

6 WORLD Rare Israeli strike in central Beirut kills 7 as troops battle Hezbollah
8 NATION New NATO Secretary-General Mark Rutte visits Ukraine
Withdrawal of prohibitory order 'victory' of Hindus: AAP
BJP's Ashok Tanwar joins Cong at Rahul Gandhi's rally

DENGUE SPREADS THROUGH AEDES MOSQUITOES Prevent incubation of mosquitoes inside and outside your home. Save yourself from Dengue SYMPTOMS OF DENGUE: High Fever, Headache, Pain Behind Eyes, Muscular Pain, Joint Pain, Rash on Skin, Redness of the Eyes, Bleeding from Nose & Gums. PREVENTIVE METHODS: Avoid water stagnation, Use mosquito net, Wear long sleeve clothing, Consult a doctor immediately.

Gadkari assures to remove Majuli bridge roadblocks Fresh tender likely to be floated shortly: CM

HT Bureau GUWAHATI, Oct 3: Following union minister Nitin Gadkari's assurance, chief minister Himanta Biswa Sarma stated on Thursday that the roadblock on a crucial bridge over the Brahmaputra River, which is intended to link Majuli River island with the mainland in Assam's Jorhat district, will be sorted out soon.



Delhi Airport. He assured me that he is personally looking into the Majuli Bridge issue. With the previous contractor unwilling to proceed, a fresh tender might be issued. A decision on this will be taken soon." The Assam chief minister has

He said, "I have written to Hon'ble Union Minister Shri @nitin_gadkari Ji requesting his immediate intervention to ensure that we don't miss the Dec 2025 completion date." The chief minister mentioned in the letter that the construction of the new two-lane major bridge, including approaches over the river Brahmaputra, between Majuli on the North Bank and Jorhat on the South Bank was awarded by the ministry of road transport and highways in August 2021 on EPC mode to the UP State Bridge Corporation Limited. He further mentioned that the project holds immense significance for the region, with a total contract value of approximately ₹ 650 crore and an expected completion date of December 2025. (CONTD. ON PAGE-2)

India sign tripartite agreement with neighbours

KATHMANDU, Oct 3: Nepal, India and Bangladesh on Thursday signed a tripartite agreement to facilitate cross-border electricity trade, officials here said. As per the agreement, Nepal will export its surplus electricity to Bangladesh via India from June 15 to November 15 every year. India will make arrangements to supply electricity from Nepal to Bangladesh. In the first phase, Nepal will export 40 MW of hydroelectricity to Bangladesh via Indian territory. The rate per unit of electricity has been fixed at 6.4 cents. From the export of electricity, Nepal will make an annual income of around USD 9.2 million, Nepal Electricity Authority (NEA) officials said. The MoU was signed in Kathmandu between NEA executive director Kulman Ghising, NTPC vidyut byapar nigram CEO Deino (CONTD. ON PAGE-2)

BJP spreads hatred, oust it from Haryana: Rahul

NUH, Oct 3: Congress leader Rahul Gandhi on Thursday said his party will not let the "hatred" being spread by the BJP on the basis of religion, language, and caste, and appealed to the people of Haryana to oust the ruling party in the Assembly polls. Gandhi was addressing a public meeting in Nuh that had witnessed incidents of violence last year after a Vishva Hindu Parishad procession was attacked by a mob, leading to the death of six people, including two home guards and a cleric. The fight is between 'mohabbat' (love) and 'nafrat' (hatred). The Congress spreads love while the BJP spreads "hatred", Gandhi said

on the last day of campaigning for the October 5 assembly polls. "The most important thing is brotherhood. Wherever the BJP and RSS people go, they spread hatred. In whichever state they go, somewhere they talk about language, somewhere they talk about religion and somewhere they speak about caste." "Hatred has to be ended. India is not a country of hatred, it is the country of 'mohabbat'. And you have shown this to the entire country," Gandhi added. India is the country of 'mohabbat ki dukan', not 'nafrat ka bazaar', he said "We will not let this hatred win in the country. Love, brotherhood (CONTD. ON PAGE-2)



Mizoram Police arrest Jharkhand couple linked to 2017 murder case

AIZAWL, Oct 3: Mizoram Police arrested a couple from Jharkhand, seven years after they allegedly killed their friend in Aizawl, a senior officer said on Thursday. The accused, Manik Das (44) and his wife Anjali Devi (40), were apprehended at their residence at Aamdhari village in Dumka district on September 29 and brought here on Wednesday. Inspector General of Police (Law and Order) Lalbiakthanga Khiangete said. The couple, both labourers, allegedly murdered their friend Mangra and buried his body inside a rented house in the Falkland area here in March 2017. Mangra, who was also (CONTD. ON PAGE-2)

Assam to launch co-districts today, says Himanta

HT Bureau GUWAHATI, Oct 3: At least 39 co-districts are coming up in Assam beginning Friday which is the first-of-its-kind approach in the country, said Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma on Thursday. In the next two days, the state administration will initiate these 39 co-districts across various places in the state. According to the chief minister, this will be the first leg of launching co-districts in Assam and several others will come up in the second phase. He asserted that this initiative would take the entire government machinery to the doorstep of the people. Sarma, in a post made to X, said, "Taking Governance one step

closer to people! Tomorrow, we begin launching 'Co-Districts'. This unique initiative, the first in the country, will decentralise district administration. Co-Districts will ensure implementation of our vision of Minimum Govt, Maximum Governance." One of the important features of these co-districts is the smaller administrative units below the district level and timely access to essential government services by citizens. Sarma claimed that this significant step will improve efficiency bringing governance to the grassroots and it will also streamline citizen-centric services. A slew of essential services will be provided under this co-district

initiative that will include issuing certificates like next of Kin/Caste/Non-Creamy Layer/PRC, magisterial powers etc. Moreover, government permission for events, functions, fairs, etc will also be provided by the co-district office and the people will not have to visit the district headquarters for the majority of official matters. Sarma said, "Issue of ration cards, distribution of rice under government scheme, sale and buying permission of lands etc. will be done at co-district level. This will take government machinery to the doorstep of people." The chief minister had earlier declared that the state government intended to (CONTD. ON PAGE-2)

Assamese among five other languages awarded classical language status

Himanta showers praise on PM Modi HT Bureau GUWAHATI, Oct 3: The central government has awarded Assamese along with four other languages as classical language status on Thursday. The decision was taken in a union cabinet meeting presided by Prime Minister Narendra Modi earlier today. Marathi, Bengali, Pali, Prakrit, and Assamese are the five additional languages that have been acknowledged as classical languages, said the union minister of information and broadcasting, Ashwini Vaishnav in the national capital. Tamil, Sanskrit, Telugu, Kannada, Malayalam, and Oriya have previously achieved the coveted title, bringing the total number of classical Indian languages to eleven. Meanwhile, following the Union cabinet's pronouncement of awarding Assamese a classical language status, chief minister Himanta Biswa Sarma heaped praises on

Prime Minister Narendra Modi for the centre's decision. Taking to X handle, Sarma wrote, "Assamese is now a classical language. On behalf of the people of Assam, I extend my gratitude to Hon'ble Prime Minister Shri @narendramodi Ji and the entire Union Cabinet for the historic decision to accord Assamese the status of Classical Language." According to him, the Assamese language now enjoys the status of culturally (CONTD. ON PAGE-2)

HT BRIEFS Residential Schools GUWAHATI: In a significant boost to education in tribal areas, a total number of 17 Eklavya Model Residential Schools (EMRS) are set to be established across the state, education minister Ranaj Pegu announced on Thursday. These schools, funded by the ministry of tribal affairs, Government of India, will provide quality education and infrastructure in blocks with more than 50% Scheduled Tribe (ST) population. Minister Pegu shared the announcement on the micro-blogging site X, detailing the locations selected for the new schools. Pegu wrote, "A total 17 (Seventeen) Eklavya Model Residential Schools (EMRS) are coming up in Assam under GoI Ministry of @TribalAffairsIn. Blocks having more than 50% ST population are selected for establishing EMRS." These include districts such as Baksa, Barpeta, Karbi Anglong, Kokrajhar, Dima Hasao, Dhemaji, Goalpara, Kamrup, West Karbi Anglong, and Udalguri. Abhinandan Subsidy GUWAHATI: The Assam government has launched the Abhinandan Education Loan Subsidy Scheme 2.0, a financial relief initiative for students pursuing higher education, the Chief Minister's Office (CMO) announced on Thursday. The scheme, introduced under the leadership of chief minister Himanta Biswa Sarma, will provide a subsidy of up to ₹ 50,000 on education loans, helping to ease the financial burden on both students and their families. Taking to the micro-blogging site X, the CMO stated, "The Government of Assam, under the leadership of HCM Dr. @himantabiswa, is launching the Abhinandan Education Loan Subsidy Scheme 2.0, offering up to ₹50,000 in subsidy to ease the financial burden on students and parents."

Efficient execution of schemes key to welfare: Nandita

HT Bureau DIPHU, Oct 3: Guardian minister Nandita Garlosa on Thursday stressed the need for efficient execution of schemes under several departments such as health and family welfare, panchayat and rural development, cooperation, sports, and social welfare, among others. Garlosa expressed her concerns while participating in a meeting which was held in Karbi Anglong's Kajir Ronghangpi Guest House. The minister also reviewed the implementation of central and state-sponsored schemes in the Karbi Anglong and West Karbi Anglong Districts under the Karbi Anglong Autonomous Council (KAAC). While speaking during the meeting, the



minister highlighted the success of these schemes is essential for furthering the welfare and development of the people of Karbi Anglong. Later, she also urged department heads to ad-

dress the needs of the local population and work towards achieving tangible outcomes. The meeting also served as a platform to discuss the challenges in implementing these schemes. The minister sought feedback from the officials and assured them of the necessary support and resources to ensure their effective execution. MLAs Dorsing Ronghang, and Rupsing Teron; executive member of KAAC, Kangbura Killing; principal secretary of KAAC Mukul Kumar Saikia, and district commissioner, Nirola Phangchopia (Karbi Anglong) and Saranga Pani Sharma (West Karbi Anglong), along with KAAC secretaries, department heads, and other officials were present at the meeting.

NEW DELHI, Oct 3: India has become an affiliate member of the International Medical Device Regulators Forum (IMDRF), which will open doors to invaluable opportunities for reliance and collaboration with regulatory authorities worldwide, the Union health ministry said on Thursday. The IMDRF, which was established in 2011, is a group of global medical device regulators whose aim is to speed up the adoption of international medical device regulatory harmonisation and convergence. Its members include national regulatory authorities of the US, Australia, Canada, the European Union, Japan, the UK, Brazil, Russia, China, South Korea, Singapore and the World Health Organisation (WHO). "To achieve global alignment in its medical device regulatory system, enhance the competitiveness of the domestic industry and boost transnational prominence, the Central Drugs Standard Control Organisation (CDSCO), under the Ministry of Health and Family Wel-

India trashes USCIRF report on religious freedom

NEW DELHI, Oct 3: India trashed a report by the US Commission on International Religious Freedom (USCIRF) and described it as a "biased" organisation with a "political agenda" on Thursday. In a strong reaction, the Ministry of External Affairs (MEA) said the USCIRF should utilise its time more productively to address human rights issues in the United States. The report is critical of India for alleged violations of religious freedom. "Our views on the United States Commission on International Religious Freedom (USCIRF) are well known. It is a biased organisation

with a political agenda," external affairs ministry spokesperson Randhir Jaiswal said. "It continues to misrepresent facts and peddles a motivated narrative about India. We reject this malicious report, which only serves to discredit USCIRF further," he said. He was responding to media queries on the 'country update' on India in the report. "We would urge USCIRF to desist from such agenda-driven efforts. The USCIRF would also be well advised to utilise its time more productively on addressing human rights issues in the United States," the spokesperson said. (PTI)

Wife of victim in Gurudwara case deposes against Jagdish Tytler

NEW DELHI, Oct 3: The wife of a victim in north Delhi's Pul Bangash Gurudwara case related to the 1984 anti-Sikh riots on Thursday deposed before a Delhi court against Congress leader Jagdish Tytler. Special Judge Rakesh Syal recorded the statement of Lakhwinder Kaur, the wife of Badal Singh who was one of the three men killed by a mob that torched the Gurudwara during the riots. In her statement, Kaur said an eyewitness told her that Tytler had come to the place of the incident in a vehicle and incited a mob. Kaur told the court that she met Surrender Singh Granthi, who worked as a Granthi in the Gurudwara in 2008, who described the incident to her. "Surrender Singh told me that he saw the incident from the roof of the Gurudwara. He told me that he saw my husband Badal Singh exiting from the Gurudwara and saw him being attacked by a mob who took

out the kirpan of my husband and stabbed him to death using the same. He also told me that Tytler had come to the place of the incident in a vehicle and that he had gathered everyone," she told the court. She added that Surrender Singh told her that the mob engaged in violence upon the incitement of Tytler and her husband's body was put in a cart after he was killed and burnt by placing burning tyres on top of him. She, thereafter, approached the court for investigation. Tytler's counsel opposed the deposition stating that the account of Granthi was hearsay and not admissible as evidence. The court rejected this claim and adjourned the matter for October 15. The judge had on August 30 ordered the framing of charges against Tytler (80) under sections 302 (murder), 109 (abetment), 147 (rioting), 153A (promoting enmity between groups) and 143 (unlawful assembly) of the (CONTD. ON PAGE-2)

'Brand India' strengthening in global market India becomes affiliate member of IMDRF

NEW DELHI, Oct 3: India has become an affiliate member of the International Medical Device Regulators Forum (IMDRF), which will open doors to invaluable opportunities for reliance and collaboration with regulatory authorities worldwide, the Union health ministry said on Thursday. The IMDRF, which was established in 2011, is a group of global medical device regulators whose aim is to speed up the adoption of international medical device regulatory harmonisation and convergence. Its members include national regulatory authorities of the US, Australia, Canada, the European Union, Japan, the UK, Brazil, Russia, China, South Korea, Singapore and the World Health Organisation (WHO). "To achieve global alignment in its medical device regulatory system, enhance the competitiveness of the domestic industry and boost transnational prominence, the Central Drugs Standard Control Organisation (CDSCO), under the Ministry of Health and Family Wel-



fare, applied for Affiliate Membership in the International Medical Device Regulators Forum (IMDRF) in 2024," the health ministry said in a statement. "After review of India's application for affiliate membership and meeting discussions by the IMDRF Management Committee (MC) with the senior officers of CDSCO during the 26th Session of IMDRF held in September 2024 at Seattle, Washington, USA, the CDSCO has

received approval from IMDRF as an affiliate member of the forum," it said. Becoming an affiliate member of the IMDRF will open doors to invaluable opportunities for reliance and collaboration with regulatory authorities worldwide, it said. The membership helps to harmonise regulatory requirements across the globe, which reduces complexities for manufacturers and helps safeguard public health by promoting collaboration, harmonising regulations and promoting convergence. As an affiliate member, India will participate in IMDRF open sessions for information exchange on technical topics with other regulators, to discuss the latest medical device regulatory strategies and trends, provide feedback on its experience and perspectives and use IMDRF documents in part or in whole as the basis for its regulatory framework for medical devices. This will strengthen the CDSCO's medical device regulatory system, helping meet emerging technical challenges that are increasingly diverse, ensuring the protection of public health and safety, and continuing to maintain the goal of international recognition for its medical device regulation, the statement said. This membership will also enable Indian medical device manufacturers to meet the regulatory requirements of IMDRF member countries, thereby strengthening the "Brand India" in the global market, it said. (PTI)

promoting collaboration, harmonising regulations and promoting convergence. As an affiliate member, India will participate in IMDRF open sessions for information exchange on technical topics with other regulators, to discuss the latest medical device regulatory strategies and trends, provide feedback on its experience and perspectives and use IMDRF documents in part or in whole as the basis for its regulatory framework for medical devices. This will strengthen the CDSCO's medical device regulatory system, helping meet emerging technical challenges that are increasingly diverse, ensuring the protection of public health and safety, and continuing to maintain the goal of international recognition for its medical device regulation, the statement said. This membership will also enable Indian medical device manufacturers to meet the regulatory requirements of IMDRF member countries, thereby strengthening the "Brand India" in the global market, it said. (PTI)

GPay to provide gold-backed loans in collaboration with Muthoot Finance

NEW DELHI, Oct 3: Global tech titan Google on Thursday said it has tied up with Muthoot Finance to provide gold-backed loans through its mobile payments service GPay.

Google also announced that from October 3, 2024, its AI assistant Gemini Live will be available in Hindi, and later eight more Indian languages will be included.

These announcements were made by the company officials at the 10th edition of "Google for India" event here.

GPay is expanding its offerings by introducing gold-backed secured loans in collaboration with Muthoot Finance. According to Google India MD Roma Datta Chobey, about 11 per cent of the world's gold is housed in India.

People across India can now access this credit product, with affordable interest rates and flexible usage options—delivering flexibility to the borrower, and security to the lender, Google said.

As regards AI assistant Gemini Live, Hema Budaraju, Senior Director, Product Management, Google India, said that over 40 per cent of the Gemini users rely on voice interactions.

"Gemini Live is now being rolled out in Hindi, with eight more Indian languages—Bengali, Gujarati, Kannada, Malayalam, Marathi, Telugu, Tamil, Urdu—to follow in the coming weeks," she said. In the coming weeks, AI



overview, a Gen-AI based feature in Google Search, will also be available in Bengali, Marathi, Telugu, and Tamil.

Marking two decades of Google in India, the big tech further revealed plans to integrate Becken-enabled open networks with its AI model, Gemini, through an 'open-source Gemini Agent Framework'.

This framework will be accessible to all Indian businesses and users, allowing them to search for and discover various listings—ranging from electronics to agricultural products—as well as job opportunities and educational courses.

Users can conduct transactions seamlessly across critical sectors such as agriculture and skill development, all via a single interface that supports voice commands in

multiple languages.

Additionally, Google said it is set to launch 'Gemini Flash 1.5' in India, one of the first globally, within the next couple of months.

This upgrade will enable organisations to securely implement cloud and AI solutions, allowing them to store data and perform machine learning processing entirely within India.

"Google Cloud is committed to partnering with Indian businesses and innovators to harness the transformative power of AI. Through initiatives like our open-source Gemini Agent Framework and collaborations on 'DPI in a box,' we're not only advancing India's digital landscape but also creating a blueprint for digital inclusion," said Bikram Singh Bedi, Vice President and Country MD,

Google Cloud India. Google also notified the launch of Google Safety Engineering Center in India in 2025.

The technology major further announced that it has inked two long-term partnerships aimed at enhancing clean energy generation in India. These collaborations are projected to contribute 186 MW of new renewable energy capacity to the Indian grid by 2026, it said.

The first partnership with Adani Group focuses on providing bundled energy solutions that will support the decarbonization of Google's cloud services in India. This includes a 61.4 MW solar-wind hybrid project in Khavda, Gujarat, which is expected to commence operations in 2025.

The second partnership with CleanMax involves a portfolio of 125.4 MW of clean energy projects, including solar and wind initiatives in Rajasthan and Karnataka, respectively.

Google has also collaborated with Nandan Nilekani's EkStep Foundation to create 'DPI in a box'—a plug-and-play model based on open network, identity, digital credentials, and other digital public goods, to enable other nations build their digital infrastructure.

Google's philanthropic arm Google.org, to promote AI literacy across underserved communities in India, announced a USD 4 million grant to the Central Square Foundation. (PTI)

Rupee plunges 14 paise to settle at 83.96 against US dollar as crude oil boils

MUMBAI, Oct 3: Rupee depreciated 14 paise to settle at 83.96 against the US dollar on Thursday, as volatile geopolitical situation triggered a surge in crude oil prices and dragged down by a steep fall of over two per cent in domestic equity markets.

According to forex traders, a strong American currency and unabated outflow of foreign funds fuelled by the bullish Chinese markets also accelerated the rupee's slide.

At the interbank foreign exchange, the local unit opened at 83.91 and touched a low of 84.00 against the greenback during intraday trade. The unit ended the session at 83.96 against the American

currency, registering a loss of 14 paise from its previous closing level. On Tuesday, the rupee settled 3 paise lower at 83.82 against the American currency. Forex markets were closed on Wednesday on account of Mahatma Gandhi Jayanti.

According to Anuj Choudhary, Research Analyst at Sharekhan by BNP Paribas, the rupee declined on weak domestic markets and a strong dollar, while a surge in crude oil prices also weighed on the domestic unit. Choudhary said the rupee is expected to trade with a slight negative bias on risk aversion in the global markets and a strong dollar amid escalating tensions between Israel and Iran.

"Traders may take cues from

ISM services PMI, weekly unemployment claims and factory orders data from the US. Investors may watch out for non-farm payrolls report from the US on Friday. USD-INR spot price is expected to trade in a range of ₹ 83.75 to ₹ 84.20," he added.

Meanwhile, the dollar index, which gauges the greenback's strength against a basket of six currencies, rose 0.27 per cent to 101.95. Brent crude, the international benchmark, climbed 3.59 per cent to USD 76.55 in futures trade. Experts attributed the spike in crude prices to fear of Israel's retaliatory attacks on Iran's oil installations amid escalating tension in the Middle East. (PTI)

Gold, silver rebound on strong festive demand

NEW DELHI, Oct 3: Gold and Silver prices rebounded on Thursday due to fresh demand from stockists and retail consumers for the ongoing festival.

The precious metal rose ₹ 200 to revisit the all-time high level of ₹ 78,300 per 10 grams, according to the All India Sarafa Association. It had closed at ₹ 78,100 per 10 grams on Tuesday. Silver also jumped by ₹ 665 to ₹ 93,165 per kg from ₹ 92,500 per kg in the previous close.

Additionally, gold of 99.5 per cent purity climbed by ₹ 200 to reclaim its all-time high of ₹ 77,900 per 10 grams. The metal had finished at ₹ 77,700 per 10 grams on Tuesday. The commodity markets were closed on Wednesday on account of Mahatma Gandhi Jayanti. Traders said the sentiment turned better on rising demand at the beginning of 'Navratri', an auspicious week in Hindu mythology for purchasing new things particularly precious metals.

"A possible increase in jewellery demand amid peak festival season and a weak Indian rupee also aided the commodity in the domestic market," Hareesh V. Head

of Commodities at Geojit Financial Services, said.

Meanwhile, in futures trade, gold contracts for December delivery declined ₹ 440 or 0.58 per cent to ₹ 75,950 per 10 grams on the Multi Commodity Exchange (MCX).

However, silver climbed ₹ 225 or 0.25 per cent to trade at ₹ 91,600 per kg on the MCX.

In the Asian trading hours, Comex gold is trading 0.17 per cent lower at USD 2,665.20 per ounce.

"Gold traded with a modest loss on Thursday, as an uptick in the US dollar and Treasury yield weighed down on precious metals," Saumil Gandhi, Senior Analyst of Commodities at HDFC Securities, said.

Silver was quoted 0.36 per cent lower at USD 31.81 per ounce globally.

"For bullion market mood remained downbeat on Thursday as US equities traded in the red on Wednesday, amid an escalation in the Middle East suggests that Israel is likely preparing for a response to strikes by Iran which indicates that precious metal prices could still find supports at lower levels. (PTI)

Contd. from Page 1.

Assamese among five other

significant tongue after central government's nod.

The chief minister mentioned in his post, "Assamese joins a select group of languages to enjoy this status. This exemplifies the unique civilisational roots of Assam that has withstood the test of time. With today's decision we shall be able to better preserve our beloved mother tongue, that not only unites our society but also forms an unbroken link to the ancient wisdom of Assam's saints, thinkers, writers and philosophers."

"Given the sacrifices our generation has made to protect the Assamese language and culture, today is one of the happiest days in my life. Once again my heartfelt thanks to Adarniya Modi Ji, for his relentless efforts to secure Bharat's Heritage," he added.

The creation of a Center of Excellence for the study of the language, funds for Professional Chairs at Central institutions, and worldwide awards for notable contributors are just a few of the major advantages that come with being designated as a classical language.

Fresh tender likely to be

"However, it has come to our notice that the construction work has been at a standstill since September 5, 2024, which is a serious cause for concern. Given that the dry season has commenced, this period is crucial for ensuring steady progress, and any delay at this stage could result in substantial loss of working days and critical time, which may lead to significant cost and time overruns," he added.

Sarma further stated, "Moreover, reports suggest that the EPC contractor, UP State Bridge Corporation Limited, has left the site, thereby halting the work. This is extremely unfortunate, as further delays would jeopardise the timely completion of this vital infrastructure project, which is essential for the connectivity and economic development of Majuli and the entire region." He had then sought Gadkari's intervention to ensure that immediate corrective measures were taken.

India sign tripartite agreement

Naran, and Bangladesh power development board Chairman Mohamad Rizwan Karim, Nepal's ministry of energy officials said. Nepal's Energy Minister Dipak Khadka and his Bangladeshi counterpart Sayeda Rijwana Hasan were also present on the occasion, the officials said. (PTI)

BJP spreads hatred, oust

and unity will win in the country," said the leader of the opposition in the Lok Sabha.

"With hatred, the country gets weakened. Hatred spreads sorrow and fear. It is only love which is an antidote to hatred. Love spreads brotherhood and with love, the country progresses. We talk about love but they (BJP) spread hatred and try to break the country," he added. Holding a copy of the Constitution, Gandhi said it has protected the rights of the poor, farmers, and labourers but "the BJP and the RSS were hell-bent on attacking the Constitution."

"The fight is about this. If the Constitution does not remain, then you, the poor, would not have anything. Your land, money, and water will vanish. These will go into the hands of select 20-25 people," he said.

Rahul again raised the issue of several Haryana youths going to the US while adopting an illegal route after spending a huge sum of money in search of a better future, saying they were unable to get employment opportunities in their home state. The counting of votes for the Assembly polls will take place on October 8. (PTI)

Assam to launch co-districts

implement a significant administrative reform with the goal of bringing the government apparatus closer to the people.

