Israeli strikes kill at least 15 in

At SCO meet in Pak, EAM Jaishankar says terrorism

Omar Abdullah sworn in as J&K CM, Cong stays away from govt for now

'Buoyed' BJP aims to win all 7 bypoll seats in Rajasthan



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HTBRIEFS Heroin seized

GUWAHATI: The Nagaon Police have successfully conducted two operations leading to the recovery of a total of 25 small plastic containers filled with suspected heroin, the police officials informed on Wednesday. As per reports, the operations, carried out by different police teams, resulted in the arrest of three individuals for further legal action. In the first operation, a team from Raha Police Station, led by Sub-Inspector Raju Deb, recovered seven plastic containers containing a net weight of 2 grams of suspected heroin. Subsequently, one person was apprehended during this operation,

and investigations are ongoing. Official held

GUWAHATI: In a significant anti-corruption operation, the Assam Department of Anti-Corruption and Vigilance arrested Partha Hazarika, Office Superintendent of the Excise Department, the department officials informed on Wednesday. The operation took place near the main gate of Janata Bhawan, Dispur, where Hazarika was caught red-handed accepting a bribe of ₹ 24,500 from a complainant in exchange for issuing a bar license. Taking to the microblogging site X, the Anti-corruption and Vigilance department

@DIR VAC ASSAM trapped red handed Partha Hazarika, Office Superintendent, Excise Deptt near the main gate of Janata Bhawan, Dispur after he accepted bribe of ₹ 24,500/- from the complainant for issuing bar licence."

Small businesses **GUWAHATI:** Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma highlighted the state's strides in empowering small businesses, particularly through the Prime Minister's Employment Generation Programme (PMEGP), a press release said on Wednesday. The chief minister also informed that the initiative has significantly boosted the Khadi industry and small-scale enterprises, creating employment opportunities and fostering entrepreneurial growth

among SC/ST communities.

DIPHU, KARBI ANGLONG, THURSDAY, OCTOBER 17, 2024

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PRICE ₹ 8

Canadian Trade Minister assures businesses to support commercial ties with

WASHINGTON, Oct 16: Amidst an unprecedented diplomatic row between India and Canada, the Canadian trade minister has assured the country's business community that they are committed to supporting the well-established commercial ties between the two

Mary Ng, minister of export promotion, international trade and economic development, made these remarks on Tuesday as tensions between India and Canada escalated after Canadian Prime Minister Justin Trudeau on Monday accused the Indian government

of supporting criminal activities targeting Canadian citizens.

India on Monday expelled six Canadian diplomats and withdrew its high commissioner and five other diplomats from Ottawa. Canada, however, said the Indian diplomats were expelled.

Ng also said that "the Government of Canada remains open to a dialogue with India and we look forward to continuing our valued relationship.

"I want to reassure our business community that our government remains fully committed to supporting the well-established com-



mercial ties between Canada and India," Mary Ng, the minister of export promotion, international

trade and economic development. said in a statement.

by its businesses. We will work closely with all Canadian enterprises engaged with India to ensure these important economic connections remain strong," she said.

ice will continue to assist and pro-

vide resources to Canadian compa-

nies operating in India," she said as

India in an unprecedented step not

only recalled its high commis-

sioner from Ottawa but also ex-

pelled six of the Canadian

diplomats from New Delhi. "Let

me be clear: Canada stands firmly

"However, we must consider our economic interests with the need to

rule of law. We will not tolerate any foreign government threatening, extorting, or harming Canadian citizens on our soil. We urge the government of India to respect the same principles of law and justice that guide our actions," Ng said. "The Government of Canada remains open to a dialogue with India and we look forward to continuing our valued relationship," said the minister.

According to the India Brand Equity Foundation, Canada and India achieved a bilateral trade relationship that reached USD 8.27 protect Canadians and uphold the billion in (CONTD. ON PAGE-2)

NE on radar of nation's development: Dhankhar

If there is heaven it is in India, if there is heavenly spirit, it is in Meghalaya, remarks VP

SHILLONG, Oct 16: The Vice-President Jagdeep Dhankhar has said that "North-East is on the radar of nation's development." He emphasized that the North-East is a significant contributor to unity, economic progress and cultural essence of the nation.

Addressing a function in Shillong on Wednesday, he said the Northeast is a significant contributor to the economic progress and cultural essence of the country.

Acknowledging the North-East as a very important part of our country, Dhankhar lauded the Look East and Act East Policy which have resulted in exponential growth in communication, connectivity and development of airports in the region.

Expressing concern over ignorance and ill-informed narratives, the Vice-President questioned if freefall of information that has no factual foundation be allowed on public platforms. He further asked



if we could afford to be loose cannons, ignoring our basic commitment to our nation. He upheld that Bharat is on the rise and it is indivisible and stressed on the youth being informed.

Dhankhar further exhorted the youth by calling them the most vital contributors and significant stakeholders in India's march to being a developed nation by 2047. Addressing the gathering at the

foundation stone laying ceremony of Meghalaya Skill and Innovation Hub At Shillong today, the Vice-President highlighted that skill is neither discovered nor innovated, it is in fact the optimal exploitation of talent of a person in that specified field which gives the human resource a qualitative cutting-edge. He underscored that skilling is no

longer a quality, it is our need. The vice-president also highlighted the formation of a dedicated Ministry of Skill Development and Entrepreneurship and allocation of 60,000 crores towards internship of 5 lakh young individuals over a period of five years, adding that villages and semiurban towns must be hub of skill

On his experience in Meghalaya, the vice-president said, "If there is heaven it is in India, if there is heavenly spirit, it is in Meghalaya." He asserted that the engine of Meghalaya's economy could be driven by tourism alone. He further added that nature has bountifully gifted Meghalaya and urged them to exploit it fully by having very talented skilled people in the shape of human resource.

C.H. Vijayashankar, Governor of Meghalaya, Conrad K Sangma, chief minister of Meghalaya, Dr Mazel Ampareen Lyngdoh, Meghalaya minister for Health & Family Welfare Department etc, Rakkam (CONTD. ON PAGE-2)

ASDC demands justice for Charchim-Prisek massacre victims' families

HT Bureau

DIPHU, Oct 16: The Autonomous State Demand Committee (ASDC) has called on the state government to provide justice to the families of the victims of the infamous Charchim-Prisek massacre, which occurred on Oc-

tober 17, 2005, in West Karbi Anglong. During a press

conference at the ASDC central committee office, ASDC president Chandra Terang Kanta that 20 noted years have

passed since the tragic incident in which 41 individuals were killed by militants. Despite this passage of time, the families of the victims are still awaiting justice. "It is important to mention that

during the ethnic clashes in Karbi Anglong on October 17, 2005, suspected Dimasa militants allegedly killed 41 people," Terang said.

He explained that on that fateful morning, a Karbi Anglong Autonomous Council (KAAC) transport bus carrying passengers from Jirikending was ambushed by militants at Charchim-Prisek village, resulting in the horrific slaughter.

> "We will not identify the victims by tribe, whether Karbi or Dimasa. What we want to emphasize is that 20 years after the incident, the vicfamilies tims' have yet to receive justice,"

Terang added. He also pointed out that although the state government announced the formation of a commission for a judicial inquiry into the incident, no such commission has been established to date. The anniversary of the massacre will be observed as the 19th National Mourning Day on October

finest forces of the country: Himanta officers for 'inaction' in Rupahihat violence



HT Bureau

GUWAHATI, Oct 16: Assam Police is emerging as one of the finest forces of the country and it is providing mentorship to the police forces of other states as well, said chief minister Himanta Biswa Sarma on

Taking to X, Sarma wrote, "Assam Police is emerging as one of the finest forces of the country and is now mentoring police forces of other States." The police academy in Assam has given training to at least 2,700 security personnel of other states, he said.

"In a first, Dergaon's Lachit Barphukan Police Academy is training 2700 police personnel from other

states, the most recent one being from Goa Police. As I have often said, we want to build a Assam that will be in a position to provide leadership in governance to other States. From Policing to Women Centric DBT, we are trying to set a path which can be used by others in our collective endeavour to build a Viksit Bharat,' CM Sarma further said.

Earlier, Sarma claimed that the state police force was strengthened and the case pendency has reduced at least four-fold times in the last three years.

According to him, in 2021, 95,994 cases were pending in Assam and the figure has drastically dropped down to 18,286 cases in 2024.

The burden of cases for each investigating officer has also lowered. In 2021, there were 52 cases per investigating officer in the police department which has come down to just 7.39 cases in June 2024.

The chief minister had praised the drastic reduction in average cases handled by every officer.

"Due to our modernisation efforts, the average number of cases, an Investigating Officer of @assampolice look after has significantly come down, reducing their burden and improving quality of investigation", Sarma

"This has resulted in a drastic reduction in case pendency, benefiting a large section of society," he added.

Assam Police emerging as one of the In letter to EC, Cong seeks transfer of police

GUWAHATI, Oct 16: The opposition Congress in Assam on Wednesday wrote to the Election Commission, seeking the transfer of some police officers in Nagaon district, including the SP, alleging that they did not take action against BJP workers who were behind the violence in Rupahihat.

A delegation of Congress leaders, comprising its state working president Jakir Hussain Sikdar and senior leader Ripun Bora, met chief electoral officer (CEO) Anurag Goel and submitted a memorandum in this re-

The Congress alleged that BJP workers attacked its supporters and the convoy of its MLAs on Tuesday in Rupahihat when they had taken out a procession to campaign for the bypoll to the Samaguri assembly seat.

Following the incident, a delegation of MLAs met the Nagaon SP and requested him to take prompt action. Several complaints were filed in Rupahi and Khatowal police stations but no action has been taken so far," it

The Congress also claimed that SP Swapneel Deka and OCs Sanjib Kumar Roy and Biku Barman of Rupahi and Khatowal police stations, respectively, were hobnobbing" with BJP leaders.

"They are indulging in activities which are detrimental to free and fair elections in the state," the letter said.



The Congress urged the EC to immediately transfer the police officers to ensure free and fair elections in Samaguri where polling is scheduled on November 13.

Sikdar later told reporters that they will also submit a memorandum to DGP GP Singh over the matter. People from both the Congress and the BJP were in-

jured in the clash that happened in Rupahihat. The BJP had alleged that Dhubri MP ?Rakibul Hus-

sain had brought "goons" from elsewhere who went on a rampage, tearing its posters and banners, besides at-

'Kaziranga now ranks second in butterfly species diversity among India's protected areas'

KNP records 446 butterfly species

GUWAHATI, Oct 16: More than 446 butterfly species have been recorded in Assam's Kaziranga National Park (KNP), famed for the one-horned rhinoceros, making it a habitat with the second highest concentration in the country after the Namdapha National Park in Arunachal Pradesh, a park official

The long-term observation and records are a culmination of years of work put in by a scientist from Kaziranga, Dr Monsoon Jyoti Gogoi.

The survey was conducted in different parts of the Kaziranga-Karbi Anglong landscape, especially in the Panbari Reserve Forest, which is home to a diverse range of butterfly species.

