kharge for remarks about PM Modi

NEW DELHI, Sept 30: The BJP on Monday slammed Mallikarjun Kharge, terming his remarks about Prime Minister Narendra Modi "absolutely distasteful and disgraceful".

It also said Modi became the prime minister for a third consecutive term with the people's mandate and not because of the Congress president's grace.

Addressing a poll rally in Kathua district of Jammu on Sunday, Kharge had said he will not die until Prime Minister Modi is removed from power and had asserted that the Congress will fight for the restoration of statehood to Jammu and Kashmir.

Reacting to his remarks, Shah said in a post on X, "Yesterday, the Congress president Mallikarjun Kharge Ji has outperformed himself, his leaders and his party in being absolutely distasteful and disgraceful in his speech. In a bitter display of spite, he unnecessarily dragged PM Modi into his personal health matters by saying



that he would die only after removing PM Modi from power," he said.

Shah said Kharge's remarks showed how much "hate and fear" the Congress people have of PM Modi that they are thinking of him "constantly".

"As for the health of Kharge Ji, Modi Ji prays, I pray and we all pray that he lives a long, healthy life. May he continue to live for many years and may he live to see

the creation of a Viksit Bharat by 2047," he added.

Union Minister Nirmala Sitharaman Nirmala said the Congress leadership never loses any opportunity to display their hate towards Modi.

"Aply said, Home Minister Amit Shahji," Sitaraman said in a post on X.

"The leadership of the Congress never loses any opportunity to display their hate towards

Narendra Modiji. This speech of Khargeji is one such instance," she said, adding, "We join in praying for the long life of Congress president Khargeji. We wish he lives to see #Viksit Bharat India @2047."

BJP national spokesperson Syed Shah Nawaz Hussain hit out at Kharge for his remarks and said Modi has become prime minister for a third consecutive term with the blessings of the people of the country.

"Is it by your grace that Modiji has become the prime minister? He has become PM because the people of the country have given a clear mandate to his government for a third consecutive term," the former Union minister told PTI Videos.

Hussain wished a long and healthy life to the Congress president and said, "We pray that Kharge sahab lives for 100 years and on his 100th birthday Prime Minister Modi sends him a bouquet." (PTI)

'Pothole-free Delhi': CM Atishi, ministers inspect roads

NEW DELHI, Sept 30: Delhi cabinet ministers led by Chief Minister Atishi hit the ground running on Monday morning, inspecting and identifying damaged roads across the city to ensure a pothole-free national capital by Diwali.

Atishi, accompanied by Public Works Department (PWD) engineers, visited different areas in south and southeast Delhi.

In a post on X, the chief minister said she found roads at NSIC Okhla, Modi Mill flyover, Chirag Dilli, Tughalakkabad, Mathura Road, Ashram Chowk and its underpass in a dilapidated condition. People have to face problems because of potholes on these roads, she said.

The chief minister directed the officials to start the repair work on a war footing and said "Under the guidance of Arvind Kejriwal, it is our endeavour that all Delhiites get pothole-free roads by Diwali".

Minister Saurabh Bharadwaj and former deputy chief minister Manish Sisodia inspected roads in east Delhi.

Sisodia, in a post on X, alleged that the BJP sent him and former chief minister Arvind Kejriwal to jail in fake cases to stall the work being done by the AAP government for the people of Delhi.

Because of this, the condition of roads has worsened, he said.

Ministers Gopal Rai, Kailash Gahlot, Imran Hussain and Mukesh Ahlawat also inspected roads.

Rai inspected roads in northeast Delhi, Gahlot in west and southwest Delhi, Hussain in New Delhi and central Delhi and Ahlawat in north and northwest Delhi.

After the inspection, Gahlot posted on X that this morning, along with senior officials of PWD, he inspected the main roads of Najafgarh, Bahadurgarh Road and Dhasan Road.

Due to the prolonged monsoon, the condition of roads is not good and people are facing problems due to potholes at many places, he said.

During the inspection, instructions were given to the officers that all necessary repairs on the road should be done as soon as possible so that people do not face inconvenience in commuting, he mentioned in the post. (PTI)

Shah should focus on serious issues like Manipur, caste census: Kharge

NEW DELHI, Sept 30: On a day Home Minister Amit Shah attacked him for his remarks about Prime Minister Narendra Modi, Congress president Mallikarjun Kharge said Shah should focus on serious issues such as the Manipur situation, census and a caste census.

Shah on Monday termed Kharge's remarks on Prime Minister Modi at a public meeting in Jammu and Kashmir "absolutely distasteful and disgraceful".

In a post in Hindi on X, Kharge said, "Home Minister Amit Shah should focus on serious issues like Manipur, census and caste census."

"Your government's own survey says that 92% of the employees cleaning urban sewers and septic tanks come from SC, ST, OBC categories," the Congress chief said.

"The BJP is against caste census because then it will be known by which work SC, ST, OBC, EWS and all other categories are earning their livelihood. What is their economic and social status? What kind of targeted benefits of government schemes should they get?" Kharge said.

He asserted that the Congress party is firmly committed to getting a caste census done. "We will get it done," he added.

Kharge tagged the screenshot of a report in The Hindu which said that in a first-of-its-kind attempt to enumerate people engaged in the hazardous cleaning of sewers and septic tanks in India's cities and towns, government data gathered from over 3,000 urban local bodies in 29 States and Union Territories shows that 91.9% of the 38,000 workers profiled so far belong to Scheduled Caste (SC), Scheduled Tribe (ST), or other backward class (OBC) communities.

Earlier, Shah said that in "a bitter display of spite", Kharge unnecessarily dragged the prime minister into his personal health matters by saying that he would die only after removing Modi from power.

At an election rally in Jammu on Sunday, Kharge was taken ill as he suffered a "syncopal attack" but resumed his speech after a brief pause, saying he won't die before PM Modi is removed from power.



"I am 83 years old. I am not going to die so early. I will stay alive till PM Modi is removed from power," the Congress leader said.

"I wanted to talk. But due to dizziness, I sat down. Please pardon me." Shah hit out at Kharge over his remarks.

"Yesterday, the Congress President Shri Mallikarjun Kharge Ji has outperformed himself, his leaders and his party in being absolutely distasteful and disgraceful in his speech.

"In a bitter display of spite, he unnecessarily dragged PM Modi into his personal health matters by saying that he would die only after removing PM Modi from power," Shah wrote on X.

He said Kharge's remarks showed how much hate and fear the Congress people have for PM Modi and that they are constantly thinking of him.

"As for the health of Mr. Kharge Ji, Modi Ji prays, I pray and we all pray that he lives a long, healthy life. May he continue to live for many years and may he live to see the creation of a Viksit Bharat by 2047," the minister said. (PTI)

Haryana: Contesting from rival parties, Chander Mohan, nephew Bhavya bank on Bhajan Lal's legacy



CHANDIGARH, Sept 30: Congress' Chander Mohan and his nephew Bhavya Bishnoi of the BJP may be contesting from rival parties and from different seats but they have one thing in common - both are banking on the legacy of former chief minister Bhajan Lal.

Mohan (59), a former four-time legislator, is the elder son of late Bhajan Lal while Bhavya Bishnoi is grandson of the ex-CM and a sitting MLA.

Mohan is contesting the October 5 Haryana assembly polls from Panchkula, where among the 10 candidates, he also faces BJP's sitting MLA and Speaker in outgoing Assembly, Gian Chand Gupta.

Bhavya, son of senior BJP leader Kuldeep Bishnoi, is seeking re-election from the Adampur constituency in Hisar district. Mohan is Kuldeep Bishnoi's elder brother.

Bhavya along with his father Kuldeep had switched over to the BJP from the Congress over two years ago. Bhavya had won the seat in the bypolls about two years ago.

The Adampur bypoll had been necessitated after Kuldeep Bishnoi resigned as Congress MLA from the seat and switched to the BJP.

Adampur has been a bastion of the family of Bhajan Lal, who was a tall non-Jat leader in Haryana and enjoyed a good rapport across communities. No one outside his family has won from the seat. He represented the seat nine times while his son Kuldeep Bishnoi was legislator from the constituency on four occasions.