Outlining the concept, Sarma stated, "We are aiming at the de-centralization of administration from the state headquarters. Each district's deputy commissioner will have the same authority granted to chief secretary-level officials. Furthermore, each district's CM will be represented by the guardian ministers of the districts.

"We have moved the greatest amount of power to the district level, and it will eventually reach the block level." He said, "It will benefit the impoverished in remote areas since they won't ever need to travel to the district headquarters or state capital for any kind of labour."

Mizoram Police arrest Jharkhand

from Jharkhand, shared the accommodation with the couple and their three children, he said.

After committing the crime, the couple fled to Jharkhand with their children, Khandge added.

The incident came to light on March 25, 2017, when a leader of the Young Mizo Association (YMA) informed police about the discovery of a body in a house. A team from Bawngkawn police station rushed to the scene, conducted necessary formalities, and initiated a probe. A case was registered at Bawngkawn police station in April 2017 under Sections 302 and 201 of the Indian Penal Code (IPC). An autopsy report suggested that Mangra might have died from asphyxia due to smothering, though the exact cause could not be determined because of the body's advanced state of decomposition, he added.

During the investigation, Mizoram Police learnt that the couple had been arrested by Jharkhand's Kathikund police on March 26, 2017, for a double murder in their native state. After obtaining a production warrant from the chief judicial magistrate in Aizawl in November 2019, a police team was dispatched to Kathikund to arrest them.

However, attempts to apprehend the couple over the years were delayed due to Citizenship Amendment Act protests in several states and the Covid-19 pandemic, Khandge explained. On September 26, a five-member police team, led by Inspector Maria Biakchungnungi and guided by Aizawl SP Rahul Alwal, went to Jharkhand and brought the couple to Aizawl on Wednesday. Khandge confirmed that the couple had been imprisoned in Jharkhand for six years and were currently on bail before being arrested by Mizoram Police. (PTI)

Wife of victim in Gurudwara

Indian Penal Code (IPC) in relation to the case, saying there was sufficient ground to proceed against the accused. The judge framed the charges on September 13 after Tytler pleaded not guilty to the offences.

The CBI had on May 20, 2023, filed a charge sheet against Tytler in the case.

Tytler "incited, instigated and provoked the mob assembled at Pul Bangash Gurudwara Azad Market" on November 1, 1984, that resulted in the burning down of the Gurudwara and the killing of three Sikhs — Thakur Singh, Badal Singh and Gurcharan Singh — the CBI alleged in its charge sheet.

The CBI had also said in its charge sheet that Tytler came out of a white Ambassador car in front of the gurudwara on November 1, 1984, and instigated a mob by shouting "Kill the Sikhs, they have killed our mother."

Anti-Sikh riots erupted in several parts of the country in the aftermath of the assassination of Prime Minister Indira Gandhi by her Sikh bodyguards on October 31, 1984. A sessions court had in August last year granted anticipatory bail to Tytler in the case. (PTI)

Sensex plunges 1,769 pts to 3-week low, investors lose ₹ 9.78 lakh cr in single day

MUMBAI, Oct 3: Benchmark BSE Sensex tanked 1,769 points to slide to a three-week low on Thursday as a spiralling conflict in West Asia triggered selling in oil, banking and auto shares, wiping out ₹ 9.78 lakh crore investor money in a single day.

Falling for the fourth day running, the BSE Sensex tumbled 1,769.19 points or 2.10 per cent to settle at 82,497.10, its lowest closing level since September 11. During the day, it plummeted 1,832.27 points or 2.17 per cent to 82,434.02. As many as 29 Sensex scrips closed in the red while only one stock ended in the green. Market capitalisation of BSE-listed companies dropped by around ₹ 9.78 lakh crore to ₹ 4,65,07,685.08 crore (USD 5.54 trillion).

The NSE Nifty slumped 546.80 points or 2.12 per cent to 25,250.10 with 48 of its constituents ending lower. Continuous foreign fund outflows and rising crude oil prices dented investors' sentiment, analysts said. From the 30 Sensex firms, Larsen & Toubro, Reliance Industries, Axis Bank, Asian Paints, Tata Motors, Bajaj Finance, Maruti, Bajaj Finserv, Kotak Mahindra Bank, Titan, Adani Ports and HDFC Bank were the major laggards.

JSW Steel emerged as the only gainer.

"The domestic market took a sharp downturn following Iran's launch of ballistic missiles at Israel, sparking fears of retaliation and escalation in the war, Vinod Nair, Head of Research, Geojit Financial Services said.

New SEBI regulations for the F&O segment have raised concerns about reduced trading volumes in the broader market. Lastly, with attractive valuations in China, FIIs have redirected their funds, adding pressure on Indian stocks," Nair added.

The BSE midcap gauge tumbled 2.27 per cent and smallcap index dropped 1.84 per cent.

All indices ended lower. Realty tanked 4.49 per cent, while capital goods (3.18 per cent), auto (2.94 per cent), services (2.87 per cent), industrials (2.75 per cent) and oil & gas (2.52 per cent) were among the major losers.

A total of 2,881 stocks declined while 1,107 advanced and 88 remained unchanged on the BSE.

"Fears of FPIs and FIIs switching to China from Indian equities were prevalent, especially considering the sharp valuations of domestic markets compared to China," said Devarsh Vakli, Deputy Head of Retail Research, HDFC Securities. (PTI)

Seagram's Royal Stag packaged drinking water launches festive campaign

HT Bureau

GUWAHATI, Oct 3: In the wake of the upcoming festive season, Royal Stag packaged drinking water has unveiled a new campaign named 'Celebrate Large,' as per an official statement on Thursday.

As per the statement, the campaign will showcase that how youth want to infuse different festive celebrations with their unique style and energy. "The campaign tagline - 'Generation Large ka Celebration Large,' elegantly weaves this desire of the young generation with brand's Live It Large philosophy," it added.

The campaign features India's T20 cricket captain Surya Kumar Yadav and is an engagement-led 360 campaign, including an interactive AR film, an innovative AR-enabled festive canvas and a

chance to celebrate with the Indian cricket superstar himself, Surya Kumar Yadav. "Conceptualized in association with creative agency partner FCB India, every touch point of the campaign aims to inspire the youth to 'Live It Large' and take their festive celebration to a new level. The campaign film beautifully showcases all major festivities across regions and also invites audience to #CelebrateLarge with Surya Kumar Yadav," the statement added.

Kartik Mohindra, chief marketing officer and head of global business development, Pernod Ricard India said, "Festivals are the perfect occasions for the youth to infuse with their unique style & energy and create memories to cherish for years to come, and of course, to Live it Large. True to the

brand ethos, our carefully curated #CelebrateLarge360-degree campaign offering multi-faceted experiences, embodies this youthful spirit and enables Generation Large to have the largest festive celebration." On the other hand, Mayuresh Dubhashi, chief creative officer, FCB India, shared that there is an inherent desire in today's youth to make every celebration large.

"We see that feeling come to life even more during the festive season. This year through our campaign #CelebrateLarge we are giving this generation a first-of-its-kind interactive platform to enjoy their festivities like never before. Through Regenerative AI, AR and food, gifting, music, fashion recommendations and a new vibrant festive canvas, we want to inspire them to Live It Large," he added.

Govt rolls out internship scheme on pilot basis Aims to provide 1 crore internship over 5 years

NEW DELHI, Oct 3: The government on Thursday rolled out the internship programme that will provide financial assistance of ₹ 60,000 per annum to 1 crore youth over a period of five years.

In 2024-25, the total cost of the pilot project will be around ₹ 800 crore and will look to provide internship to 1.25 lakh candidates during this fiscal, government sources said on Thursday.

Announced in the Union Budget 2024, the Prime Minister's Internship Scheme in Top Companies will also provide insurance coverage to the interns. The scheme will be implemented through an online portal developed by the corporate affairs ministry.

Subject to certain conditions, youth aged between 21 and 24 years will be eligible for the scheme, the sources said.

The internship programme will commence on December 2.

Through the portal, the sources said, partner companies can offer internship opportunities and the top companies for the pilot project have been identified on the basis of the average of their CSR expenditure in the last three years.



Candidates seeking internship opportunities can register in the portal from the second week of October. The participation of companies in the scheme is voluntary and an internship will be offered for 12 months, with at least half of the period to be spent in the actual job environment and not in the classroom. Any other company/bank/financial institution can participate in the scheme with the approval of the ministry, which will take into consideration factors like sectors and areas under-repre-

sented by the top 500 companies.

The interns will be provided a financial assistance of ₹ 5,000 per month and out of the total amount, ₹ 4,500 will be disbursed by the government and ₹ 500 will be paid by the company from its CSR funds. Also, a one time grant of ₹ 6,000 for incidentals will be disbursed by the ministry to each intern, upon joining the place of internship. Expenses associated with the training of interns under the scheme will be borne by the company from its CSR funds.

Insurance coverage will be provided to each individual intern under insurance schemes of the Union government, PM Jeevan Jyoti Bima Yojana and PM Suraksha Bima Yojana. The premium amount in this regard will be offered by the government.

As part of the eligibility criteria, sources said, candidates enrolled in online/distance learning programmes are eligible to apply.

Candidates who have passed High School, Higher Secondary School, possess a certificate from an ITI, hold a diploma from a Polytechnic Institute, or are graduates with degrees such as BA, B.Sc, B.Com, BCA, BBA, B.Pharm, etc. are eligible, sources said. Partner Companies will have a dedicated dashboard on the portal where they can post internship opportunities, detailing location, nature, required qualifications, and any facilities provided.

Eligible candidates may register on the Portal, where their details will be used to generate a resume.

Candidates can browse internships based on their preferred sectors, roles, and locations and apply for up to five opportunities. (PTI)

Indian Knowledge System is universal heritage: Guv

Acharya inaugurates international conference 'Unraveling Indian Knowledge across Asia'

HT Bureau

GUWAHATI, Oct 3: Governor Lakshman Prasad Acharya said that for India to contribute to a developed Asia, the ancient knowledge of the country should be integrated with modern science to make the ancient knowledge system more compatible in finding solutions to modern-day challenges while inaugurating an international conference — 'Unraveling Indian Knowledge across Asia' on the theme 'Towards a Developed Asia and a Developed India' at IIT Guwahati on Thursday.

Acharya stated that by connecting ancient Indian knowledge, such as yoga and ayurveda, with modern science, it becomes possible to attain improved and holistic physical and mental health. The Governor added that the younger generation should be encouraged to study and practice ayurveda and other ancient Indian healing systems for holistic treatment of diseases.

Stating that the Indian Knowledge System is not just a source of



national pride but a universal heritage, the Governor mentioned that the Upanishads, Buddhist philosophy, and the school of logic known as Nyaya have all contributed to global philosophical discourse. He also noted that ayurveda offers a holistic approach to health in today's stress-laden times. The surgical methods of Sushruta, described in the 6th century BCE, were so advanced that they are considered precursors to many modern surgical techniques, the Governor added.

Acharya further stated that an-

cient Indians left no stream of human consciousness unexplored — from delving into religion and philosophy to uncovering the medicinal secrets of food, the Indian knowledge system has enriched the world with its efficacy. He also noted that, developed over thousands of years, the Indian Knowledge System encompasses a wide array of disciplines — from mathematics and astronomy to medicine, philosophy, and linguistics. This system is not just a relic of the past but a living entity that continues to influence the modern world today.

The Governor also reiterated that the declaration of June 21 as International Yoga Day by the UN has brought yoga into the mainstream, with people across the globe incorporating it into their daily routines. Governor Acharya thanked IIT Guwahati for hosting the international conference, which, according to him, would help elevate Indian knowledge to greater heights and share it with other Asian countries to draw up an action plan for a prosperous and developed future.

Referring to Prime Minister Narendra Modi's vision for a 'Developed India', where education, research, and innovation have received unprecedented support, the Governor said that the scientific discussions at the conference would undoubtedly help redefine ancient knowledge in a modern context and use it for the benefit of society.

Director of IIT-Guwahati, Prof Devendra Jalihal, Prof Brahma Dev from IIT-Bhubaneswar, and a host of other dignitaries were present at the program.

Citizens oppose Vedanta's exploration near Hollongapar Gibbon Sanctuary

HT Correspondent

JORHAT, Oct 3: A call was made to oppose Vedanta's proposed gas and oil exploration activities near the Hollongapar Gibbon Wildlife Sanctuary, an eco-sensitive zone, at a citizens' meeting organised under the aegis of Brihattar Jorhat Nagarik Samaj at the conference hall of Kingchuk Sports and Cultural Association, Mariani, here on Thursday.

The meeting, which was attended by several organisations and individuals from Jorhat and other districts, adopted four resolutions, including a case to be filed at the National Green Tribunal. The other resolutions were to ask the government to immediately stop Vedanta from its mining activities and to seek the removal of the railway track from the middle of the sanctuary and lay it in a way that avoids the forest area, as well as the removal of the electrification of the track immediately.

The meeting also resolved to send the resolutions to the President of India, the Governor of Assam, and all concerned departments of the Union government. The proposal would also be sent to international organisations associated with the conservation of wildlife and fauna.

Brihattar Jorhat Nagarik Samaj secretary Tridib Dutta, while enumerating the objectives of the public meeting, stated that the people should unite and oppose tooth and nail the said drilling activities of a Vedanta-owned company, as it would spell disaster for the fragile biodiversity of the area, which also housed the endangered Hoolock Gibbon, the only ape species in India. He further made a call to oppose the electrification of the railway track that cut through the sanctuary, as this would disturb the fauna at night.

Prominent educationist Ranjit Gohain Baruah of Mariani expressed satisfaction with the steps taken by the citizens' committee for a legal fight in the Green Tribunal and urged the citizens to provide financial assistance to the citizens' committee in this fight.

At the beginning, the treasurer of the committee, Dilip Bardoloi, welcomed all the nature lovers and or-

ganisations that attended the meeting, especially Rakesh Hazarika of the Global Pandemic Response Forum, Guwahati.

Dr Dandeeswar Dutta, secretary of the Jorhat Environment Society, explained the rich biodiversity of the Dissoi Valley Reserve Forest, which was a contiguous part of the Gibbon Sanctuary, and the potential damage to the two neighbouring forest areas. He pointed out that the Vedanta activity would have a negative impact in Jorhat, resulting in increased atmospheric temperature.

Bikash Bardoloi, president of the Jorhat Lions Club Greater, said that the 4.49 hectares of forest allocated for mining in the reserve is no small measure of land. Mining in this forest will cause irreparable damage to the last refuge of the endangered Hoolock Gibbon in Assam and its shrinking habitat. He said it should be the duty of conscious citizens to oppose this activity.

In the meeting, it was stated that the government had frequently amended the forest laws in the interest of big capitalists to allow the destruction of forests in the name of development. He said Vedanta Ltd. had faced several controversies in the past, including allegations of corporate influence in politics through donations/electoral bonds to political parties.

The meeting was chaired by president of Brihattar Pramod Mahanta and was attended by Rajjor Dal Jorhat district president Pradeep Sarkar, Niranjan Halai of Ashray Dergaon, Nekibul Hussain of Dharitri Eco-Friendly Forum, Mariani, Rituparno Goswami, Jorhat district president of the Democratic Youth Federation of India, Arindam Gogoi, president of Krishak Mukti Sangram Samiti, Jorhat, and Junmoni Bora, president of Nadi and Nari Jagrat Shakti, Assam. The meeting was also attended by Rajiv Barua, Mariani advisor of the Jorhat Citizens' Committee, and Kanak Chandra Bora, advisor of the Titabar Committee, Dr Golap Deka, vice-president of the Committee, Biren Tati, secretary of Hollongapar Nature's Society, Mukib Jamal Ahmed, prominent journalist Niranjan Mahanta, Jamini Barbara, and many others.

Savour Thai flavours at Nest Asia: An exclusive culinary experience with chef Raja Das

HT Bureau

GUWAHATI, Oct 3: Premium Pan-Asian restaurant Nest Asia at Radisson Blu Guwahati is set to tantalise taste buds with its exclusive Thai Food Festival, 'Savour Thai Flavours', running from October 4-13, coinciding with Durga Puja. This culinary journey promises to immerse guests in the bold and aromatic flavours of Thailand, showcasing an authentic and traditional dining experience.

The festival kicked off with a media interaction on Thursday, offering an opportunity for the local press and food enthusiasts to meet renowned chef Raja Das — expert chef from Radisson Blu Plaza Airport Delhi — who curated the festival. Throughout the festival, chef Das will host daily sessions, guiding diners through a specially curated set menu that highlights the essence of Thai cuisine.

General manager at Radisson Blu Guwahati, Ankur Mehrotra, expressed excitement about the festival, stating, "We are thrilled to welcome chef Raja Das to our culinary team for this exclusive event. Our goal is to provide our guests with a memorable experience that not only showcases the rich flavours of Thai cuisine but also creates an engaging and immersive atmosphere."

Guests will enjoy a set dinner menu priced at Rs 1,999 plus taxes per person, featuring a selection of authentic dishes designed to deliver a unique culinary exposure. The experience will be complemented by complimentary Thai iced tea, while an array of Thai cocktails and mocktails will be available for purchase, complete with special offers to enhance beverage sales.

The event aims to engage local patrons, bringing them a taste of Thailand through interactive cooking demonstrations led by chef Raja Das. Each dish served will be accompanied by storytelling, enriching the dining experience with insights into Thai culinary traditions.

Chef Karthikeyan, executive chef at Radisson Blu Guwahati, shared his enthusiasm for the festival, saying, "I am excited to bring the vibrant and diverse flavours of Thailand to Nest Asia. Each dish tells a story, and I look forward to sharing this culinary journey with our guests. I hope everyone leaves with not just a full stomach but also a deeper appreciation for Thai culture and cuisine."

During the festival, Nest Asia will transform into a Thai-inspired haven, adorned with traditional props, centrepieces, and ambient lighting to create an inviting atmosphere. The music will complement the theme, ensuring a complete sensory experience.

The premium Pan-Asian restaurant invites all food lovers to embark on this delightful culinary journey, promising an unforgettable experience of Thai flavours and culture.

Week-long Swachhata Hi Seva Abhiyan concludes in Morigaon

HT Correspondent

MORIGAON, Oct 3: The Swachh Bharat Mission, a week-long program that kicked off on September 17 and concluded on Wednesday as part of Mera Yuva Bharat under the Ministry of Youth Affairs and Sports, government of India, aims to create a people's movement through public participation.

As part of the program launched in India, Mera Yuva Bharat Morigaon district visited various places in six development zones of the district, especially Ja-

giroad Railway Station, Morigaon College, various areas of Morigaon town, Shaheed Surya Bora, and Shaheed Lakshya Deka Higher Secondary School.

The cleanliness program was conducted at various places including State Hospital, Tarani Kalbari Tiwa Tribal Youth Association, Paghali Community Centre, Jajri Bazar area, Dhalpuria Anant Primary School, etc., in collaboration with several leading voluntary organisations in the district.

The program was attended by Nehru Yuva

Kendra District Youth Officer Bikash Chandra Pradhan, Nehru Yuva Kendra accountant and program officer Dhananjay Talukdar, youth leaders Tulsi Deka, Parth Pratim Gautam, Dharmaprasad Kalita, Imran Ali, Bhupen Das, Nitul Deka, and others.

Delegates were encouraged by their participation. 150 youth representatives who participated in the program were presented with a cap bearing the My Bharat logo, a diary, and a pen each under the scheme.

ACMS Margherita branch declares bonus for 39 tea estates



HT Correspondent

MARGHERITA, Oct 3: Hari Nanda Gohri, secretary of the Assam Chah Mazdoor Sangha (ACMS) Margherita branch, during a briefing with media persons on Thursday, reacted to the incident on the September 24 and 25 at Powai Tea Estate, where workers protested over the bonus issue, which led to a two-day halt at the estate. Hari Nanda Gohri said that due to two so-called vested interest leaders of the Powai area, namely Rupesh Tanti and Nirmal Das Kalandi, the incident occurred. Without having any information, the workers of Powai Tea Estate protested, and for that reason, they were deprived of two days' wages, for which both Rupesh Tanti and Nirmal Das Kalandi are fully responsible.

Hari Nanda Gohri stated that both Rupesh Tanti and Nirmal Das Kalandi provoked the workers of Powai Tea Estate to protest.

As a result, they received nothing; hence, their two days' wages were cut off. The Assam Chah Mazdoor Sangha (ACMS) Margherita branch warns Rupesh Tanti and Nirmal Das Kalandi not to play with the emotions of tea garden

workers; otherwise, in the coming days, they will have to face harsh punishment under the law.

On Thursday, a quantum of bonus was declared by the management of 39 tea estates within the Assam Chah Mazdoor Sangha (ACMS) Margherita branch. The workers of Powai Tea Estate will get 20%, Hollongabi Tea Estate 20%, Segunbari Tea Estate 20%, Pengree Tea Estate 20%, Shree Krishna Tea Estate 20%, Tipam Tea Estate 19%, Jankipur Tea Estate 19%, Konapather Tea Estate 16%, Ledo Tea Estate 20%, Khatangpani Tea Estate 20%, Brahmajam Tea Estate 20%, Bogapani Tea Estate 20%, Dehing Tea Estate 20%, Dirok Tea Estate 20%, Margherita Tea Estate 20%, Namdang Tea Estate 20%, Paharpur Tea Estate 8.33%, Longtong Tea Estate 16%, MR Tea Estate 16%, Anand Tea Estate 13%, Koriapani Tea Estate 17%, Patkai Tea Estate 16%, Natunmati Tea Estate 12%, Sharma Agriculture 13%, Bishnu Tea Estate 15%, Hanuman Tea Estate 15%, B M Ambikapur Tea Estate 12%, Dibru Valley Tea Estate 12.5%, New Rangamala Tea Estate 12%, Pengaregorh Tea Estate 13%, Green Valley 12%, Toka Pather Tea Estate 12%, Gogoi Chitranaala Tea Estate 12%, Suraj Tea Estate 12%, Seojee Tea Estate 12%, Saikia Tea Estate 8.33%, G L Tea Estate 8.33%, Renuprova Tea Estate 11%, and Binapani Tea Estate 20% bonus for this Durga Puja.

Hari Nanda Gohri said that under the Assam Chah Mazdoor Sangha (ACMS) Margherita branch, there are a total of 39 tea estates, with 16 tea estates having factories and 23 being green leaf sellers.

Gossaigaon pays tribute to litterateur Satish Chandra Choudhury

HT Correspondent

GOSSAIGAON, Oct 3: The Gossaigaon branch of Assam Sahitya Sabha organised a condolence meeting for the departed soul of renowned litterateur and vice-president Satish Chandra Choudhury of Assam Sahitya Sabha at the premises of Kamal Nath Club Library recently. Dr Tarani Kanta Kalita, general secretary of the Gossaigaon branch of Assam Sahitya Sabha, in his introductory speech, recalled the life and contributions of Satish Chandra Choudhury, who held the position of vice-president of Assam Sahitya Sabha. It is noteworthy that Satish Chandra Choudhury served twice as general secretary of the Assam Sahitya Sabha and was the vice-president in 2009.

He was also a prominent social worker and an assistant teacher at Bajali Higher Secondary School. As a writer, Choudhury authored books for nearly four decades, including significant works such as 'Patsalar Itibritta', 'Kamrupar Utsav Parva', and 'Dubipori Haraeswar Dewalayar Dewdasi Nritya', which earned him recognition in literary circles, added Dr Kalita. Choudhury was also involved in journalism and contributed to both English and Assamese newspapers. People from all walks of life will always appreciate the land he donated to the Pathsala Press Club. Khanindira Nath Das, branch president of the Gossaigaon Sahitya Sabha, asserted in his speech that, as vice-president of Assam Sahitya Sabha, Choudhury visited Gossaigaon on January 17, 2009, to celebrate Artist Day. As a mark of respect, the flag of Gossaigaon Sahitya Sabha will remain at half-mast for three days in front of the branch office, added Khanindira Nath Das. During the event, a one-minute silent prayer was observed for the departed soul, praying for his eternal peace. Several individuals, including branch advisor Putal Chandra Das and assistant secretary Bijon Dey, attended the condolence meeting.

Empowering youth is BTC's commitment: EM Dr Swargiary

HT Bureau

GUWAHATI, Oct 3: In line with BTC CEM Pramod Boro's vision to empower the youth for a brighter future, BTC EM Dr Nilut Swargiary attended the Career Counselling Programme at KBR Degree College in Orang on Thursday. Speaking on the occasion, Dr Swargiary remarked, "Empowering our youth with the right guidance and resources is essential for building a brighter future. This programme reflects BTC's commitment to fostering the potential of our students." He further said, "Today's career counselling programme is a vital step in ensuring that our students are equipped to explore diverse opportunities and pursue their dreams with confidence." Organised by the Library Services Department of BTC, the programme aimed to provide expert career guidance, enabling students to make informed decisions about various career opportunities based on their aptitudes and academic strengths.

Assam Rifles observes International Day of Older Persons

HT Correspondent

BISWANATH CHARIALI, Oct 3: Assam Rifles organised a special event to celebrate the International Day of Older Persons on Wednesday at Lokra, stated a press release. The program was attended by 70 families along with 16 children, making a total of 86 participants. The event aimed to honour and recognise the contributions of elderly people within the community. It featured interactive sessions focused on the well-being and health of older persons and emphasised generating awareness about their emotional requirements. Interactive sessions and several activities were also organised on the theme 'Ageing with Dignity: The Importance of Strengthening Care & Support Systems', which encouraged participation from all age groups to ensure better understanding and foster a sense of unity and respect for senior citizens. Assam Rifles has always remained committed to strengthening family ties and supporting the welfare of their extended community, and this celebration was yet another example of their dedication to promoting the values of care, empathy, and togetherness.