A new pictorial guidebook on butterflies, authored by Gogoi, documents 446 species of butter-



flies recorded in Kaziranga, 18 of which are new in the country.

The new records include Burmese Threering, Glassy Cerulean, Dark-bordered Hedge Blue, Andaman Yellow Banded Flat, Ferrar's Cerulean, Great Redvein Lancer, Peacock Oakblue, Singled-lined Flash, Yellow-tailed Awlking, White Palm Bob, Darkdusted Palm Dart, Clavate Banded Demon, Pale-marked Ace, Yellow Onyx, Long-winged Hedge Blue, Ace sp, Hill Ace and Dwarf Gogoi, who has been studying

butterflies in the region since 2007, said that Kaziranga now ranks second in butterfly species diversity among India's protected areas, after Namdapha National Park.

This record is particularly significant given Kaziranga's location is outside the Himalayan and Patkai mountain ranges, he added. There is a need to raise aware-

ness about the importance of butterfly conservation in Kaziranga by highlighting the rich diversity of species in the region, along with further research, monitoring, and habitat protection initiatives.

Meanwhile, the chief minister's office (CMO) congratulated Gogoi on X. "Dr Monsoon Jyoti Gogoi, a young lepidopterist from Kaziranga, has documented over 446 butterfly (CONTD. ON PAGE-2)

Delhi polls: Kejriwal urges people to re-elect him as CM

NEW DELHI, Oct 16: AAP national convenor Arvind Kejriwal on Wednesday launched the party's "Jan Sampark" campaign ahead of the Delhi Assembly elections and urged the people to re-elect him as the chief minister.

Kejriwal said if he becomes the chief minister, he would ensure that no work of the people of Delhi gets stalled. He also alleged that the BJP, during his five months imprisonment, tried to impede various schemes of the AAP government.

"I am confident that the people will form an AAP government again to continue all the work and facilities in Delhi. With the support of your vote, I will once again be the chief minister to do all your work likes before," Kejriwal said at the campaign launch event. Kejriwal resigned as Delhi chief minister on September 17, days after getting bail in a corruption case. He said that he would return as the chief minister

only after getting a "certificate of honesty" from the people in the Assembly polls due early next year. As part of the "Jan Sampark"

campaign that will continue till October 29, Aam Aadmi Party workers will reach out to Delhiites with a letter from Kejriwal telling people the "truth" behind his arrest and that of other party leaders in corruption cases. "The people of Delhi have many questions regarding my arrest, and to address those questions, I have written a letter. Our party workers will go door to door with this letter till October 29 so that the people can get answers to their questions," he said.

In the letter, Kejriwal alleged that he, along with other party leaders, was arrested by the BJP to disrupt AAP's work in Delhi

"They arrested me and kept me in jail for five months. They did it to stop the facilities I am providing to the people (CONTD. ON PAGE-2)

Govt to celebrate from Nov 3

18 in *(CONTD. ON PAGE-2)*

HT Bureau GUWAHATI, Oct 16: The Assam government will hold 'Bhasa Gauray Saptah' to express gratitude to everyone who has helped in enriching the Assamese language, which has been recently recog-

nised as a classical language. This was informed by the chief minister Himanta Biswa Sarma on Wednesday after he held discussions with senior government officials regarding the week-long celebration for Assamese receiving the classical language status recently by the central government.

"I chaired an important meeting to chalk out details of 'Bhasha Gaurav Saptaah'. From Nov 3-9, Assam will celebrate the Classical Language Status conferred on Assamese and recollect the indelible contribution of languages in uniting society," Sarma wrote on micro-blogging site X.

He further informed that all colleges, schools and public offices will join this program that will commence by expressing collective gratitude to Prime Minister Narendra Modi and litterateurs, who have contributed to the growth and preservation of the Assamese language.

The chief minister asserted that many facts about the 2000 year-old Assamese language will be unfurled during the celebration.

"Assamese is over 2000 years old, facts such as these need to be reinforced during Bhasha Gaurav Saptah. Along with other online and offline activities in schools, colleges and public offices, we will also release a booklet explaining the importance of Classical Language," he mentioned. Sarma earlier sought cooperation from all sections of the people of the state to make the celebration of the 'Bhasa Gourav Saptah' a grand

success. As per an official statement, Sarma asked the DCs to collect the letter of gratitude to the prime minister signed by different organisations and individuals across the state to be forwarded to the PMO either through post or through

Assam Bhawan.

THE HILLS TIMES

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Sensex drops 318 pts, Nifty settles below 25,000 as IT, auto shares retreat

clined by 318 points while Nifty slipped below 25,000 level on Wednesday due to selling in IT and auto shares amid unabated foreign fund outflows and weak trends in global markets.

Falling for the second day, the BSE Sensex declined by 318.76 points or 0.39 per cent to settle at 81,501.36. During the day, it slumped 461.86 points or 0.56 per cent to 81,358.26.

The NSE Nifty declined by 86.05 points or 0.34 per cent to close at 24,971.30.

From the 30 Sensex firms, Mahindra & Mahindra, Infosys, Kotak Mahindra Bank, JSW Steel, Adani Ports, Tata Motors, Adani Ports, ITC and Titan were the major laggards.

HDFC Bank, Bharti Airtel, Reliance Industries, Asian Paints and State Bank of India were the gainers.

"The market traded range bound with a negative bias due to the fear of a downgrade in FY25 earnings, which could impact the sustainability of premium valuation," Vinod Nair, Head of Research, Geojit Financial Services

The participants are expecting only a slow pace in earnings expansion in the second quarter due to insipid demand and volatility in input prices, Nair said addng that the rate of recovery in Q2 compared to Q1 is below expectation.



'Nifty recorded a two-day losing streak on Wednesday tracking sell-off across the globe with Nifty closing below 25,000. Markets were mostly lower in Asia and Europe on Wednesday after US stocks pulled back from their records, dented by selling of technology and energy sector shares," said Deepak Jasani, Head of Retail Research, HDFC Securities.

The BSE midcap gauge dipped 0.10 per cent while smallcap index climbed 0.31 per cent. Among the indices, IT tanked 1.17 per cent, auto (0.97 per cent), consumer discretionary (0.69 per cent), teck (0.76 per cent) and services

Telecommunication jumped 0.91 per cent, realty climbed 0.64 per cent, energy (0.25 per cent), oil & gas (0.20 per cent) and commodities (0.10 per cent).

"Markets were range-bound with a negative bias as investors mostly resorted to selective profit-taking, particularly in banking, IT and auto stocks. While weak global market cues also contributed to the overall weakness, persistent offloading of domestic shares by foreign investors this month have made local traders jittery and are mostly adopting a cautious ap-Prashanth Tapse, Senior VP

(Research), Mehta Equities Ltd, said. Foreign Institutional Investors (FIIs) offloaded equities worth ₹ 1,748.71 crore on

Tuesday, according to exchange data. In Asian markets, Seoul, Tokyo and Hong Kong settled lower, while Shanghai closed higher. European markets were trading in the negative territory. The US markets ended lower on Tuesday.

Global oil benchmark Brent crude climbed 0.08 per cent to USD 74.32 a barrel.

On Tuesday, the BSE benchmark Sensex declined 152.93 points or 0.19 per cent to settle at 81,820.12. The Nifty settled lower by 70.60 points or 0.28 per cent to 25,057.35. (PTI)

Govt hikes wheat MSP by ₹ 150/quintal at ₹ 2,425 ahead of state polls

NEW DELHI, Oct 16: The government on Wednesday increased the Minimum Support Price (MSP) for wheat by ₹ 150 to ₹ 2,425 per quintal for the 2025-26 marketing season, a move that comes ahead of key state elections.

The Cabinet Committee on Economic Affairs (CCEA), chaired by Prime Minister Narendra Modi, approved price hikes for six rabi crops, with increases ranging from ₹ 130 to ₹ 300 per quintal for the 2025-26 marketing season beginning April 2025.

"Like for Kharif crops, there is a significant increase in the MSP for rabi crops," Information and Broadcasting Minister Ashwini Vaishnaw said in a media briefing after the cabinet meeting.

He highlighted that the new wheat MSP is 105 per cent higher than the cost of production, calling it "a

The government also raised the MSP for rapeseed and mustard seed by ₹300 to ₹5,950 per quintal, aiming to boost domestic oilseed production and reduce edible oil imports.

The support price for safflower increased by $\ref{140}$ to ₹ 5,940 per quintal for 2025-26 from ₹ 5,800 per quintal in the previous season.

In the case of pulses, the support price for lentil (masur) increased by $\stackrel{?}{\underset{?}{?}}$ 275 to $\stackrel{?}{\underset{?}{?}}$ 6,700 per quintal, while that for gram MSP raised by ₹ 210 to ₹ 5,650 per quintal for 2025-26.

The support price for barley increased by ₹ 130 to



₹ 1,980 per quintal for 2025-26 from ₹ 1,850 per quintal in the previous season.

The announcement comes as states like Maharashtra, Jharkhand, and Delhi prepare for elections.

However, Vaishnaw dismissed any connection between the MSP hikes and the upcoming polls, stating that such announcements typically occur around this time. The minister asserted that farmers have a "good feeling" towards the government, citing transformative changes in their lives.

The MSP increases align with the 2018-19 Union Budget commitment to set support prices at least 1.5 times the all-India weighted average cost of production. The government expects these hikes to ensure remunerative prices for farmers and encourage crop diversification. (PTI)

Kia India signs Airtel Business as its connectivity partner

HT Bureau GUWAHATI, Oct 16: One of the fastest-growing premium carmakers Kia India, has partnered with Airtel Business, the B2B arm of Bharti Airtel ("Airtel") for its Kia Connect 2.0 platform, on Wednes-

day, as per an official statement. The statement stated that this 2.0 platform focuses on five pillars that is vehicle management, AI voice command, convenience, remote control, safety and security and navigation.

"Airtel's robust nationwide communications network will power all connected car variants of Kia with reliable and secure realtime connectivity, enabling uninterrupted transfer of critical data," it added. Commenting on this, Hardeep Singh Brar, Sr VP and head of sales and marketing, Kia India, said, "As part of our 2.0 transition, we are introducing the OTA (Over-the-Air) Kia Connect Diagnostics, unlocking the possibilities of Software-Defined Vehicles where IoT technology becomes fundamental to our offerings."

"We are excited to partner with Airtel Business whose futureready solutions will seamlessly integrate with our vehicles, ensuring robust data security and privacy. With Airtel's extensive network, we will further enhance the customer experience that Kia is renowned for and deliver global technologies tailored for the Indian consumer. This collaboration will empower Kia vehicle owners with advanced analytics and real-time insights, providing essential metrics," he added. "We at Airtel Business are at the forefront of empowering brands across sectors with a secure and dedicated network designed for IoT for the safe transmission of all customer data across connected devices," said airtel business CEO Sharat Sinha.