Campaigning in Panchkula,

Mohan is confident of his and Congress party's victory, saying people want to oust the BJP from power.

The BJP did not do any work for the last ten years, says Mohan.

"During Bhajan Lal ji's time, maximum development took place in Panchkula, youth got employment while several institutions and a good road network came up," he says. Hitting out at the BJP, Mohan says they claim ₹ 5,000 crore has been spent for development works in Panchkula during their time, "but we need to know where that money has gone, no development is visible on the ground".

If elected, Mohan promises to change Panchkula's face and also effectively tackle the drug menace.

"My father's dream was to see Panchkula develop like modern cities like Paris," he said.

Back in Adampur, Bhavya has stepped up campaigning as only a few days are left for the polls.

About his grandfather Bhajan Lal, Bhavya says he was a visionary leader who changed the face of Haryana and Adampur by bringing development. For over five decades, the people of Adampur have reposed their trust in the Bhajan Lal family, he says.

We have got so much love from the people of Adampur and it is they who fight the polls, he says.

Bhavya says after winning the Adampur seat in the bypolls, he brought development projects worth ₹ 800 crore for the constituency.

Kuldeep Bishnoi terms Bhajan

Lal as an institution, a visionary leader and says being his son is a matter of great pride for him.

Kuldeep and Bhavya claim that the BJP will return to power for a third consecutive term.

While campaigning in Panchkula on Sunday, former Union Minister Pawan Kumar Bansal and senior Congress leader and Sirsa MP Kumari Selja threw their weight behind Mohan.

Bansal said the BJP failed to undertake any development in Haryana during the past ten years and now people are seeking an account from them.

Unemployment is at its peak in Haryana, even as two lakh government posts are vacant, Bansal said.

During the Congress' regime, Haryana made fast progress, he said. But under BJP Haryana has fallen behind, Bansal said. He said Haryana's debt was around ₹ 70,000 crore ten years ago, "which has mounted to ₹ 3.20 lakh crore and yet development is not visible".

Appealing to the people of Panchkula to make Mohan victorious, Selja said he has always kept the doors of his house open for his people. Panchkula is mini-Haryana or even mini-India as people hail from various parts of the country live here, she said.

Selja said the Congress is set to form the government in Haryana.

"You elect Chander Mohan and once again Panchkula will shine," she said.

Hitting out at the BJP, she said, "When they have no job to show or any development to highlight they are engaged in talking only about Congress... Why BJP changed its chief minister (M L Khattar) after nine-and-a-half years, they did so because they knew there has been total failure in governance for the last ten years."

"After they brought the new face (Nayab Singh Saini), they made him fight from Karnal (in the bypolls held in May which he won) and now changed his seat (Saini is contesting October 5 polls from Ladwa now). They neither have any leadership nor any work to show," she said. (PTI)

ED may soon book Siddaramaiah in MUDA-linked money-laundering case

NEW DELHI, Sept 30: The Enforcement Directorate (ED) is soon expected to book Karnataka Chief Minister Siddaramaiah and some others in a money-laundering case linked to the Mysuru Urban Development Authority (MUDA), taking cognisance of a recent state Lokayukta FIR, official sources said on Monday.

Siddaramaiah, his wife B M Parvathi, brother-in-law Mallikarjuna Swamy and Devaraju -- from whom Swamy had purchased land and gifted it to Parvathi -- and others have been named in the FIR registered by the Mysuru-located Lokayukta police establishment on September 27.

The FIR was lodged after a special court in Bengaluru last week ordered a Lokayukta probe against Siddaramaiah in the case.

The order of the special court judge came a day after the high court upheld the sanction granted by Governor Thaaawarchand Gehlot to conduct an investigation against the senior Congress leader on allegations of illegalities in the allotment of 14 sites to his wife by the MUDA.

The ED is expected to press sections of the Prevention of Money Laundering Act (PMLA) to book Siddaramaiah in its Enforcement Case Information Report (ECIR). Sources said the federal agency is studying the Lokayukta Police FIR.

According to procedure, the ED is empowered to summon the accused for questioning and even attach their assets during investigation.

Siddaramaiah (76) had last week said he was being targeted in the MUDA issue as the opposition is "scared" of him and noted that it is the first such "political case" against him.

He also reiterated that he will not resign following the court ordering a probe against him in the case as he has done no wrong and asserted that he would fight the case legally.

In the MUDA site-allotment case, it is alleged that compensatory sites were allotted to Siddaramaiah's wife in an upmarket area in Mysuru, which had higher property value as compared to the location of her land that was "acquired" by MUDA. (PTI)

Economic growth, social development possible only where rule of law is upheld: Murmu

NEW DELHI, Sept 30: President Droupadi Murmu on Monday said that economic growth and social development are possible only where the rule of law is upheld.

Without maintaining law and order, ensuring justice and protecting citizens' rights, progress becomes a meaningless term, she said addressing a group of Indian Police Service (IPS) probationers, who had called on her at the Rashtrapati Bhavan.

"One category of crime I would like to highlight here is crimes against women. While it is a complex phenomenon with its roots deep in a sick mindset as well as sickening social prejudices, it is, first of all, a crime. Therefore, fighting it requires action at many levels, but the first response comes from the police force," Murmu said.

She said that police officers working on these cases are expected to have exceptional sensitivity, empathy for the victim besides utmost commitment to the

task of ensuring justice.

The president said police officers working on cases of crime against women are "expected to have exceptional sensitivity and empathy for the victim and utmost commitment to the task of ensuring justice".

She said law and order is not only the bedrock of governance but also the very basis of the modern state, and asked the officers to be efficient, sympathetic, fearless as well as friendly.

Murmu said police officers' roles become more crucial as India aims to scale new heights in the years to come.

"Economic growth and social development are possible only where the rule of law is upheld. Without maintaining law and order, ensuring justice and protecting citizens' rights, progress becomes a meaningless term," the president said. She asked the police officers to be tech-savvy and stay a step ahead of the criminals.

Maintenance of law and order, crime prevention and detection as well as other aspects of policing have benefited from advances in technology, the president said.



"The flip side, however, is that criminals and terrorists too have resorted to using technology. When cyber-crimes and cyber warfare are rising around the world, you will be expected to be tech-savvy and stay a step ahead of the

criminals," Murmu said.

The president expressed happiness over the rise in the number of women officers in the IPS.

"I am told that in this batch there are 54 lady officers out of the total strength of 188. At 28.72 per cent, it is a sharp jump from last year's numbers as well as the average of recent years," she said.

Murmu said that the role of lady

officers goes much beyond addressing gender-based crimes.

"Their increasing numbers can change the overall character of policing for the better, improve the police-community relations, and will prove beneficial to the nation too," the president said, addressing the IPS probationers of the 76 Regular Recruits (2023) batch.

She also advised the officers to make yoga a part of their routine and not ignore their mental well-being.

"I have spoken about the great responsibilities placed on your shoulders. These can sometimes be too stressful. I would like to offer you a word of advice in this regard.

"Never ignore your mental well-being. Make yoga, 'pranayama' and relaxation techniques part of your routine from now, and they will help you do your job better," Murmu said.

"The S' in IPS' stands for service", she said, and added that "one watchword above all is to serve the nation and its citizens". (PTI)

India needs more time for transition from coal: Experts

NEW DELHI, Sept 30: As the UK officially shut down its last remaining coal power plant on Monday, policy experts said coal will continue to be a part of India's energy mix for the next few decades, given that it is still a developing country with significant energy needs.

The UK on Monday closed its last coal power plant, becoming the first G7 nation to do so amid calls for a global coal-free energy system by 2040.

The world's first coal power plant opened in London in 1882, and until 2012, coal accounted for 39 per cent of the UK's electricity generation.

Global energy think tank Ember said the closure of the UK's last coal plant means that more than a third of OECD countries are now coal-free, with three-quarters expected to eliminate coal power by 2030, in line with global climate goals aimed at limiting warming to 1.5 degrees Celsius.

The International Energy Agency's (IEA) "Net Zero by 2050" report recommends that developed countries phase out unabated coal by 2030, while developing countries should aim to do so by 2040 to remain on track for global net-zero emissions by 2050.