Guv administers oath to new commissioners of ASCRTPS

HT Bureau

GUWAHATI, Oct 3: Governor Lakshman Prasad Acharya administered the oath of office to Ranjan Kumar Chakraborty and Bimal Chand Oswal as commissioners for the Assam State Commission for Right to Public Services (ASCRTPS) at a solemn function held at Raj Bhavan on Thursday. Earlier, chief secretary to the government of Assam, Ravi Kota, sought the Governor's permission to commence the ceremony. The swearing-in ceremony was attended by chief commissioner of ASCRTPS Dr Sujoy Lal Thaoson, commissioner and secretary to the Governor of Assam SS Meenakshi Sundaram, secretary ARTPPG Manita Borgohain, along with senior officers of the state government.

Cachar DC flags off rally to kick off International Girl Child Day celebrations



HT Bureau

GUWAHATI, Oct 3: In a remarkable show of support for gender equality, Cachar district commissioner Mridul Yadav flagged off a rally to mark the beginning of the week-long celebration of International Girl Child Day here on Thursday.

Organised under the 'Beti Bachao Beti Padhao' initiative, this rally aimed at empowering young women and elevating their voices for sustainable development.

The event was organised by Sankalp: Hub for Empowerment

of Women, Cachar, in collaboration with the district administration and the National Cadet Corps (NCC) 62nd Girls Battalion.

Over 100 participants, including 77 girls from 11 colleges across Cachar district, took part in the rally, underscoring the district's dedication to building an inclusive society where women and girls contribute significantly to development.

International Day of the Girl Child, observed globally, was declared by the United Nations and first celebrated on October 11, 2012.

The day advocates for increased opportunities for girls and raises awareness of the gender inequalities they face across the world.

District commissioner Mridul Yadav, alongside assistant commissioner Anjali Kumari, who also serves as the in-charge of the District Social Welfare Office, and officials from the defense and NCC, inaugurated the rally. Speaking at the event, DC Yadav stressed the vital role of empowering girls in shaping the future. "Today, we are not just celebrating the girl child; we are celebrating future leaders, innovators, and changemakers."

Initiatives like Beti Bachao Beti Padhao are crucial for promoting gender equality and ensuring girls have the opportunity to drive societal development," said Yadav.

Starting from the District Commissioner's Office and ending at Silchar Circuit House, the rally carried the theme — Elevating Girls' Voices for Sustainable Development. This theme aligns with global efforts to ensure girls lead the way in progress and innovation.

The event highlighted the district's unwavering commitment to promoting gender equality and set a promising tone for the week-long celebrations and future efforts aimed at building a more inclusive society.

NF Railway announces special trains for festive season

Details of stoppages and timings of trains available on the IRCTC website



HT Bureau

GUWAHATI, Oct 3: Northeast Frontier Railway has decided to operate two pairs of special trains to clear the extra rush of passengers during the forthcoming festive season. One Puja special train will run twice a week between Anand Vihar Terminal — Katihar — Anand Vihar Terminal from October 8 to November 27, 2024, for 15 trips in both directions. The other train will run for one trip on October 5, 2024, from Dibrugarh to SSS Hub-

balli Jn. Accordingly, train no 04047 (Katihar — Anand Vihar Terminal) will depart from Katihar every Wednesday and Saturday at 18:00 hours, reaching Anand Vihar Terminal at 17:50 hours the next day. In the return direction, train no 04048 (Anand Vihar Terminal — Katihar) will depart from Anand Vihar Terminal every Tuesday and Friday at 15:20 hours, reaching Katihar at 15:00 hours the next day.

The train will run with one AC first

class, one AC 2-Tier, two AC 2-Tier cum AC 3-Tier, one AC 3-Tier, ten sleeper class, and one general second class coach. The train will run via Khagaria, Barauni, Patliputra, Pt. Deen Dayal Upadhyaya Jn., Mirzapur, Prayagraj Jn., Chipayana Buzurg in both directions.

The one-way special train no 05926 (Dibrugarh — SSS Hubballi Jn) will depart from Dibrugarh on October 5, 2024 (Saturday) at 13:30 hours, reaching SSS Hubballi Jn on October 8, 2024 (Tuesday) at 09:00 hours.

The train will run with ten sleeper class and two general second class coaches. It will travel via New Tinsukia, Simaluguri Jn., Furkating Jn., Lumding Jn., Chaparmukh Jn., Guwahati, Rangiya Jn., New Cooch Behar, New Jalpaiguri, Malda Town, Dankuni, Kharagpur Jn., Bhubaneswar, Berhampur, Vizianagram Jn., Samalkot Jn., Rajahmundry, Vijayawada Jn., Guntakal Jn., Toranagallu, and Gadag Jn. to reach SSS Hubballi Jn.

The details of stoppages and timings of these trains are available on the IRCTC website and are also being notified on various social media platforms of NF Railway. Passengers are requested to verify the details before undertaking their journey.

QUOTE OF THE DAY

Thinking will not overcome fear but action will.
-W. Clement Stone

Refugee crisis deepens in Mizoram

The ongoing political turmoil in Bangladesh's Chittagong Hill Tracts (CHT) has driven a fresh wave of tribal refugees into India, exacerbating the humanitarian crisis in Mizoram. With over 40,000 refugees, mostly from Myanmar and Bangladesh, the state is struggling to manage the growing influx. As tensions in the CHT continue, there is little sign that these displaced people will be able to return home soon. The deep-rooted ethnic ties between the Mizos of India and the tribals of Myanmar and Bangladesh have made Mizoram a natural sanctuary, but the strain on resources and the political deadlock with the Centre are complicating the situation. The Mizoram government has refrained from complying with the Centre's directive to collect biometric data of the refugees. Officials cite a lack of funds as one reason, but underlying concerns over the potential misuse of this data also play a role. Many tribal refugees are wary of the government's motives, especially given the fallout from the controversial National Register of Citizens (NRC) in Assam. The NRC, which left millions scrambling to prove their Indian citizenship, has cast a long shadow over the region, fuelling distrust of any official data collection efforts. The tribal communities, particularly the Christian tribes, have historically been suspicious of the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP)-led government, viewing it as a Hindu-nationalist entity with different priorities. This mistrust has been compounded by Assam Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma's renewed push for another NRC exercise, despite the earlier effort costing 1,600 crore and yielding little in terms of deportations. Sarma's call for stricter identification and potential deportation of illegal migrants from the region is at odds with the broader humanitarian concerns in Mizoram and other Northeast states, which have long provided refuge to their ethnic kin from Myanmar and Bangladesh.

For now, Mizoram stands in defiance of the Centre's orders, focusing instead on providing relief to the displaced Chins from Myanmar and tribals from Bangladesh. The state argues that biometric registration may pave the way for future deportations, something the refugees fear. The Mizoram government has made it clear that repatriation should not be considered until peace is restored in Myanmar and Bangladesh, both of which are grappling with internal unrest. In Myanmar, the civil war that followed the February 2021 military coup has displaced thousands, particularly Christian tribes like the Chins, who have long sought political autonomy. Western countries have supplied arms to various dissident groups, further fuelling the conflict, while the Myanmar military remains backed by Russia and China. In Bangladesh, tribal communities in the CHT face increasing hostility, with recent military operations forcing them to flee their homes. The Centre's attempts to control the situation in Mizoram through biometric data collection and eventual deportation plans have not gained traction. Mizoram, citing its ethnic ties and humanitarian concerns, remains committed to helping the refugees, despite the mounting challenges.

With over 42,000 refugees now in Mizoram—an increase of 1,500 since February—this crisis shows no signs of abating. As unrest continues in both Myanmar and Bangladesh, Mizoram's resources and patience are being tested. How the Centre navigates this sensitive issue, balancing humanitarian concerns with national security, remains to be seen. However, it is clear that the deadlock between Mizoram and the Centre will persist as long as the regional conflicts continue to displace thousands of people.

Iran strikes Israel: A new chapter in the Middle East conflict

By: Satyabrata Borah

On October 1, 2024, tensions between Iran and Israel reached a critical point when Iran launched a massive missile barrage targeting Israeli cities and military facilities. This attack, involving nearly 200 ballistic missiles, marked one of the most significant escalations in the ongoing conflict between the two nations.

Dubbed "Operation True Promise 2," the strike was Iran's response to the assassination of Ismail Haniyeh, Hamas' political leader, who was killed in Tehran in July 2024, as well as the more recent killing of Hezbollah leader Hassan Nasrallah in Beirut.

The missile strikes caused air raid sirens to sound across Israel, forcing civilians into bomb shelters in cities like Tel Aviv and Jerusalem. Israel's defense systems, including the Iron Dome, intercepted many of the incoming missiles, but several still managed to hit targets, resulting in significant damage. Key targets included a school in Gederah and various public spaces, including a restaurant in Tel Aviv.

Although the damage was widespread, casualties were minimal on the Israeli side, with two Israelis lightly injured. In contrast, debris from the rockets in the West Bank city of Jericho killed one Palestinian and injured others. There were also reports of injuries in Jordan, with two Jordanian civilians hurt by shrapnel. This missile attack by Iran followed several months of increasing hostilities between the two countries.

Israel had previously carried out airstrikes targeting Iranian interests and proxy forces in Syria and Lebanon. Iran, in turn, accused Israel of destabilizing the region and vowed to retaliate for what it described as continued Israeli provocations. The immediate catalyst for the missile strikes was the killing of high-ranking leaders from Hamas and Hezbollah,

groups that Iran supports financially and militarily.

The Israeli government, led by Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, responded by stating that Iran had made a "grave mistake" and promised swift and decisive retaliation. While the exact nature of Israel's planned response remains unclear, the country's military is likely to target Iranian positions in Syria, Lebanon, and perhaps even within Iran itself. The Israeli Defense Forces (IDF) have already begun limited ground raids in southern Lebanon to neutralize Hezbollah forces.

The attack also saw an international response, with the United States strongly condemning Iran's actions and vowing to support Israel in its defense. U.S. naval forces reportedly assisted Israel by intercepting some of the missiles during the attack. Washington warned Tehran of severe consequences should the conflict escalate further, although both the U.S. and Israel are likely to carefully consider their next steps to avoid triggering a larger regional war.

The consequences of this latest flare-up are already being felt globally. Oil prices surged by as much as 6%, reflecting fears that the conflict could disrupt production in the region, which is a critical supplier of energy to the world. Financial markets reacted with volatility, with stocks falling amid concerns about the broader implications of a prolonged conflict between two major players in the Middle East.

As both sides gear up for potential further escalations, the region faces a highly volatile situation, with the risk of a wider war involving other regional players such as Hezbollah, Syria, and potentially Iraq, where Iranian-backed militias operate. Iran has warned of "crushing" retaliatory strikes if Israel launches a counter-offensive, setting the stage for what could become one of the most dangerous periods in the Iran-Israel conflict in years.

Cyber warfare's new front: Lessons from Hezbollah's pager attacks and India's vulnerabilities

On September 17, a chilling reminder of the evolving landscape of cyber warfare shook the Middle East when hundreds of pagers used by Hezbollah members exploded nearly simultaneously across Lebanon and Syria. These attacks killed at least 12 people, including two children, and injured more than 2,000 others. This unprecedented event was followed by a second wave, where dozens of two-way radios blew up, resulting in an additional 20 deaths and over 450 injuries. The meticulous coordination of the explosions left many speculating that Israeli intelligence, specifically Unit 8200, the cyber warfare division of the Israel Defense Forces (IDF), had orchestrated the attack.

The motive appeared clear: to cripple Hezbollah's communication network and sow terror within its ranks. Hezbollah, wary of the vulnerabilities associated with mobile phones, had shifted to using pagers as their primary mode of communication. However, this reliance became their Achilles' heel. Reports indicate that the pagers contained small amounts of explosives triggered by a remote signal.

The procurement of these devices was traced back to a Taiwanese company, Gold Apollo, which initially manufactured the AR-924 model pagers. However, the pagers used by Hezbollah were distributed not by Gold Apollo directly but through BAC Consulting, a Budapest-based firm. Subsequent investigations revealed that Israeli intelligence had been running BAC Consulting through two shell corporations to obscure their involvement. The incident has sparked intense debate about the future of cyber warfare and the weaponization of everyday objects. Israeli intelligence's ability to carry out such an attack, infiltrating Hezbollah's communication infrastructure, is a stark reminder of how state-sponsored cyber espionage and sabotage can transcend traditional military confrontations. While this attack stands out for its execution and impact, it is merely one chapter in a long history of state-sponsored cyber espionage and sabotage.

The global landscape of cyber espionage: A growing threat

The use of technology for intelligence gathering and sabotage is not a new phenomenon. Edward Snowden's 2013 revelations about the U.S. National Security Agency (NSA) shocked the world when he exposed

the PRISM program. Under PRISM, the NSA collected massive amounts of internet communications data, including emails, chats, and social media interactions, directly from major tech companies. The program was not limited to passive data collection; it also involved planting backdoors and spyware in electronic devices to monitor and control the flow of information.

One of the most notorious examples, detailed in Glenn Greenwald's book *No Place to Hide*, involved NSA employees intercepting Cisco routers meant for international organizations and implanting them with backdoors before shipping them out. This incident, while specific to the NSA, raised global concerns about the vulnerability of supply chains. Cisco publicly distanced itself from these activities, but the damage was done. The incident highlighted how easily tech hardware could be compromised by national intelligence agencies.

The US is far from alone in these practices. In 2018, Bloomberg reported that Chinese intelligence had placed tiny microchips on server motherboards manufactured by Supermicro. These compromised motherboards found their way into the servers of major U.S. tech giants, including Amazon and Apple. The microchips allegedly enabled Chinese intelligence to remotely access sensitive data, potentially compromising national security. Although these allegations were denied by both companies, the report underscored the growing risks posed by foreign-made technology.

Similarly, in 2020, The Wall Street Journal reported that Huawei, the Chinese telecom giant, had covertly accessed mobile networks worldwide using backdoors intended for law enforcement use. These revelations prompted several nations, including the U.S., to ban Huawei's products over fears of espionage. Chinese surveillance equipment makers, such as Hikvision and Dahua, have also faced international scrutiny, with concerns about sensitive data being sent back to Beijing.

India's response to cyber vulnerabilities: A slow awakening

Despite these global revelations, India's response to cybersecurity threats has been slow and reactive. Even after the Snowden leaks, India continued to procure foreign-

made hardware and software for critical communication networks, both civilian and military. It wasn't until 2020, after the Chinese incursions in Ladakh, that India began restricting Chinese telecom equipment in a meaningful way.

However, by then, the damage was already done. More than half of the state-owned Bharat Sanchar Nigam Limited (BSNL)'s mobile network was running on equipment supplied by Chinese telecom giants ZTE and Huawei. Private telecom companies like Airtel and Vodafone also remain heavily dependent on Chinese technology for their networks.

In March 2021, despite mounting geopolitical tensions with China, Bharti Airtel awarded a telecom infrastructure expansion contract worth approximately Rs 300 crore to Huawei. This decision came under significant scrutiny, as it highlighted India's continued reliance on Chinese technology, even in the face of national security concerns.

Efforts to reduce this dependency and promote indigenization have been slow and largely unsuccessful. According to a report by the Global Trade Research Initiative, China and Hong Kong accounted for a staggering 56% of India's total imports in electronics, telecom, and electrical products during the 2023-24 financial year.

While the Indian government has made strides in restricting the use of non-trusted telecom equipment, the reality is that much of India's critical communication infrastructure is still reliant on foreign-made technology, including equipment from companies like Cisco, which has significant operations in India.

A false sense of security?

In response to the growing cybersecurity threats, the Indian Army recently adopted a secure mobile ecosystem called SAMBHAV (Secure Army Mobile Bharat Vision). While this system was hailed as a step towards secure communication for India's military, it may provide a false sense of security. SAMBHAV relies on foreign handsets and operates on commercial networks seeded with foreign equipment, leaving the system vulnerable to the very threats it aims to combat. While foreign dependencies cannot be eliminated overnight, there is a glaring lack of a cohesive national strategy to reduce

these vulnerabilities. India has been discussing a new cybersecurity strategy since 2020, but it has yet to be implemented. One critical element of such a strategy must be the replacement of foreign-made hardware and software in critical systems with indigenous alternatives.

Global trends and lessons for India

The U.S. offers a model for how India might approach this challenge. In 2019, the U.S. enacted the Secure and Trusted Communications Networks Act, which mandates that network operators remove equipment from Chinese vendors like Huawei and ZTE. Although the program, often called "rip and replace," has faced delays due to the widespread use of Chinese equipment, the U.S. government's intent is clear: to reduce its dependence on potentially compromised foreign technology.

China, too, has adopted a similar approach. In 2023, the Chinese government ordered a "rip and replace" initiative for U.S.-made chips in its telecommunication networks, with a goal to eliminate them by 2027. This followed an earlier order banning government agencies from using iPhones and foreign-branded smartphones for work, further emphasizing the global trend towards reducing reliance on foreign technology in sensitive areas.

The path forward: A strategic imperative for India

In the context of India, Aatmanirbharta (self-reliance) is not just a policy goal - it is a strategic imperative, particularly in domains critical to national security. Cybersecurity is one such domain, where reliance on foreign technology poses significant risks. India must prioritize the development of indigenous capabilities in both hardware and software, not only to safeguard against state-sponsored cyber threats but also to ensure that its digital infrastructure remains resilient.

The lessons from the Hezbollah pager attacks and the broader global trends in cyber espionage are clear: the future of warfare is not just about armies and missiles; it is about networks, devices, and data. India must act decisively to fortify its digital defenses, reduce foreign dependencies, and protect its national security in this rapidly evolving landscape. A comprehensive national cybersecurity strategy is long overdue, and the time to act is now. (The writer can be reached at dipakkurmigpltd@gmail.com)

DEGREE OF THOUGHT

By: Dipak Kurmi

Confronting classroom conflict

By: Himangshu Ranjan Bhuyan

Classroom conflict has emerged as a significant issue within educational institutions, particularly in Assam, where a noticeable increase in peer violence has raised alarm among educators, parents, and community alike. This phenomenon encompasses a range of behaviors, from bullying and verbal harassment to physical altercations, and poses a substantial threat to the safety and well-being of students. More than just immediate physical harm, the ramifications of classroom conflict reach deeply into the educational experience, affecting students' academic performance, mental health, and social development. To effectively confront this issue, a thorough understanding of its underlying causes and potential solutions is essential.

At the heart of classroom conflict lies a complex web of factors, many of which are deeply rooted in the socio-economic landscape of Assam. The state grapples with persistent issues such as poverty, political instability, and social inequalities. These stressors can create a challenging environment for students, often manifesting as frustration or aggression.

Students from disadvantaged backgrounds may not receive the emotional support they need, leading to emotional volatility and a propensity toward conflict. When compounded by academic pressures, these factors can drive students to express their frustrations through acts of violence or hostility toward their peers.

Bullying is perhaps the most pervasive form of classroom conflict, presenting a unique set of challenges for students and educators. It can take many forms, including physical intimidation, verbal abuse, and social exclusion. Victims of bullying often endure severe emotional distress, which can result in long-term psychological issues such as anxiety and depression. The cycle of bullying creates a hostile environment, undermining the safety of the classroom and hindering the educational experience for all involved. In Assam, the absence of effective anti-bullying measures leaves many students feeling isolated and unsupported, further exacerbating the prevalence of such behaviour.

Peer dynamics significantly contribute to classroom conflict. During adolescence, students navigate complex social landscapes, making peer relationships crucial to their social development. The pressure to conform to group norms can lead individuals to engage in aggressive behaviors as a means of gaining acceptance or avoiding ostracism. Consequently,

students may find themselves caught in a cycle of violence - either as perpetrators or victims. The fear of social exclusion often deters bystanders from intervening in violent situations, allowing aggression to proliferate unchecked.

The institutional framework of schools plays a pivotal role in either mitigating or exacerbating classroom conflict. Many educational institutions in Assam face resource constraints, resulting in large class sizes and insufficient support systems. Teachers, overwhelmed by these conditions, may struggle to manage classroom dynamics effectively. Moreover, without adequate training in conflict resolution and classroom management, educators may feel ill-prepared to address violent incidents when they arise. This lack of preparedness can create an environment where conflict thrives; leaving students without the guidance they need to resolve disputes constructively. The consequences of unresolved conflict are far-reaching, affecting not just the individuals involved but the entire classroom environment. Students who experience or witness violence often suffer from diminished academic performance and increased absenteeism. The fear and anxiety stemming from such experiences can create an oppressive atmosphere, distracting students from their studies and stifling their desire to learn. Over time, this can lead to disengagement from the educational process, perpetuating a cycle of failure that impacts their future prospects.

To confront the rising tide of classroom conflict effectively, a multifaceted approach is necessary. Schools must prioritize creating a safe and inclusive environment where all students feel valued. Implementing comprehensive anti-bullying programs is a critical first step. These programs should establish clear policies for reporting and addressing incidents of violence, empowering students to speak out against bullying without fear of retribution. By fostering a culture of accountability, schools can work to reduce the incidence of violence and promote a more positive learning environment.

Teacher training is essential for equipping educators with the tools necessary to manage conflicts effectively. Professional development opportunities focused on conflict resolution, emotional intelligence, and restorative practices can empower teachers to create supportive classrooms. Establishing open lines of communication with students can help educators identify potential conflicts early and intervene before they escalate into violence. By fostering trust and rapport, teachers can help cultivate a positive atmosphere that mitigates the likelihood of conflict.

Regional rural banks are getting big focus in North Eastern states

By: Arun Kumar Shrivastava

Union Minister for Finance and Corporate Affairs, Nirmala Sitharaman, chaired a key meeting on September 30 in Itanagar to review the performance of seven Regional Rural Banks (RRBs) serving the North East region. The meeting covered RRBs from the states of Arunachal Pradesh, Assam, Manipur, Meghalaya, Mizoram, Nagaland, and Tripura.

The meeting was attended by M. Nagaraju, Secretary of the Department of Financial Services (DFS), along with chairpersons of RRBs, sponsor banks including the Chairman of SBI and Managing Director of PNB, senior DFS officials, and representatives from the RBI, NABARD, SIDBI, and officials from the seven northeastern states.

In the meeting, Sitharaman emphasized the vital role of RRBs in supporting the rural economy and urged them, with the help of their sponsor banks, to boost credit disbursement under key Government of India schemes like MUDRA and PM Vishwakarma. She highlighted the need to focus on providing credit for agriculture, horticulture, and allied sectors such as piggery,

goatery, sericulture, and fisheries. The Minister also directed NABARD to promote Farmer Producer Organizations (FPOs) in the region.

The Finance Minister called for the organization of special State Level Bankers' Committee (SLBC) meetings with RRBs to explore opportunities in horticulture, floriculture, sericulture, and animal husbandry across the North-East. She also stressed the need to address issues related to land records for agricultural credit and increase financing for agri-processing units. States were urged to ensure mobile veterinary services were available in rural areas.

Additionally, she underscored the importance of ensuring every eligible person in the North-East is covered under the Pradhan Mantri Jan Dhan Yojana (PMJDY). She directed the DFS to collaborate with the Ministry of Development of North Eastern Region (DoNER) and the North Eastern Council (NEC) to extend credit to One District One Product (ODOP) vendors in the region. The Finance Minister also advised RRBs to develop tailored products for MSMEs and leverage their local presence to enhance financial penetration in rural areas. Furthermore, RRBs, along with their sponsor

banks and NABARD, were instructed to open new banking touchpoints in underserved regions, particularly in Nagaland and Arunachal Pradesh.

Meanwhile, the Meghalaya government has signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with The Nudge Institute to uplift 50,000 of the state's poorest households, with a special focus on single mothers and their families. This initiative aims to drive social inclusion, financial empowerment, and livelihood development for these marginalized groups.

The program will offer livelihood coaching and tight handholding support, particularly for single mothers who often face economic hardships. Through a dedicated community cadre, these households will receive assistance in developing sustainable livelihoods, while also benefiting from a broader social protection framework designed through departmental collaboration and advanced monitoring technologies.

The partnership was officially announced at the North-East Conclave on September 27 in Shillong, co-hosted by the Meghalaya State Rural Livelihoods Society (MSRLS) and The Nudge Institute. The conclave, titled "Strengthening Ecosystem for the Develop-

ment of the Most Excluded and Poorest of the Poor," underscored the importance of addressing the pressing needs of vulnerable populations, especially women-led households.

Sampath Kumar, Principal Secretary and Development Commissioner of Meghalaya, highlighted the significance of this focus, stating, "The Government of Meghalaya is committed to inclusive development, and this partnership with The Nudge Institute to support 50,000 single mothers and the poorest households is a crucial step in that direction."

The conclave brought together key stakeholders from various states, including Andhra Pradesh, Assam, and Bihar, to share their experiences in livelihood development. Prominent figures such as A.T. Mondal, Honourable Minister for Community and Rural Development, and Shri Charanjit Singh, Additional Secretary at the Ministry of Rural Development, were in attendance.

A success-story compendium titled *Against All Odds*, which celebrates the resilience of women from self-help groups in Meghalaya, was also launched, showcasing the positive impact of such initiatives. (IPA Service)

Hassan Nasrallah: Between politics, terrorism, and grey areas of the Middle East



By: Kabir Taneja

An Israeli air strike in the densely populated area of Dahieh, a suburb in Lebanon's capital Beirut, targeted and killed Hezbollah's long-time chief Hassan Nasrallah on 27 September. The impact of Nasrallah's death, who not only led Hezbollah but was a towering ideologue and figure within Lebanese polity for over three decades, is bound to be profound. However, for the moment, it leaves behind more questions than answers.

In Lebanon, Hezbollah, designated as a terror group by the United States and others in 1997, is seen as a state within a state. For the Israelis, eliminating most of Hezbollah's top-ranked leadership over the past months was primarily a political decision and not a tactical one. The capacity and ability to conduct these operations are not built in the short term but honed over a long period. Furthermore, it is also a critical attempt to rebuild the sense of security that the country was so known for, which was not just dented, but decimated, after the terror attack by Hamas almost a year ago.