He further added that we are thrilled to power the journey of Kia's connected cars with our future-ready technology solution that offers efficient and effective capabilities. We are committed to playing a significant role in India's digital growth with our cuttingedge integrated IoT Hub that offers customised solutions for the unique IoT requirements of enterprises across 5G, 4G, NB-IoT, 2G

Consultation process to consider all inputs, take calibrated view: TRAI Chief

NEW DELHI, Oct 16: As battlelines are being drawn over the modalities of allocating satcom spectrum, TRAI Chairman Anil Kumar Lahoti on Wednesday said consultation process is currently on and that the telecom regulator will consider all inputs put before taking a considered view.

The regulator's comments came as Starlink CEO Elon Musk and Indian tycoons are locked in a standoff over satellite spectrum.

Jio recently sought a revision of a consultation paper on recommending norms for "terms and conditions for the assignment of spectrum for certain satellite based commercial Communications services".

"We have received reference from the Telecom Department and we have initiated consultation process in response to reference that has been received from DoT and it covers issue that have been referred to TRAI by the DoT... the consultation process is on, we will consider all inputs and views that are received during consultation process and we will come out with our considered recommendations," TRAI Chairman Anil Kumar Lahoti told reporters on the sidelines of IMC. Asked about the demand by Reliance Jio that the TRAI consultation paper be revised to ensure a level playing field between terrestrial and satellite players, TRAI chairman said, "different stakeholders raise different demands on the consultation process, and we consider all these viewpoints and inputs and take a considered view

World's richest man Elon Musk has taken on Indian billionaires Mukesh Ambani and Sunil Bharti Mittal over the allocation of spectrum used in wireless communication using satellites, calling their demand for the auction of such airwayes "unprecedented".

While Ambani's Reliance Jio has been vocal about the need to allocate such spectrum through an auction to give a level-playing field to legacy operators who buy airwaves and set up infrastructure like telecom towers, Mittal on Tuesday articulated the need for satellite companies harboring any urban ambitions to ctrum as telecom compar

Musk-led Starlink is demanding administrative allooks to tap into the world's fastest-growing mobile how can you price it individually". (PTI)



telephony and internet market. This has found some backing in Telecom Minister Jvotiraditva Scindia. who said on Tuesday that such airwaves will be given out through administrative allocation and not auc-

Scindia said the Telecom Act of 2023 passed in December has put the matter in 'Schedule 1', which means that for satcom spectrum will be allocated administratively.

. Spectrum does not come without a cost. What that cost is and what the formula of that cost is going to be, will not be decided by you or me... it will be decided by Trai... and there is a paper that has already been circulated by Trai, and we have a regulatory authority for telecom, and that regulatory authority has been empowered by the constitution to decide what that administrative pricing is going to be," he had said.

The minister had said that he is very confident that Trai will come up with the best pricing that should be adopted, provided that it is being given in an administrative manner.

"Satellite spectrum across the world is allocated administratively. So, India is not doing anything different from the rest of the world. Conversely, if you do decide to auction it then you would be doing something, which is different from the rest of the world,' minister said

Pointing out that satellite spectrum is shared airlotment of licences in line with the global trend, as it waves, Scindia said, "If the spectrum is shared then

Adani Green defers **USD 1.2 bn bond sale**

NEW DELHI, Oct 16: Billionaire Gautam Adani's conglomerate deferred a USD 1.2 billion bond offering to post US elections due to weak market conditions, sources

Units of Adani Green Energy Ltd, the conglomerate's clean-energy business, were to offer a 20year green note on Tuesday but deferred it at the last minute.

Sources in know said Adani Green launched the IG-rated Hybrid RG notes, but after careful consideration decided to defer it to post US elections, to achieve a much tighter pricing and overall outcome.

Some uncertain developments in connection with US elections have led to the deferment of the dollar bond issuance, they said.

Adani Green felt it would not be the best outcome from overall pricing standpoint, as compared to other options available immediately i.e onshore bonds, bank financing. Proceeds from the proposed bond will be used to repay foreign-currency loans.

The launch had got a positive response but the company decided to defer to better market conditions to achieve tighter pricing. (PTI)

Rupee rises 4 paise to settle at 84 against US dollar

MUMBAI, Oct 16: The rupee witnessed a range-bound trade and strengthened marginally by 4 paise to 84 (provisional) against the US dollar on

Wednesday as easing crude oil prices supported investor sentiments. Forex traders said the rupee traded in a narrow range as a strong dollar and a muted tone in the domestic equities weighed on the local unit, while weak crude oil prices and any likely intervention by the Reserve Bank of

India (RBI) supported the local currency at lower levels. At the interbank foreign exchange market, the local unit opened at 84.03 and traded in a narrow range of 83.98 and 84.07 and finally settled for the day at 84.00 (provisional), higher by 4 paisa over its previous close of 84.04 against the dollar.

"The local currency pair was weighed down by significant foreign fund outflows this month amid strength of the American currency in the overseas market which surged to a two-month high of 103.25.

"Overall Foreign Institutional Investors offloading USD 8 billion in October also weighed on sentiments for rupee in the current month," said Maneesh Sharma, AVP - Commodities & Currencies, Anand Rathi Shares and Stock Brokers.

Analysts said investors are awaiting the US retail sales and jobless claims reports, due on Thursday, for cues on the future path of US policy rates which could provide crucial direction to dollar, while likely intervention by the Reserve Bank of India (RBI) could also support the local currency pair at lower levels.

Meanwhile, the dollar index, which gauges the greenback's strength against a basket of six currencies, was marginally down by 0.01 per cent to 103.25 points.

Brent crude, the international benchmark, eased 0.31 per cent to USD 74.02 per barrel in futures trade amid easing concerns about supply disruptions due to the Middle East conflict. In the domestic equity market, the 30-share BSE Sensex declined 318.76 points, or 0.39 per cent, to close at 81,501.36 points, while the Nifty was down 86.05 points, or 0.34 per cent, to 24,971.30 points. (PTI)

Contd. from Page 1..

Canadian Trade Minister assures

fiscal year 20203 and USD 5.3 billion during April-November 2023. In 2022, India was Canada's ninthlargest merchandise trading partner in the Indo-Pacific region, the 13th-largest merchandise trading partner globally and the 14th-largest destination for merchandise exports. Major exported items from India to Canada include pharmaceutical products (USD 274.05 million); followed

by nuclear reactors, boilers, and parts (USD 195.46 million), electrical machinery (USD 160.68 million), and articles of iron and steel (USD 156.03 million), during April-November 2023. Major imports from Canada during April-November 2023 include petroleum products (USD 608.17 million); followed by edible vegetables (USD 420.60 million) fertilizers (USD 337.63 million), pearls, precious metals, and stones (US\$ 200.80 million), pulp and wastepaper (USD 192.79 million), and electrical machinery and equipment (USD 114.84 mil-

As of September 2023, Canada was ranked as the 17th largest foreign investor in India, having made cumulative investments amounting to USD 3.6 billion since April 2000. Canadian investments constitute approximately 0.56% of the total foreign direct investment (FDI) inflow into India.

More than 600 Canadian companies and organizations have established a presence in India. The bilateral commercial relationships between the two countries stand at USD 100 billion, which includes USD 70 billion of Canadian portfolio investment into India. In 2020, Canadian direct investment in India amounted to USD 2 billion. Canadian portfolio investment in India is estimated to have grown more than 50 per cent over the past five years, reaching about USD 27 billion. (PTI)

NE on radar of nation's

A Sangma, Meghalaya education minister, A L Hek, Meghalaya minister for Animal Husbandry and Veterinary, Donald Phillips Wahlang, chief secretary to the Govt. of Meghalaya and other dignitaries were also

ASDC demands justice for

Karbi Anglong. Addressing allegations that he called for the scrapping of Article 244(A) of the Indian Constitution, which provides for the creation of an Autonomous State, Terang clarified, "I have heard claims that I advocated for scrapping Article 244(A). What I actually said is that the state and central governments should take the initiative to implement Article 244(A) by passing it in Parliament. Once implemented, it could then be reconsidered for potential scrapping, but not before."

KNP records 446 butterfly

species, the second-highest in the country after Namdapha. HCM Dr.@himantabiswa extends his best wishes to Dr Gogoi for his remarkable contributions, which include 18 new records for India, such as the Burmese Threering, Glassy Cerulean, Dark-bordered Hedge Blue, and Andaman Yellow Banded Flat, further enriching India's biodiversity research," the CMO post said. (PTI)

Delhi polls: Kejriwal urges

of Delhi," Kejriwal said at the event. The letter accused the BJP-led central government of putting him behind bars to slow down the AAP's expansion in the country in the wake of its victory in Punjab Assembly polls. "They want to stop the work I am doing in Delhi because the people of 22 BJP-ruled states are questioning why such progress is not happening in their states," Kejriwal said.

The AAP supremo claimed that other leaders of the party went to jail because of the contribution they had made to Delhi's development.

"We all went to jail for you. If I did not work for the people of Delhi, the BJP people would not have sent me to jail. If Manish Sisodia did not build good schools to educate children, he would not have to go to jail," Kejriwal said. "If Sayendra Jain had not maintained mohalla clinics and improved government hospitals in Delhi, he would not have gone to jail," he added.

The letter also alleged that if the BJP comes to power in Delhi, then all the work and the free facilities like electricity and water will be stopped.

AAP leaders, including Manish Sisodia, Delhi chief minister Atishi, ministers Gopal Rai, Saurabh Bharadwaj,

Kailash Gahlot, and Imran Hussain, and other party MLAs, were also present at the campaign launch. Meanwhile, BJP leader Vijender Gupta dismissed the AAP allegations and said, Kejriwal was spreading fear among the people of Delhi to win the assembly polls.

"Kejriwal cheated the people of Delhi... He knows its election time and the people will hold him accountable for his deeds and the AAP government is going to be ousted. Kejriwal has once again started scaring the people of Delhi," Gupta, the Leader of the Opposition in the Delhi Assembly, said.

Gupta said the AAP leaders talking about the BJP withdrawing the free electricity and water schemes after coming to power only proves that the ruling party has accepted defeat. "In their speeches, they are saying that the BJP government will take away everything that was for free. This fear shows that they have already realised their defeat,"

The BJP leader said the people of Delhi are wise and will not fall for the "tricks" of the AAP. He said the party will be wiped out in Delhi. (PTI)

PM Modi inaugurates 8th edition of IMC

HT Bureau GUWAHATI, Oct 16: Prime Minister Narendra Modi has inaugurated the 8th Edition of Indian Mobile Congress (IMC) 2024, the largest telecom, media and technology forum in Asia, jointly organized by the Department of Telecommunications (DoT) and the Cellular Operators Association of India (COAI), at Bharat Mandapam.

As per an official statement, Modi took a walkthrough of the exhibition area before officially inaugurating the event and where he listed four pillars of Digital India - Low-priced devices, extensive reach of digital connectivity to every nook and corner of the country, easily accessible data and goal of 'Digital First'.

"Further demonstrating this year's theme of "The Future is Now", the first day of IMC and WTSA 2024 saw global leaders, visionaries, innovators and exhibitors showcased innovative technologies, ideas and use cases across key industries and sectors," the statement said.