The term "unabated" in this context refers to electricity production that does not use technologies designed to capture and reduce greenhouse

gas emissions.

These developments occur as developed countries push developing countries to accelerate the phase-down of unabated coal power.

India, the world's second-largest consumer of coal for electricity generation after China, saw the share of coal-fired power generation rise to 75 per cent in 2023-24 from 71 per cent in 2019-20.

According to the IEA, while coal consumption fell in Europe and the US in 2023, it rose by 8 per cent in India and 5 per cent in China.

That said, India's coal usage for power generation began several decades later than that of developed nations. While the UK's first coal power plant opened in 1882, India established its first major thermal power plant, the Hussain Sagar Thermal Power Station in Hyderabad, in 1920.

Policy experts say India is focusing on a long-term energy transition, where coal will continue to be part of the energy mix for the next few decades.

Sunil Dahiya, an independent analyst, said that while coal will not disappear in the near future, India must reduce harmful emissions from the sector by deploying advanced air pollution control technologies and improving efficiency to curb carbon emissions.

According to climate activist Harjeet Singh,



India has made remarkable progress in renewable energy, but the intermittent nature of these sources and the lack of scalable battery storage mean that coal still underpins its power supply and industries like steel and cement.

"Yet, the cost of coal goes far beyond emissions -- it destroys ecosystems, displaces communities, and deepens environmental injustice. India must urgently shift away from coal, and the international community must provide the financial and technological support needed for a just transition -- for both people and the planet," he said.

Labanya Jena, a sustainable finance specialist at global think tank Institute for Energy Econom-

ics and Financial Analysis, said achieving 100 per cent renewable energy deployment in India's energy mix quickly poses significant challenges.

"We need to reduce the cost of energy storage, make it easier to acquire land for RE projects, address social challenges associated with green economic transition, and make capital available at a reasonable rate.

However, rapid RE deployment can help India decarbonize its energy system while balancing economic and energy security needs," he said.

Montek Singh Ahluwalia, former deputy chairman of the erstwhile Planning Commission, said in a webinar organized by the think tank Centre for Social and Economic Progress last week that India can't cut down coal immediately and it is hypocritical in the West to focus solely on coal while ignoring oil and natural gas.

"However, if we are going to achieve net-zero emissions by 2070, we must recognise that we need to phase out thermal power. We should indicate to the world that India's emissions will increase for a while, then peak, and eventually decline. Right now, there's a lot of misunderstanding in the West about India's willingness to reduce emissions," he said.

Sunita Narain, the director general of the Centre for Science and Environment, echoed this sen-

timent, saying that India is currently dependent on coal, as it remains the cheapest form of energy available.

"We need to talk about a different future for coal. We must clean up coal -- not just for climate change but also for local air pollution. We will still need to invest, and that's where the world needs a conversation."

India has repeatedly emphasised that it is still a developing country with significant energy needs and that coal remains a crucial part of its energy mix because it is a reliable and affordable source of electricity.

It argues that developed countries have historically contributed more to greenhouse gas emissions, having relied on fossil fuels for their economic development. Therefore, developed nations should take the lead in reducing emissions while allowing developing countries more time to transition to cleaner energy sources.

India's Environment Minister Bhubender Yadav had said earlier that the country is committed to meeting the energy needs of its population and "will also have to rely on coal power until it achieves developed country status".

He said the nation cannot solely depend on "importing oil and gas" to meet its energy demands. (PTI)

No intermediary allowed to publish name, photo of victim in R G Kar rape-murder case: SC

NEW DELHI, Sept 30: The Supreme Court on Monday reiterated its earlier order that no intermediary is allowed to publish the name and photo of the victim in R G Kar Hospital rape-murder case.

As the hearing commenced, advocate Vrinda Grover told a bench of Chief Justice D Y Chandrachud and Justices J B Pardiwala and Manoj Misra that the parents of the deceased victim are disconcerted by repeated clips in social media disclosing her name and photos.

The top court said it had already passed an order on this issue and it was for the law enforcement agencies to implement the order. It clarified its earlier order and said it applies to all intermediaries.

The bench noted that substantial leads have come up in the CBI investigation and it has given statements on both aspects -- alleged rape and murder and the financial irregularities. The hearing is currently underway.

The top court on September 17 had said it was disturbed by the findings given in a status report filed by the Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI) in the rape-murder case but refused to divulge the details, saying any disclosure may



jeopardise the ongoing investigation.

On September 9, the top court had voiced concern over the absence of the "challan", a key document forwarding the body of the junior doctor who was raped and murdered at R G Kar Medical College and Hospital in Kolkata for post-mortem, from the records presented before it and sought a report from the West Bengal government.

On August 22, the apex court had tore into the Kolkata Police over the delay in registering the unnatural death of the woman doctor, who was raped and killed at the hospital, calling it "extremely disturbing", and questioned the sequence of events and the timing of its procedural formalities.

The top court had earlier constituted a 10-member National Task Force (NTF) to formulate a protocol for ensuring the safety and security of doctors and other health care professionals.

Terming the incident as "horrific", the apex court had exoriated the state government over the delay in filing the FIR and allowing thousands of people to vandalise the state-run facility.

The rape and murder of the junior doctor in a seminar hall of the state-run hospital has sparked nationwide protests.

The medic's body with severe injury marks was found on August 9. A civic volunteer was arrested by the Kolkata Police in connection with the case the following day.

On August 13, the Calcutta High Court ordered the transfer of the probe from the Kolkata Police to the CBI, which started its investigation on August 14. (PTI)

Air Chief Marshal A P Singh takes charge as new Chief of Air Staff

NEW DELHI, Sept 30: Air Chief Marshal Amar Preet Singh, an accomplished fighter pilot with more than 5,000 hours of flying experience, on Monday assumed charge as new chief of the Indian Air Force, succeeding incumbent Air Chief Marshal V R Chaudhari.

Air Chief Marshal Singh was serving as Vice Chief of the Air Force in his previous assignment. Air Chief Marshal Chaudhari retired from

service after helming the force for three years.

Born on October 27, 1964, Air Chief Marshal Singh was commissioned into the fighter pilot stream of the Indian Air Force in December 1984. In his long and distinguished service spanning nearly 40 years, he has served in a variety of command, staff, instructional and foreign appointments.

An alumnus of the National Defence Acad-

emy, Defence Services Staff College and National Defence College, the air officer is a qualified flying instructor and an experimental test pilot with more than 5,000 hours of flying experience on a variety of fixed and rotary wing aircraft.

Air Chief Marshal Singh has commanded an operational fighter squadron and a frontline air base. (PTI)

Let's finish him: Duo waited for Delhi Police constable to get close before mowing him down

NEW DELHI, Sept 30: As he closed in on the car of two men he had been chasing after rebuking them for drinking on the road, Delhi Police Constable Sandeep did not realise it was what they wanted.

"Brother Bhandre, let's run Sandeep over and finish him," said accused Rajnish alias Sittu, to Dharmender alias Bhandre, who was driving the car. They waited for the constable to get close enough, according to the FIR registered in the matter.

Dharmender revved the throttle and hit Sandeep's motorcycle from behind, dragging him for some distance before hitting a stationary car and crushing the constable between the two cars, stated the FIR which was accessed by PTI. The gruesome incident was caught on CCTV camera.

The incident occurred in the early hours of Sunday near Veena Enclave here when Sandeep, 30, was headed towards Railway Road from Nangloi police station during duty hours in plainclothes.

While Sandeep was on duty, he met his colleagues, Constables Khushi Ram and Sachin, who were returning home after duty.

"We spotted him (Sandeep) on his bike in plainclothes. I asked him about his duty hours and he told

us that on the directions of his SHO (station house officer), he was on duty in plainclothes as incidents of thefts had increased in his beat area," Ram stated in the FIR. As the three started moving towards Nangloi Railway Road, they saw a white Wagun R parked near a government school and that two men inside it were consuming alcohol, the FIR said.

"We identified one of the occupants as Dharmender alias Bhandre, who lives in Veena Enclave. Since I was previously posted at Nangloi police station, I knew Dharmender," Ram said in the FIR.

When Sandeep objected to the duo drinking alcohol on the road, Dharmender shouted, "You are interfering in our personal matter. How dare you?"