Nasrallah was not just any movement leader, and Hezbollah was not like Al Qaeda, hiding in caves and fighting guerrilla warfare. Under Nasrallah, who headed the group for over three decades, Hezbollah transformed from a militant movement to a political one. It became a critical part of Lebanon's identity, for better or worse for many, and the group, along with its leader, was core to Iran's own regional designs. Unlike Hamas, a Sunni Islamist group, Hezbollah represented the Shia interest. In the aftermath of the 7 October attacks, Nasrallah came off as an unsarcastically wary actor, not keen to go full throttle against Israel just yet.

The reasons for this hesitancy are of debate even today. Israel has previously assassinated several Hezbollah and Hamas leaders. But it has suffered setbacks and learnings in unravelling the group's military and political intent. This is as much about Israel's military capacities as it is about its geographic realities. In the past, twice, Israel has tried to hold territories and create buffer zones in southern Lebanon with limited success in 1982 and 2006.

Since then, Hezbollah has also upscaled its armoury significantly, adding ballistic missiles, drones, and other similar equipment with the help of Iran. The Qader-1 ballistic missile, first used by the Lebanese group during the ongoing exchanges, targeting Israeli intelligence headquarters in Tel Aviv, is known to be a variant of the Shahad-3 missile, in service with Iran's military.

For Israel, and more specifically, Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, the elimination of the entire current hierarchy of Hezbollah is a tempting opportunity to double down.

The US, Israel's security guarantor, has also been boxed in between what it should do and what it would like Israel to do. The American role here is critical, which has shifted from discussions about Saudi-Israeli normalisation earlier in the year to now having to support its main ally in the region. This is

not just for Israel's sake per se, but also to preserve its own dwindling image as a security guarantor.

To course correct, and uphold the word of American power and polity, specifically in Asia as a US-China contestation continues to build, abandoning core allies right now could be a costly message to send out. Added to this, the fact that Israel is taking on Hezbollah, a designated terror group, makes it difficult for the US's ability to exert real pressure on Israel.

This, however, has translated into Israel at times taking more than its share of advantage with Washington D.C., as civilian casualty numbers pile up and the US reportedly having no prior intimation on Israeli plans to target Nasrallah.

But if Israel has quandaries over 'what next?', so does Iran. One of the core reasons for Iran to embolden the so-called 'Axis of Resistance', where Hezbollah under Nasrallah formed a core, was for it to not have to take on Israel directly and be embroiled in a conventional war. The response from Iran on both the assassination of the Hamas chief in central Tehran on the sidelines of the swearing-in ceremony of new Iranian president Mahmoud Pezeshkian and now the killing of the Hezbollah chief in Beirut has been uncharacteristically mute.

While Hezbollah, which is much more intertwined with Iranian ideology and polity will not break ranks, it could raise questions over the depth of Iranian tutelage and the unity of decision-making moving forward between the state's moderates and the more extreme viewpoints. It's also a grave challenge for Pezeshkian, while not having much sway over either the Ayatollah or the powerful Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC), the new leader's mandate is more representative of pulling the Iranian population towards prosperity and in his words, "justice", than pushing them into a direct conflict.

What would be the consequence of non-action from Iran is an interesting question. While Tehran did kinetically respond earlier in the year, in concert with its Resistance, including Hezbollah and the Houthis in Yemen, it was due to a direct attack on an Iranian diplomatic mission by Israel in Syria.

The fact that Iran mobilised when its direct interest was in the crosshairs but balked in doing so on both Haniyeh and now Nasrallah's killings would indeed raise some interesting conversations within the Resistance leadership, and maybe more consequentially, the lower and mid-level cadres who are on the frontlines.

Overall, the coming months seem unlikely to deliver a peace agreement or even a ceasefire at the current juncture of the conflict. Nasrallah's cousin, Hashem Safieddine, is expected to succeed him. Israel's decision to escalate and to achieve maximalist objectives was something Iran and Hezbollah seemingly did not expect, perhaps due to their prior experiences under similar circumstances. But for the future, when diving into the tough game of predictions, the general thumb rule for the Middle East remains to follow what states and actors do, and not what they say. (Courtesy: ORF)

In the hollow of the middle class

By: Surajit C. Mukhopadhyay

From early August till date, West Bengal has been in the throes of massive civil unrest over the rape and murder of a post-graduate trainee doctor in a premier medical college of the state. Civil society, at best dormant and hemmed in by its selfish concerns at the best of times, has suddenly found a voice and body in the state. Ordinary folks, young and old, irrespective of gender, religion and class have shown remarkable solidarity by holding night vigils, and street corner meetings. They are supporting the junior doctors, who are on a cease-work protest, with moral and material support. They are pressuring the government and its bureaucracy, with the relentless articulation of resistance and civil anger.

All of this has been done in the most non-violent manner possible with exemplary restraint despite the many attempts by agent provocateurs to vilify the junior doctors by one canard or the other.

Even the celebrities from the tinsel world, so long blissfully ensconced within the quangos and the spaces created by the state and the ruling party, have hit the streets demanding justice for the victim.

This by itself would have been a routine act of exercising rights provided by the Constitution of India and therefore unremarkable had it not been for the fact that such open and bold assertions of demands by these people went directly against their interest, and that they had been silent and complicit in many other preceding cases where their presence could have made a difference.

The massive street presence of anonymous citizens shows their importance as influential agents of public opinion, a lesson that we must start to appreciate in earnest if we in India and West Bengal in particular, are to think of meaningful changes to the structures of oppression that are in place. But then, this is a matter that requires separate attention, time and space.

I wish to draw attention to a few concerns that continue to plague us and refuse to go away despite our progress as a nation supposedly living with and within democracy. One is the almost automatic and immediate reaction of the police, bureaucracy and the political establishment to duck questions of accountability and play the game of passing the buck and lying through their collective teeth.

Imagine the situation as it unfolded with the rape-murder of the doctor, her parents were given false information initially and then made to wait for hours before being allowed to see her. Finally there was the unseemly and uncouth attempt to cremate her in a hurry.

All the while a very hostile environment made it clear to the devastated parents that help was not forthcoming. To compound the depravity, you have the top cop of Kolkata sauntering in and not doing much even as his divisional commissioner allegedly offers money. Later, a woman police officer would try to fudge the issue even more by holding a press conference where misinformation would flow in a torrent.

Second is the failure of the political executive, elected by the people to be the representative not only of a constituency geographically described but of every emotion and sentiment that describes their lived experience for better or worse. The death of the junior doctor brought to our notice the spectacular failure of ethics and public morality on the part of those who are to articulate the collective conscience of a people.



This bankruptcy of the political executive is reflected in the apathy that has been cultivated over the past 70-odd years, working directly most of the time in brazen disregard for the very people who pay taxes that provide them with the luxuries they have come to see as their rightful entitlement combined with complacency and immense arrogance.

The scale of the protest and the wide support that it is receiving from all sections of society is unprecedented as noted above. The question is why is it so vociferous, sustained, high in visibility and so doggedly persuasive? Is it simply an outrage against a corrupt police force, the political establishment and a criminal medical institution? Or are we outraged because we have had enough of this extreme apathy, of anomie in practice, of duplicity and highhandedness?

Are we angry because the victim was a young woman (the gender aspect) or a doctor (the status aspect) or the fact that she belonged to the majority community in a sprawling metropolis?

Have we ever seen such a massive protest for the many minority victims equally brutalised and denied justice in the past? For example, what about Najeib, missing for the past seven-odd years and whose case the CBI has officially closed? Why did we not see such a massive protest for his disappearance from the campus where he was a student? These are some of the troubling questions that distress us even as we resolve to bring justice to the young lady doctor. I think all our suspicions — from gender, and status to majority affiliation are valid and have played a vital role in the outpourings that we witness.

Add a dash of our nonchalance to the transgression of law and ethics on the part of our senior bureaucrats and politicians as normal behaviour expected of the bosses, and we have begun to get a sociological grip on resistance and protest.

But I think we are missing the elephant in the room. While every section of the people has come out in protest, it is no secret that under these circumstances, it is the middle class that creates the discursive space that compels the society to take cognisance.

The middle class was and is a deciding factor in public opinion with a disproportionate say in the way articulation of grievances and resistance is scripted. From talk shows to street corners, from genteel neighbourhoods to business districts, the show of anger, frustration and resistance has the imprimatur of the expressive Indian middle class. The catchy slogans, the biting sarcasm, and the well-crafted demands are all declarations of this class playing a vital and decisive role in India and abroad.

The pertinent question is — why now, especially since they have only recently voted overwhelmingly in favour of the

party that runs the government in West Bengal? We may never know this but let me argue that in essence, the middle class is outing itself, it is in a mode of introspection, and it is clearly stating that all this while it was complacent and happy to go about feathering its own nest as best as it could.

It is saying loud and clear that its collective back is against the wall, that it cannot bend and genuflect to its vested class interest anymore, it is acknowledging that the young lady has shown how hollow they are as a class, lacking a spine as it were along with the obvious lack of critical thinking that it has mortgaged to the market.

Michael Sandel, one of the great philosophers of our times, has been asking this question repeatedly — what is it that money can buy? Or to put it simply, what is it that money cannot or should not buy? Post-liberalisation of the economy, the middle class became a class without a soul, having nurtured and reared the toxic atmosphere and a kind of ethics that says that all that is great and good is all that can be quantified and measured.

No other consideration except a fat pay cheque, a luxurious apartment, a fancy vacation, stocks and bonds and advertised consumption makes any sense. Anything that is not glamorous must be consigned to the margins of our already tattered civilisation. This was the pact of the middle class with neoliberalism, as it became its greatest protagonist, its biggest champion and staunch ally.

In the shadow of this glitz and glamour, of the shallow and hollow life that was advertised and consumed as the benchmark of success, the likes of the criminals who destroyed a young life, a thousand possibilities and the happiness of a family grew up and like cancer metastasised quickly, devouring the collective conscience of a class that once venerated Ram Mohun, Rabindranath, Vidyasagar or Bhagat Singh and Netaji. It is the arrival of hollow men and women in the centrestage of our public life as leaders of our socio-economic destiny that binds the tragedy of Najeib of Delhi and Tilottama of Kolkata.

It is the veneration of the market and the relentless search for success at any cost that brings together the tragedy of lynching, of 'bulldozer justice', the growth of a spineless bureaucracy, a compromised teacher and a vacuous political leadership mired in endless corruption.

The cry for justice is a cry of anguish not only for the loss of an innocent daughter but the long-suppressed humanity that was sacrificed at the altar of neoliberalism's success. It may well be a song of redemption for the middle class, an expiration of guilt for having neglected to do what was right. As Bob Marley would have said "Won't you help to sing these songs of freedom?" (Courtesy: The Citizen)

Cultism has grievously damaged the Indian railways

By: Mathew John

In a true democracy, at the heart of all government policy making reside the economic and social interests of the ordinary citizen and concern for civil equality. But such righteous compulsions certainly did not determine major policy decisions during Narendra Modi's ten-year reign. And despite the chastisement in the recent Lok Sabha elections, the mindset has not changed, certainly not on Indian Railways.

A lot of what happened in key institutions in that dark period cannot be explained adequately through the normal dissection of policy, which predicated an in-depth study and analysis based on inputs from stakeholders, alignment with corporate objectives and other relevant economic and social factors. The bizarre policy decisions of the last ten years defy such straightforward analysis.

Having spent a lifetime as an insignificant but aware micro-component of the awesome Indian Railway system (IR), I do believe that for a proper understanding of the thinking that provoked the radical but irrational root-and-branch changes wrought by the Modi dispensation, one would have to venture into the Freudian world of psychoanalysis. Only a psycho-analytical diagnosis can explain the devastating policy and operational blunders on IR in the last decade.

What were the mental processes that prompted the railway ministry into this 'Mohammed bin Tuglaki' obsession to do things out-of-the-box by carpet-bombing time-tested systems that have sustained IR for decades?

Being neither psychiatrist nor psychologist, I can only attempt to identify the most obvious manifestations of the sickness that gripped IR for ten years and seems still tenaciously to linger. The symptoms point to an advanced ailment known as "cultism" which, among other things, has been defined as "the willingness to serve God" and is founded on ignorance, fanatic zeal and anti-intellectualism. It is beyond reason and hence beyond negotiation. The primary intent is not improvement of the organisation but projection of the cult leader. The overpowering hero-worship so blinds the cult followers that they lose their balance and sense of judgement.

A cult leader with absolute power over his devotees is dangerous but how much more lethal does he become when he also exercises dominant political power? Cultism was the all-powerful force that overwhelmed the country for a decade and was the determining factor that informed all major decisions on IR.

Traditionally, IR has been recognised as the common man's transport. IR's vision statement of 2011-12 encapsulated the corporate mission: "Indian Railways shall provide safe, efficient, af-

fordable and customer-focussed transport."

But to propitiate one man and his ego, IR was stood on its head for ten long years. Tried and tested systems have been dismantled, IR's primary social responsibility of being cost-conscious and even-handed in its functioning set aside as also its sacred commitment to the needs of the common man.

Allow me to first address the biggest scandal ever on IR — the criminal neglect of the ordinary second-class traveller who was erased from consideration while deciding the priorities for investment in new passenger services and improving existing on-board facilities.

Most shocking has been the deliberate, precipitous reduction in ordinary second-class accommodation in all categories of trains even as IR splurged on a slew of glitzy but economically ruinous Vande Bharat trains that cater to the well-heeled, affluent passengers — an outrageous example of the 'let them eat cake' syndrome.

One statistic vindicates this grave charge of the 'suit-boot' culture that has swamped the IR: the total number of AC/executive class passengers carried was 393 million in 2013-14 and increased to 532 million in 2022-23 whereas the ordinary class passengers across all categories have plummeted from 7921 million in 2013-14 to 5859 million in 2022-23. The sharp decline in second class passengers has happened,

not because our aam janta (common people) have shrunk in numbers but because their needs never figured in the IR management's calculations. Ordinary passenger trains have been ruthlessly eliminated, second class accommodation replaced with AC coaches, the legendary Jan Shatabdis disregarded and what have you.

What explains this lopsided, illogical focus of IR on the better-off citizens and the short shrift given to the common man? To revert to my dilettante Freudian analysis, the salient point is that the common man and his needs are unrepresenting and not 'glamorous' and eyeball catching, which are de rigueur requisites in the regime's singular obsession with projecting our tinsel Superman.

But the Vande Bharat clutch of trains are sleek and glitzy, and hence the sole preoccupation of the railway management, despite being a dead loss to the nation — financially ruinous, elitist and at complete odds with the nation's requirements. They throttle line capacity on the critical routes, have serious technical issues relating to power consumption and riding comfort.

Out of 50 odd pairs of Vande Bharat trains, about 70% are being run with half the payload — eight cars instead of 16 cars for want of demand. Can there be anything more scandalous than such colossal wastage in a country where scores of ordinary passengers travel on the footboards,

risking life and limb?

The Opposition must demand a white paper on the devastation wreaked in passenger services on IR as also the adverse outcomes from other vanity projects like the bullet train, the frenetic, injudicious electrification of the entire system resulting in massive dissipation of the railways' diesel assets.

While splurging on such wasteful projects, IR has drastically cut down manpower even in the critical safety categories, a fact highlighted by the recently appointed chairman though he disingenuously attributed the staff shortage to exponential growth in railway infrastructure. In response to an RTI query, the Railway ministry acknowledged in March 2024 that out of around 10 lakh sanctioned posts under the safety category, more than 1.5 lakh posts are vacant, including 14,429 posts of loco pilots. The brute fact is that railway safety was the lowest priority as it could not be harnessed for image-building.

Much has already been written about the subsiding of the railway budget into the general budget in 2016 and the revamping of the management structure as part of the Modi regime's zany obsession to showcase radical transformative change in its watch. And so I shall refrain from belabouring these high crimes, except to point out that these blunders have already begun to bite the nation. The discontinuance of the railway budget has al-

lowed impunity and profligacy in spending, with no public oversight and zero accountability. The debt servicing on Indian Railway Finance Corporation (IRFC) loans used for buying surplus rolling stock, is already at an unsustainable 22.5% of IR's working expenses. If one factors in the sharp reduction in appropriation to the depreciation reserve fund and the pension fund, the suspension of dividend payment, railway finances are in an alarming state. And this is only the tip of the iceberg.

The bogus, ill-thought 'Indian Railway Management Service' scheme has unravelled, with an acute shortage of technical specialists, so much so that there is a move afoot to re-employ retired railway engineers. The grapevine suggests a return to the old system of recruitment to the Group 'A' services.

Who is responsible for the awful mess? Undoubtedly, the cult leader is the main culprit in this complete desecration of systems that were painstakingly built over the decades. Our 'non-biological' prime minister had the gall to pronounce that "all-round work to transform the railways began only after 2014. Everyone was clueless before this."

To burnish one man's image, the entire Indian railway system dropped down to its knees. For the first time ever, a train service — the *Namo Bharat* — has been named after a prime minister and that too a serving prime minister

— the most egregious example of self-glorification. That's cultism.

There are other villains involved in this wrecking of the IR. Among those who were actively associated with the crazy changes in systems are the right-wing cabal of Bibek Debroy, Sanjeev Sanyal, Partho Mukhopadhyay and a host of others who know better and yet bartered away the interests of the railways to propitiate their god. In the same bracket fall the top management of IR during this critical time who did absolutely nothing to protect the IR's interests. They have much to answer for.

This rogues' gallery must also include my ilk — the superannuated railway officers across departments. It is astounding how these seasoned railwaymen with nothing to lose, have junked allegiance to their professional alma mater to become devout bhakts. Their WhatsApp groups are unabashed Modi fan clubs that tolerate no criticism of their god. Unlike retired IAS, IPS and other service officers who have raised their voices in protest some of the autocratic regime's unjust policies, these retirees watched unmoved as IR was being destroyed.

Let me conclude with a quote of Albert Camus: "By definition a government has no conscience. Sometimes it has a policy but nothing more." What hope is there when cultism is the policy? (Courtesy: The Wire)

12 injured after Russian glide bomb smashes into Ukrainian apartment building



KYIV, Oct 3: A Russian glide bomb struck a five-story apartment block in Kharkiv, Ukraine's second-largest city, injuring at least 12 people including a 3-year-old girl, local officials said on Thursday.

The bomb hit between the third and fourth floors of the building on Wednesday night, igniting blazes, Kharkiv regional Gov. Oleh Syniehubov said. Firefighters searched for survivors through smoke and rubble.

The city of Kharkiv, located around 30 kilometers (18 miles) from the Russian border, has been a frequent target of aerial attacks throughout the war against Russia that is now deep into its third year.

Glide bombs have become an increasingly common weapon in the war. They have terrorized civilians and bludgeoned the Ukrainian army's front-line defenses.

They were a key weapon in Russia's capture of the tactically significant town of Vuhledar on Wednesday, as Russian forces wreak destruction on the eastern Donetsk region and force weary Ukrainian troops to withdraw from obliterated towns and villages.

Ukraine has no effective countermeasure for glide bombs, which are launched from Russian aircraft inside Russia.

Ukraine President Volodymyr

Zelenskyy said the latest Kharkiv attack highlighted the urgent need for increased support from Ukraine's Western allies.

Zelenskyy recently held talks with officials in the United States in an effort to ensure further Western military support.

Russia has had the battlefield initiative since late last year, when a Ukrainian counteroffensive petered out. Ukraine is grappling with a critical manpower problem on the front line and is straining to hold back Russia's grinding assaults.

Though Russia's battlefield gains have been incremental, its steady forward movement is adding up as the Ukrainians are pushed backward and yield ground.

Both sides have kept up regular cross-border aerial attacks, usually at night.

Ukraine's air force said Thursday that 78 out of 105 Shahed drones launched by Russia overnight were destroyed on Thursday as 15 regions of the country came under attack.

The Russian military, meanwhile, intercepted 113 Ukrainian drones overnight, according to a statement by the Defense Ministry in Moscow. The drones were destroyed over four Russian regions on the border with Ukraine —Belgorod, Bryansk, Kursk and Voronezh, it said. (AP)

After Nov Parliamentary polls, SLanka to face its third major election before 2024 ends



COLOMBO, Oct 3: Amid continued economic troubles, Sri Lanka is to witness two more island-wide major elections before the end of the year, months after the recently concluded Presidential polls. The parliamentary election is scheduled for November 14 following the presidential election that was held on September 21 in the cash-

strapped nation. Third would be the local council elections in December.

Meanwhile, a one-off election scheduled for the southern province's Elipitiya local council will be held on October 26. Sri Lanka's independent Election Commission, in a statement late on Wednesday night, said arrangements would be made to hold the local election immediately after the parliamentary polls following the Supreme Court order of August 22.

As per the order, the elections to 340 local councils are to be held between 30-35 days from November 14, meaning that it would be scheduled for the third week of December.

The court ruled that the local council election should have been held at the earlier scheduled date of March 9, 2023, and not holding it was a violation of fundamental rights.

The then president and finance minister Ranil Wickremesinghe blamed the dire financial state of the country following the 2022 economic crisis and said it was not possible to hold the election.

The decision to not hold was announced despite the election commission making preliminary arrangements and had accepted nominations too. The court said that Wickremesinghe, as the finance minister, was guilty of rights violation by not allocating the necessary funds required to hold the election. The then opposition had accused Wickremesinghe of not holding the election for the fear of losing.

On September 23, Anura Kumara Dissanayake, the leader of the Marxist Janatha Vimukthi Peramuna party's broader front, the National People's Power (NPP), as sworn in as Sri Lanka's ninth president. He signed the special gazette notification ordering the dissolution of parliament on September 24.

Sri Lanka is currently negotiating for the fourth tranche of the USD 2.9 billion four-year facility clinched by the Wickremesinghe administration in March 2023.

The island nation has already received three tranches of about USD 360 million each and the third review for the release of the fourth tranche is expected to happen in Washington at the end of this month. (PTI)

In SKorea, deepfake porn wrecks women's lives and deepens gender conflict

SEOUL, Oct 3: Three years after the 30-year-old South Korean woman received a barrage of online fake images that depicted her nude, she is still being treated for trauma. She struggles to talk with men. Using a mobile phone brings back the nightmare.

"It completely trampled me, even though it wasn't a direct physical attack on my body," she said in a phone interview with The Associated Press. She didn't want her name revealed because of privacy concerns.

Many other South Korean women recently have come forward to share similar stories as South Korea grapples with a deluge of non-consensual, explicit deepfake videos and images that have become much more accessible and easier to create.

It was not until last week that parliament revised a law to make watching or possessing deepfake porn content illegal.

Most suspected perpetrators in South Korea are teenage boys. Observers say the boys target female friends, relatives and acquaintances — also mostly minors — as a prank, out of curiosity or misogyny. The attacks raise serious questions about school programs but also threaten to worsen an already troubled divide between men and women.

Deepfake porn in South Korea gained attention after unconfirmed lists of schools that had victims spread online in August. Many girls and women have hastily removed photos and videos from their Instagram, Facebook and other social media accounts. Thousands of young women have staged protests demanding stronger steps against deepfake porn. Politicians, academics and activists have held forums.

"Teenage (girls) must be feeling uneasy about whether their male classmates are okay. Their mutual trust has been completely shattered," said Shin Kyung-ah, a sociology professor at South Korea's Hallym University.

The school lists have not been formally verified, but officials including President Yoon Suk Yeol have confirmed a surge of explicit deepfake content on social media. Police have launched a seven-month crackdown.

Recent attention to the problem has coincided with France's arrest in August of Pavel Durov, the founder of the messaging app Telegram, over allegations that his platform was used for illicit activities including the distribution of child sexual abuse. South Korea's telecommunications and broadcast

An Israeli airstrike on an apartment in central Beirut has killed seven Hezbollah-affiliated first responders

Rare Israeli strike in central Beirut kills 7 as troops battle Hezbollah in southern Lebanon

BEIRUT, Oct 3: An Israeli airstrike on an apartment in central Beirut killed seven Hezbollah-affiliated civilian first responders. Israel has been pounding areas of the country where the militant group has a strong presence since late September, but has rarely struck in the heart of the capital.

There was no warning before the strike late Wednesday, which hit an apartment in central Beirut not far from the United Nations headquarters, the prime minister's office and parliament.

Hezbollah's civil defence unit said seven of its members were killed.

The strike came after at least eight Israeli soldiers were killed in clashes with Hezbollah in southern Lebanon, where Israel announced the start of what it says is a limited ground incursion earlier this week. The region was meanwhile bracing for Israeli retaliation following an Iranian ballistic missile attack.

Residents reported a sulfur-like smell following the strike in Beirut, and Lebanon's state-run National News Agency accused Israel of using phosphorus bombs, without providing evidence.

Human rights groups have in

the past accused Israel of using white phosphorus incendiary shells on towns and villages in southern Lebanon. The Israeli military did not immediately respond to a request for comment.

Hezbollah has an armed wing with tens of thousands of fighters but it also has a political movement and a network of charities staffed by civilians.

In a separate development, Iran-backed Houthi rebels in Yemen said they had launched two drones at Tel Aviv overnight.

The military said it identified two drones off the coast of the bustling metropolitan area, shooting one of them down while the other fell in the Mediterranean Sea.

The escalating violence in Lebanon has opened a second front in the war between Israel and Iran-backed militants that began nearly a year ago with Hamas' surprise Oct 7 attack from the Gaza Strip into Israel.

The Israeli military said Thursday that it killed a senior Hamas leader in an airstrike in the Gaza Strip around three months ago. It said that a strike on an underground compound in northern Gaza killed Rawhi Mushtaha and two other Hamas commanders.



There was no immediate comment from Hamas. Mushtaha was a close associate of Yahya Sinwar, the top leader of Hamas who helped mastermind the Oct 7 attack. Sinwar is believed to be alive and in hiding inside Gaza.

In recent weeks, Israeli strikes in Lebanon have killed Hezbollah leader Hassan Nasrallah and several of his top commanders. Hundreds more airstrikes across large parts of Lebanon since mid-September have killed at least 1,276 people, according to Lebanon's Health Ministry.