Notably, India Mobile Congress 2024 is currently taking place from 15th -18th October, 2024 at Pragati Maidan in New Delhi.

The inaugural day witnessed showcases, keynotes and session discussions by industry leaders on telecom and digital infrastructure,

quantum technology and circular economy, along with a spotlight on 6G and 5G use-case, cloud & edge computing, IoT, semiconductors, cybersecurity, green tech, satcom and electronics manufacturing.

The day also featured important sessions and panels which included: Shaping the Future of Telecom: AI, 5G, and the Power of Multi-layer Convergence, Xciting Networks, Unleashing Potential, Orchestrating Future Connectivity with Open APIs, The Future Engineered: Women Driving the Digital Paradigm, Gadgets that shape the future: Insights and innovations, among oth-

Maharashtra's pre-budget welfare schemes not to dent state finances: Icra

MUMBAI, Oct 16: The spate of welfare schemes and guarantees announced by the Eknath Shindeled Maharashtra government is unlikely to dent the state's financial position, a domestic rating agency said. Icra Ratings' chief economist Aditi Navar also expects that there will not be a "runaway increase" in spending even though the "rhetoric may be very high"

She explained that Maharashtra fares well on the state debt front. and the leverage levels are among the lowest in the country.

Concerns have been raised in the recent past over schemes like the ₹ 46,000-crore Ladki Bahin Yojana of providing cash handouts to women or the decision to discontinue tolls for cars while entering or exiting the financial capital.

The rating agency's assistant vice president Neetika Shridhar said Maharashtra has a sizeable amount of fiscal space because it has not been doing a lot of welfare spending in the last few years, which can limit the sacrifices that it may have to make to accommodate the financial pressure coming



from new schemes "I don't think so because of this recent announcement there will be any major hit to the state, at least in FY25," she added.

Nayar explained that a government has to make a balancing act when it takes any decisions, which may put pressure on the finances, and may opt either to roll back revenue spending or defer capital expenditure to a later time, just to balance the books.

Additionally, there is also a possibility that the announcements done by the state do not necessarily go through from an implemen-

tation perspective. States used to resort to off-budget borrowings in the past, but that is not possible any more because of the change in norms from the

Centre, she added. The nature of guarantees given by state governments has evolved over the last two decades, starting penditure items for works like irrigation projects in the 1990s to the power sector in the 2000s but have widened across lately. Meanwhile, an analysis of 13

with commitments for capital ex-

major states contributing over 82 per cent of India's GDP by the agency said their capital expenditure is set to rise by 13 per cent to ₹ 6.5 lakh crore in FY25, which will be lower than the budgeted projections of ₹ 7.2 lakh crore.

This is largely due to a dull start to the fiscal year with a 13.5 per cent contraction in the first four months of the fiscal, and also revenue collections of states undershooting expectations, the agency said. The rating agency said it foresees a modest slippage in the combined revenue and fiscal deficits of the 13 states in FY25 to ₹ 2.2 lakh crore and ₹ 8.8 lakh crore, respectively, from ₹ 1.9 lakh crore and ₹ 8.5 lakh crore in the budget esti-

The debt levels will rise marginally to 30 per cent of GSDP from 29.2 per cent in FY25, it added. (PTI)

Lakshmi Puja celebrated

with festive fervour

Two arrested, third suspect absconds

Police foil ULFA(I) plot to kidnap **ONGC officers in Sivasagar**

THURSDAY, OCTOBER 17, 2024

SIVASAGAR, Oct 16: With inputs from the Intelligence Agencies. Sivasagar police busted a horrible ULFA(I) plan to kidnap top ONGC officers from a rig near Bokota Nemuguri and arrested two persons, Irshad Latiff and a surrendered ULFA cadre, Rahul Hazarika alias Laden, in the wee hours on Wednesday. The third person involved in the kidnapping plan, Tahir Hussain, evaded arrest as he left his residence with family before the police party reached his home in Babupatty on Tuesday.

Addressing a press conference on Wednesday in his office, SP Sivasagar Subhrajyoti Bora told media persons that the three individuals—Tahir Hussain of Babupatty, Irshad Latiff (Mithu) of the same area, and Rahul Hazarika alias Laden from Moran—worked in tandem for about two months and meticulously planned how and when the kidnapping could be executed. He stated that the police received secret information on October 5 that two cars had been moving suspiciously on NH37 with individuals of doubtful activity and later learned about the secret plan to kidnap two or three ONGC higher officials from a rig site in Bokota Nemuguri on October 6 during the changeover of the

HT Correspondent

NAGAON, Oct 16: State minis-

ter Pijush Hazarika criticised Rak-

ibul Hussain while addressing an election rally held in the Samaguri

Padumani area, stating that he is

an arrogant and revengeful leader

who has threatened the people of

his constituency through televi-

Referring to the unpleasant in-

cident at the Congress rally on

Tuesday, Hazarika said that Rak-

ibul Hussain's statement, "stone

for stone", proves him to be a

failed leader. He further accused



tioned that the planning started in May and that, as planned, Rahul Hazarika spent the night of October 5 with Tahir and Irshad in Tahir's house. Since Tahir was working on the same rig, he informed the ULFA(I) that the time of the changeover would be most propitious for abducting the ONGC officers. Accordingly, on October 6, early in the morning at around 4:00 am, the three set out in an Innova car to Charaideo near the Nagaland border to meet four ULFA(I) cadres who were supposed to kidnap the ONGC offi-

All seven individuals moved about Sivasagar town for the entire day, waiting for evening to set in.

Pijush Hazarika slams Rakibul

Hussain as an arrogant leader

Addressing the first election

campaign rally for the upcoming

by-election in the 88th Samaguri

assembly constituency, Hazarika

stated that Rakibul Hussain prac-

tises family-centric politics and

has harmed his own son by pro-

jecting him as the Congress can-

Hazarika also criticised Hus-

sain for not developing the south-

ern part of his constituency and

instead creating a hub for anti-so-

cial elements in the northern part

didate in Samaguri.

from outside to cover up his own accused Hussain of being a "rhi-

tensified checks at all key points in and around the town, the party could not reach the rig site on time. Finally, when the gang arrived, the officers were safely home after the changeover. Police did not divulge the names of two more individuals

who were involved in the crime. SP Bora clarified that a separate case has been registered (No 11/2024) in Bokota Nemuguri PS in connection with the injury of the SULFA man, Rahul Hazarika, and it is being investigated by an independent IO from the office of the IGP Eastern Range.

Earlier, a police team led by Abdul Mannan, IO, Simaluguri PS, and Kalpajyoti Sharma, OC, Sivasagar PS, in the presence of an

noceros killer" during his tenure

as Forest minister and stated that

he had fled to Dhubri, unable to

develop his constituency. Haz-

arika urged the people to give a

befitting reply to Rakibul Hussain

by voting for the BJP candidate,

Prominent leaders of the BJP

alliance parties like Jayanta Deka,

Manik Ĝohain, Khagen Gohain,

and Diplu Ranjan Sarma, who

pledged to develop the con-

stituency and address long-stand-

ing issues, also attended the rally

Diplu Ranjan Sarma.

here on Wednesday.

Hussain, an assistant engineer at ONGC (Drilling), for five hours on Tuesday in connection with a case registered in Simaluguri PS (Case No 24/2024). It is alleged that Tahir Hussain had been providing key information to the banned outfit, and several incriminating documents, laptops, toy rifles, three cars, and one numberless sophisticated bike were seized from his residence bearing the numbers AS 04 R 2888, AS 04 Y 2012, and AS 06 U 3474. The police have informed ONGC about the development and urged the ONGC authorities to take necessary action against their own officer.

REGION

Tahirul's close friend and accomplice, Irshad Latif (Mithu), was arrested from his residence in the same area. Farukh Ahmed, a mobile phone trader from Dhabbapatty, was also picked up by the police for interrogation.

ULFA(I) attempted the same to kidnap three ONGC engineers from a rig in Lakwa (Rumania Rig I) in 2021. After long negotiations with the government and appeals from the public, ULFA(I) released the three from their captivity in the Kachin area. It is due to the district police's strict vigilance over the situation that a horrible kidnapping incident could be averted in

Pangolin scales seized

HT Correspondent

JORHAT, Oct 16: A person with five kilograms of dry pangolin scales was apprehended by Forest Department personnel with support from the Wildlife Crime Control Bureau from a location along the historic Dhodar Ali in Mariani under the Titabar co-district of Jorhat district on Tuesday.

According to a source, legal action under the relevant sections of the Wildlife Protection Act was initiated against Sagar Nayak (46), an employee in the health section of a tea garden in Mariani. Information regarding illegal wildlife trade was reportedly found on Nayak's mobile phone. The source stated that the scales were likely to be from over

HT Correspondent

KOKRAJHAR, Oct 16: The celebration of Lakshmi Puja was held on Wednesday at various locations across the Bodoland Territorial Region (BTR) with festive fervour.

In Kokrajhar, the Lakshmi Puja and fair celebration began on Wednesday at various places, including Simbargaon, Banargaon, Sukhanjhora, Rabhapara, etc., with festive fervour.

In Chirang, the 133rd Bijni Lakshmi Puja and fair began at the Lakshmi Mandir, Bijni, along the Raja Bijit Narayan Samanyay playground. The Lakshmi Puja and fair will continue for 12 days, which will witness various programs like cultural events, Kusha dance, and showcases of theatre, etc.

Notably, the Bijni Lakshmi Puja has been regarded as a historic annual event among the citizens of the region. The Bijni Lakshmi Puja celebration started in 1891 under the then Bijni King Bijit Narayan and has been celebrated every year since, earning a remarkable name in the state of Assam.

"The Lakshmi Mandir has been opened for the devotees this evening. The Bijni Lakshmi Puja and Fair are historic as citizens of this area have the opportunity to worship Lakshmi Devi during the Lakshmi Puja celebration," said a member of the puja

The Kajalgaon Lakshmi Puja and fair also began on Wednesday at the Kajalgaon Lakshmi Mandir complex. A large number of devotees and visitors thronged the inaugural day on Wednesday evening.

In Baksa, the Lakshmi Puja was organised at different places in the district, witnessing a large number of devotees and followers at the Lakshmi Mandir.

Pramod Boro, the chief executive member of Bodoland Territorial Region, and state cabinet minister Urkhao Gwra Brahma extended their greetings on the auspicious occasion of Lakshmi Puja.

CEM Boro wished a happy Lakshmi Puja to all citizens of the region, saying that may Goddess Lakshmi Devi bless all citizens with peace, prosperity, and hap-

"On the sacred occasion of Lakshmi Puja, may Goddess Lakshmi bless us with peace, prosperity, and happiness. May your home be filled with light, joy, and success. Wishing every family a blessed and joyous Lakshmi Puja," Boro added.

Our Dibrugarh correspondent adds: On Wednesday, the markets in Dibrugarh were bustling with people participating in the Lakshmi Puja celebrations. From early morning, crowds gathered to purchase flowers, fruits, and idols of Goddess Lakshmi.