Sandeep asked Dharmender and Rajnish to come to the police station but the two started moving towards Nangloi railway station in their car. Sandeep chased them on his motorcycle. Ram and Sachin also followed them. After reaching near Jaat Dharmshala, Dharmender slowed down the vehicle and waited for the three policemen to get close. As he approached the car, Sandeep asked the accused to stop their vehicle. Instead, Dharmender hit Sandeep's motorcycle with his car. (PTI)

3 held in Delhi for duping man of ₹ 2.39 crore on pretext of providing CNG pump

NEW DELHI, Sept 30: Delhi Police has arrested three people, including a former contractual employee of the Ministry of Petroleum, for allegedly duping people on the pretext of providing CNG pumps, officials said on Monday.

The fraudsters duped a man of ₹ 2.39 crore under the guise of setting up a CNG pump, they said, adding that the accused had received ₹ 1.79 crore through various dummy bank accounts and ₹ 60 lakh in cash.

"On March 27, this year, the complainant approached the IFSO Special Cell, stating that he had been defrauded of ₹ 2.39 crore by individuals who promised to install a CNG pump on his land," Deputy Commissioner of Police (IFSO) Hemant Tiwari said.

The officer further said that the complainant told police that he was searching petrol or CNG pump allotment processes online and was approached by two individuals, Amrendra and Amit Pandey, who presented themselves as coordinators and agents of a gas company. "They lured him with promises of getting a CNG pump

installed with minimal formalities. The accused created forged documents, including a registration certificate, bank account details, and an invoice with a GST number, and sent them to the complainant. By posing as officers of a gas company, they swindled ₹ 2.39 crore from the victim," said the DCP, adding that an FIR was registered and an investigation was taken up.

According to the police, a special team was formed as the fraud dates back almost three years. The team gathered details of the bank accounts involved in the fraud and traced the money trail. The registration and allotment documents provided by the accused were verified with the gas company and found to be fake.

"Team pinpointed the location of the accused and subsequently arrested Amit Kumar Pandey (41), Amrendra Kumar (47) and Amar Singh (62), the DCP said. To avoid detection, the accused had been using SIM cards registered in someone else's name. They also created fake emails to send documents to the complainant. (PTI)

Climate change hit over 50 pc cotton farmers surveyed in Maha, Gujarat in 5 years: Report

NEW DELHI, Sept 30: Over 50 per cent of the cotton farmers surveyed in Gujarat and Maharashtra have suffered either "major or complete" crop loss due to floods and droughts in the past five years, according to a new report.

The survey, conducted by a UK-based think tank International Institute for Environment and Development (IIED) and the All-India Disaster Mitigation Institute (AIDMI), revealed that about two-thirds of the 360 farmers surveyed were experiencing longer dry spells, higher average temperatures and more days of extreme heat.

The survey, conducted in September 2023, involved cotton farmers equally split between Surendranagar district in Gujarat and Sambhaji Nagar district in Maharashtra. Most farmers were landowners, with the majority of landholdings smaller than 10 acres.

India is the largest producer of cotton globally. In 2023, it produced around 5.84 million metric tonnes -- almost a quarter of the world's cotton -- across 13 million hectares, engaging nearly six million farmers.



However, climate change, specifically more frequent periods of extreme heat, poses a significant threat to the livelihoods of small-holder farmers, especially women, who depend on this crop and is a critical risk to the global textile supply chain. Research shows that the western and central zones of India are more vulnerable to drought-like conditions, while the northern and northeastern zones are more susceptible to extreme flood events. Smallholder cotton farmers are particularly vulnerable in this ongoing climate crisis, putting mil-

lions of livelihoods at stake.

Laura Kelly, director of IIED's Shaping Sustainable Markets team, said, "Climate change is turning into a nightmare for farmers everywhere, and India's cotton growers are no exception.

"There are some government programmes and insurance schemes to help them, but our research shows they are not well known and may not provide comprehensive support in any case. While farmers are already doing what they can to protect their livelihoods, the government and

Flood situation in Bihar worsens as embankments of Kosi, Bagmati rivers breached

PATNA, Sept 30: Flood situation in several parts of Bihar worsened on Monday as embankments of Kosi river in Darbhanga district and Bagmati river in Sitamarhi were breached, officials said.

The Kosi river was in spate and breached its embankment near Kartarpur block, inundating Kirtarpur and Ghanshyampur villages in Darbhanga late on Sunday, while seepage was reported in the embankment of Bagmati river in Runni Saidpur block in Sitamarhi district, they said.

"The flood situation has worsened with fresh embankment breaches but it is under control. There is nothing to panic," an official said.

The state water resources and disaster management departments have been working on a war footing, he said.

"Altogether six incidents of embankment breach have so far been reported from various parts of the state. Some of them have already been repaired and work is going on for others," Bihar Water Resources Minister Vijay Kumar Choudhary told PTI on Monday.

The embankment of the Bagmati River at Madhkaul village in Sitamarhi and the Gandak river's embankment in West Champaran were damaged due to excessive water pressure, resulting in inundation in the Valmiki Tiger Reserve, another official said. "Water flowing above the embankments was reported from Valmikinagar and Kiratpur in Darbhanga. But now the water level in several rivers started receding. No casualty has been reported so far in Bihar due to the flood", the minister said. Considering the gravity of the flood situation in north Bihar, six more teams of the National Disaster Management Authority (NDRF) from Varanasi in Uttar Pradesh and Ranchi in Jharkhand are being deployed, he said.

They are being engaged in addition to the existing 12 teams of NDRF and 22 of State Disaster Management Authority (SDRF) deployed in the relief and rescue operation in the flood-affected districts," said a bulletin issued by the disaster management department on Monday.

"Despite water levels receding in several small rivers, the overall situation remained grim with over 16 lakh people affected by the deluge. No fatality has been reported so far," another official said. (PTI)

Himachal mosque row: Hindu outfits' scuffle with police in Kullu

SHIMLA, Sept 30: As protests demanding the demolition of illegally constructed mosques rage on in Himachal Pradesh, a Muslim organisation said that there were no illegal mosques in the state but delay in approval of maps in government records was causing a problem.

Hindu outfits that took out a yatra in Kullu demanding the demolition of the mosque were involved in a scuffle with police on Monday. Protesters of the 'Hindu Dharam Jagaran Yatra' marched from Hanuman temple to Akhara Mosque amid tight security.

People in large numbers, women included, carrying saffron flags and placards called for the demolition of the mosque in Kullu. Musicians playing local instruments and women in traditional dress led the yatra.

The demand for the demolition of illegally constructed mosques began after a scuffle between a Muslim barber and a Hindu businessman in Malvana area in the suburbs of Shimla on August 30 turned into a communal issue. Hindu groups have been demanding the demolition of mosques they say are unauthorised, while residents at large are demanding that outsiders coming into the state be identified.

Meanwhile, Muslim Welfare Committee, Mandi

president Naheem Ahmed told the PTI on Monday: "No mosque in Himachal Pradesh is illegal but there had been a delay in getting the maps approved and other related processes. We would ourselves remove the structures if found illegal." He said that a meeting of representatives of the Muslim community was held in the Balh area of Mandi on Sunday.

It was decided that a state-level committee of the minority community would be constituted and they would meet the chief minister to apprise him of the prevailing situation, Ahmed said. He said that Muslim leaders were of the view that some people are spreading hatred and such practices should be curbed. Every person coming from outside irrespective of his religion should be checked, he added.

Earlier, on Sunday, Kullu district authorities said that the mosque at Akhara Bazaar was not illegal. He said that there was a some difference between the area of the mosque in government records and the actual area covered by it, district authorities said, adding that the case for its regularisation was pending with the town and country planning department. The total area of the mosque is 980 square metres, and a deviation of around 150 square metres was found, they said. (PTI)

investors also need to pitch in."

The IIED director said big fashion chains need to recognise they have a role to play in helping their suppliers deal with climate shocks. Supporting the families producing a key commodity for their industry is not only a moral imperative but also a smart commercial choice.

The survey found that farmers are combating the climate threat by diversifying and rotating their crops or taking loans to invest in resources like irrigation to mitigate future problems.