The Israeli military said Thursday that it had struck around 200 Hezbollah targets across Lebanon, including weapons storage facilities and observation posts. It said the strikes killed at least 15 Hezbollah fighters. There was no

independent confirmation.

Hundreds of thousands of people have fled their homes, as Israel has warned people to evacuate from around 50 villages and towns in the south, telling them to relocate to areas that are around 60 km (36 miles) from the border and considerably farther north than a UN-declared buffer zone.

Israel says it is targeting Hezbollah after nearly a year of rocket attacks that began on Oct 8 and have displaced some 60,000 Israelis from communities in the north. Israel has carried out retaliatory strikes over the past year that have displaced tens of thousands on the Lebanese side.

The vast majority of recent strikes have been in areas where Hezbollah has a strong presence,

including the southern suburbs of Beirut known as the Dahiyyeh. But Israel has also carried out strikes in Palestinian refugee camps in Lebanon, and a strike in central Beirut earlier this week killed three Palestinian militants.

Hezbollah, Hamas and the Houthis are part of the Iran-led Axis of Resistance, which also includes armed groups in Syria and Iraq. They have launched attacks on Israel in solidarity with the Palestinians, drawing retaliation in a cycle that has repeatedly threatened to set off a wider war.

The region once again appears on the brink of such a conflict after Iran's missile attack on Tuesday, which it said was a response to the killing of Nasrallah, an Iranian Revolutionary Guard general who was with him, and Ismail Haniyeh, the political leader of Hamas, who was killed in an explosion in Tehran in July that was widely blamed on Israel.

Both Israel and the United States have said there will be severe consequences for the missile attack, which lightly wounded two people and killed a Palestinian in the occupied West Bank. The United States has rushed military assets to the region in support of Israel. (AP)

New NATO Secretary-General Mark Rutte visits Ukraine in his first trip since taking office

KYIV, Oct 3: A Russian glide bomb struck a five-story apartment block in Kharkiv, Ukraine's second-largest city, injuring at least 12 people including a 3-year-old girl, local officials said on Thursday.

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the latest Kharkiv attack highlighted the urgent need for increased support from Ukraine's Western allies.

Zelenskyy recently held talks with officials in the United States in an effort to ensure further Western military support.

UK charts more planes to fly out British nationals from Lebanon

LONDON, Oct 3: The UK

government announced further chartered planes on Thursday to help British nationals leave Lebanon in response to the deteriorating security situation amid the conflict with Israel and to meet the demand for a flight chartered earlier this week.

The Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office (FCDO) said the additional flights will continue for as long as the security situation allows. Meanwhile, it says it is also working with partners to increase capacity on commercial flights for British nationals.

"Recent events have demonstrated the volatility of the situation in Lebanon," said UK Foreign Secretary David Lammy.

"The safety of British nationals in Lebanon continues to be our number one priority. That's why we are announcing additional chartered flights to help those who want to leave. I urge all British nationals still in Lebanon to register with the FCDO and leave the country immediately," he said.

As per its established policy for such chartered flights, British nationals who have registered their presence with the government will be sent details on how to request a seat, with those not registered being urged to do so immediately.

All British nationals and their spouse or partner and children under the age of 18 are eligible as long as they hold a valid travel docu-

ment. Dependants who are not British nationals require a valid visa that has been granted for a period of stay in the UK of more than six months.

The FCDO said officials have been working "round the clock" in London, Beirut and the wider region to provide support to British nationals as violence escalated in the region. An FCDO Rapid Deployment Team has also arrived in Lebanon to bolster the support offered by British Embassy officials.

UK Defence Secretary John Healey travelled to Cyprus on Wednesday to meet with around 700 British military personnel deployed there as part of contingency planning to support nationals in Lebanon. He also met with

his Cypriot counterpart, Vasilis Palmas, to discuss the urgent need for de-escalation in West Asia as well as the country's support for humanitarian operations. Healey then held a call with his Israeli counterpart, Yoav Gallant, to express the UK's condemnation of the Iranian attack and call for de-escalation and a ceasefire in Lebanon.

The FCDO reiterated that the UK continues to call for a ceasefire between Lebanese Hezbollah and Israel, which would provide the space necessary to find a political solution in line with United Nations Security Council Resolution 1701, passed in 2006 with the aim of resolving the conflict between Hezbollah and Israel. (PTI)

Typhoon Krathon makes landfall in Taiwan, packing fierce winds, torrential rain

KAOSHIUNG (TAIWAN), Oct 3: Typhoon Krathon made landfall on Thursday in Taiwan's major port city of Kaohsiung, bringing torrential rains and fierce winds to the island's south. Trees were brought down by high winds and roads were flooded, prompting the closure of schools and businesses.

Krathon made landfall in the industrial Siaogang district of Kaohsiung around 12:40 p.m., the Central Weather Administration said. It packed maximum sustained winds of 126 kph with gusts of 162 kph.

The typhoon was forecast to move slowly north and weaken into a tropical depression by Friday before it reaches the capital, Taipei. It was expected to then head across the Taiwan Strait toward the Chinese coast. Winds were strong in Taipei on Thursday, but there was little rain.

Kaohsiung earlier urged its residents to take cover from potentially disastrous winds and rain, which tore down storefronts and flooded car parks but caused no reported loss of life.

The slow-moving typhoon, which approached Taiwan at a speed of about 4 kph (2.5 mph), doused eastern and southern parts of the island over the past five days, forcing thousands to evacuate from mountainous or low-lying areas. Two days of closures are believed to have taken a significant toll on the island's high-tech economy that relies heavily on foreign trade.

Gusts and heavy rains pelted empty streets in Kaohsiung, while life in Taipei, 350 kilometers (215 miles) to the north, was only slightly disrupted.

Many residents woke up Thursday to mobile phone alerts urging them to take shelter from the potentially dangerous winds. The weather administration posted a Facebook message warning Kaohsiung and Pingtung county residents not to go outside when the eye of the storm passes above their area and the weather calms briefly, because the winds would pick up again afterward.

Weather-related events attributed to Krathon injured at least 123 people around the island, according to Taiwan's fire department. Two people died — one after driving into fallen rocks on the road in the southeastern Taitung county, and the other while trimming tree branches in the city of Hualien. Two others remained missing.

A fire at a hospital in Pingtung County killed at least nine people early Thursday. The deaths were attributed to smoke and the cause was under investigation. It was not immediately clear whether the blaze was related to the typhoon. Thousands were evacuated from areas vulnerable to mudslides and landslides. Almost 40,000 troops were on standby to help with rescue efforts.

Mountainous areas in the island's south have received up to 169 centimeters (5.5 feet) of rain over the past five days. China's weather agency said some eastern and southern parts of Taiwan are set to receive extremely heavy rains of up to 40 centimeters (1.3 feet) over the next 24 hours.

Typhoons rarely hit Taiwan's west coast, affecting instead the mountainous eastern side of the island. (AP)

Rwanda's Marburg fever deaths rise to 11 as its source is still being investigated

KIGALI, Oct 3: Marburg hemorrhagic fever has killed 11 people in Rwanda, health authorities said, as the East African country continues to investigate the source of an outbreak first traced among patients in health facilities.

There are 36 confirmed cases of the disease that manifests like Ebola, with 25 of them in isolation, according to the Rwandan government's latest update.

Rwanda declared the outbreak on Sept. 27 and reported six deaths a day later. Authorities said at the time that the first cases had been found among patients in health facilities and that an investigation was underway "to determine the origin of the infection."

The source remains unclear days later, raising contagion fears in the small central African nation. Isolating patients and their contacts is key to stopping the spread of viral hemorrhagic fevers like Marburg.

At least 300 people who came into contact with those confirmed to have Marburg have been identified, and an unspecified number of them are now in isolation facilities, according to local health authorities.

Rwandans have been urged to avoid physical contact to help curb the spread. Most of the affected people are healthcare workers across six out of 30 districts in the country.

The U.S. Embassy in Rwanda's capital of Kigali has urged its staff to work remotely and avoid visiting offices.

Like Ebola, the Marburg virus is believed to originate 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% of people who fall ill with the disease. (AP)



watchdog said Monday that Telegram has pledged to enforce a zero-tolerance policy on illegal deepfake content.

Police say they've detained 387 people over alleged deepfake crimes this year, more than 80% of them teenagers. Separately, the Education Ministry says about 800 students have informed authorities about intimate deepfake content involving them this year.

Experts say the true scale of deepfake porn in the country is far bigger.

The U.S. cybersecurity firm Security Hero called South Korea "the country most targeted by deepfake pornography" last year. In a report, it said South Korean singers and actresses constitute more than half of the people featured in deepfake pornography worldwide.

Nagaland has 406 ODF villages out of 747



HT Correspondent

DIMAPUR, Oct 3: Nagaland PHED and cooperation minister Jacob Zhimomi on Wednesday said out of 747 villages, the state has 406 open defecation free (ODF) villages, 39 model villages, and 302 rising villages as of September 2024.

Gracing the Swachhata Hi Seva 2024 culmination programme as the chief guest at Capital Convention Centre in Kohima, Zhimomi stressed that every individual is equally responsible for cleanliness campaign to make our environment clean for everyone.

He appealed to the people of the state to cooperate with the line departments and the government to effectively change their mindsets to create or make Nagaland the safest place.

He thanked the urban development department, PHED, municipal councils, town councils, blocks and villages for their contributions and support in various capacities for making the best outcome of the holistic mission of the cleanliness drive.

Saying that it was the biggest cleanliness campaign across the country and the world with an impactful culmination, Zhimomi said since its official launch on October 2, 2014, significant progress has been made within 10 years of the Swachh Bharat Mission in construction of toilets, infant mortality rate etc. In Dimapur, the Dimapur Municipal Council (DMC) organised the culmination-cum-award ceremony of the Swachhata Hi Seva campaign at Lion's Club.

DMC chief executive officer Thungchanbemo Tungeo said the campaign witnessed a wide array of activities organised to engage the public and spread awareness on the importance of cleanliness.

Key activities undertaken by the DMC on the day included a mini marathon and a ride for cleanliness as well as a cleanliness awareness campaign targeting churches, schools, colleges, and local shopkeepers. The council also focused on the cleaning and beautification of clean target units in collaboration with local organisations.

Call for improvement in civil registration system in Nagaland

HT Correspondent

DIMAPUR, Oct 3: A state-level inter-departmental coordination committee meeting on Thursday called for continued efforts to improve the overall civil registration process in Nagaland, particularly through greater coordination between departments and the adoption of new technologies.

The meeting, held at the directorate of economics and statistics in Kohima, addressed several key issues related to the registration of births and deaths as well as efforts to improve the civil registration system across the state.

According to an official report, as of March 31, 2023, there are 1,471 registration centres in the state, with 1,439 centres located in rural areas and 32 in urban areas.

In rural areas, each recognised village has a registration unit managed by the head teacher of the government primary school, who serves as the registrar for births and deaths. In addition, there are also registration units at primary health centres and community health centres. The urban areas, particularly district headquarters, have registration units located in the district registrar's offices, headed by the district economics and statistics officer. The units are also available in government district hospitals, municipal offices, and town councils.

Two reached Imphal safely escorted by state police and Assam Rifles Two abducted youths released after a week, reach Imphal

IMPHAL, Oct 3: Two youths who were held hostage by armed men in Manipur's Kangpokpi district were released and handed over to police on Thursday morning, seven days after they were abducted, an officer said.

The two youths - Oinam Thoithoi Singh and Th Thoithoiba Singh - were handed over to Kangpokpi superintendent of police at Gamgiphai naka at around 5 am, the officer said.

The two reached Imphal safely escorted by state police and Assam Rifles, police said.

"They are now in Imphal police station and completing certain formalities," police said, adding "Their family members are also at the police station and the youths will be soon handed over to family members."



The two on September 27 had accompanied another youth N Johnson Singh who was appearing for SSC GD recruitment test at New Keithelmanbi. However, they lost their way in Kangpokpi district. While Johnson was rescued by the army and handed over to the police, the two youths re-

mained in the captivity of armed men.

Meanwhile, Manipur chief minister N Biren Singh in a post on social media said, "The two young men abducted in Kangpokpi on September 27 have been safely released."

Singh said, "I sincerely appreciate everyone from both the state and central government who worked tirelessly to ensure their safe return. Your efforts are deeply valued."

A series of negotiations involving both central and state officials were involved in securing the release of the two youths, the official said.

The DGP had twice visited Kangpokpi district to secure their release, an official said. (PTI)

Mob storms police station, loots arms in Ukhrul



IMPHAL, Oct 3: A mob stormed a police station in Manipur's Ukhrul town and looted arms during a clash between two groups, officials said on Thursday.

Three persons were killed and 20 others injured in a gunfight that broke out between two groups on Wednesday over cleaning a disputed land in the town as part of 'Swachhata Abhyan'.

The police station was attacked when the violence was going on.

Prohibitory orders were imposed and mobile internet services were suspended in the town after the clash between two groups of the Naga community.

"After violence broke out in Ukhrul town, a mob comprising mostly of youths stormed the police station located at Wino Bazar and decamped with government weapons," an official said.

The number and types of weapons looted cannot be immediately confirmed as an investigation is continuing, he added.

Unofficial sources, however, claimed that the looted weapons included AK-47 and INSAS rifles.

Looting of arms was reported from various police stations in the ethnic-strife-torn state earlier, but in all those cases the areas concerned were dominated by either Meiteis or Kukis, the two warring communities.

This is the first time a police station was stormed

in a Naga-majority area, according to a source.

"The Ukhrul police station is located a few metres away from an Assam Rifles camp," the official said.

On Wednesday, additional director general of police L Kailun directed all district SPs and other officers to remain on "high alert" and to ensure proper security for arms and ammunition.

It is not clear, however, whether the instruction was given before or after the arms were looted from the police station in Ukhrul district.

On Wednesday, three persons including a Manipur Rifles personnel were killed and more than 20 others were injured in the gunfight between two groups over cleaning a plot of land, police said.

Members of the two sides belong to the Tangkhul Naga community but are residents of different villages. Both lay claim to that land.

One of the three deceased was on-duty personnel of the Manipur Rifles, an armed force under the state government.

Ten of the critically injured have been referred to a hospital in Imphal while others are being treated in the Ukhrul district hospital, police said.

Additional forces were also rushed to the district to bring the situation under control.

Following the violence, three Tangkhul Naga legislators had appealed to the villagers to maintain peace and "resolve the issue amicably through dialogue."

Prohibitory orders under BNSS Section 163 have been imposed in Ukhrul town following the incident and internet services have been suspended.

The northeastern state, affected by ethnic clashes since May 2023, witnessed escalated violence from early last month.

More than 200 people have been killed and thousands rendered homeless in violence between Imphal Valley-based Meiteis and adjoining hills-based Kukis since May 3 last year. (PTI)

Sinlung Hills Council elections on November 5

AIZAWL, Oct 3:

Mizoram State Election Commissioner H Lalthlangliana on Thursday announced that the elections for the 12-member Sinlung Hills Council (SHC) will be held on November 5.

Lalthlangliana said the last date for filing nomination is October 10, while the last date for withdrawal of candidature is October 14. Scrutiny of nomination papers will be held on October 11, he said.

Voting will be held on November 5 between 7 am and 4 pm and counting of votes will be undertaken as soon as voting is over and all ballot boxes reach constituency headquarters, he said.

According to the final roll published by the state election commission on September 30, there are 23,789 voters, including 11,914 female voters within Sinlung Hills Council.

There are 38 polling stations and

16 of them close to Assam and Manipur borders are declared critical polling stations, according to Lalthlangliana. He said that adequate police forces will be deployed to ensure free and fair elections.

Meanwhile, the ruling Zoram People's Movement (ZPM) and Hmar People's Convention (HPC) have forged a pre-poll electoral alliance and agreed on a seat-sharing arrangement as per which ZPM will contest in 8 out of 12 seats and HPC in 4 seats, ZPM president Lallian-sawta said. The SHC has 12 constituencies, comprising 31 villages in the Hmar-dominated northeastern part of Mizoram, covering three assembly constituencies in Aizawl, Kolasib and Saitual districts.

In the last polls held on November 2019, the Mizo National Front (MNF)-HPC combine bagged 10 seats, and the other two were won by independent candidates. (PTI)

Tripura CM urges immediate completion of Unity Mall

HT Correspondent

AGARTALA, Oct 3: Tripura chief minister Manik Saha on Thursday instructed officials and workers engaged in the construction of the Unity Mall to complete the work immediately.

He also expressed his desire to establish unique initiatives in all 60 Assembly Constituencies, which would foster further development and boost the economy.

Dr Saha said this after attending Bhoomi Puja of Jute Mall (Unity Mall) at Ekta Mall (Unity Mall) at Jute Mill Ground, Near Amtali, Agartala today.

"Unity Mall is a dream project of Prime Minister Narendra Modi. Another one of his dream projects is the Light House, which is almost complete. I have said that if there are any issues, we will sit down and solve the problems. Those responsible for constructing the Unity Mall have stated that they will complete the work within 27 months. However, you must set a target earlier than this and complete it as soon as possible. I hope that until the work is completed, the MLA and local people will help and keep a close eye on it from time to time," he said.

11 Kuki-Zo inmates shifted from Sajiwa Central Jail to Kangpokpi: Officials



IMPHAL, Oct 3: Eleven Kuki-Zo inmates from Sajiwa Central Jail in Imphal were sent to Kangpokpi district on Thursday morning, days after being granted bail by a court, officials said.

"The inmates, who had been incarcerated for various offences, including drug-related charges, were recently granted bail by a local court," an official said, noting that their release had been delayed due to the prevailing situation in the state.

The official, however, asserted that their release from jail and the freeing of two Meitei youths earlier in the day were unrelated.

The two Meitei youths, held hostage by armed men in Kangpokpi district, were handed over to the district SP at Gamgiphai naka around 5 AM, seven days after their abduction on September 27. Escorted by police and the Assam Rifles, the two reached Imphal around 8 AM, officials confirmed.

However, the Kangpokpi district-based Committee on Tribal Unity (COTU) claimed that the release of the 11 inmates was a key demand in negotiations for freeing

the youths. A COTU representative stated in a video message, "Three men from Imphal valley were detained by our village volunteers. After our intervention, we managed to release one youth immediately. For the other two, our volunteers imposed certain conditions. Our first discussion with the DGP on September 29 did not materialise."

He added, "Our initial demands included the transfer of all Kuki-Zo inmates from Sajiwa Central Jail to Churachandpur and the setting up of a police station. We requested the Centre to intervene, and with their assistance, we reached an amicable solution. The youths were released today, and according to our agreements, the 11 inmates have now been received at the Church compound in Saparmeina."

Chief Minister N. Biren Singh had previously acknowledged that there were demands from the abductors. "There have been some demands regarding the transfer of certain inmates, but the government is working to release the youths unconditionally," Singh said on September 30. (PTI)

Meaning of corruption and BJP is same: Tripura CPI(M) leader

HT Correspondent

AGARTALA, Oct 3: CPI(M) state committee secretary Jitendra Chaudhury on Thursday said that the meaning of corruption and BJP is the same. Addressing a massive rally in Agartala protesting the misuse of the BJP government, the Jitendra who is also MLA said that corruption and BJP are synonymous. "The words may be different, but the meanings are the same. From the block level to everywhere, there is corruption. People are in distress, and development has collapsed. This government is deeply mired in corruption," he said.

AGARTALA, Oct 3: Former Tripura CM and CPI(M) politburo member Manik Sarkar on Thursday welcomed Chief Minister Manik Saha's promise of reopening old cases of political murders to deliver justice to the violence-affected families. The veteran Left leader also said the people expect the chief minister would reopen cases of murders of 22 CPI(M) leaders and workers during the BJP rule in the state.

During a law and order review meeting, Saha had recently asked the top police officers to identify murder cases and reopen those to deliver justice to the deceased families.

"The chief minister has been stat-

Manik Sarkar welcomes Tripura CM's promise of reopening old murder cases

ing that the government will reopen old murder cases to deliver justice. We welcome the move. The BJP has been at the helm for the past seven years and who will prevent the chief minister from reopening old murder cases," Sarkar said while addressing a CPI (M) protest rally. The people also expect the government will "reinvestigate the murder of 22 CPI(M) leaders and workers".

"The cases of three RSS workers, who were abducted by militants and still missing, must be reinvestigated," Sarkar said.

Speaking on the recent peace accord with insurgent groups, the CPI(M) leader said, "There has been

no militancy-related incident in the state for the past six to seven years. The insurgents had tried to topple the Left Front government since the beginning of their arms struggle (in the 1990s)." He also said, "We used to tell the militant groups to initiate peace talks with either the state or the Centre but they did not pay heed. Now, they have come in numbers and surrendered arms." A peace agreement was signed among the central and Tripura governments and two insurgent groups of the state in New Delhi on September 4 in the presence of Union Home Minister Amit Shah to end violence and bring peace in the northeastern state. (PTI)

Give peace a chance in interest of humanity: UNC

SENAPATI, Oct 3: The United Naga Council (UNC) recently appealed to Hunphun and Hungpung villagers to refrain from further taking up arms and give peace a chance in the greater interest of humanity.

"With heavy heart and lamentation over the occurrence of pandemic situation at the heart of the Ukhrul district headquarters today leading to the death of our beloved brothers from the fatal bullets and injuries inflicted upon many victims from both the villages," UNC stated.

The UNC also said the era of head hunting as sports and glorifying one's chopped head as a trophy are old ways and the days of the past. "It is a natural phenomenon for any human race to have disagreement and conflict over land resources but violence is not a means for ends of conflict," it added.

The UNC then said, "With the advent of Christianity in our land, our ancestors have abandoned our old ways of life and

always followed the path of 'reasoning'. So let us reason together and shun from further exacerbation of violence and killings to restore peace and cohesion".

While lamenting over the death of those who have been inflicted with bullet injuries and traumas as a result of the emotionally charged trigger holders, the UNC fervently appealed to both the headmen and village authorities at the helms of affair to listen to the 'inner voice' and to rein in tumultuous situation and pave way for a peaceful dialogue.

The UNC then offered its heartfelt con-

dolences to the bereaved families and "our heart goes out to all fellow friends who sustained injuries from both the villages".

Once again, the Naga body fervently appealed to both the villagers to take a bold step and a higher road towards restoring peace, leaving aside all the bitterness and put at rest all possible confrontation and bloodshed for the sake of "our" elders, children and younger generations. "Let us embrace compassion, love and forgiveness instead of getting ourselves embroiled in senseless fighting. Let peace and sanity prevail," it added. (NNN)



No. 507842/135

EXTENSION NOTICE

APPLICATION FOR PRE-MATRIC, POST-MATRIC AND TOP-CLASS SCHOLARSHIP TO STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES FOR THE YEAR 2024-25

In modification of this office advertisement no.- 507842/113, dated-05/07/2024 published in the daily newspapers, the last date for submission of online applications for Pre-Matric (Class IX & X) scholarship to Students with Disabilities through National Scholarship Portal (NSP-<http://scholarships.gov.in>) has been extended till 15th October, 2024.

The revised timelines for submission of applications and verification at institute level are mentioned below:

Sl. No.	Components of National Scholarship for Students with Disabilities	Last date of Submission of application	Last date of verification by Institute Nodal Officers
1.	Pre-matric scholarships for Class IX and X	15 th October, 2024	31 st October, 2024
2.	Post-matric scholarships for Class XI to Post-graduation	31 st October, 2024	15 th November, 2024
3.	Top Class scholarship (For Graduate and Post-Graduate Degree/Diploma in notified institutes of excellence in education)	31 st October, 2024	15 th November, 2024

Sd/-
Director
Social Justice & Empowerment,
Assam
Beltola, Guwahati-28

Janasanyog /D/6865/24/4-Oct-24

No. CHD/UDD/CHD-71/6th ASFC 1st Inst./Devolution/202-23/1985 Date 01/10/2024

PRESS NOTICE INVITING TENDER

The Council Head of Department, Urban Development Department, BTC, Kokrajhar invites two bids system for the work "Const. of Chain link fabric fencing with GI wire and plantation over open public drain at Kokrajhar town" under 6th ASFC (Devolution) fund for the year 2022-23 for amounting Rs. 75,00,000.00 (Rupees Seventy Five Lakhs) only.

Details may be seen at website <http://assamtenders.gov.in> and also at the office of the undersigned during office hours.

Sd/- CHD
Urban Development Department,
BTC, Kokrajhar

IPR(BTC)/C/2024-25/652

No. CHD/HT/BTC(G)/858/2024-25/1 Dated Kokrajhar, the 30/09/2024

INVITATION FOR BIDS (IFB)
Tender No. HT/03/2024

Director of BTC, Handloom & Textiles, Kokrajhar invites e-bids from eligible Registered Suppliers / Dealers / Firms of BTR under Handloom & Textiles Department for the year 2024-25 for the following works and ON TWO BIDS SYSTEM under SOPD fund for the year 2024-25 as detailed in the table below.

Sl. No.	Name of Work	Estimated Amount (Approx)	Duration	EMD	Tender Processing Fee (in Rs.)
1	Supply of fly shuttle frame looms with accessories @ Rs. 3.00 lakhs for Handloom Production Centre cum Training Centres under BTR	36,00,000/-	45 days	2% for General & 1% for Reserved Category	Rs. 1000/-

Details may be seen at website <http://assamtenders.gov.in> and also in the office of the undersigned during office hours.

Sd/-
i/c. Director of BTC,
Handloom & Textiles, Kokrajhar

IPR(BTC)/C/2024-25/649

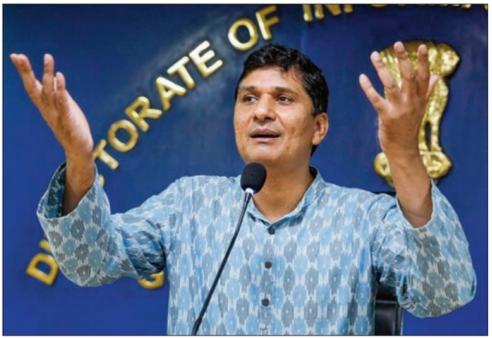
Withdrawal of prohibitory order 'victory' of Hindus: AAP

NEW DELHI, Oct 3: Aam Aadmi Party on Thursday said the withdrawal of a prohibitory order imposed in the city by the Delhi Police was a "victory" of the people, especially Hindu devotees.