While most residents observed Lakshmi Puja on Wednesday, some plan to continue the celebrations on

"Due to skyrocketing prices of vegetables and other essential commodities, we are facing problems. We are observing the Lakshmi puja this time on a small budget," said Ranjan Paul, a resident of Dibrugarh.

He said, "In previous years, the prices were lower, but this time, everything has shot up. Before Durga Puja, the prices of vegetables and other essential com-

Kojagari Lakshmi Puja, also known as Kojagori Purnima, is celebrated to honour Goddess Lakshmi, the goddess of wealth and prosperity. The festival is observed on the night of the full moon in the month

Sankardev Abirbhab Mahotsav celebrated in Sivasagar

HT Correspondent

SIVASAGAR, Oct 16: The 576th Abirbhab Mahotsav of Mahapurush Srimanta Sankardev was celebrated by Srimanta Sankardev Sangha, Sivasagar, on Tuesday. The day began with the Seva Bahini conducting a cleanliness drive, followed by the hoisting of the flag. A Bhagwat procession saw the participation of a large number of devotees and mothers from various communities and primary units of the

The event featured a meeting where Dr Ranjit Kumar Barua, a prominent painter and sculptor from Jorhat, delivered a speech on the 'Brindawani Bastra'. The also unveiled his own book,

Meeting held at Nagaon DC Office for upcoming by-election



memorial book 'Shankar Ranjai' by Achyut Krishna Nath was released by Dr Rajen Barua, who

'Bhakti Darshan'. The evening concluded with a performance of the play 'Parijat Haran', depicting the Guru's teachings.

Hussain of bringing in people of the constituency. The minister **Himanta wishes Omar Abdullah** on becoming J-K CM

GUWAHATI, Oct 16: Chief minister Himanta Biswa Sarma on Wednesday extended his best wishes to National Conference leader Omar Abdullah on being sworn in as the CM of Jammu and Kashmir. National Conference leader Omar Abdullah was sworn in as the

chief minister of Jammu and Kashmir on Wednesday. He will lead the first elected government in the Union territory after 2019 when Article 370 was abrogated. "Many congratulations to Shri @OmarAbdullah Ji on taking oath as the Chief Minister of Jammu and Kashmir. On behalf of the people of Assam, we extend our best wishes for a successful tenure of the newly elected government," Sarma said in a post on X.

Lt Governor Manoi Sinha administered the oath of office and secrecy to Abdullah, who takes over as chief minister for a second term and is the third generation of the Abdullah family to occupy the office -- after his grandfather Sheikh Abdullah and father Farooq Abdullah.

The National Conference won 42 out of the 90 seats in the recent elections, while alliance partner Congress bagged six. In 2019, the erstwhile state was bifurcated into the union territories of Jammu and Kashmir and Ladakh. (PTI)

117 AMRS Hojai students qualify for IOQM 2024

HT Correspondent

NAGAON, Oct 16: A total of 117 students from Ajmal Modern Residential School (AMRS), Hojai have cracked the Indian Olympiad Qualifier in Mathematics (IOOM) – 2024, conducted by the Mathematics Teachers' Association (India) [MTA(I)] in collaboration with the Homi Bhabha Centre for Science Education (HBCSE), Mumbai, on behalf of the National Board for Higher Mathematics (NBHM) under the Department of Atomic Energy (DAE), government of India.

The IOQM, popularly known as PRMO, saw over 231 candidates from Category - A (classes 8, 9, 10 & 11) and girls, covering the entire regions of Assam and Arunachal Pradesh, selected to appear for the Regional Mathematics Olympiad (RMO). Among them, 117 students are from AMRS, Hojai, accounting for more than 50 percent. This significant achievement has brought laurels to AMRS, Ajmal Super 40, and the Ajmal Foundation. The program aims to identify and nurture mathematical talent among pre-university students across the country, leading to the participation of Indian students in the International Mathematical Olympiad (IMO). The principal of AMRS, Areef Ahmed, expressed his immense satisfaction and congratulated all the successful students, parents, and teachers, with special gratitude to the IOQM coordinator of AMRS, Mir Mukul Ali, who is also an eminent mathematics teacher.

The Managing Trustees of the Ajmal Foundation, Maulana Badruddin Ajmal and Sirajuddin Ajmal, MLA Binnakandi, along with Dr Khasrul Islam, director, Ajmal Foundation; Dr MRH Azad, general manager, Ajmal Foundation; and Abdul Kadir, project head, Ajmal Super 40, extended their heartfelt congratulations and best wishes to all the successful students, parents, teachers, the coordinator, and principal Areef Ahmed for bringing such accolades to AMRS, Hojai, a press note added.

Morigaon District Day celebrations held

HT Correspondent

MORIGAON, Oct 16: A women-friendly football match was held on Tuesday at the Motiram Bora School field in Barangabari to celebrate Morigaon District Day. The friendly match was jointly organised by the Morigaon District Sports Office and Motiram Bora Model High School. District commissioner Debashis Sarma inaugurated the match in the presence of superintendent of police Hemanta Kr Das, ADCs, the district sports officer, and other distinguished guests. The match commenced with the district commissioner kicking off the ball. The two-day district celebration featured various events, including a comedy drama titled 'Massage', performed by renowned Bollywood actor Rakesh Bedi at the district library on Monday. On Tuesday, noted singer Zubeen Garg enthralled the audience with beautiful songs at Morigaon Stadium.

Governor extends Kati Bihu

HT Bureau GUWAHATI, Oct 16: Governor Lakshman Prasad Acharya conveyed his greet-

ings to the people of the state

on the occasion of Kati Bihu. In a statement, Acharya said, "Since Assam has an agrarian culture and the majority of the people in the state depend on agriculture, the celebration of this Bihu holds immense importance. I hope the 'Akash Bonti', the auspicious lamp placed in the fields, drives away pests and insects and helps ensure a good yield. Moreover, the earthen lamp lit in front of the Tulsi plant as part of these Bihu celebrations reiterates our inherent connection with the auspicious Tulsi plant." He wished the people well and encouraged them to celebrate Bihu to carry forward the rich legacy of As-

samese society.

greetings on

Wednesday at the conference hall of the Nagaon District Commissioner's Office regarding the upcoming by-election for the 88th Samaguri assembly constituency. District commissioner Narendra Kumar Shah chaired the meeting, which was attended by iournalists, district officials, and representatives of various political parties. During the meeting, the district commissioner

briefed the journalists on the guidelines and instructions for the upcoming by-election and sought their

HT Correspondent

NAGAON, Oct 16: A special meeting was held on

Over 180,448 voters are eligible to cast their votes in the by-election, comprising 91,304 male voters,

89.133 female voters, and 11 third-gender voters. It was informed that the voters of the constituency will exercise their respective franchise at over 197 polling stations this time in the Samaguri assembly constituency.

The nomination papers for the by-election will be accepted from October 18 to October 25, 2024. Scrutiny of nomination papers will take place on October 28, and the last date for withdrawal is October 30. Voting will take place on November 13, and counting will be held on November 23.

DC Shah also discussed the law and order situation as well as the election code of conduct with district officials and representatives of political parties, an official press note asserted here.

One dies in road mishap

HT Correspondent DEMOW, Oct 16: A road accident

occurred in front of the Gajali Oil Depot on NH-37 on Wednesday, resulting in one fatality and another serious injury. Reports indicate that a Tata Zest car (AS 03 AA 7391) collided head-on with a Pulsar motorcycle (AS 03 Y 2614) near the oil depot. The motorcycle rider was killed in the crash, while a female passenger sustained severe injuries. According to hospital sources, the motorcycle rider, identified as Babatu Mili, a resident of Ofala, Sivasagar, was brought to the hospital already dead.

Two books by Dr Dimbeswar Chalina launched at DHSK College

HT Correspondent
DIBRUGARH, Oct 16: Two books

by the former principal of DHSK College and eminent writer, late Dr Dimbeswar Chaliha, were launched at Dibrugarh.

Dr Dimbeswar Chaliha translated the world-famous book by naturalist EPG, 'Wildlife of India'

The book was launched by Dr Parmanand Mohanta, retired professor, department of Physics, Dibrugarh University. The second book was launched by Dr Sashikanta Saikia, principal of DHSK College and emi-Inaugurating the first book, Dr Mo-

hanta said Dr Chaliha was a very knowledgeable person. Despite his important responsibilities as principal, he continued to write literature tirelessly. He said the late Chaliha was an invaluable asset to the Assamese literary world and made sig-

nificant contributions to literature.

Recalling his time with the Assam Science Society, Dr Mohanta said Chaliha's work still inspires everyone. The book is about the wildlife of India and provides a detailed description of various places, as well as the forests and wildlife of Assam. The foreword of the book was written by then-Prime Minister Pandit Jawahar-

The program began with a lamplighting ceremony at the portrait of the late Dr Dimbeswar Chaliha. During the same event, held on Tuesday afternoon, the third edition of his children's poetry book, 'Fechu Raja Hall', was launched by Dr Sashikanta Saikia. He stated that Dr Chaliha was not only popular as a principal but also well-established as a writer and literary figure. He was a writer, poet, naturalist, and popular science author.

He cited many examples of books written by Dr Chaliha, noting that each one reflects his perspective on life. He also mentioned that the Assamese translation of 'Wildlife of India' can serve as a handbook for researchers. The program was anchored by Barnali Barua, with the purpose of the meeting explained by Dr Dimbeswar Chaliha's son, Dr Jayanta Madhay Chaliha.

Dr Dimbeswar Chaliha's wife, Dalimi Chaliha, shared her feelings at the event. It was attended by Dr Dilip Kumar Bhuyan, former principal of MDKG College; Dr Bharti Dutta, former professor of DHSK College; National Award-winning teacher and prominent writer Gandheshwar Saikia; and many others who remem-

Station to receive ₹55.17 crore upgrade, enhancing amenities & accessibility for commuters

Rangapara Station set for major revamp under Amrit Bharat Stations Scheme

GUWAHATI, Oct 16: In a bid to enhance and modernise railway stations, Rangapara North Station, situated on the North Bank of the Brahmaputra, is being revamped with world-class amenities under the Amrit Bharat Stations Scheme (ABSS). Rangapara North Station, under the Rangiya Division of Northeast Frontier Railway, is one of the 50 stations in Assam selected for redevelopment under the scheme. This station will receive a significant facelift at an estimated cost of ₹ 55.17 crores. Altogether, a total of 92 stations under the jurisdiction of Northeast Frontier Railway have been selected for redevelopment under ABSS. The revamping of this station will provide modern state-ofthe-art amenities to railway commuters.