Dipping into savings is another common coping strategy, but not all respondents have this option available. Others reported that in response to climate shocks, they have been forced to sell land or livestock, while a small number have avoided using healthcare or even cut back on the amount of food they consume.

About two-thirds of respondents said they had crop insurance (81 per cent in Maharashtra and 42 per cent in Gujarat), one-third had life insurance, 36 per cent had health insurance and only 8 per cent had livestock insurance. (PTI)

YAS ISLAND (ABU DHABI), Sept 30: Filmmaker Mani Ratnam's period drama "Ponniyin Selvan Part - 2", superstar Shah Rukh Khan-starrer "Jawan" and Ranbir Kapoor's "Animal" bagged three awards each in technical categories at the 2024 IIFA Rocks here.

The awards ceremony, held on the third and final day of the 24th edition of IIFA Festival on Sunday, celebrated the best of technicians across languages.

Music maestro A R Rahman received the best background score award for "Ponniyin Selvan Part - 2", with Ravi Varman winning the award for best cinematography (Tamil) and Thota Tharani earning recognition for best production design (Tamil) award for Ratnam's ambitious film.

"Jawan" registered wins in categories of best cinematography (G K Vishnu), sound mixing (Sampath Alwar, Chris Jacobson, Rob Marshall, Marti Humphrey), and special effects (Shah Rukh's company Red Chillies VFX).

Director Sandeep Reddy Vanga won the best editing

award for "Animal". Sachin Sudhakaran and Hariharan M were awarded best sound design honour and Harshvardhan Rameshwar received award for background score for Vanga's movie.

The best screenplay award was given to filmmaker Vidhu Vinod Chopra, Jaskunwar Kohli, Anurag Pathak, Aayush Saxena.



'Ponniyin Selvan Part - 2', 'Jawan', 'Animal' win top honours at IIFA Rocks 2024

Vikas Divyakirti for their critically-acclaimed and hit film "12th Fail".

Ishita Moitra won best dialogues film award for "Rocky Aur Rani Kii Prem Kahaani" and the trophy of best choreography went to Bosco-Caesar for "Pathaan", also starring Shah Rukh.

IIFA Rocks ended on an electrifying note with the grand finale of the IIFA Festival 2024, which kickstarted on September 27.

Hosted by Siddhant Chaturvedi and Abhishek Banerjee, IIFA Rocks featured enthralling performances by Shankar-Ehsaan-Loy, Shilpa Rao, Honey Singh, and Iulia Vantur.

The evening kicked off with the legendary musical trio Shankar-Ehsaan-Loy rendering soulful compositions and high-energy renditions of their hit songs.

The trio, known for their work in films "Kal Ho Naa Ho", "Dil Chahta Hai", "Kabhi Alvida Naa Kehna", "Zindagi Na Milegi Dobara", and "Bhaag Milkha Bhaag", were also honoured for completing their 30-year journey in Indian cinema. Joining them was Rao, whose powerful vocals and versatility have made her one of the most sought-after playback singers in Indian cinema.

Singer Honey Singh and Iulia Vantur also captivated the audience with their performances.

IIFA Rocks paid homage to the trailblazers of Indian cinema, spotlighting the technical brilliance behind the scenes.

The event recognised excellence in cinematography, screenplay, dialogues, editing, choreography, sound design, sound mixing, background score, and special effects (visual).

The IIFA Festival 2024 concluded on Sunday. (PTI)

Veteran actor Mithun Chakraborty to receive Dadasaheb Phalke Award: I&B minister

NEW DELHI, Sept 30: Veteran actor Mithun Chakraborty, star of films such as "Mrigayaa", "Surakshaa", "Disco Dancer", and "Dance Dance", was on Monday named recipient of the Dadasaheb Phalke Award, the government's highest recognition in the field of cinema.

The announcement comes months after Chakraborty was awarded Padma Bhushan, the third-highest civilian honour, by the Government of India.

Union Minister for Information and Broadcasting Ashwini Vaishnaw made the announcement on X.

"Mithun Da's remarkable cinematic journey inspires generations! Honoured to announce that the Dadasaheb Phalke Selection Jury has decided to award legendary actor, Sh. Mithun Chakraborty Ji for his iconic contribution to Indian Cinema," the minister said in the post. The award will be presented to Chakraborty at the 70th National Film Awards ceremony on October 8, 2024, Vaishnaw said. The three-member jury -- comprising former Dadasaheb awardee Asha Parekh, actor-politician Khushbu Sundar and filmmaker Vipul Amrutlal Shah -- selected Chakraborty for the prestigious honour.

Chakraborty, 74, is very happy, said his son Namashi Chakraborty about the Dadasaheb Phalke Award announcement. "We all are feeling very proud. He is in Kolkata, I just spoke to him. He is a self-made superstar and a great citizen. This was long, long overdue but I am so proud that he is finally being awarded with this honour," Namashi told PTI over phone from Los Angeles.

Chakraborty, whose real name is Gourang Chakraborty, is an alumnus of Pune's Film and Television Institute of India (FTII) who has predominantly worked in Hindi and Bengali cinema.

He made his acting debut with Mrinal Sen's 1976 film "Mrigayaa", for which he won his first National Film Award for Best Actor. He earned two more National Awards for 1992's "Tahader Katha" (best actor) and 1998's "Swami Vivekananda" (best supporting actor).

Chakraborty shot to stardom with his distinctive dancing style in the 1982 superhit "Disco Dancer", which is widely credited for ushering in the era of disco dancing in India through chartbusters like "I Am A Disco Dancer" and "Yaad Aa Raha Hai".

Then followed several hits like "Mujhe Insaaf Chahiye", "Hum Se Hai Zamana", "Pasand Apni Apni", "Ghar Ek Mandir", "Kasam Paida Karne Wale Ki" and "Com-mando".

He was also praised for his role in the 1990 film "Agneepath", fronted by Amitabh Bachchan.

A former Rajya Sabha Member of Parliament, Chakraborty joined the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) ahead of the 2021 West Bengal Legislative Assembly election. (PTI) Chakraborty also

If I can reach here, why can't others if they work hard: Mithun

KOLKATA, Sept 30: Legendary actor Mithun Chakraborty on Monday said if he can get the Dadasaheb Phalke award then others can also get it if they have the dedication and spirit of hard work.

Union Minister for Information and Broadcasting Ashwini Vaishnaw in a post on X informed that Mithun Chakraborty has been named the recipient of the Dadasaheb Phalke

Award. Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Monday lauded Chakraborty as a cultural icon and expressed delight at the veteran actor being conferred with the Dadasa-

heb Phalke Award. Chakraborty said he is dedicating this honour (Dadasaheb Phalke award) to his family and countless well-wishers and fans. To a question how he view this in retrospect, the journey from north Kolkata home, the veteran actor told reporters here, "I only wish to tell everyone that if I have reached this far, why can't you?" "You (the aspiring actors) should have the dedication and motivation. You should have the resilience to face difficult situations and keep doing your work. I can be the example," he said.

Asked about the wishes of Prime Minister Narendra Modi, Chakraborty said "I am thanking him for the wishes and greetings. He and everyone else who had wished me." To a question about his earlier stint as a Rajya Sabha MP from TMC, Chakraborty said "I had stepped down long back and I am no more the MP. I am an actor who is also involved in social work for people."

Chakraborty said about inferences that his association with BJP had any role in getting the honour, "I am associated with BJP. But I have worked in the industry in all these decades and got the love of people." To another question about the R G Kar incident and the ongoing investigations, Chakraborty said "Like everyone else I was shaken by this incident. We all want all those behind such barbaric crime be tracked and punished promptly. If that is delayed or does not happen then the issue of women's safety will never be ensured." (PTI)



'Devara: Part 1' crosses ₹ 300 crore-mark in first weekend

NEW DELHI, Sept 30: Telugu film "Devara: Part 1", helmed by Koratala Siva, earned Rs 304 crore at the worldwide box office in opening weekend, the makers said on Monday.

Headlined by Jr NTR and also starring Saif Ali Khan and Janhvi Kapoor, the film released on September 27.