Delhi Police earlier in the day informed the Supreme Court that the order prohibiting the assembly of five or more persons in the city, from September 30 to October 5, was "withdrawn".

In a press conference, AAP leader and Delhi minister Saurabh Bharadwaj claimed that the order had sparked "outrage" among Hindu devotees concerned about Navratri programmes like temple visits, Jagaran and religious processions in the coming days.

The nine-day Navratri celebrations began on Thursday. "This is a moment of triumph for the people of Delhi, especially for the Hindu devotees, who were worried about how they would celebrate the festival," said the AAP leader.



Delhi minister Saurabh Bharadwaj speaking at a press conference.

The minister said that withdrawal of the order was also a "defeat" of the Lt Governor under whom the Delhi Police worked.

"This is an embarrassing defeat for the Lieutenant Governor. The Central government and its lawyers knew that such absurd orders cannot be implemented in a sovereign, free country," he said.

The prohibitory order was challenged in the court by the Kalkaji temple priest and during the hearing, the solicitor general representing the Centre informed that it was revoked, Bharadwaj said.

He also slammed the BJP and the RSS for not speaking against the order despite claiming to be "defenders of Hinduism".

According to a police officer, the order ceased on the intervening night of October 2 and 3. The scrapped order imposed Section 163 (which was earlier Section 144 of CrP) of the Bharatiya Nagarik Suraksha Sanhita in the districts of New Delhi, North and Central and all the police stations bordering other states.

It was imposed on the ground that the general atmosphere in Delhi was "sensitive from a law and order point of view" due to various issues including the Waqf Amendment Bill, the MCD standing committee election and pending DUSU poll results. (PTI)

BJP leader asked to join Sharad Pawar's party



MUMBAI, Oct 3: Maharashtra BJP leader Harshvardhan Patil met NCP (SP) chief Sharad Pawar in Mumbai on Thursday, amid growing buzz that he is joining the Pawar-led party ahead of the state assembly elections. Patil told PTI that he met Pawar at the latter's Silver Oaks residence in south Mumbai.

"Pawar urged me to join his party and contest the assembly elections. He said he would get me elected," Patil said. State BJP minister Chandrakant Patil told reporters that the former state minister will regret his decision to join the Pawar-led party.

Those realising that they will not be fielded again (by the BJP) for the assembly polls are quitting the party, he added.

"When we win the elections and he comes back to us to be readmitted in the party, our top leaders will decide whether to take him back or not," Chandrakant Patil said.

Speculations have been rife that Harshvardhan Patil, a former MLA from Indapur assembly seat in Baramati Lok Sabha constituency, would switch sides, especially after NCP leader and Deputy Chief Minister Ajit Pawar said those who won the seat last time will get to retain the seat. Patil, who has been elected as MLA four times from Indapur seat, is aspiring to contest from Indapur again.

The seat is represented by BJP's alliance partner, NCP, which is likely to field sitting MLA Dattatray Bhamare again this time.

Patil served as minister of state for agriculture and marketing in the Shiv Sena-BJP alliance government during 1995-99. He won the 1995 assembly election as an independent candidate. He was a minister during the Congress-NCP alliance government from 1999 to 2014. He joined the Congress in 2009 and was the minister for cooperation and parliamentary affairs. (PTI)

Adequate financial provision made for 'Ladki Bahin' scheme, says DyCM Ajit Pawar

PUNE, Oct 3: Maharashtra Deputy Chief Minister Ajit Pawar on Thursday said adequate monetary provision has been made for the 'Ladki Bahin Yojana', the state government's financial assistance scheme for women.

Pawar was responding to the opposition's criticism that the scheme was putting a financial strain on the state treasury.

The 'Mukhyamantri Majhi Ladki Bahin Yojana' is a flagship programme of the Eknath Shinde-led Mahayuti government, under which eligible women are given ₹ 1,500 assistance per month.

"I am the Finance Minister of the state. I can confirm that our annual revenue stands at around ₹ 42-43 lakh crore. We are adhering to the fiscal framework designed for the state by the Centre, and we have not exceeded those calculations. I have handled the finance



Deputy Chief Minister Ajit Pawar speaking at a press conference.

portfolio for over 10 years and presented several budgets during that time," he said while talking to reporters.

Salaries, pensions, repayment of the loan have to be given priority in the budget, and the remaining funds are used for development and to uplift the poor, he said.

Funds for the Ladki Bahin Yojana are allocated as per the needs of the scheme, Pawar said.

"₹ 46,000 crore have been allo-

cated annually for the scheme. By the time the scheme was announced in the budget (in July), three (fiscal) months (April, May and June) were already over. Now, for the remaining nine months, ₹ 35,000 crore are required...If for one year, ₹ 45,000 crore are required, how much funds will be required for nine months - that number is ₹ 35,000 crore," he said.

He said that when he goes out and asks women beneficiaries whether they have received the instalment of Ladki Bahin, they respond affirmatively.

"Just one or two women say they have not received the instalment amount, but also point out that their forms have been approved. They know their instalment will come for sure. We have made adequate provisions for the scheme," he said. (PTI)

BJP's Ashok Tanwar joins Cong at Rahul Gandhi's rally



CHANDIGARH, Oct 3: In a setback to the BJP, senior party leader and former MP Ashok Tanwar joined the Congress at Rahul Gandhi's rally in Mahendragarh district in Haryana on Thursday, two days before the state goes to polls.

As Gandhi was winding up his speech at the rally in Bhawaria, an announcement was made from the stage asking the audience to wait for a few minutes.

Soon after, Tanwar (48), who had joined the BJP in January this year, walked onto the stage and it was announced that "aaj unki garh wapas ho gayi ha (today, he has

returned to the Congress fold)".

Tanwar, a Dalit leader who was considered close to Gandhi and had left the Congress in 2019 following differences with former Haryana chief minister Bhupinder Singh Hooda, returned to the party hours before the campaigning for the October 5 Haryana Assembly polls came to an end at 6 pm.

Shortly before joining the Congress, the former Sirsa MP was campaigning for the BJP candidate in Safidon assembly constituency.

During the campaigning, the BJP targeted the Congress over its treatment of Tanwar, referring to his differences with Hooda and an

incident in which he sustained injuries during a scuffle allegedly between him and the former chief minister's supporters in Delhi.

Tanwar's return to the Congress is likely to come as a boost for the party, which is looking to wrest power from the BJP after a decade.

Tanwar, a former Haryana Congress president, shook hands with Gandhi and greeted Hooda, who welcomed him into the party fold and patted his back.

Senior Congress leader K C Venugopal was also present on stage.

Tanwar had joined the AAP in April 2022. He quit the AAP in January this year, expressing his displeasure over the party joining hands with the Congress for the Lok Sabha elections.

Before joining the AAP, he was with the Trinamool Congress briefly.

After joining the BJP, Tanwar had unsuccessfully contested against Congress leader Kumari Selja, a prominent Dalit face of her party, from Sirsa Lok Sabha constituency in May. The BJP had picked him over its sitting Sirsa MP Sunita Duggal. (PTI)

I have faith in judiciary, truth will always triumph: CM Siddaramaiah

MYSURU, Oct 3: Karnataka Chief Minister Siddaramaiah, facing probe into the MUDA 'scam' case, on Thursday asserted that he is conducting himself in accordance with his conscience and confident that truth would prevail as he once again rejected opposition calls for his scalp.

"Satyameva Jayate," he declared as he spoke at the inaugural ceremony of the ten-day Dasara celebrations on the premises of temple of Goddess Chamundeshwari, the presiding deity of Mysuru and its royals, atop the Chamundi Hills here.

Amid demands by the BJP and JD(S) for his resignation over the MUDA (Mysuru Urban Development Authority) 'scam', the Chief Minister emphasised that so long as he has the blessings of the people and Chamundeshwari, "no one can do anything."

Siddaramaiah received support from unexpected quarters in the MUDA case as senior JD(S) leader and MLA G T Devegowda decried calls for his resignation.

Reiterating that he has done nothing wrong, the Chief Minister said he would not have been possible for him to stay in politics for so long.

"Earlier too I had been the Chief Minister for five years, probably in Karnataka's history after Devaraj Urs, if there is any Chief Minister who has completed five years term, it is only Siddaramaiah," said Siddaramaiah, who had served as Chief Minister from 2013 to 2018.

Even now despite all obstacles and difficulties, he has the blessings of mother goddess Chamundeshwari, the Chief Minister said.

"G T Devegowda (JDS MLA) is a member in MUDA, he knows what the truth is, so despite being in another party he has tried to speak the truth. 'Satyameva Jayate', truth will always triumph. So I have said several times that until this government and Siddaramaiah have the blessings of you, the people of the state, no one can do anything," he added.

Siddaramaiah noted that he has won from Chamundeshwari Assembly segment five times out of eight elections that he fought from there, and he lost thrice, including once against Devegowda. "It was a defeat due to my own faults, I don't want to analyse it now. Because of the blessing of the people of Chamundeshwari, I have been Chief Minister twice."

"I have thrice won from Varuna and once from Badami, five times from Chamundeshwari. I have won nine elections. It has been over 40 years since I first became Minister. On August 17, 1984 I first

became Minister. Due to the blessings of goddess Chamundeshwari, I have done no wrong, had I done anything wrong, it would not have been possible for me to stay in politics for so long," he said.

Pointing out that he and Devegowda are from the same taluk and had worked together in the past, Siddaramaiah said, his statement that truth will triumph, has instilled more strength in him. "I thank G T Devegowda."

Devegowda, who is JD(S) core committee chief who shared the stage with Siddaramaiah at the Dasara event, praised the Chief Minister, as he hit out at those demanding his resignation.

"Those from the state and at the Centre, after becoming Minister (at the Centre) without understanding the responsibility and the respect they have, by sidelining his (Siddaramaiah) good works are everyday demanding his resignation," Devegowda said in a dig at JD(S) leader and Union Minister H D Kumaraswamy.

"Will Kumaraswamy who has won with over two lakh votes (in the Mandya Lok Sabha elections) resign when asked to resign? Siddaramaiah has won (and become CM) with the support of 136 MLAs. He is being asked to resign, should he resign? Show me which law asks him to resign or says put him in jail," Devegowda said.

Stating that he is speaking about

Siddaramaiah as he knows him personally, he said if one has to quit just because an FIR has been registered, "no one will be there either from Congress or BJP or JD(S)." "Has the Court or Governor asked for Siddaramaiah's resignation or put in jail?"

"Let everyone against whom FIR has been registered resign if they have courage," Devegowda challenged and said, "...courts are there, they will give verdict, which everyone will abide by. Do development first, and look at what has to be gotten from the Centre (by Kumaraswamy and BJP) and what has to be done for the state..." the JD(S) leader said.

Listing out his contribution to the state and Mysuru during his earlier stint as Chief Minister and now during the current term, including five guarantee schemes, Siddaramaiah said their beneficiaries tell him every day not to be afraid for any reason and that they are with him.

"I have faith in the courts, we are trying to conduct ourselves in accordance with our conscience. That's the reason during Gandhi Jayanti yesterday I had quoted Mahatma Gandhi's teaching that the court of conscience was above all courts. Because of my faith in courts and strong belief that I have worked according to my conscience, truth will triumph," the CM said.

The Lokayukta police on September 27 registered an FIR against Siddaramaiah, his wife Parvathi B M, brother-in-law Mallikarjuna Swamy, and Devaraju -- from whom Mallikarjuna Swamy purchased land and gifted it to Parvathi -- and others, following a Special Court order on September 25.

The ED has also registered an Enforcement Case Information Report (ECIR), equivalent to an FIR by police, against the Chief Minister over the alleged irregularities in allotment of 14 sites to his wife by the MUDA. (PTI)

AAP's its Nilokheri candidate joins Congress



CHANDIGARH, Oct 3: In a setback to AAP ahead of Saturday's Haryana Assembly polls, the party's Nilokheri (reserve) seat candidate Amar Singh joined the Congress.

After joining the party, Singh on Wednesday said only Congress can defeat the BJP government which has been "unjust to farmers, women, Dalits, and minorities".

He joined the Congress here in presence of Partap Singh Bajwa, Leader of Opposition in the Punjab Assembly, the party said in a statement.

Bajwa formally inducted Singh into the party, it added.

The Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) is part of the INDIA bloc, but is contesting the Haryana elections on its own after the talks between the Arvind Kejriwal outfit and Congress last month to forge an alliance for the state polls did not materialise.

The fresh setback to the AAP in Haryana comes days after its Faridabad candidate Pravech Mehta joined the ruling BJP on September 28.

Mehta had joined the BJP in Faridabad in the presence of Union Minister Krishan Pal Gurjar, who is the BJP MP from Faridabad, and Haryana BJP leader Vipul Goel.

Meanwhile, welcoming Singh, Bajwa said he has joined the party unconditionally and "has extended full support to Congress candidate (from Nilokheri) Dharampal Gondar".

Bajwa also mentioned that Singh is popular within the Sikh community in Nilokheri.

Singh said in Haryana is witnessing a direct fight between the Congress and the BJP. The same situation exists in Nilokheri, he added.

The former AAP leader said the main goal at this moment is to get rid of the BJP government, "which has been unjust to farmers, women, Dalits, and minorities, and only Congress can achieve this".

He added that he continued contesting the election, it would have directly benefited the BJP. To ensure that the vote is not divided, he decided to join the Congress. (PTI)

Odisha Raj Bhavan has become BJP's 'war room' ahead of Jharkhand polls: BJD

BHUBANESWAR, Oct 3: Alleging that Odisha Raj Bhavan is being used as a "war room" for the upcoming Jharkhand elections, the Opposition BJD on Thursday sought clarification from Governor Raghuraj Das on whether he was in the race for the chief minister post in the neighbouring state.

The BJD's reaction came in the wake of recent visits by Assam Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma and veteran BJP leader M. Venkaiah Naidu to Odisha Raj Bhavan to meet Das.

Additionally, Odisha CM Mohan Charan Majhi met senior BJP leaders and Das before embarking on a two-day pre-election tour to Jharkhand. While Assam's CM clarified that his visit was for personal reasons, the BJD expressed skepticism, questioning the intentions behind the gathering of BJP leaders at the Governor's residence.

Mounting a strong attack on the ruling BJP, BJD MPs Sasmitha Patra and Sulata Deo claimed that the Raj Bhavan has effectively turned into a centre for the saffron party's political activities.

They asserted that the office of the Governor and the Raj Bhavan should remain above politics, emphasising the need to maintain the sanctity and dignity of the Governor's House. Deo alleged ongoing discussions suggesting that Das might be seeking to become the next Jharkhand CM. "There are ru-

mours that the Governor will contest elections in Jharkhand; he should clarify his position regarding this speculation," they told reporters.

Speculations are doing the rounds that Das, who was Jharkhand CM between 2014 and 2019, wants to return to the politics of his home state.

BJD leaders also criticised the state's BJP government for its alleged inaction regarding an incident where the Governor's son physically assaulted a government official at Puri Raj Bhavan in July.

They questioned whether any action would be taken against the Governor's son, pointing to Majhi's silence on the matter. "It appears that the state government is shielding the accused because he is the son of the Governor," they alleged. As of now, Odisha Raj Bhavan has yet to respond to BJD leaders' allegations.

Reacting to BJD's allegations, BJP spokesperson Dilip Mallik said, "Now that the BJD is out of power after 24 years, its leaders are biting their teeth. The BJD leaders do not understand civility and social life. There is no harm if a governor meets a chief minister in Raj Bhavan." A meeting between the Governor and the Chief Minister of another state may be a matter of courtesy or personal convenience, the BJP spokesperson said in a statement. (PTI)

Diamond industry in Gujarat facing big crisis, workers jobless, says Cong; seeks Centre's assistance

AHMEDABAD, Oct 3: The Congress in Gujarat on Thursday said diamond workers in Surat are facing an "unprecedented crisis" of joblessness and recession due to the Russia-Ukraine war, and urged the Centre to take up corrective measures.

State Congress president Shaktisinh Gohil said many diamond workers have lost their jobs and some of them even ended their lives due to the crisis in the diamond industry.

"Surat's diamond industry is facing an unprecedented crisis as G7 countries banned Russian diamonds, which are imported in India for cutting and polishing and exported in the western markets as well as China, UAE and Hong Kong," he said, adding that most of the rough diamonds are mined in Russia.

Many diamond workers have lost their jobs with some of them also ending their lives. Despite the enormity of the crisis, the government at the Centre and the state have not done anything to help the diamond workers who are struggling to survive, he said.

"Why hasn't the central gov-



ernment taken up the issue with the G7 countries, including the USA, the UK and the European countries regarding their stringent sanctions on rough diamonds that are sourced in Russian mines?" he asked.

"India's External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar, who is also a member of the Rajya Sabha from Gujarat, has neither held a single meeting with the stakeholders,

nor has been taken up the issues of the diamond sector with G7 countries, USA and European Countries," he claimed.

The diamond sector is one of the top employment providers in Gujarat as around 25 lakh families are directly or indirectly dependent on this industry.

Diamond polishing factories are located in Surat, Navsari, Bhavnagar, Amreli, Botad, Rajkot, Ju-

nagadh and Ahmedabad, Gohil said.

"The crisis that the sector faces can be gauged from the official figures of India's diamond exports that have plummeted. As per the official figures, exports have dropped from USD 23 billion in 2022 to USD 16 billion in 2023 and is expected to decline to USD 12 billion in 2024. Also, the prices of polished diamonds fell between five per cent to 23 per cent in 2023," the Congress leader added.

Gohil sought to know if the central government has taken up the issue to any international forum highlighting the plight of diamond workers and their families.

Has the Gujarat government raised this issue before the Union Ministry of External Affairs and the Ministry of Commerce and Industries regarding the sanctions by the developed world have adversely impacted local industries in Surat and Gujarat, he asked.

"I urge the government to immediately take up the issue with western countries and help the diamond industry and workers of Gujarat," he said. (PTI)

ONE WAY SPECIAL TRAIN FROM DIBRUGARH TO SSS HUBBALLI JN.

It has been decided to run one way Special Train from Dibrugarh to SSS Hubballi Jn. on 05-10-2024 (Saturday) as per timings, stoppages and date as mentioned below:

(Train No. 05926 Dibrugarh - SSS Hubballi Jn. One Way Special (Trip-01))			
Stations	Arrival	Departure	Date/Days
Dibrugarh	---	13.30	
New Tinsukia	15.00	15.10	05-10-2024 (Saturday)
Mariani Jn.	19.00	19.05	
Dimapur	22.24	22.26	
Lumding Jn.	00.14	00.16	
Guwahati	03.50	04.15	06-10-2024 (Sunday)
New Bongaigaon	06.55	07.05	
New Jalpaiguri	12.35	12.45	
Bhubaneswar	07.55	08.00	07-10-2024 (Monday)
SSS Hubballi Jn.	09.00	-----	08-10-2024 (Tuesday)

Other Commercial Stoppages: Naharkatiya, Simaluguri Jn., Furkating Jn., Diphu, Hajo, Chaparmukh Jn., Jagiroad, Kamakhya, Rangija Jn., New Coochbehar, Dhupguri, Kishanganj, Malda Town, Rampur Hat, Bolpur S Niktn, Dankuni, Kharagpur Jn., Balasore, Bhadrakh, Cuttack, Khurda Road Jn., Berhampur, Palasa, Srikakulam Road, Vizianagaram Jn., Kottavalasa, Simhachalam North, Duvvada, Samalkot Jn., Rajamundry, Eluru, Vijayawada Jn., Guntur Jn., Narasaraopet, Vinukonda, Markapur Road, Giddalur, Diguvametta, Nandyal, Dhone Jn., Guntakal Jn., Ballari Jn., Toranagallu, Hosapete Jn., Koppal and Gadag Jn.

COMPOSITION: Sleeper Class (Ten), General Second Class (Two) and SLR (Two) = 14 Coaches.

General Manager (Operations)

NORTHEAST FRONTIER RAILWAY
"SERVING CUSTOMERS WITH A SMILE"

Manish Sisodia shifted to a bungalow on Rajendra Prasad Road

5, Ferozeshah Road bungalow to be Kejriwal's new address

NEW DELHI, Oct 3: Aam Aadmi Party chief Arvind Kejriwal will move into bungalow number 5 on Ferozeshah Road in Lutyens' Delhi on Friday, days after he resigned from the chief minister's post.

The bungalow, which is close to the AAP headquarters, was officially allotted to the party's Rajya Sabha MP from Punjab Ashok Mittal.

Earlier in the day, former deputy chief minister Manish Sisodia shifted to a bungalow on Rajendra Prasad Road.

The house is the official residence of AAP Rajya Sabha MP Harbhajan Singh, party leaders said.

"Kejriwal will move into 5, Ferozeshah Road residence of AAP MP from Punjab Ashok Mittal on Friday," AAP leader Saurabh Bharadwaj told reporters at a press conference.

Several party leaders, including MPs, MLAs and councillors, had offered Kejriwal their houses after he decided to leave 6,



Flagstaff Road in north Delhi's Civil Lines, where he lived since 2015 as the chief minister, Bharadwaj said.

The new accommodation of Kejriwal, where he will move in with his family, is close to the AAP headquarters at Ravi Shankar Shukla Lane.

Living in the New Delhi area, which is also his As-

sembly constituency, Kejriwal will supervise AAP's campaign for the upcoming polls in Delhi and other states, party leaders said.

Kejriwal, after being released from Tihar jail where he was lodged for more than five months in connection with the alleged excise policy scam, surprised everyone with

his decision to step down as the chief minister.

He announced his decision to resign, saying he would return to the CM's post only after having a "certificate of honesty" from the people in the Delhi Assembly elections due in February next year.

The 6, Flagstaff Road house where Kejriwal lived with his family, in-

cluding his wife, children and elderly parents, was targeted by the BJP as "Sheesh Mahal" over alleged irregularities in its reconstruction.

Party leaders said Sisodia moved with his family from the AB-17 bungalow on Mathura Road that was earlier allotted to him as deputy chief minister of Delhi.

The bungalow was allotted to the Delhi government minister and now chief minister, Atishi, after Sisodia was arrested in the excise policy case in March 2023.

Atishi currently lives in her Kalkaji constituency house even after becoming the chief minister while Sisodia and his family were living in the Mathura Road bungalow, they said.

The new address of Atishi, who was recently given the 'Z' category security cover, is yet to be decided.

he might keep the Mathura Road residence or move into the 6, Flagstaff Road bungalow, they added. (PTI)

Azhar skips ED summons in HCA case; called again on Oct 8



HYDERABAD, Oct 3: Former Indian cricket captain and Congress politician Mohammad Azharuddin on Thursday failed to depose before the ED in a money laundering case linked to alleged financial irregularities in the Hyderabad Cricket Association, official sources said Thursday.

The 61-year-old former Member of Parliament was asked to depose before the federal agency at its office here on October 3 and get his statement recorded under the Prevention of Money Laundering Act (PMLA), the sources said.

However, the former cricketer sought more time from the agency. He has been issued fresh summons for October 8, they said.

The probe is related to alleged financial irregularities in the Hyderabad Cricket Association (HCA) in which the ED had con-

ducted searches in November last year.

It had then raided the premises of former office bearers of the HCA, including former HCA vice president and Indian cricketer Shivlal Yadav, Congress MLA and ex HCA president Gaddam Vinod, former HCA secretary Arshad Ayub apart from the office of a company called S S Consultants Pvt. Ltd. and the residential premise of its managing director (MD), Satyanarayana.

Azharuddin's role during his tenure as the HCA president is under the scanner of the agency, the sources said.

There was no immediate response from the former Indian skipper, who unsuccessfully contested the assembly polls held last year. The money laundering case stems from three FIRs and charge sheets filed by the Telangana anti-

corruption bureau (ACB) for alleged criminal misappropriation of funds of the HCA to the tune of ₹ 20 crore.

The charge sheets contain allegations of serious irregularities in the procurement of DG sets, fire fighting systems and canopies for the Rajiv Gandhi Cricket Stadium constructed in Uppal, Hyderabad," the ED had earlier in a statement.

As per the police charge sheets, despite deadlines, several works were delayed inordinately leading to escalated costs and budget enhancements and corresponding losses to the HCA.

It was found that the office bearers of the HCA, including its then secretary, president and vice-president and others, in collusion with private parties, "arbitrarily" got various tenders and works allotted to preferred vendors/contractors at higher than market rates without following proper tender processes and in many cases even before the receipt of quotations, the agency had alleged.

Advance payments were made to many contractors but no work was done by them, it added.

The ED had said its raids undertaken last year led to the seizure of digital devices, "incriminating" documents and "unaccounted" cash of ₹ 10.39 lakh, it said.

Azharuddin began his political innings with a win from Uttar Pradesh's Moradabad Lok Sabha seat in 2009. He is also a working president of the Telangana Pradesh Congress Committee (TPCC). (PTI)

Isha Foundation row: SC puts on hold police probe, transfers plea from HC to itself

NEW DELHI, Oct 3: The Supreme Court on Thursday effectively halted the police probe into the alleged illegal confinement of two women at spiritual leader Jaggi Vasudev's Isha Foundation ashram at Coimbatore in Tamil Nadu.

Transferring to itself a habeas corpus petition of a man alleging that his two daughters were held captive inside the premises of the Foundation, a bench headed by Chief Justice D Y Chandrachud directed the Tamil Nadu Police to not take any further action in pursuance of the Madras High Court's direction asking it to inquire into the alleged illegal confinement of the women.

"You can't let in the Army or the police into an establishment like this," the bench observed during the hearing.