Rangapara North Railway Station, built in 1903 by the Assam Railway Trading Company, is an important station in Sonitpur district. The station is situated on the Rangapara-Murkongselek section under the Rangiya Division of Northeast Frontier Railway. Currently, work on the improvement of





Main entry building work

the facade and facilities, such as a waiting hall with the latest amenities for passenger convenience, is in progress. Among the other ongoing works are improvements in

12m wide FOB work the circulating area, construction of toilet

blocks, provision of a second entry for passenger accessibility, easily accessible water booths for divyangjan, and installation of

train indication & coach guidance boards, all progressing steadily. To accommodate longer trains, platform extension work is underway, including platform surfacing, platform shelters, and separate parcel handling pathways. Additionally, three lifts are being provided for differently-abled and elderly passengers with heavy luggage. To ease the movement of passengers between platforms, a 12-meter-wide foot overbridge is also being constructed

The Rangapara North Railway Station serves as a major stop for freight trains. The station played a key role in the growth of the tea industry in Assam and continues to be an important transportation hub for the region today. It was originally built to facilitate the transportation of tea from the tea gardens in the region to markets in Kolkata and other parts of India. The station's upgrade will create new avenues, leading to employment, business opportunities, ease of travel, and a significant boost to tourism for passengers from

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QUOTE OF THE DAY

With renunciation life begins. -Amelia Barr

An eventful tenure

nief Justice D Y Chandrachud has less than a month to go for retirement. His tenure, the longest in the past 14 years, would be known for a distinctive judicial approach that stands in contrast to many of his predecessors. He infused the Supreme Court with a renewed focus on individual rights, social justice, and constitutional values, particularly in cases that involve the Union government. Coming from a lineage of legal brilliance, with his father having served as the longest-serving Chief Justice in Indian history, Justice Chandrachud carried the weight of legacy on his shoulders. Yet, it wasn't just the expectations of a family name that shaped his tenure. The incumbent CJI has consistently emphasized the need for safeguarding civil liberties, drawing attention to the imperatives of justice and equity. This is evident in cases where the Union government has sought to implement policies that may infringe upon individual freedoms. For instance, in a landmark ruling related to the rights of same-sex couples, a bench headed by him recognized the importance of equality and non-discrimination, sending a strong message about the constitutional guarantee of rights regardless of sexual orientation. This decision not only affirmed individual rights but also underscored the judiciary's role in checking governmental power.

Chandrachud's tenure highlighted a nuanced understanding of the constitutional framework, especially in cases concerning national security and public order. His judgments reflect a balanced approach, often prioritizing the rights of individuals while still considering the state's interest in maintaining order. Such balancing is crucial in a democracy, where the rights of the few can easily be overshadowed by the perceived needs of many. One of the most significant judgments under his tenure came in the context of habeas corpus petitions challenging preventive detentions. The case surrounding this issue carried significant political and social ramifications, with the government invoking national security to justify its actions. The commitment to inclusivity and social justice in his judgments has been a defining feature of Chan-

The relationship between the judiciary and the executive has always been fraught with tension, but Chandrachud's tenure saw the court not shying away from challenging the government's decisions, especially in matters related to the controversial Citizenship Amendment Act (CAA) and similar laws enacted by the Modi government. Under Chandrachud's guidance, the court undertook a rigorous examination of the implications of such laws on the rights of individuals. His advocacy for transparency and accountability within the judicial system stands out, particularly in an era where concerns about judicial independence are increasing consistently. The CJI took proactive steps to ensure that the appointment process is devoid of arbitrary influence, fostering an environment where the judiciary can operate free from external pressures, including those from the government. He also championed the need for making the judiciary more accessible to the common citizen, advocating for mechanisms that facilitate public participation in the judicial process. This is particularly crucial in a country where the legal system can often feel daunting and out of reach for many. His efforts in this direction signify a commitment to demystifying the judiciary and ensuring that justice is not merely an abstract concept but a tangible reality for all.

Kati Bihu - The quiet prayers of Assam's farmers

ati Bihu, one of Assam's three major Bihu festivals, is often overshadowed by its more exuberant counterparts, Bohag Bihu (Rongali Bihu) and Magh Bihu (Bhogali Bihu). While those two festivals are celebrations of fertility and harvest, marked by feasts, dance, and music, Kati Bihu presents a stark contrast. Also known as Kongali Bihu, or the "barren Bihu," it is a time of quiet reflection and prayer, an intimate communion between farmers and their land, during a period of agricultural uncertainty

Kati Bihu is celebrated in mid-October, aligning with the Assamese month of Kati. This is a time when rice fields stand tall with crops that are yet to mature. The festival occurs during the waiting period, a time of hope tempered by caution, as the yield of the crop is still unknown.

Resources are often scarce at this time, with granaries running low from last year's harvest, and farmers rely on their faith and perseverance to see them through this crucial phase. Kati Bihu serves as a reminder of the fragile balance between human labor and nature's will, with rituals and prayers being the core of this agrarian festi-

Unlike the festive celebrations associated with other Bihus, Kati Bihu carries a more somber tone. The mood in rural Assam during this period is pensive rather than celebratory. It is a time when farmers, having sown their fields and tended to their crops, must now step back and leave the fate of their harvest to nature. This phase of uncertainty is reflected in the simple, introspective rituals of Kati Bihu.

While Rongali Bihu is about fertility and new beginnings, and Bhogali Bihu is about harvest and feasttience, faith, and quiet resilience.

One of the most significant rituals of Kati Bihu is the lighting of the Akash Banti, or sky lamp. Small earthen lamps, filled with oil, are placed on tall bamboo poles in the fields and around homes. These lamps are lit at dusk, and their flickering flames glow softly in the darkness of the night, symbolizing hope and guiding the spirits of ancestors.

Bihu, the Akash Banti is not just a light in the physical sense but a metaphor for the hope that farmers carry in their hearts

In the context of Kati

time. The lamps are also believed to protect the fields from evil forces and to ward off pests that could potentially damage the

The significance of the Akash Banti goes beyond its function as a ritualistic object. It embodies the relationship between the farmer and the land, a relationship that is marked by both hard work and humility.

By lighting these lamps, farmers acknowledge that, despite their best efforts in tending to their crops, the final outcome is beyond their control.

The lamps are offerings to the divine, a way of seeking blessings for the crops that have been sown. They represent the farmer's faith in the forces of nature and the hope that all will go well in the weeks leading up to the harvest.

The ritual of lighting the Akash Banti is often accompanied by the chanting of prayers and the offering of food to the spirits of the ancestors. These prayers are a quiet plea for protection and prosperity.

Farmers believe that their ancestors, who too were connected to the land, will guide and protect them, ensuring that the crops grow well and the harvest is



home and field, between

the domestic and the agrar-

Tulsi is a reminder that, in

the life of a farmer, the per-

sonal and the professional,

the spiritual and the mate-

this delicate phase.

their dependence on the

uncertainty.

The act of worshipping

This act of offering underscores the deep connec-

lamps around the Tulsi plant signifies the **DEGREE OF THOUGHT** farmer's acknowledgduring this uncertain Himangshu Ranjan Bhuyan ment of the interconnectedness between

tion that Assamese farmers have with both their heritage and their land. The act of remembering one's ancestors and seeking their blessings is a humble recognition of the cyclical nature of life, where past, present, and future are all intertwined.

Another important aspect of Kati Bihu is the worship of the Tulsi plant, which holds a special place in Assamese households. Tulsi, revered in Hinduism for its medicinal and spiritual properties, is worshipped in the evening during Kati Bihu. Farmers light small lamps and place them near the Tulsi plant, offering prayers for the health and well-being of their family and crops.

The Tulsi plant symbolizes life, fertility, and protection, and its worship during Kati Bihu reflects the farmer's deep respect for nature. Just as the Tulsi plant is nurtured and protected, so too are the crops in the fields, which require care and attention to thrive.

The worship of Tulsi during Kati Bihu also highlights the theme of domesticity that runs through the festival. While the fields are a place of hard work and hope, the home is flection. The lighting of values of patience, faith, and hard work that define the life of a farmer. It is a time to pause, reflect, and offer prayers for a successful harvest, while also acknowledging the risks and challenges that come with farming. The simplicity of the rituals - lighting lamps, offering prayers, worshipping Tulsi - mirrors the simplicity of the agrarian lifestyle, where life is lived

rial, are all deeply conin harmony with the cycles nected. The well-being of of nature. the family and the success Kati Bihu also serves as a of the harvest are seen as reminder of the deep contwo sides of the same coin. nection between the people Kati Bihu also marks the of Assam and their land. beginning of a period of Agriculture has always transition. As the festival been the backbone of Asfalls during a time when the samese society, and the rhythms of rural life are rice plants are still maturing, it is a period of waiting closely tied to the cycles of

and watching. Farmers planting and harvesting. monitor their fields closely, The rituals of Kati Bihu ensuring that no harm reflect this connection, ofcomes to the crops during fering a glimpse into the lives of farmers who rely on The quiet rituals of Kati the land for their sustenance and livelihood. The festival Bihu - lighting lamps, offering prayers, worshipping is not about grand celebrathe Tulsi plant - are all ways tions or material abunin which farmers seek to dance; instead, it is about protect their crops and enhonoring the land and offersure a good harvest. It is a ing quiet prayers for its fertime of introspection, when tility and protection. farmers are reminded of As modernity and urban-

the landscape of Assam, the forces of nature and their own resilience in the face of celebration of Kati Bihu has evolved as well. In urban In many ways, Kati Bihu areas, where agriculture is no longer the primary is a reflection of the agrarsource of livelihood, the ritian life in Assam, where uals of Kati Bihu have farming is not just an occupation but a way of life. The taken on a more symbolic

ization continue to reshape

of the Akash Banti, the worship of Tulsi, and the offering of prayers are still observed, but the direct connection to farming is less immediate. Nonetheless, Kati Bihu

remains an important cultural festival, serving as a reminder of Assam's agricultural heritage and the values of patience, faith, and perseverance that are embedded in the region's identity.

Kati Bihu may not have the festive exuberance of its counterparts, but its quiet rituals and solemn prayers speak to the heart of Assamese culture. It is a festival that honours the land, the cycles of nature, and the resilience of the farmers who depend on it.

Through the lighting of lamps and the offering of prayers, Kati Bihu reflects the deep spiritual connection between the people of Assam and the land they cultivate. It is a time of waiting, watching, and hoping, a time when farmers place their faith in the forces of nature and offer quiet prayers for a bountiful harvest.

In a world where agriculture is becoming increasingly industrialized and disconnected from the rhythms of nature, the rituals of Kati Bihu offer a valuable reminder of the importance of humility, patience, and respect for the

The quiet prayers of Assam's farmers, offered in the soft glow of the Akash Banti, remind us that farming is not just about production and consumption - it is about living in harmony with nature, understanding its cycles, and honoring its gifts. Kati Bihu, in its quiet way, keeps this spirit alive, offering a moment of reflection and gratitude for the land that sustains us. (The writer is Editor in Chief of the Assamese E-Megazine SAMPROTIK. He can be reached at himang-

Kati Bihu: The season of reflection and scarcity in Assam

they light earthen lamps,

known as Saaki, around the

plant as a form of offering.