According to the makers, the total box office collection (gross) of "Devara: Part 1" stands at Rs 304 crore worldwide.

The post on the official handle of the film on X read, "A hurricane named #Devara... has wiped out every nook and corner with his 'X' style of destruction #Blockbuster-Devara."

Two-part epic "Devara" is billed as a high-octane action drama set in the forgotten coastal lands of India. The first part was released in Telugu, Tamil, Hindi, Malayalam and Kannada last week.

The film is produced by Yuvasudha Arts and NTR Arts and presented by Nandamuri Kalyana Ram. (PTI)



Vivek Oberoi wants to work with Rajinikanth, Kamal Haasan and Chiranjeevi

YAS ISLAND (ABU DHABI), Sept 30: Actor Vivek Oberoi is quite happy with the way his career is panning out in the south movie industry but the actor is now looking for an opportunity to work with stalwarts like Rajinikanth, Kamal Haasan, and Chiranjeevi.

Oberoi, a prominent face in the Hindi film industry, made his debut in south with "Thozha/Oopiri" and has starred in films such as "Vivegam", "Lucifer", "Vinaya Vidheya Rama" and "Kaduva". The actor said he loves working in the industry where he got the opportunity to collaborate with many great actors and people "who I've admired and respected".

"I've got so much love from south. So, whenever they call me, I love going back and collaborating with them. I've done films in all four languages. But I feel my journey will never be complete

till I've done some sort of role in Rajini sir, Kamal Haasan sir or Chiranjeevi sir's films," Oberoi told PTI on the green carpet of the IIFA Awards 2024.

The 48-year-old actor said award ceremonies like the IIFA Awards play a pivotal role in bringing together different movie industries. "Award ceremonies like IIFA especially is that they are about coming together of the fraternity, what's special this time is we've got colleagues from the south, and Bollywood all coming together to celebrate Indian cinema, which is going places on a global level," Oberoi said. The three-day IIFA Awards gala, which kickstarted on September 27, began with the celebration of the south cinema with IIFA Utsavam, followed by IIFA Awards (for Hindi industry), and IIFA ROCKS. (PTI)



Aanand L Rai says he had initially narrated 'Zero' idea to Salman Khan

YAS ISLAND (ABU DHABI), Sept 30: Filmmaker Aanand L Rai has revealed that he had approached superstar Salman Khan for "Zero" when the film was in the scripting stage but they both eventually got busy with other projects and the conversation didn't go further.

Rai, known for films such as "Raanjhanaa" and "Tanu Weds Manu", started working on "Tanu Weds Manu Returns" while Salman got busy with another film. Salman's contemporary and superstar Shah Rukh Khan eventually starred in "Zero", which followed the story of a vertically challenged man.

"I had met him (Salman), I was working on it (script). At that time I had not finished writing the story. This happened after 'Raanjhanaa'. I had met him just like that and I told him, 'Aisi ek duniya hai (describing the world of 'Zero') ek duniya describe ki thi', and he liked it. Then I started working on 'Tanu Weds Manu Returns'. The story (of 'Zero') also changed but I couldn't go to him again. The day I have an opportunity, I'll go to him. I really want to work with Salman," the filmmaker told PTI in an interview on the green carpet of the IIFA Awards 2024 here.

The director described Salman as a "great actor and sensitive person".

"A sensitive person can switch easily between genres. So, it's up to us (filmmakers) now what kind of story I offer him," he said.

Salman, however, featured in "Zero" in a cameo in the song "Issaqbaazi" in which he shook a leg with Shah Rukh, his co-star in films such as "Karan Arjun" and "Hum Tumhare Hain Sanam". The film also featured Anushka Sharma and Katrina Kaif. (PTI)

WC winner Griezmann retires from int'l soccer after 10 years with France

PARIS, Sept 30: World Cup winner Antoine Griezmann took the soccer world by surprise on Monday when he announced the end of his international career with France.

The 33-year-old Atletico Madrid player has played 137 matches with Les Bleus, scoring 44 goals during a successful 10-year tenure.

Griezmann started with France in 2014 in a friendly match against the Netherlands then quickly established himself as a stalwart of the team coached by Didier Deschamps with his versatile talent and influence as both a goalscorer and an assist provider.

Only two players, Hugo Lloris and Lilian Thuram, have played more international games with France than Griezmann.

"It's with a heart full of memories that I close this chapter of my life," Griezmann said in a message posted on Instagram. "Thank you for this wonderful tricolor adventure and see you soon."

Griezmann is fourth on France's list of all-time scorers behind Olivier Giroud, Thierry Henry and Kylian Mbappe.

He won the 2018 World Cup and the Nations League three years later with his France teammates.

"After 10 incredible years, marked by challenges, successes and unforgettable moments, it is time for me to turn a page and make way for the new generation," he said.

"I was lucky enough to experience some incredible moments alongside some exceptional teammates. We have shared vic-



tories that will remain forever engraved in our memories."

After a disappointing showing at the European Championship earlier this year, where France lost in the semifinals, Griezmann had lost some of his influence in Deschamps' team.

His final appearance in the France kit was in September in a 2-0 win over Belgium in a Nations League match when he came on as a late substitute.

Although Griezmann has admitted he struggled at the Euros, he was expected to keep on

playing with France until the 2026 World Cup.

In his retirement message, Griezmann thanked Deschamps for his support over the last decade despite the coach's decision to make Mbappe France captain ahead of him last year

following Lloris' retirement. Griezmann had previously said Deschamps' snub had been difficult to stomach.

Griezmann didn't say how long he'll continue with his club career. His contract with Atletico runs until 2026. (AP)

Deeply concerning: Usha slams EC members for not felicitating Olympic medallists

NEW DELHI, Sept 30: Indian Olympic Association (IOA) President PT Usha on Monday said it is "deeply concerning" that the Executive Committee members failed to honour Olympic medallists and accused the Finance Committee of blocking funds intended to support Indian athletes' preparation for the Paris Games.

India secured six medals, including two historic bronze by young shooter Manu Bhaker, but Usha said the "EC does not want to celebrate their success" and it makes her "very sad."

"These athletes have made the nation proud, and it is the responsibility of the IOA to celebrate their achievements with the respect they deserve. It is deeply concerning that, even after returning home in mid-August, the EC has failed to discuss or take any steps towards organizing a formal felicitation ceremony," she said in a statement.

She revealed that a proposal for a preparatory grant of ₹ 2 lakh for each Olympic-bound athlete and ₹ 1 lakh for each coach had been blocked by the Finance Committee, notably by IOA Treasurer Sahdev Yadav.

"I strongly believe that this grant would have given our athletes and their coaches the support they needed in the crucial period leading up to the Olympic Games."

"The refusal to disburse these funds reflects a lack of understanding of the needs of athletes and shows a complete disregard for their preparation and well-being,"

she stated. Highlighting the contrast with previous leadership, Usha pointed out that a successful felicitation ceremony was organised for the seven medallists from the Tokyo 2021 Olympics, even amid the COVID-19 pandemic.

"If my predecessors could celebrate the achievements of our athletes during a global pandemic, what is stopping the current EC members from doing the same? These medallists have worked tirelessly to bring honour to our nation, and they deserve to be acknowledged."

Usha questioned the commitment of some EC members, particularly those who are former athletes. "As someone who has represented India on the world stage, I understand the importance of recognising the hard work, sacrifices, and victories of our athletes. It is disheartening to see that others in positions of power, especially those who have also worn the national colours, are failing to uphold this duty."

The IOA had planned to award each individual medallist between ₹ 50 lakh and ₹ 1 crore, with coaches receiving ₹ 15 lakh to ₹ 25 lakh as part of the official felicitation.

"By not following through on these plans, the IOA is letting down the athletes who have made our country proud. I urge the Executive Committee to take immediate action and ensure that our athletes receive the honours and recognition they deserve." (PTI)

Rajen Borthakur memorial football competition concludes

HT Correspondent

TEZPUR, Sept 30: The Rajen Borthakur memorial Tezpur Challenge Cup Football Competition organised by Tezpur District Sports Association, which began on September 18 last at the historic Polo field, concluded here on Sunday. The final match was held between Delhi FC and Oil India, Duliajan. Delhi FC defeated Oil India, Duliajan by 3-0 goals. A good number of football fans and spectators witnessed the thrilling match.