The bench, also comprising Justices JB Pardiwala and Manoj Misra, said the police shall file the status report, as directed by the high court in its September 30 order, before the top court. The apex court passed the order after the Isha Foundation approached it challenging the high court's order directing the Coimbatore Police to collect all case details registered against the Foundation and produce them before the court for further consideration.

"We welcome intervention by Hon'ble Supreme Court in the case. Since the matter is sub judice, we will not be able to comment further," Isha Foundation said in a statement.

Senior advocate Mukul Rohatgi, appearing for the Foundation, sought a stay of the high court order, and said around 150 police officials have entered the Foundation's ashram and are probing every corner. The bench, which interacted with the two women in-chambers through video-conferencing, noted they have stated that both of them are residing at the ashram voluntarily and without any coercion.

"As regards the presence of police, in pursuance to the order

of the high court, it has been stated by the two individuals that the police left the premises last night, though they were there... in pursuance of the order of the high court," the bench noted. While taking up the habeas corpus petition, the bench permitted the father of the two women to appear before it through video-conferencing if he wishes to interact with the court in person or through counsel.

"The police shall not take any further action in pursuance of the directions issued in paragraph four of the impugned order dated September 30, 2024, save and except for the submission of the status report to this court," the bench said.

"The status report, which was directed by the high court to be filed by the police, shall be submitted before this court," it said and posted the matter for further hearing on October 18. The bench noted that during the course of interaction with the two women, both the individuals have stated that they joined the ashram at the age of 24 and 27 years respectively.

It said text of the high court's order indicated that they are presently 42 and 39 years old respectively.

The bench noted the two women have stated that they are free to travel outside the ashram, which they had done from time to time and their parents have also visited there to meet them. It further noted that one of the two individuals have stated that she had also participated in a marathon held at Hyderabad.

The apex court noted it was submitted before it that a similar petition was filed by the mother of the two individual about eight years ago, in which the father had also appeared.

It noted that as per the Foundation's counsel, filing of second habeas corpus petition ought not to have been entertained on these facts, particularly having regard to the age, maturity and volition of the two women. (PTI)

5 Maoists arrested in Jharkhand's Gumla

GUMLA (JHARKHAND), Oct 3: Five Maoists, including a self-styled 'sub-zonal commander' of the proscribed CPI (Maoist), carrying a bounty of ₹ 5 lakh on his head, were arrested in Jharkhand's Gumla district, a police officer said on Thursday.



A large cache of arms and ammunition, including a carbine, three rifles, three country-made pistols and 137 live cartridges were recovered from their possession, he said.

The 'sub-zonal commander' was arrested from Anjan Hirmakhad forest in the district on Wednesday.

"Based on information provided by him, four other Maoists were arrested," said Anup Bihara, DIG of South Chhotanagpur Division, while briefing reporters.

"Several Maoist leaders have either been killed or arrested in the past three years in the district," he said. (PTI)

PM Modi to address Kautilya Economic Conclave today

NEW DELHI, Oct 3: Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Friday will address the third Kautilya Economic Conclave, which will discuss various issues including job creation, green economy, artificial intelligence and public policy design.

This year's conclave will focus on several themes, including reforming the international financial architecture, financing the green transition, geo-economic fragmentation and the implications for growth.

It would also deliberate on 'India and the middle-income trap', jobs and skilling, artificial intelligence and public policy design, and the principles for policy action to preserve resilience of the economy.

The Conclave built on the theme 'The Indian Era', would bring together close to 150 national and international academicians and policy makers to discuss most important issues confronting the Indian economy and economies of the Global South, a finance ministry statement said.

Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman will deliver the inaugural address, while External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar will deliver the closing address of the 3-day event scheduled from October 4-6. The event is being organised by the Department of Economic Affairs and the Institute of Economic Growth.

Some of the discussions in these sessions will

range from how the Indian economy can create more regular jobs; how the rules-based multilateral system must adapt to prevent geo-economic fragmentation, and how progress through multilateral consensus can be made possible.

The third edition of the Conclave would also delve on harnessing India's comparative advantage in AI, ML, and Fintech for job creation; assessing India's current growth trajectory and considering ways in which India can maintain productivity growth.

It will also discuss the reforms needed to make the financial system more resilient as well as efficient; identify long-term initiatives to achieve sustainable development goals; and discuss climate change and renewable energy.

"The conclave will showcase India's increasing role as a bridge-maker of countries in the Global South," the finance ministry said.

The speakers at the Conclave include Finance Minister of Bhutan Lyonpo Lekey Dorji, Principal Secretary to the Prime Minister P K Mishra, Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank (AIIB) Chief Economist Erik Berglof, NITI Aayog Vice Chairman Suman Beri, 16th Finance Commission Chairman Arvind Panagariya, and Harvard Kennedy School Professor of International Trade and Investment, Robert Lawrence. (PTI)

Odisha: 696 leopards found in first state-sponsored census

BHUBANESWAR, Oct 3: The first state-sponsored leopard census conducted in Odisha has revealed the presence of 696 leopards in different forest areas of the state, officials said. The census report of the Odisha Forest Department was released during an event to celebrate the State Wildlife Week here on Thursday.

Commenting on the 'All Odisha Leopard Estimation', Principal Chief Conservator of Forests (PCCF), Wildlife, Susanta Nanda said about 200 leopards were located in the Simlipal Tiger Reserve and surrounding areas, which is the highest in the state.

The Satkosia landscape turned out to be another promising site for these animals, boasting the second-highest leopard population in the state at 150, Nanda said. During the census, 70 to 80 wild leopards were found in the Hirakud, Redhakhol and Sambalpur areas in Sambalpur district, followed by 40 in the Sunabeda and Khariar forests in Nuapada district, he said.

"Forty-five percent of the leopard population in Odisha is located outside the protected area network... The territorial forest divisions have considerable leopard presence," the report said. (PTI)

Leopard terrifies Udaipur villages, kills 7 within fortnight



UDAIPUR, Oct 3: A leopard on the loose has struck fear across 20 villages near Udaipur with people confining themselves to houses and schools shutting down.

The leopard has killed seven people and wounded several within a fortnight across villages in the district's Godunda and Badgaon subdivisions.

An over 100-member team from the forest department, police, and the army has surrounded a 20-km area spanning two villages — Kelvon Ka Kheda and Rathod Ka Guda — near Udaipur City, where the last two attacks happened, Deputy Superintendent of Police Gajendra Singh said. District Forest Officer Ajay Chit-tora said that the pattern across attacks indicates they were all made by the same leopard.

Gogunda Station House Officer Shaitan Singh Nathawat said villagers have confined themselves to their homes and when they do go out, they carry sticks.

The forest department had on Tuesday issued a permission to shoot down the animal.

Search teams have been firing crackers and playing drums to disturb the big cat and drive it out for a shot.

A trap has been set near a rainwater drain in Kelvon Ki Dhani where the leopard's pugmarks were seen.

Locals say leopards never attacked humans before, but the pattern seems to have broken with repeated skirmishes.

"We are avoiding going to collect fodder for the cattle," villager Bhagwati Lal said.

The DFO said cages have been set up at all strategic locations, with teams of shooters from Udaipur, Rajasamand, Jodhpur, and Ranthambore actively searching for it.

"An expert shooter from Hyderabad is also there," he said. Schools in Rathod Ka Guda have been closed in view of children's safety.

The officer said in case people do need to go out, such as in case of an emergency, they have been advised to go in groups, carrying sticks. An advisory has also been put out on social media.

"Be more cautious where dead animals are lying. If the school is far from village, children should walk in a group. Keep children fully clothed.

"If they are naked, the leopard may mistakenly identify them and attack them in confusion," the administration instructed.

It also advised villagers to beat their sticks on the ground while walking to make sound and not to venture into the bushes or deserted places.

"If there is a toilet outside the house, do not leave its door open," it said. (PTI)

Delhi Police busts ₹ 500 crore investment fraud; Elvish Yadav, Bharti Singh among 5 summoned

NEW DELHI, Oct 3: Delhi Police has summoned YouTuber Elvish Yadav and comedian Bharti Singh and three more in an app-based scam involving a fraud of Rs 500 crore, an officer said on Thursday.

Police received over 500 complaints alleging that many social media influencers and YouTubers promoted the HIBOX mobile application on their pages and lured people into investing through the app, the officer said. The main accused in the scam, Sivaram (30), a resident of Chennai, has been arrested, police said.

As per the complaint, social media influencers and YouTubers including Saurav Joshi, Abhishek Malhan, Purav Jha, Elvish Yadav, Bharti Singh, Harsh Limbachiya, Lakshay Choudhary, Adarsh Singh, Amit, and Dilraj Singh Rawat promoted the applica-

tion and lured people into investing through the app. "HIBOX is a mobile application that was part of a well-planned scam," Deputy Commissioner of Police (IFSO Special Cell) Hemant Tiwari said.

Through this application, the accused promised guaranteed returns of one to five per cent daily, amounting to 30 to 90 per cent in a month, the DCP said. The app was launched in February 2024. Over 30,000 people invested money into the app.

During the initial five months, the investors received high returns. However, from July the app withheld the payments citing technical glitches, legal issues, GST issues, etc. "The alleged companies disappeared after closing their office in Noida in Uttar Pradesh," DCP Tiwari said.

Police said that the mastermind Sivaram

was arrested and ₹ 18 crore has been seized from his four different bank accounts.

On August 16, police received complaints from 29 victims against the HIBOX application at the Intelligence Fusion & Strategic Operations (IFSO).

The complainants alleged that they were promised high returns on their investments.

On August 20, the Special Cell registered an FIR under various sections of the Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita and relevant provisions of the Information Technology Act.

During the investigation, many complaints from the cyber Northeast district have also been registered against the HIBOX application by nine people who were cheated similarly.

These nine cases were transferred to

Gen Z's contribution crucial to achieve developed nation goal by 2047: Prez

Convocation ceremony of Mohanlal Sukhadia University in Udaipur



JAIPUR, Oct 3: President Droupadi Murmu on Thursday said the contribution of the present generation is crucial for achieving the goal of making India a developed nation by 2047.

Addressing the convocation ceremony of Mohanlal Sukhadia University in Udaipur, the President said the policy of altruism over selfishness will help blossom talent of the students.

"Baba Saheb Ambedkar be-

lieved that character is more important than education. He believed that an educated person who does not have character and humility is more dangerous than a violent creature. If his education causes harm to the poor, that person can become a curse for the society.

"I want to tell all of you that wherever you are, do not do anything which tarnishes your character. Your behaviour should have

the highest moral values, along with integrity in every aspect of your life," Murmu said.

According to the President, today, when rapid changes are taking place across sectors, including in the field of science and technology, the spirit of the students should be maintained.

"One should move forward by maintaining personal ambition and social balance. Compassion is a natural quality. Some people take the path of selfishness, but giving priority to the interests of all will sharpen your talent," she said.

"We have set the goal of becoming a developed nation by 2047. This goal can be achieved only with the contribution of your generation.

"I hope you will contribute the most and increase the pride of your family, society and the country through your conduct. This is the meaning of education," the President added. (PTI)

CORRIGENDUM - 9
AGAINST TENDER NOTICE NO.:
CON/2024/JUNE/04,
Dated : 27-06-2024

Corrigendum-9 has been issued against Tender No. CE/CON/LF/EPC/2024/05 for details please visit www.ireps.gov.in.

Chief Engineer/CON/1
Northeast Frontier Railway
(Construction Organisation)
"SERVING CUSTOMERS WITH A SMILE"

MAINTENANCE AND OPERATION OF VARIOUS WATER FILTRATION PLANT

E-Tender Notice No. LMG/Engg/149 of 2024; Dated: 29-09-2024 (GeM). E-tenders are invited by the undersigned for the following work: **SN. 1. Brief Description of Item:** Maintenance and operation of various water filtration plant, placement of PVC tank at Chandkhira Bagn, Tilbhum, Nadiapur stations, repair to existing pipe lines and supply of potable water to LC gates (6LK, 7LK, 8LK, 1KD, 2KD, 3KD, 1BK, 2BK, 3BK, 4BK, 5BK, 6BK, 8BK, 9BK, 12BK, 13BK) on every three days interval, painting of OHT under the jurisdiction of ADEN/Karimganj Jn. for 2 (two) years. **Tender Value:** ₹ 2,70,87,380/-; **Earnest Money:** ₹ 2,85,400/- E-tenders will be closed at 13.00 hrs. on 24-10-2024 and opened at 13.30 hrs. on 24-10-2024. The complete information with tender documents of above e-tender will be available upto 13.00 hrs. of 24-10-2024 in website <http://www.GeM.gov.in>.

DRM/Works, Lumding
NORTHEAST FRONTIER RAILWAY
"Serving Customers with a smile"

Samantha, Chaitanya say divorce was 'mutual' decision after T'gana min links KTR with their split

NEW DELHI, Oct 3: Former actor couple Samantha Ruth Prabhu and Naga Chaitanya hit back at Telangana minister Konda Surekha after her remarks that senior BRS leader KT Ramarao was responsible for their divorce, saying her claims are "false" and their decision to part ways was "mutual".

On her Instagram Story, Samantha wrote there was "no political conspiracy" behind her split with Chaitanya, which was announced in 2021. In his note shared on X, Chaitanya said the divorce was one of the "most painful and unfortunate" of his life's decisions, and that Surekha's claims were "ridiculous".

Samantha, known for web series "The Family Man 2" and films "Theri", and "Eega", implored Surekha to be responsible and respectful of individuals' privacy. "My divorce is a personal matter, and I request that you refrain from speculating about it. Our choice to keep things private doesn't invite misrepresentation."

"To clarify: my divorce was mutual consent and amicable, with no political conspiracy involved. Could you please keep my name out of political battles? I have always remained non-political and wish to continue doing so," she wrote on Wednesday night.

Talking to reporters here, Con-

gress leader Surekha, the minister for environment, forests and endowments, alleged that "KTR (Rama Rao) was the reason behind the divorce of Naga Chaitanya and Samantha."

KTR sent a legal notice to Surekha, demanding an apology from her.

In her post, Samantha asked Surekha to understand the "significant weight" her words carry as a minister.

"To be a woman, To come out and work, To survive in a glamorous industry where women are more often than not treated as props, To fall in love & to fall out of love, To still stand up and fight... It takes a lot of courage and strength. Konda Surekha Garu, I am proud of what this journey turned me into — please don't trivialise it," she added.

Chaitanya, in the note on X, recalled that a mutual decision was made by him and Samantha "after a lot of thought".

"It was a decision made in peace, owing to our different life goals and in the interest of moving forward with respect and dignity as two mature adults. However, there have been various baseless and completely ridiculous gossips on the matter so far," he wrote on Wednesday night.

The "Majili" actor said he has remained silent all this while out of deep respect for her former

spouse as well as his family. He recently announced engagement to actor Sobhita Dhulipala.

"Today, the claim made by Minister Konda Surekha garu is not only false, it is absolutely ridiculous and unacceptable. Women deserve to be supported and respected. Taking advantage and exploiting the personal life decisions of celebrities for the sake of media headlines is shameful," he added.

Earlier, Chaitanya's father and top Telugu actor Nagarjuna strongly condemned the minister's remarks asking her "not to use lives of movie stars who stay away from politics to criticise your opponents".

The former couple also received support from fellow Telugu film industry colleagues, including Allu Arjun, Jr NTR, Chinmayi Sripada, and Nani.

Arjun condemned Surekha's remarks, terming them "baseless" and "derogatory".

"This behaviour is deeply disrespectful and goes against the



values of our Telugu culture. Such irresponsible actions should not be accepted as normal. I urge the parties involved to act more responsibly and respect individual privacy, especially towards women. We must promote respect and dignity in society as a whole," the "Pushpa: The Rise" star said in a statement on X.

Dragging personal lives into politics is a new low, said Jr NTR.

"It's disheartening to see baseless statements thrown around carelessly, especially about the film industry. We will not sit quietly while others make

baseless allegations against us. Let's ensure our society does not normalize such reckless behavior in democratic India," the "Devara: Part 1" star said on X.

Chinmayi said it's unfortunate to watch how multiple individuals, Telugu YouTube channels and media persons have been using Samantha's name to gain mileage.

"End of the day all it proves is that they need her or her name to get the attention. Not the other way round. She will always be higher than anyone could even dream of touching with a barge pole," the singer wrote on the microblogging site.

Nani, Samantha's co-star on

films such as "Eega" and "Yeto Vellipoyindhi Manasu", said it's not okay for anyone in a respectable position to talk "utter baseless rubbish" in front of the media.

"Disgusting to see politicians thinking that they can get away talking any kind of nonsense. When your words can be so irresponsible it's stupid of us to expect that you will have any responsibility for your people. It's not just about actors or cinema. This is not abt any political party... We all should condemn such practice which will reflect poorly on our society (sic)" he said. (PTI)

AHAN SHETTY JOINS CAST OF 'BORDER 2'



MUMBAI, Oct 3: Ahan Shetty has joined the star-studded cast of war drama "Border 2", the actor announced on Thursday.

Ahan Shetty is the son of Suneil Shetty, who featured in filmmaker JP Dutta's 1997 blockbuster "Border".

The actor, who made his acting debut with 2021's "Tadap", will feature in the follow-up alongside the original movie's star Sunny Deol as well as Varun Dhawan and Diljit Dosanjh.

In an Instagram post, Shetty said "Border" is a "legacy, an emotion, and a dream come true" for him.

"Ironic how life works—my journey with 'Border' started 29 years ago, when mom visited dad on set while pregnant with me. I grew up hearing OP Dutta's legendary stories, holding JP uncle's hand, and sitting by @nidhiduttaofficial side.

"I never realized how much those moments would shape my love for cinema and the Indian Armed Forces. Now, being part of Border 2 is an absolute honour," he wrote.

The sequel, to be directed by Anurag Singh, is backed by Dutta alongside Bhushan Kumar.

"Working with @iamsunnydeol sir is a blessing, and I can't wait to share the screen with @varundvn who I look up to as an older brother. As a huge @diljitdosanjh fan, sharing the screen with him is surreal.

"And to you, Papa—everything I am is because of you, and I'll do my best to honor the legacy you've worked so hard to create," Shetty said.

Besides "Border 2", Shetty will feature in "Sanki", co-starring Pooja Hegde. (PTI)

PAYAL KAPADIA PART OF TIME100 NEXT 2024 LIST, AYUSHMANN KHURRANA PENS NOTE



NEW DELHI, Oct 3: Payal Kapadia, director of the Cannes Grand Prix award winner "All We Imagine As Light", is part of the TIME100 Next 2024 list, created by the US-based publication to recognise most influential personalities from different walks of life. In May, Kapadia's film also charted history by becoming the first movie from India to be selected in competition in 30 years at the prestigious Cannes Film Festival.

For TIME magazine, actor-singer Ayushmann Khurrana penned a note for the filmmaker, praising her talent and ability to translate the human experience for the big screen.

"Payal Kapadia is nothing short of a trailblazer. Her 2024 film, 'All We Imagine as Light', made history this year as the first from India to win Cannes' Grand Prix.

"The movie is a master class of emotions—deeply reflective, philosophical, and meditative in its approach. There is a powerful believability to how she portrays the human experience onscreen. Her authenticity and her lens on reality are part of what makes her work so rare," Khurrana wrote.

What Kapadia, also known for the acclaimed documentary "A Night of Knowing Nothing" and short film "Afternoon Clouds", achieved at Cannes is a milestone for Indian cinema, he said.

"I'm proud to be living in an era where I could witness a talent like Payal showing the world that Indian stories resonate universally, transcending geographies and languages. Her win will inspire other filmmakers and artists to follow in her footsteps and think big. India is a young country of more than 1.4 billion people. We have 1.4 billion stories to tell, and Payal has boldly, loudly, and brilliantly told everyone to pursue their dreams. It would be an honor to work with her, and to engage with her mind," wrote the actor, who was the only Indian to be chosen for the 2023 edition of the TIME100 Impact Awards. (PTI)

Working out issues with CBFC over certificate for 'Emergency' film: Zee Entertainment tells HC

MUMBAI, Oct 3: Zee Entertainment Enterprises, a co-producer of Kangana Ranaut's "Emergency" film, on Thursday told the Bombay High Court it was working out with the Censor Board issues over issuance of certificate for the movie.

The movie, which was initially slated for a September 6 release, has been embroiled in a battle with the Central Board of Film Certification (CBFC), popularly known as the censor board for non-issuance of certificate for release of the movie.

Last week, the CBFC told the high court that the movie could be released if certain cuts were made as decided by the board's revising committee.

On Thursday, senior counsel Sharan Jagtiani told a division bench of Justices B P Colabawalla and Firdosh Pooniwalla the issues are being worked out.

"I believe it is working out between the CBFC and respondent 2 (Ranaut's Manikarnika Films, co-producer)," Jagtiani said.

The bench posted the matter for hearing on Fri-

day. Earlier this week, the bench was informed by the censor board that Ranaut's production company Manikarnika had agreed to the cuts.

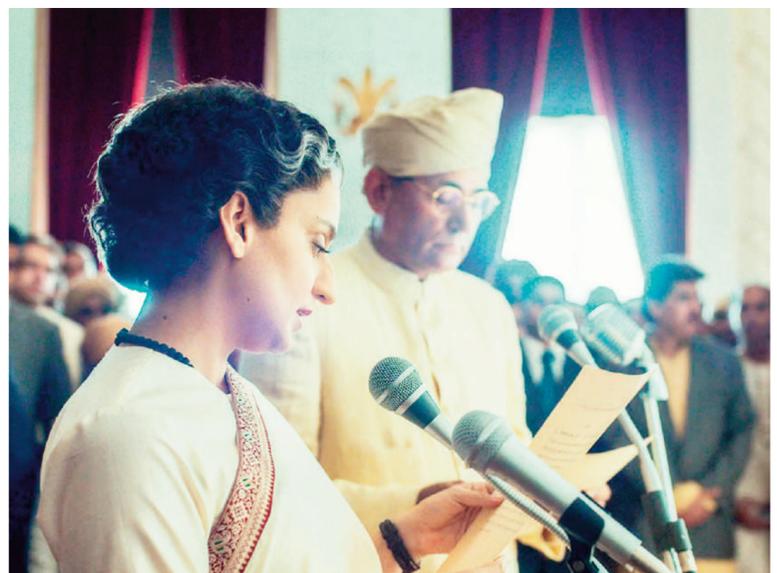
The movie's co-producer Zee Entertainment Enterprises had moved HC seeking a direction to the CBFC to issue a certificate for the film "Emergency", helmed by Kangana Ranaut.

The biographical drama is caught up in controversy after Sikh organisations, including the Shiromani Akali Dal, objected, accusing it of misrepresenting

the community and getting historical facts wrong. Zee Entertainment had in its plea claimed that the CBFC had already made the certificate for the movie but was not issuing it.

Ranaut, who has directed and co-produced the film besides playing the lead role of former prime minister late Indira Gandhi, earlier this week accused the CBFC of stalling certification to delay the release.

Zee Entertainment had also alleged that the certificate was being withheld due to political reasons and due to the upcoming elections in Haryana. The bench had then wondered as to why the ruling party (BJP) would act against Ranaut, who was herself a BJP MP. (PTI)



Women's T20 WC: India need top guns firing in unison against New Zealand

DUBAI, Oct 3: A stellar effort by senior stars would be mandatory when India take on New Zealand in their opening Group A match of the women's T20 World Cup here on Friday, aiming for a strong start in their quest to wipe off the memories of past near-misses. Skipper Harmanpreet Kaur, who in all likelihood, will be appearing in her last T20 World Cup, has been witness to several near misses and disappointing moments from close quarters, including India's capitulation to Australia in the final at Melbourne in 2020.

As has been in the past, this Indian line-up is rich in

talent and, arguably, only Australia have a similarly well-oiled unit.

But the reigning champions have six titles in their cabinet, and India's is still dust-laden.

So, what pegs India back in global events? It seems more a case of mental fragility at clutch moments, and the Women in Blue tried to address that during a preparatory camp at the NCA (National Cricket Academy) with a few counselling sessions.

But such external measures can only be of limited help in big tournaments, as it boils down entirely to flawless execution of strategies on a given day.

In that context, India will not get a better opponent than New Zealand, which is not a fancied side like its Trans-Tasman neighbour. But the two-time runners-up are as tough as nails.

A victory against them could well be counted as a sign of being in fine shape --tactically and mentally -- and that's a pre-requisite for India in a group that also has Australia, Sri Lanka and Pakistan.

To start with, India will require heavy contributions from their top guns -- the 35-year-old Harmanpreet, Smriti Mandhana, Jemimah Rodrigues, Shafali Verma and Deepti Sharma.

Among them, Shafali and Mandhana have been in excellent touch, making runs in their last international outing in the Asia Cup in Sri Lanka in July even though India lost to the hosts in the final.

In fact, Mandhana's last five T20I innings include three fifties.

But Harmanpreet and Shafali have been a tad underwhelming and the duo finding range is imperative for India's charge at the top and middle order.

It is critical to India's chances as the pitches in the UAE, going through a harsh heat wave, might not be a treasure trove of runs, particularly deep into the tournament.

However, the expected weariness of the track, in one way, will cater to India's strengths in the bowling department -- spin.

They have only three pacers in their squad -- Renuka Singh, Pooja Vastrakar and Arundhati Reddy. In all likelihood, India will only play two of them, while depending on a plethora of spinners in their line-up.

India have exceptional variety in that department. The attack will be marshalled by off-spinners Deepti and Shreyanka Patil, leg-spinner Asha Shobhana and left-arm spinner Radha Yadav.

But the Kiwis have a good blend of experienced and young players, who can lift

them above such obstacles.

Their talismanic skipper Sophie Devine, experienced all-rounder Suzie Bates along with veteran pacers Lea Tahuhu and Leigh Kasparek form the crux of this New Zealand side.

Add the exciting young all-rounder Amelia Kerr to the mix, and they have the wherewithal to spring a surprise or two in this tournament.

But beyond them, the Kiwis are a bit green behind the ears and that could be their Achilles Heel.