The prayers sung, particu-

larly by children, invoke

Goddess Lakshmi, the god-

dess of wealth and prosper-

ity, asking for blessings on

the crops and the house-

is the lighting of Akash

Banti (sky lamps) in the

paddy fields. These lamps

are placed atop tall bamboo

poles and are believed to

ward off pests and protect

the crops. Scientifically,

these lamps attract insects

that might harm the crops,

which then perish in the

flames, thus safeguarding

the fields. There is also a

traditional belief that these

lamps light the way for the

spirits of ancestors, who

bless the crops from above.

nity: Kati Bihu is marked

by simplicity, as it is not a

time of abundance but one

of reflection. Unlike the

grand feasts and joyous

dances of Rongali and

Bhogali Bihu, Kati Bihu is

a time for families to come

together in prayer, recog-

nizing the realities of

The offering of light, par-

ticularly around the Tulsi

plant and the paddy fields,

symbolizes hope and the

desire for a prosperous har-

scarcity.

Simplicity and Solem-

Another important ritual



By: Dipak Kurmi

ati Bihu, also known as Kongali Bihu, is one of the three major Bihu festivals celebrated by the people of Assam. Unlike its more festive counterparts - Rongali Bihu (Bohag Bihu) and Bhogali Bihu (Magh Bihu) - Kati Bihu is observed with simplicity and solemnity. Celebrated in mid-October, during the Assamese month of Kati, it marks a critical time in the agricultural calendar when crops are still growing in the fields, and farmers face scarcity of food and resources. The word "Kongali" itself means "poor" or "scarcity," reflecting the challenges faced by families during

this period. Agrarian Significance: Like the other two Bihus. Kati Bihu is deeply rooted in the agrarian culture of Assam. This Bihu is celebrated during the autumn season when farmers, having toiled through the year. are concerned about the health of their crops, partic-

ularly rice. The festival is seen as a time of prayer and hope, where farmers and their families solicit divine blessings for a good harvest. The celebrations are quiet, as the season is marked by scarcity in both food and money, with granaries running low until the next har-

Rituals of Reverence: One of the most important aspects of Kati Bihu is the

While Kati Bihu is quieter than the other Bihus, it holds significant cultural and religious importance for the Assamese community. The festival highlights the strong bond between the people and the land, emphasizing the agricultural roots of Assamese society. It is a time when farmers, despite worship of the Tulsi (basil) the challenges of scarcity, plant, which is considered express their faith in divine sacred in Hinduism. Famiforces and their connection lies prepare for the day by to the soil. During this Bihu, some planting a Tulsi plant in an altar made of mud and water, and in the evening,

traditional foods like pithas and snacks are still prepared, though not on the same scale as during the more exuberant Bihus. The lighting of lamps and the offering of prayers around the Tulsi plant and the paddy fields create a spiritual atmosphere, where families gather to observe rituals that have been passed down through generations.

vest in the coming months.

Cultural Importance:

A Festival of Faith: Kati Bihu is a festival that reminds the people of Assam of the cyclical nature of life, where times of scarcity are followed by times of abundance. The prayers offered during Kati Bihu symbolize the hope that, despite the hardships, prosperity will return with the next harvest. It serves as a reminder that even in difficult times, faith in the natural and divine order can provide comfort and assurance.

Kati Bihu reflects the resilience of the Assamese people. Through its quiet rituals and the lighting of humble lamps, it highlights the importance of patience, perseverance, and faith. While the granaries may be empty, the festival reminds everyone that brighter days are just around the corner, as they await the blessings of a good harvest and the return of abundance to their homes. (The writer can be reached at dipakkur-

miglpltd@gmail.com)

By: Satyabrat Borah

in Assam, a state known for its rich cultural traditions and deep connection with agriculture. This festival, which is less well-known compared to Bohag Bihu (Rongali Bihu) and Magh Bihu (Bhogali Bihu), holds a special significance for the people of Assam. Kati Bihu, also called Kangali Bihu, is observed during the Assamese month of Kati, which falls in mid-October. The word "Kangali" means "poor" or "scarcity," reflecting the essence of this festival. Unlike the more vibrant and joyous Rongali Bihu, which is celebrated at the beginning of the Assamese New Year, Kati Bihu is a time of austerity, prayer, and hope.

The significance of Kati Bihu lies primarily in its deep connection to agriculture. Assam, like many other regions in India, is primarily an agrarian society, and the Bihu festivals are closely tied to the agricultural cycle. Kati Bihu is celebrated during a crucial period in the farming calendar, when the paddy crops are growing in the fields but have not yet ripened. It is a time of waiting and uncertainty for the farmers. The season of Kati is known for being lean, as the granaries are almost empty, and families have to carefully manage their resources until the harvest season arrives. Therefore, Kati Bihu is a time of simplicity and

During Kati Bihu, farmers perform rituals to protect their growing crops and ensure a good harvest. One of the most important traditions of Kati Bihu is the lighting of earthen lamps, known as "Saki," in the paddy fields. These lamps are placed on the tops of bamboo poles or in small clay pots and are believed to drive away evil spirits and pests that might harm the crops. This ritual reflects the farmers' deep connection with nature and their belief in the power of light to ward off darkness and evil forces. The lamps are also lit in front of the sacred Tulsi plant at home, which is considered a symbol of protection and purity in Hindu households. Lighting lamps around the Tulsi plant is a prayer for the well-being of the family and the prosperity of the crops.

The lighting of lamps during Kati Bihu has both practical and spiritual significance. On the practical side, it is believed that the flickering light of the lamps helps scare away insects and pests that could damage the paddy

The significance of Kati Bihu ati Bihu is one of the three this practice was a natural way to pro- ligious or cultural festival, but also a cities. However, the cultural and spirlamps are a symbol of hope and guidance. As the days grow shorter and the nights longer during this time of the year, the lamps represent the farmers' prayers for light to guide them through the lean period until the harvest. The light also symbolizes the farmers' faith that despite the scarcity and difficulties of the present, a brighter future lies ahead with the promise of a good

> Another important aspect of Kati Bihu is the role it plays in reinforcing the community spirit in Assamese villages. While the festival may not involve grand feasts and celebrations like Rongali Bihu, it is a time when families and communities come together to share their experiences and struggles. In a largely agrarian society, farming is not just an individual activity but a collective effort, and Kati

control methods were not available, In this way, Kati Bihu is not just a re-volved in agriculture, especially in the tect the crops. On the spiritual side, the celebration of the earth and the natural resources that sustain life. In addition to its agricultural impor-

tance, Kati Bihu has religious and spiritual significance. The festival often coincides with Diwali, the Hindu festival of lights, and shares some similarities with it. Like Diwali, Kati Bihu involves the lighting of lamps and prayers to the goddess Lakshmi, who is the goddess of wealth and prosperity in Hinduism. However, while Diwali is a celebration of material wealth. Kati Bihu's focus is more on the wealth that comes from nature. The prayers offered during Kati Bihu are not just for personal prosperity, but for the well-being of the crops and the land. The rituals performed during Kati Bihu are deeply rooted in Hindu beliefs, and they reflect the Assamese people's faith in divine forces to protect them and ensure their survival

The significance of Kati Bihu lies primarily in its deep connection to agriculture. Assam, like many other regions in India, is primarily an agrarian society, and the Bihu festivals are closely tied to the agricultural cycle. Kati Bihu is celebrated during a crucial period in the farming calendar, when the paddy crops are growing in the fields but have not yet ripened. It is a time of waiting and uncertainty for the farmers. The season of Kati is known for being lean, as the granaries are almost empty, and families have to carefully manage their resources until the harvest season arrives

Bihu provides an opportunity for villagers to help and support one another. Farmers often discuss the state of their crops and exchange advice on how to deal with any challenges they may be facing in their fields. This sense of community and cooperation is an essential part of the Assamese way of life, and Kati Bihu reinforces these

The rituals and customs of Kati Bihu also reflect the close relationship between the Assamese people and their natural environment. The traditional practice of lighting lamps and using scarecrows made from bamboo and banana leaves to protect the fields highlights the sustainable methods used by farmers to safeguard their crops. These methods are in harmony with nature, and they demonstrate how Assamese farmers have long understood the importance of protecting the through difficult times.

One of the central symbols of Kati Bihu is the Tulsi plant, which holds a special place in Hindu tradition. The Tulsi plant is often regarded as a manifestation of the goddess Lakshmi, and it is believed to have protective and purifying qualities. During Kati Bihu, Assamese households place lamps near the Tulsi plant and offer prayers for the health and prosperity of their family and crops. The practice of worshipping the Tulsi plant is a way for people to connect with the divine and seek blessings for the future. It also symbolizes the importance of nature and the environment in Assamese culture, as the Tulsi plant is seen as a source of life and protection.

In modern times, Kati Bihu has evolved to reflect the changing landscape of Assam. With the spread of urbanization and industrialization, fewer

plants. In the past, when modern pest environment while working the land. people in the state are directly initual significance of Kati Bihu strong, even for those who are no longer engaged in farming. The festival continues to be observed in both rural and urban areas, with people lighting lamps and offering prayers for the well-being of their families and the environment. Schools and cultural organizations often hold special events to teach younger generations about the traditions of Kati Bihu, helping to preserve Assam's cultural heritage.

Despite the challenges posed by modernization, there is a growing interest in reviving traditional festivals like Kati Bihu and promoting sustainable agricultural practices. As the world faces the impacts of climate change and environmental degradation, the lessons of Kati Bihu are more relevant than ever. The festival's emphasis on patience, hard work, and respect for nature offers valuable insights into how communities can adapt to changing environmental conditions while maintaining their cultural identity. Efforts to promote organic farming and environmentally friendly practices in Assam are often linked to the values of sustainability and harmony with nature that are embodied in Kati Bihu

Kati Bihu may not have the same level of fanfare and celebration as Rongali Bihu, but its significance lies in its message of resilience, hope, and community. It teaches the importance of perseverance during difficult times and reminds people to stay connected with their roots, both literally and metaphorically. For the farmers of Assam, Kati Bihu is a time to care for their crops and pray for a successful harvest. For others, it is an opportunity to reflect on the values of simplicity, patience, and respect for nature that are at the heart of Assamese culture.

Kati Bihu is more than just a festival: it is a reflection of the Assamese people's deep connection with the land and their belief in the cyclical nature of life. The festival's rituals, though simple, carry profound meaning, emphasizing the importance of light in times of darkness and the need for faith and hope during periods of uncertainty. As Assam continues to evolve, Kati Bihu remains a reminder of the state's agricultural heritage and the enduring importance of nature in sustaining life. (The author can be reached

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'Carbon Farming' opens doors of profit for small and marginal farmers

By: Priyanka Saurabh

THURSDAY, OCTOBER 17, 2024

or small-scale farmers, carbon markets provide an opportunity to improve farming practices, adapt to climate change, and contribute to global climate solutions. Many carbon projects aim to protect and restore forests, wetlands, and other ecosystems. These ecosystems are important sources of biodiversity and can provide livelihood opportunities for small farmers and rural com-

Intensive farming practices have been adopted in Indian agriculture for the last six decades to ensure food security in the country. This has resulted in a significant reduction in soil organic carbon, a decline in soil fertility, and chemical pollution in major cultivated lands across the country.