A prize distribution ceremony was held with Jiten Borthakur, president of Tezpur District Sports Association in the chair. The session was attended by Prithibiraj Rabha, MLA, Tezpur, Ankur Bharali, District Commissioner, Sonitpur, office bearers of Assam Olympic Association besides a host of eminent sports personalities. Journalist Atanu Bhuyan unveiled 'Buniyad', a mouthpiece compiled on this occasion and edited by Pankaj Barua. The district sports association felicitated prolific swimmer Elvish

Ali Hazarika and Minuma Bodo, a brave lady who saved the life of 18 pilgrims in Badrinath from an imminent accident. The winner and runners up teams were handed over by the cash wards of rupees one lakh and fifty thousand along with the Tarini Bhuyan Memorial trophies respectively by Atanu Bhuyan, eldest son of Tarini Bhuyan. Besides Prem Kanta Deka memorial, Arundhati Katakya memorial and Joya Borthakur memorial player of the tournament award, best player award, best goalkeeper award etc. were handed over by the family members of the donors family.

The player of the tournament award was won by Sudipta Konwar, Oil India, Duliajan while the player of the final match went to the credit of Assam of Delhi FC. Similarly, the award of highest goal scorer was won by Himangshu Tangra and best goalkeeper award was won by Muwangchanga of Delhi FC.

'Intensity of women team's prep ahead of T20 WC is unmatched'

BENGALURU, Sept 30: Former India batter VVS Laxman said the hard yards Harmanpreet Kaur and her teammates had put in a camp at the Centre of Excellence here will stand them in good stead in the upcoming Women's T20 World Cup. India will open their campaign in the ICC showpiece with a match

against New Zealand on October 4 at Dubai.

"The kind of commitment, dedication and the intensity with which they practice and prepare is unmatched. I am very proud of the way they prepare," Laxman, head of BCCI Centre of Excellence, told a select media gathering. Laxman detailed how

the women cricketers went about their preparation for the big event. "It was a productive camp and (women's team head coach) Amol (Muzumdar) had planned in such a manner that in the first phase of the camp he focused on the mental and physical aspects of the game."

"Then there was a break and

when they came back, they focused on the skill and the tactical aspect of the game. It was not only restricted to nets but they also played five matches where Amol created different situations, different kinds of challenges for the players," he said.

On a general note, Laxman said women's cricket in India has

seen a surge in recent years, and the Women's Premier League will take the game further forward. "I think there is so much upside for women's cricket. I can say that through this role that was my first exposure working and seeing the young girls and the international women players work from close quarters." (PTI)



Prize distribution ceremony of REC Open Hunt Boxing Programme-02 (Elite, Youth, Junior & Sub Jr.) by Assam Sepak Takraw Association general secretary and Sepak Takraw Federation of India vice president Dr Bishnu Ram Nunisa at SAI, Guwahati on Monday.

East Bengal part ways with Spanish coach Cuadrat

KOLKATA, Sept 30: Kolkata giants Emami East Bengal has mutually parted ways with Spanish head coach Carles Cuadrat following the team's underwhelming performance in the ongoing Indian Super League, the club announced on Monday.

Bino George has been named as the interim head coach of the side. "The Emami East Bengal FC management appreciates coach Carles for guiding the team to the Kalinga Super Cup title and AFC continental competitions after a long hiatus. We wish him the best in his future endeavours," Vibhish Vardhan Agarwal of Emami Group said in a statement.

Cuadrat took over the charge of East Bengal in April last year, signing a two-year contract.

Under Cuadrat, East Bengal

ended a 12-year trophy drought since the Federation Cup triumph in 2012 by winning the Kalinga Super Cup title in January this year. It remains the only title of his reign.

He also led the team to a runners-up finish in last year's Durand Cup.

But it was not a smooth sailing for the 55-year-old Spaniard as the Red and Gold brigade finished a disappointing ninth in the last ISL season with six wins as many draws and 10 defeats.

The pressure mounted on Cuadrat after East Bengal made disastrous start to the ongoing ISL season, after the team suffered a hat-trick of defeats in the ongoing ISL. And the writing was on the wall following the losses with East Bengal making its intentions clear to cut its ties with Cuadrat. (PTI)

Comparing Kohli and Babar baseless, the Indian star way ahead: Zaheer Abbas

SHARJAH, Sept 30: Pakistan great Zaheer Abbas feels the comparisons between Virat Kohli and Babar Azam are baseless as the Indian superstar is a lot more consistent than the under-fire Pakistan batter.

Once regarded as part of the 'Fab Five' including Kohli, Steve Smith, Joe Root, and Kane Williamson, Babar is currently enduring an extended slump in form.

"Yeh fizoool ki baatein hai (the comparisons are pointless). Virat Kohli scores in every match the other player (Babar) doesn't score in any match so then how can you compare. The person who scores, he is the bigger player," Abbas told PTI on the sidelines of the Cricket Predicta Conclave here.

Kohli has 80 international hundreds to his name while the much younger Babar has scored 31 centuries across formats.

Abbas also acknowledged the consistency displayed by India across formats and said the Rohit Sharma-led team will be a strong contender for the upcoming Champions Trophy.

"Indian team overall is very good. Their batters are doing well and the bowlers both are good. It is a very balanced team, one that plays soch samajh kar (thoughtfully)," said Abbas.

"They have a very good captain, who understands cricket very well. So, when everything is going in your favour it is smooth sailing. That's the case with India right now."

"There is a very good chance of them doing well (at the Champions Trophy) because they have a balanced team," the 77-year-old said.

Hailed as the 'Asian Bradman' for insatiable appetite for runs, Abbas was one of the most elegant batters of his time. He played 78 Tests and 62 ODIs for Pakistan, accumulating 5062 and 2572 runs respectively.

The 77-year-old strongly believes that Test cricket truly tests the players' character, resilience, mental strength, technique, and consistency.

"Test cricket is real cricket. That it is the real Test of any player, bowler. At one point India and Pakistan's Test team



used to be good. And now the boards are realising that we can't go on without Test cricket.

"How many T20s can you play? How many white-ball tournaments can the ICC organise? Maybe 2 or 3 but in the end you have to return to ODI or Tests."

"If you continue Test cricket the cricket will last longer. I know people like to get results fast but slowly they will get bored of T20s and we need Tests and ODIs."

An increasing number of players are turning down central contracts from their boards to focus on careers in T20 franchise leagues, a worrying trend that Abbas believes should be addressed. "Test cricket is ultimate. Anyone can win in T20. Teams can win by fluke. But that is not the case in Test cricket as it has two innings. You have the scope to do well in one innings. Test cricket teaches you a lot."

"I know a lot of the players

don't want to play Test cricket and play T20 instead. That needs to be stopped. They need to come up with something..."

"Something like you have to play at least 5 or 6 Test matches a year then you can play ODI or T20s. Every year a minimum number of Test matches need to be allotted," he added.

Once a cricketing powerhouse, Pakistan now find themselves in a difficult situation. Their downward spiral began with the Asia Cup last year which was followed by the team's early elimination from the ODI World Cup in 2023 and the T20 World Cup this year.

Earlier this month they suffered their first-ever Test series loss to Bangladesh.

"Bohot bada dhakka tha (It was a huge setback) that Pakistan lost to Bangladesh. We never thought that not only Pakistan will lose but it will lose so bad."

"Pakistan cricket abhi daamadol hai (is not doing great). The performance has dropped. I am hopeful that it will get better. The reasons behind this are many." (PTI)

DC co-owner GMR group takes over Hampshire in county cricket

LONDON, Sept 30: The GMR Group, co-owners of IPL franchise Delhi Capitals, on Monday completed an agreement with Hampshire to buy majority stake in the English county club.

Initially, the GMR Group will hold 53 percent stake in Hampshire, thereby making it the first county team to have an overseas ownership.