Teams: India: Harmanpreet Kaur (c), Smriti Mandhana, Shafali Verma, Deepti Sharma, Jemimah Rodrigues, Richa

Ghosh, Yastika Bhatia (subject to fitness), Pooja Vastrakar, Arundhati Reddy, Renuka Singh Thakur, Dayalan Hemalatha, Asha Sobhana, Radha Yadav, Shreyanka Patil (subject to fitness), Sajana Sajeevan

Travelling reserves: Uma Chetry (wk), Tanuja Kanwer, Saima Thakor.

New Zealand: Sophie Devine (c), Suzie Bates, Eden Carson, Izzy Gaze, Maddy Green, Brooke Halliday, Fran Jonas, Leigh Kasparek, Melie Kerr, Jess Kerr, Rosemary Mair, Molly Penfold, Georgia Plimmer, Hannah Rowe, Lea Tahuhu. Match starts at 7.30 pm IST. (PTI)

ISL: FC GOA AIM FIRST HOME POINTS AGAINST NEUFC

MARGAO, Oct 3: FC Goa will look to continue their winning momentum and secure their first home win of the season when they face a struggling NorthEast United FC in the Indian Super League (ISL) here on Friday.

FC Goa have struggled in their last two home fixtures, losing to Jamshedpur FC and Mumbai City FC.

But the Gaurs returned to winning ways against East Bengal last week with a narrow 3-2 victory in Kolkata, while the reigning Durand Cup champions NEUFC, who played out a 1-1 draw with Kerala Blasters FC, are still in search of their first win.

FC Goa will look forward to young players stepping up in the absence of a few seniors due to injuries and head coach Manolo Marquez urged that the team needs to adapt to situations better than the previous games.

"We have a lot of things to improve on. It's true that the other day, we played good in some moments, and we need to learn to manage the situations better," Marquez said.

"We have players with experience, who are injured. We have played a lot of young guys, especially in the form of substitutions, and they need to adapt to the



ISL."

The last time the two teams met in the ISL, the Highlanders overcame the Gaurs 2-0. If they are able to achieve the similar feat again, it will be a new record for Juan Pedro Benali's side.

NorthEast United have never been able to defeat Goa in consecutive games, setting up a fascinating narrative for this clash.

Benali is wary of the threat that Goa possess and refused to downplay the hosts despite a

shaky start to the season.

He said, "It is going to be a very difficult game. It's a very good team with great players and a very good coach -- the national team coach, in fact.

"He knows each player very

well. It won't be easy. We need to be strong, focused, not give them enough space, and we will need to play smart," said Benali.

FC Goa and NorthEast have played each other 20 times in the ISL.

The Gaurs have emerged victorious on six occasions, while the Highlanders were on the winning side on four times with 10 games ending in draws.

FC Goa goalkeeper Laxmikant Kattimani will also near a personal milestone, and is one game away from registering 100 appearances in the ISL.

He will become the sixth goalkeeper to achieve this milestone after Amrinder Singh, Gurpreet Singh Sandhu, Rehenesh TP, Vishal Kaith and Arindam Bhat-tacharja.

The match will also see a battle for supremacy between Alaed-dine Ajaraie of NEUFC and Armando Sadiku of FC Goa.

Ajaraie has attempted more shots (14) in the ISL than FC Goa's Armando Sadiku.

The latter has registered six shots from outside the box and scored once in the process.

Marquez has won five ISL games against the Highlanders. If Goa win, it would be his sixth win, levelling his record against Chennaiyin FC. (PTI)

Lionel Messi, Inter Miami win MLS Supporters Shield with 3-2 win at Crew

COLUMBUS (OHIO), Oct 3: Lionel Messi and Inter Miami have another trophy, along with home-field advantage throughout the Major League Soccer playoffs.

Messi scored twice in the final minutes of the first half, goalie Drake Callender stopped a penalty kick in the 84th minute and Inter Miami beat the defending MLS Cup champion Columbus Crew 3-2 on Wednesday, wrapping up the Supporters Shield given annually to the team with the best regular-season record.

It was Messi's 46th major trophy won for club or country, extending his record for the most by any men's soccer player in history. And it is the second he has won with Inter Miami, this Supporters Shield being added to the Leagues Cup trophy the Herons claimed shortly after Messi joined the club in 2023.

"We knew this was a group that could fight for this," Messi said.

Luis Suarez also scored for Inter Miami, which will open a best-of-three first-round playoff series in the final weekend of October. If the team wins that series, it would have the right to host every match it plays the rest of the season -- an Eastern Conference semifinal (scheduled for Nov. 23 or 24), the East final (Nov. 30 or Dec. 1) and the MLS Cup final on Dec. 7.

"We have a nice opportunity to go down in history ... and now we think about what is coming," Messi told Apple TV after the match. "We have a great advantage in that we play all the games at home, which was what we were looking for. I think that we are very, very strong at home."

Also still within reach for Inter Miami: the best MLS regular-season mark ever. Wednesday's win pushed Inter Miami's record to 20-4-8 this season, giving it 68 points. If the club wins its final two matches -- Saturday at Toronto and Oct. 19 at home against New England -- it would finish with 74 points.

Khushi seals dramatic bronze, takes India's tally to 15 at ISSF Jr Worlds

LIMA (PERU), Oct 3: Khushi secured a hard-fought bronze in the women's 50m rifle 3 positions at the ISSF Junior World Championship here, dramatically qualifying for the final before rallying to claim the third spot.

Her medal on Wednesday took India's tally to 15, including 10 gold, one silver, and four bronze medals, keeping the country at the top of the standings.

The youngster shot 447.3 in the final to finish behind Caroline Lund of Norway who won silver with 458.3. Caroline's compatriot Synnove Berg won gold with 458.4.

However, Khushi's path to the podium was far from easy. She narrowly made it to the medal round, rallying brilliantly in the final standing position in qualifying to clinch the seventh spot with a score of 585.

It got so tight that there were four others on the same score. However, Khushi and Italian Anna Schiavon clinched the final two qualifying spots, scoring 29 inner-10 shots, while two

New England has the single-season points record, finishing with 73 in 2021.

Messi opened the scoring in the 45th minute, taking a long pass from Jordi Alba -- his long-time teammate at Barcelona, the club with which Messi won 35 of his trophies -- and splitting two defenders before somehow getting the ball past Columbus goalkeeper Patrick Schulte for a 1-0 lead.

And about five minutes into first-half stoppage time, Messi struck again on a free kick from about 30 yards out. Schulte seemed fooled, and Messi squeezed the ball between the goalie and the near post for a 2-0 lead.

"Dominant," Inter Miami coach Gerardo "Tata" Martino said.

Diego Rossi scored in the first minute of the second half for Columbus to cut the lead in half, but it didn't take long for Inter Miami to restore the two-goal cushion.

Almost immediately after play resumed, Schulte was upended by one of his own defenders and Suarez sent a header into an empty net for a 3-1 edge.

Juan "Cucho" Hernández's penalty kick in the 61st minute got Columbus within 3-2. But once again, the momentum didn't last for long. Rudy Camacho was sent off for his second yellow card in the 63rd minute, meaning the Crew had to play with 10 men the rest of the way.

Didn't matter. Columbus still created some big chances down the stretch.

A deflected ball in the 76th minute got across the box and onto the right foot of Mohamed Farsi -- but his shot was blocked by Callender, who was perfectly positioned to protect the lead.

Then came more drama, when Inter Miami was called for its second handball inside the box -- an automatic penalty kick -- of the second half. Hernández picked the left side of the net, but Callender made the save look almost easy. (AP)

Mbappe can't rescue Real Madrid in Champions League loss to Lille

MADRID, Oct 3: Kylian Mbappe came off the bench but couldn't prevent defending champion Real Madrid from losing 1-0 at underhanded Lille in the revamped Champions League.

With Mbappe a substitute after a minor hamstring injury, the opening goal came from Canada striker Jonathan David's penalty deep into first-half stoppage time. A video review ruled that midfielder Eduardo Camavinga handled the ball.

David scored a hat trick last weekend and shot confidently past goalkeeper Andriy Lunin, who was replacing the injured Thibaut Courtois. Mbappe came on in the 57th. It was Madrid's first loss in the competition since a 4-0 hammering by Manchester City in the 2023 semifinal return

leg. Real Madrid coach Carlo Ancelotti did not excuse his players.

"We made a lot of errors. In the first half, we had a lot of issues in the transitions," he said. "We weren't aggressive enough. We weren't able to create chances, we weren't great in possession. We were slow, we lacked ideas. We have forwards that need to play vertically, and, if we can't supply that, it's difficult. ... It was the same the last time we lost a match."

Madrid hadn't lost in 36 official matches, since a 4-2 defeat in extra time to Atletico Madrid in the Copa del Rey in January.

A brighter note saw Brazil teenager Endrick becoming the youngest Champions

League starter for Madrid at 18 years, 73 days old. He surpassed the mark set by former Madrid great Raúl González, who was 18 years, 78 days old when he faced Ajax in 1995.

Liverpool coach Arne Slot got his first taste of a European night at Anfield and saw his team beat Bologna 2-0, thanks to goals from midfielder Alexis Mac Allister and prolific forward Mohamed Salah, who set up the first goal.

Salah teased the defense with an 11th-minute cross for Mac Allister to score from close range and curled in a rising shot in the 75th as Liverpool carried over the confidence from easing past AC Milan 3-1 at San Siro two weeks ago.

Bologna, playing in the competition for

the first time in 60 years, is still looking for a goal after drawing 0-0 with Shakhtar Donetsk in the first round.

Substitute Jhon Duran scored a late winner to give Aston Villa another 1-0 win over Bayern Munich.

When the sides met in the 1982 European Cup final, Villa won 1-0 in a big upset. Prince William was born that year, and he was cheering in the Villa Park crowd when Duran pounced late on.

Coach Unai Emery sent the 20-year-old Duran on in the 70th and the Colombia forward -- who has made a habit of scoring goals from the bench -- did it again with a brilliant left-footed effort from around 25 meters to beat Bayern goalkeeper Manuel Neuer. (AP)

Donnarumma's high-ball blunders may cost PSG if French league is close

PARIS, Oct 3: Paris Saint-Germain goalkeeper Gianluigi Donnarumma's weakness under the high ball is increasingly obvious.

Although PSG coach Luis Enrique has not made an issue of it, Donnarumma's errors may prove costly to them if the French league title race is closer this season.

PSG tops the table on goal difference from Monaco ahead of Sunday's trip to face Nice, which scored eight goals in its previous home game.

Donnarumma's blunders were exposed in Tuesday's 2-0 loss at Arsenal in the Champions League. Although Enrique did not blame him for the goals, the mistakes were evident and worryingly similar to the ones last season in Europe's elite competition.

Arsenal's first goal saw a hesitant Donnarumma beaten as Kai Havertz -- hardly the most renowned at headers in world soccer -- anticipated a cross from Leandro Trossard and nodded the ball in.

Italy's No. 1 goalie was beaten

again when Bukayo Saka's low free kick from the right went straight under him.

He was not entirely at fault, since his view of the ball may have been obscured, but there seemed to be no talking between Donnarumma and his defenders. It all looked very familiar.

Last season in the Champions League quarter-final first leg against Barcelona, Donnarumma failed to come for a corner and central defender Andreas Christensen headed in the winner.

Despite his imposing stature -- Donnarumma is 1.96 meters tall -- he stood rooted to his line and seemed unsure how to judge the ball's flight.

Earlier in that match, Donnarumma struggled with Lamine Yamal's cross and Raphinha put Barcelona ahead.

Donnarumma's hesitancy repeated itself in the semifinal return leg against Borussia Dortmund when central defender Mats Hummels rose unchallenged to head in Julian Brandt's corner



from the left -- a carbon copy of Christensen's goal.

Donnarumma also made blunders trying to pass the ball out from defence in some Ligue 1 games last season.

On Tuesday night, a few minutes after Arsenal's second goal, television cameras showed him muttering to himself and throwing

up a hand in exasperation.

For all of his shot-stopping and excellent reflexes on the goal line, the 25-year-old Donnarumma does not appear as strong overall as his PSG predecessor Keylor Navas, who was a more commanding presence in the penalty area.

Despite having just had an out-

Weight management is athlete's responsibility: Mary Kom

MUMBAI, Oct 3: No stranger to the physical toll of weight management during a competition, six-time world champion boxer M C Mary Kom Thursday waded into the debate surrounding wrestler Vinesh Phogat's Olympic heartbreak for being 100gm over, saying that to be within the prescribed limit is an individual responsibility.

The 42-year-old mother of four, who was India's first woman boxer to win an Olympic medal (a bronze in London, 2012), was in the city to promote Utkarsh Small Finance Bank, which named her as its brand ambassador.

Speaking for the first time on Phogat, who was disqualified on the day of her 50kg finals in the Paris Games for being marginally over the prescribed limit, Mary Kom said weight management is an athlete's responsibility.

"I felt so disappointed in the sense that I have also done the same (weight management) for the last so many years. Weight is important, that is my responsibility. I cannot blame anyone," she said.

"I do not want to say this in her case. I am saying this in my case only. If I do not cut the weight properly then how will I play? I am there to win a medal and that is what I think," she continued.

Mary Kom, in the past, has spoken about her weight cut routines and how difficult the process can be. The Manipuri started out as a pin-weight (46kg) category boxer before settling for the flyweight (51kg) division in her amateur career.

Phogat, who was being seen as gold medal contender in Paris, skipped meals and fluids, worked out an entire night and also cut her hair to be within the requisite category but the effort fell short eventually.



She challenged her disqualification, calling the rules inhumane, but her appeal was rejected by the Court of Arbitration for Sport. The wrestler retired to join politics after the heartbreak and is contesting the Haryana assembly elections on a Congress ticket.

Mary Kom was also quizzed about India's boxing campaign in Paris and she was still perplexed by how poor the performance was. She said she wants to have a meeting

with the national federation and sports minister Mansukh Mandaviya to understand "what is lacking" and clear her "doubts".

The Indian boxing contingent, which included two reigning world champions in Nikhat Zareen and Lovlina Borgohain, cut a sorry figure in the Games and failed to win even one medal.

"We know what the result was, it was so, so bad. I want to know what is lacking," said the Manipuri, who became the first Indian

woman boxer with an Olympic medal when she bronze in the 2012 London Games.

One of the most successful athletes in the history of Indian sports, Mary Kom felt the boxers got all the logistical support they needed but she does have some "doubts" regarding how their training was managed by the Boxing Federation of India.

"I will meet the boxers too if the situation demands. If the sports minister has the knowledge (about the issues) I want to discuss that also," she said.

Refusing to share her exact concerns, Mary Kom said she would rather discuss them in the meeting with Mandaviya and BFI brass.

"The federation has provided all the coaches. But I have a few doubts as well. But what is the point in saying them now, the Olympics are done. Now there is no point in saying all that, but I want to discuss it with them in the meeting," said the former Rajya Sabha MP.

"(The) sports minister is doing whatever he can do from his side, infrastructure, facilities or whatever (other) needs are there. But how did the federation handle the training? Was it done systematically or not? What happened exactly, I do not know," she wondered.

"If I do not meet them and not discuss, how will I know about them?"

Mary reiterated that she wants to participate in professional boxing

"I have not retired yet but I want to compete. I am trying to get opportunities, waiting for my chance to fight pro. I just want to come back."

"I can continue for another three-four years, that is my will. I have the passion and hunger. I want to continue," she added. (PTI)

Gary Kirsten's critical observations after T20 World Cup led Babar Azam to shun limited overs captaincy



KARACHI, Oct 3: Premier batter Babar Azam had lost his interest in captaining the national white ball teams after a critical report submitted by the limited overs head coach Gary Kirsten to the Pakistan Cricket Board. In discussions with insiders in the cricket board and those close to the Pakistan team, it was apparent that Babar had lost his mojo after the T20 World Cup in July in which the team fared poorly under his captaincy.

"Babar was not happy with the observations and recommendations of Kirsten and even assistant coach, Azhar Mahmood and felt he was solely being blamed for the disappointing performances," one insider said.

"He had indicated to the national white ball teams after a critical report submitted by the limited overs head coach Gary Kirsten to the Pakistan Cricket Board. In discussions with insiders in the cricket board and those close to the Pakistan team, it was apparent that Babar had lost his mojo after the T20 World Cup in July in which the team fared poorly under his captaincy."

"Babar was not happy with the observations and recommendations of Kirsten and even assistant coach, Azhar Mahmood and felt he was solely being blamed for the disappointing performances," one insider said.

"He had indicated to the cricket board after some parts of Kirsten's report became public that he was not interested in remaining captain." The insider said Babar had complained to some board officials, who had worked a lot with him that it was unfortunate the PCB didn't take his past performances and results into their consideration nor showed the required confidence and trust in him.

Another insider said that the final nail in the coffin was when the PCB didn't announce him as captain of the ODI squad while confirming him to lead the national T20 side before the World Cup. Kirsten, in his report to the board, discussed the dressing room environment and also the behaviour and non-cooperation of some players in England and the T20 Cup World Cup.

He also conveyed his opinion on whether Babar was equipped to handle the pressures of captaincy and his more significant role for the team as a specialist batter after the mental stress and criticism he had gone through since last year.

According to one source, the PCB is in no hurry to announce, who will replace Babar as white-ball captain as internally they have told Kirsten, selector Asad Shafiq and some members of the selection committee to take a decision and make a recommendation after much thought and debate.

"Chairman, Mohsin Naqvi has made it clear he wants minutes of all official discussions by the selection committee that includes both foreign head coaches to be recorded so that a clear reason is on record for making the appointment," he added. (PTI)

National Motorcycle Racing Championship set for grand climax

CHENNAI, Oct 3: The Indian National Motorcycle Racing Championship culminates this weekend with the fifth and final round here, as 100 entrants representing 19 sides will battle it out across 19 races.

The three-day event that gets underway on Friday will see races across five categories - Pro-Stock 301-400cc Open, Pro-Stock 165cc Open, Novice (Stock 165cc), Girls (Stock 165cc) and Stock 301-400cc Novice, while a maximum of 52 points will be offered.

The same will be the case in the Honda India Talent Cup and the TVS India One-Make Championship, attracting some hand-picked talented riders. The 2024 season witnessed a standard start in June. It will be long remembered for the emergence of a new generation of talented and fearless riders. Pune's Sarthak Chavan, who turns 18 at the end of this month, has attracted much attention, along with 17-year-old Chiranth Vishwanath from Bengaluru. (PTI)

Swimmer Bhargabi wins three gold medals in int'l sports competition



HT Correspondent
JORHAT, Oct 3: Jorhat girl Bhargabi Hazarika won three gold medals in an International Sports Competition recently held in Malaysia and Singapore.

Bhargabi excelled in her individual events, securing gold in the 100 and 200 meters (butterfly) and the 100 meters (breaststroke) in the 22 to 29-year age category. The competition took place from September 22 to 30, featuring participants from Sri Lanka, Pakistan, Afghanistan, Dubai, Malaysia, and several other countries. Bhargabi is the daughter of Gukul Hazarika and Bharoti Hazarika of Jorhat Malow Ali.

South Africa crush Ireland by 139 runs in ODI opener

ABU DHABI, Oct 3: Mark Adair took four more wickets for Ireland but it wasn't enough this time as South Africa won the opening cricket match of their ODI series by 139 runs.

South Africa scored 271-9 thanks to opener Ryan Rickelton's 91 runs in 102 balls — with three sixes and seven fours — and 79 from Tristan Stubbs after winning the toss and choosing to bat in the first of three one-day internationals.

Rickelton and Stubbs put on a 152-run partnership for the fourth wicket as they helped the Proteas recover from an early innings collapse.

Lizaad Williams then tore through Ireland's top-order, taking three wickets in an eight-over opening spell as they Irish slumped to be five down inside the first 15-overs.

Williams ended with 4-32, his best ODI figures from his five matches played, with Lungi Ngidi and Bjorn Fortuin taking a further two wickets apiece as Ireland was bowled out for 132 in 31.5 overs in



reply. George Dockrell top-scored for the Irish with 21 off 32 balls.

Earlier, Adair claimed 4-50 off 10 overs. That followed the seamer's standout performance on Sunday when Ireland achieved its

first-ever Twenty20 cricket victory against South Africa in the second match of the T20 series, which ended 1-1. Adair took 4-31 in four overs in that match. Like the T20 games, the ODI series is taking place in Abu Dhabi. (AP)

ICC launches AI tool to shield players from 'toxic content' in Women's T20 WC

SHARJAH, Oct 3: The International Cricket Council (ICC) has introduced a social media moderation tool at the Women's T20 World Cup to "protect the cricket community from toxic content" and create a safer and inclusive online environment for players and fans.

The tournament gets underway in Sharjah on Thursday with the final slated in Dubai on October 20.

This AI-powered tool, in collaboration with GoBubble, monitors toxic content like hate speech and harassment across official and player social media channels, aiming to protect mental health and foster a positive atmosphere.

ICC head of digital, Finn Bradshaw said: "We are dedicated to fostering a positive and inclusive environment for all participants and fans of the ICC Women's T20 World Cup, it's been great to see so many of the players and teams embrace our new initiative." (PTI)

West Indies award 9 cricketers historic multi-year contracts across men's, women's teams



ST JOHN'S (ANTIGUA), Oct 3: In a historic first, nine West Indies cricketers, including ODI vice-captain Alzarri Joseph, pace sensation Shamar Joseph, women's T20I skipper Hayley Matthews and her deputy She-maine Campbell, were awarded multi-year contracts for the next two years, the CWI announced.

The Cricket West Indies offered contracts to 15 men's cricketers and with six among them received multi-year deals based on their performances during the 2023-2024 evaluation period.

Of the 15 senior women's players, three were awarded multi-year contracts.

The announcement comes amid growing participation of the West Indies cricketers in lucrative franchise leagues across the globe, which has long undermined the stability of the national teams.

The talent drain to global T20 leagues has considerably weakened West Indies' international squads, prompting the CWI to offer multi-year contracts as a strategy to provide financial secu-

rity and retain players longer for national duty.

The development follows a four-year Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) signed in January 2024 between CWI and the West Indies Players Association (WIPA).

"CWI has committed to maintaining open and honest dialogue with players and being practical about the realities of the modern game," CWI director of cricket Miles Bascombe has stated.

"The players have responded in kind and the acceptance of multi-year contracts is an indication of clarity, confidence, and commitment on both sides.

"I'd like to congratulate the entire contracted cohort on their performances in the last assessment period and I look forward to them building on those in next one."

The WI men's contracted pool of international players is relatively stable, with only two changes in the 15-member group.

Kavem Hodge, who made his Test debut this year against Australia, received his first-ever international contract, along with Roston Chase.

Hodge played a pivotal role in Windies' first Test win in Australia in 28 years in Brisbane and then followed that up with a maiden Test century against England at Trent Bridge.

He was also the leading run-scorer in the series for the Caribbeans.

Chase averaged 60.25 with the bat for the year in T20Is at a strike rate of 141.76 in eight innings where he notched 241 runs. (PTI)

Spinner Tabraiz Shamsi opts out of CSA contract

JOHANNESBURG, Oct 3: Left-arm wrist spinner Tabraiz Shamsi on Thursday opted out of Cricket South Africa's central contract pool to more actively pursue opportunities in T20 leagues across the globe.

However, Shamsi will still be available to play for the Proteas in major bilateral or ICC tournaments in white ball formats.

"I have decided to opt out of my central contract in order to be more flexible during the domestic season,

allowing me to explore all opportunities available and look after my family in the best way possible," Shamsi said in a statement issued by the CSA.

Shamsi also reiterated his commitment to South African cricket, and hoped to be part of a World Cup-winning squad in future.

"This will not impact my ability or motivation to play for the Proteas in any way and I will always be available to play for my country whenever I am needed." (PTI)

Biggest challenges for India in women's T20 WC will be Australia, SL: Harbhajan

NEW DELHI, Oct 3: India's World Cup-winning spinner Harbhajan Singh said the Harmanpreet Kaur-led side will face a tough challenge from Australia and Sri Lanka in the ICC Women's T20 World Cup.

The global showpiece gets underway in the UAE from Thursday, and India are placed in Group A alongside Australia, Sri Lanka, Pakistan and New Zealand.

"I think India needs to be very careful when playing against Australia. Looking at this group, India has Australia, New Zealand, Pakistan, and Sri Lanka. But one match that I think will be a little tough is the India-Australia match," Harbhajan told Star Sports.

"Australia is a good team, even though these matches are being played in Dubai, on subcontinent pitches that might not suit them as much as their home conditions. But Australia, no matter where they play, are hard to beat. So, the biggest challenge for India may be Australia," he said.

Harbhajan's fears were not entirely misplaced as the Australia have beaten India 23 times in 32 T20Is with the 'Women in Blue' winning seven of them.

However, the 44-year-old warned India of another potential hazard on its way - Sri Lanka.

The Islanders had recently trumped India



in the Asia Cup final with Chamari Athapaththu and Harshitha Samarawickrama producing match-winning efforts.

"Sri Lanka, too, after their recent series

win against India, will be confident when they play against India. So, that will also be a good contest."

But Harbhajan had little doubts that India have the skill sets to land their maiden ICC title.

"Team India will be the team to beat in this tournament. They have both experience and youth. Harman (captain Harmanpreet Kaur) is in good form, Smriti (Mandhana) is in good form, and Deepti (Sharma) is an unbelievable spinner.

"They are a very capable team and have been playing very good cricket. The unit looks solid. If India plays good cricket overall, I believe they will win this tournament," he noted.

The off-spinner, who has 711 international wickets, also advised the Indians to take it one match at a time, without succumbing to the big-moment pressure.

"You have to try to give your best and not take pressure. At this stage, the only thing that matters is to know yourself, and play as a unit. Results will follow.

"Don't think about the big picture; just take small steps with each match and focus on the process. I hope if they follow these things, our team will perform very well," he added.

India open their campaign against new Zealand on Friday. (PTI)