In a phased manner through the next 24 months, the Indian conglomerate will acquire 100 percent stake. "Hampshire Sport & Leisure Holdings Limited, owner of the Utilita Bowl site and Hampshire Cricket, has signed and exchanged definitive agreements with GMR Global Pte Ltd (GGPL), marking the start of a significant strategic partnership,"

the club said in a statement in its website. "As part of the agreement, GGPL will initially acquire a majority stake in Hampshire Sport & Leisure Holdings Limited, with the completed acquisition of 100% ownership expected within the next 24 months," the statement added.

Kirankumar Granthi, Corporate Chairman of the GMR Group, said his aim will be to cultivate "value creation" and providing opportunities to budding talents.

"With this acquisition, along with our investments in the US, Dubai, and India, GMR is focused on engaging and connecting with the global youth. We are committed to financial prudence, value creation, and creating opportunities for young talent." (PTI)

Onslaught surprises the rival attack

India push for victory with T20-style batting



KANPUR, Sept 30: Trying to force a result in the limited time available, India played a sensational T20-style cricket to take a 52-run first-innings lead against Bangladesh in the second Test, infusing life into the rain-hit contest here on Monday.

The sun shone bright in the Kanpur sky after two gloomy days and the on-field action finally began after losing eight sessions. India had six sessions to force a win, and the hosts did everything they could on the fourth day of the match.

The pitch hardly offered assistance to India bowlers but the hosts still bundled out Bangladesh for 233 in their first innings, built around Mominul Haque's patient unbeaten 107. India then unleashed their batting might on the visitors, striking at 8.22 runs per over to reset the records for fastest team 50 (18 balls), 100 (74 balls) and 200 runs (24.2 overs) in Test cricket.

India declared their second innings at 285 for nine to have another go at the visiting batters.

At stumps, Bangladesh were 26 for two with Zakir Hasan and Hasan

Mahmud becoming off-spinner Ravichandran Ashwin's victims. They were trailing India by 26 runs.

India are going for the kill as an outright victory will consolidate their top position in the World Test Championship (WTC) table.

Considering the tougher assignments ahead, especially the Australia Tour, India need to log as many wins as possible against comparatively easier rivals to get some cushion before the tough overseas rubbers.

Young opener Yashvi Jaiswal (72 off 51 balls) set the tone with three boundaries in the opening over bowled by Hasan Mahmud and skipper Rohit Sharma (23 off 11) bludgeoned Khaled Ahmed for two consecutive sixes - one landing on the roof of the stadium.

It was clear that India were showing an urgency to surpass the Bangladesh total quickly after more than two days' play was lost to bad weather.

The onslaught surprised the rival attack but the home fans were rewarded for visiting the stadium.

Adopting a see-the-ball and hit-the-ball approach, India completed the fastest team fifty in three overs.

Realising the ineffectiveness of his pacers, Bangladesh skipper Najmul Hossain Shanto introduced spinner Mehidy Hasan Miraz and he responded to the call by casting Rohit.

Jaiswal completed his fifty with a single off left-arm spinner Taijul Islam and continued in his aggressive fashion. His innings, which contained 12 fours and two sixes, was cut short by Mahmud.

The young opener added 72 runs for the second wicket with Shubman Gill (39). Rishabh Pant did not last long but there was no change in approach for the hosts with Virat Kohli and KL Rahul building on the foundation with their swift 87-run stand for the fifth wicket.

In a breathtaking show, Indian batters hit 28 fours and 11 sixes, collecting 158 runs in boundaries.

In the process, Kohli became only the fourth player in history to complete 27,000 runs in international cricket across formats.

Ravindra Jadeja also cherished a rare double of 300 Test wickets and 3000 Test runs. He is the second quickest to complete the double behind England great Ian Botham.

He also became only the seventh Indian to take 300 Test wickets when he dismissed Khaled Mahmud. (PTI)

India record fastest team hundred and fifty during 2nd Test against Bangladesh

KANPUR, Sept 30: Indian batters went on a rampage to better their own record of fastest team hundred in men's Test cricket while resetting the record of quickest fifty on the fourth day of the rain-affected second match against Bangladesh here. Yashvi Jaiswal hammered 10 fours and a six to make the fourth fastest fifty for any Indian batter after Rohit Sharma's early fireworks (23 off 11 balls, 3x6s, 1x4s), as the 50-run mark was breached in a mere three overs at the Green Park on Monday.

India thus broke England's record of scoring the fastest team fifty in 4.2 overs which they had reg-

istered against the West Indies at Trent Bridge in July this year. While Jaiswal continued with his aggressive approach, No 3 Shubman Gill also joined in to punish the Bangladesh bowlers as India crossed the triple-figure mark in 11 overs, improving their own record. India had recorded the fastest century for any team in terms of overs faced when they went past the 100-run mark against the West Indies at Port of Spain in 2023. Indian batters went all guns blazing in reply to Bangladesh's 233 all out in the first innings. Only 35 overs' play was possible on the first three days of this final match due to persistent rains and ground conditions. (PTI)

Kohli becomes fourth player to complete 27,000 international runs

KANPUR, Sept 30: Indian batting superstar Virat Kohli on Monday became only the fourth player in history to complete 27,000 runs in international cricket across formats, a feat that he achieved on the fourth day of the ongoing second Test against Bangladesh here. Kohli made a brisk 47 off 35 balls with four fours and a six as he helped India push on further in an aggressive mode to make up for the lost time in the Test due to incessant rains.

He is only the second Indian cricketer to have breached the 27,000-run mark and stands fourth in the list for most international runs across formats, which is headed by the legendary Sachin Tendulkar with 34,357 runs.

In between the two Indian batting greats are Sri

Lanka's Kumar Sangakkara with 28,016 runs at the second spot and Australia's Ricky Ponting at the third, with 27,483 runs.

Kohli, who has a little over 8,870 runs in Tests, has 13,906 runs in 295 ODIs and another 4,188 runs in 125 T20Is — a format from which he retired after helping India win the T20 World Cup in June this year.

BCCI secretary Jay Shah wrote on X, "Another towering milestone in the illustrious career of Virat Kohli as he crosses 27,000 international runs! Your passion, consistency, and hunger to excel are inspiring to the cricketing world. Congratulations @imVkohli, the journey continues to inspire millions!" (PTI)



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नए समाज की ओर
Towards a new dawn

সংস্কৃত ভাষা
অসম চৰকাৰ
মহিলা আৰু শিশু বিকাশ বিভাগ

POSHAN Abhiyaan
PM's Overarching Scheme for Holistic Nourishment
সহী পোষণ - দেশ রোহান
#পোষণমাহ২০২৪

পৰিপুষ্ট কিশোৰী শক্তিশালী নাৰী

ৰাষ্ট্ৰীয় পোষণ মাহৰ সৈতে সংগতি ৰাখি
ৰাজ্যিক পোষণ মাহ
উদ্‌যাপন
১ - ৩০ ছেপ্টেম্বৰ ২০২৪

সামৰণি অনুষ্ঠান

মুখ্য অতিথি
শ্ৰীমতী অজন্তা নেওগ
মাননীয় মন্ত্ৰী
মহিলা আৰু শিশু বিকাশ বিভাগ, অসম চৰকাৰ

বিশিষ্ট অতিথি
শ্ৰীযুত সঞ্জয় কিষাণ
মাননীয় মন্ত্ৰী
শ্ৰম আৰু চাহ জনজাতি কল্যাণ বিভাগ, অসম চৰকাৰ
অতিভাৰক মন্ত্ৰী, গোলাঘাট জিলা

গৌৰৱময় উপস্থিতি

শ্ৰীযুত কামাখ্যা প্ৰসাদ তাৰা, সাংসদ, কাজিৰঙা লোকসভা সমষ্টি
শ্ৰীযুত মৃগাল শইকীয়া, বিধায়ক, খুমটাই বিধানসভা সমষ্টি
শ্ৰীযুত বিশ্বজিত ফুকন, বিধায়ক, সৰুপথাৰ বিধানসভা সমষ্টি

স্থান: সমষ্টি ক্ষেত্ৰ, গোলাঘাট
তাৰিখ: ১ অক্টোবৰ, ২০২৪
দিনৰ ১১:০০ বজা

ৰাইজৰ উপস্থিতি কামনা কৰা হ'ল

পোষণ অভিযান, অসমৰ দ্বাৰা প্ৰচাৰিত

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