In addition, intensive farming with single-crop cultivation of major cereals has led to a loss of biodiversity and depletion of groundwater resources. These farming practices have also increased greenhouse gas (GHG)

emissions that contribute to global warming and climate change

India's agroforestry sector presents a significant opportunity to integrate with carbon finance projects, particularly through afforestation, reforestation, and restoration initiatives.

Carbon Sequestration through Carbon Finance Projects Agroforestry's ability to sequester carbon makes it a central component of carbon finance initiatives. Carbon finance projects involve planting trees or increasing tree cover in agricultural landscapes, allowing farmers to earn carbon credits through carbon sequestration ac-

Expanding the agroforestry sector to 53 million hectares by 2050 presents an opportunity for large-scale carbon sequestration and participation in global carbon markets. Carbon finance project initiatives also offer the potential for income diversification, particularly for small and marginal farmers.

However, small farmers have still not benefited extensively

from carbon markets – primarily due to the low prices offered and the high cost of generating tradable, unique, and verifiable carbon credits.

In addition, participating in carbon markets can require a significant investment of time and resources. Although carbon markets can provide financial benefits for carbon sequestration, financial incentives may be insufficient to cover the costs borne by farmers. Still, the market is changing rapidly, and new technologies are expanding the range of what is possible.

Beyond carbon sequestration, agroforestry under carbon finance projects enhances soil fertility, improves water retention, and reduces erosion, thereby boosting agricultural productivity. In addition, it promotes environmental sustainability by restoring degraded lands and providing a buffer against climate risks.

Government policies supporting agroforestry, such as the National Agroforestry Policy, 2014, provide a framework for expanding agroforestry in India. For further integration with carbon finance, this policy should be revised to explicitly support carbon finance project initiatives and facilitate access to car-

Subsidies and financial support for carbon sequestration Financial incentives, such as subsidies for planting trees or maintaining forest cover, can encourage small farmers to systematically adopt agroforestry.

Capacity building and awareness campaigns Training programs are necessary to educate farmers about the benefits of agroforestry and carbon finance. Extension services and NGOs can play an important role in disseminating information and providing technical support to enable small and marginal farmers to participate in carbon finance initiatives.

Encouraging private sector participation through private and international collaborations such as public-private partnerships (PPPs) and engaging with international carbon finance platforms will be critical to scaling up agroforestry-based carbon finance projects.

Global platforms such as Verra and Gold Standard need to recognize the need for Indiacentric standards that take into

account the unique challenges of smallholder agriculture. Agroforestry in India has immense potential to contribute to carbon sequestration, environmental sustainability, and rural economic development.

A framework has been developed to promote Voluntary Carbon Markets (VCM) for the agriculture sector in India, to encourage small and marginal farmers to avail carbon credit benefits. Introducing farmers to the carbon market can accelerate the acceptance of eco-friendly agricultural practices along with increasing their incomes.

Farmers can adopt sustainable agricultural practices and gain additional income from carbon credits, as well as other agroecological benefits in terms of improved natural capital such as soil, water, biodiversity, etc.

The carbon credit market in agriculture is in its infancy and requires strict monitoring and regulatory systems. There are concerns that asymmetric information, lack of transparency, and inadequate regulation may lead to unfair pricing practices

for carbon credits, resulting in lower incomes for farmers.

Additionally, lack of knowledge and awareness among farmers and rural communities may lead to their exploitation. There is an urgent need for policy measures to ensure transparency, regulation, and widespread awareness about this in the country. These systems are essential for efficient and transparent functioning in the country to ensure that the intended benefits reach the farm-

The framework for voluntary carbon markets in agriculture sector will help promote carbon market among the agricultural community, encourage and finance sustainable agricultural

The main objective of the VCM framework is to create awareness and build capacity of stakeholders, motivate farmers to adopt sustainable agricultural practices. It will further contribute to Sustainable Development Goals, support rural livelihoods and enhance resilience in agriculture.

Atmospheric rivers are shifting poleward, reshaping global weather patterns

By: Zhe Li

tmospheric rivers those long, narrow bands of water vapor in the sky that bring heavy rain and storms to the US West Coast and many other regions — are shifting toward higher latitudes, and that's changing weather patterns around the world.

The shift is worsening droughts in some regions, intensifying flooding in others, and putting water resources that many communities rely on at risk. When atmospheric rivers reach far northward into the Arctic, they can also melt sea ice, affecting the global climate.

In a new study published in Science Advances, University of California, Santa Barbara, climate scientist Qinghua Ding and I show that atmospheric rivers have shifted about 6 to 10 degrees toward the two poles over the past

Atmospheric rivers on the

just a US West Coast thing. They form in many parts of the world and provide over half of the mean annual runoff in these regions, including the US Southeast coasts and West Coast, Southeast Asia, New Zealand, northern Spain, Portugal, the United Kingdom and south-central Chile.

California relies on atmospheric rivers for up to 50 per cent of its yearly rainfall. A series of winter atmospheric rivers there can bring enough rain and snow to end a drought, as parts of the region saw in 2023.

While atmospheric rivers

share a similar origin — moisture supply from the tropics - atmospheric instability of the jet stream allows them to curve poleward in different ways. No two atmospheric rivers are exactly alike.

What particularly interests climate scientists, including us, is the collective behavior of atmospheric rivers. Atmospheric rivers are commonly seen in the extratropics, a region between the latitudes of 30 and 50 degrees in both hemispheres that includes most of the continental U.S., southern Australia and Chile.

Our study shows that atmospheric rivers have been shifting poleward over the past four decades. In both hemispheres, activity has increased along 50 degrees north and 50 degrees south, while it has decreased along 30 degrees north and 30 degrees south since 1979. In North America, that means more atmospheric rivers drenching British Columbia

A global chain reaction

One main reason for this shift is changes in sea surface temperatures in the eastern tropical Pacific. Since 2000. waters in the eastern tropical Pacific have had a cooling tendency, which affects atmospheric circulation world-

This cooling, often associated with La Nina conditions, pushes atmospheric rivers toward the poles. The poleward movement of atmospheric rivers can be explained as a chain of interconnected processes. During La Nina conditions, when sea surface temperatures cool in the eastern tropical Pacific, the

Walker circulation — giant loops of air that affect precipitation as they rise and fall over different parts of the tropics — strengthens over the western Pacific. This stronger circulation causes the tropical rainfall belt to expand. The expanded tropical rainfall, combined with changes in atmospheric eddy patterns, rehigh-pressure anomalies and wind patterns

farther poleward. Conversely, during El Nino conditions, with warmer sea surface temperatures, the mechanism operates in the opposite direction, shifting atmospheric rivers so they don't travel as far from the equator.

that steer atmospheric rivers

The shifts raise important questions about how climate models predict future changes in atmospheric rivers. Current models might underestimate natural variability, such as changes in the tropical Pacific, which can significantly affect atmospheric rivers. Understanding this connection can help forecasters make better predictions about future rainfall patterns and water avail-

Why does this poleward shift matter?

A shift in atmospheric rivers can have big effects on local climates. In the subtropics. where atmospheric rivers are becoming less common, the result could be longer droughts and less water. Many areas, such as California and southern Brazil, depend on atmospheric rivers for rainfall to fill reservoirs and support

Without this moisture, these areas could face more water shortages, putting stress on communities, farms and

In higher latitudes, atmospheric rivers moving poleward could lead to more extreme rainfall, flooding and landslides in places such as the US Pacific Northwest, Europe and even in polar regions.In the Arctic, more atmospheric rivers could speed up sea ice melting, adding to global warming and affecting animals that rely on the ice. An earlier study I was involved in found that the trend in summertime atmospheric river activity may contribute 36 per cent of the increasing trend in summer moisture over the entire Arctic since 1979.

What it means for the fu-

So far, the shifts we have seen still mainly reflect changes due to natural processes, but human-induced global warming also plays a role. Global warming is expected to increase the overall frequency and intensity of atmospheric rivers because a warmer atmosphere can hold more moisture.

How that might change as the planet continues to warm is less clear. Predicting future changes remains uncertain due largely to the difficulty in predicting the natural swings between El Nino and La Nina, which play an important role in atmospheric river shifts.

As the world gets warmer, atmospheric rivers — and the critical rains they bring — will keep changing course. We need to understand and adapt to these changes so communities can keep thriving in a changing climate. (Courtesy: Down To Earth)

Antibiotic pollution in a warming world

By: K. S. Uplabdh Gopal

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

With the grim reality of climate change today, society faces an unprecedented juncture of Antibiotic Pollution combined with Antimicrobial Resistance (AMR). Rising temperatures allow the increased contamination of our water systems by antibiotic residues, feeding the surge in resistant "superbugs"—bacteria which common medical treatments

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

The invisible pathways of pollution

several key paths, each playing a sizable role in the spread of AMR.

Pharmaceutical manufacturing: India, one of the world's largest producers of antibiotics, accounts for more than 20 percent of the world's generic drugs. But this kind of positioning comes at a cost. The effluents discharged from the manufacturing units, like in industrial belts such as Patancheru-Bollaram industrial estate in Hyderabad, have been found to carry high concentrations antibiotics like

Ciprofloxacin, Ofloxacin, and Azithromycin, at levels thousands of times higher than what is deemed safe. A study estimated the antibiotic residue concentrations in certain Indian rivers, namely the Yamuna and Gomti, to be 2-5 times higher than the limits proposed by the Ministry of Environment, Forest, and Climate Change.

Even with wastewater treatment systems installed, systems usually fail to effectively filter out these antibiotic residues. The Indian pharmaceutical industry, valued at around US\$50 billion, has yet to fully execute stricter wastewater management practices. Improved surveillance is a significant component of the new World Health Organisation (WHO) guidelines on wastewater management and limiting antibiotic pollution from manufacturing. India is far from the mark as local industries continue to discharge untreated toxic waste into nearby water bodies.

Agriculture and livestock: Increased temperatures and changing disease patterns in agriculture have spurred overuse in livestock and crop production. A major share of antibiotics is consumed by livestock farming in India, with most farmers using antibiotics to promote the growth of their animals. This practice causes significant quantities to seep into the soil and find their way into nearby water bodies. A 2021 study by the Indian Council of Agricultural Research noted AMR in E. coli and other bacterial samples taken from livestock and shrimps in 12 states. The samples had resistance levels higher in regions where antibiotics were used

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

Climate change as a pollution multiplier

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

rivers and lakes. An example to understand this would be to look at monsoon floods this year, the spillover from urban sewage systems, which carry waste containing antibiotics, contaminate local water bodies and create an environment conducive to the amplification of bacteria that were resistant to those antibiotics. A study finds that over 85 percent of Indian districts are exposed to extreme climate events such as floods, thereby placing more ecosystems at risk of contamination from pollution with antibiotics.

Simultaneously, in northern India and much of the country, the increasing intensity of drought is concentrating pollutants (with evaporation), including antibiotic residues, in shrinking water bodies such as local lakes. This creates a "perfect storm" for bacteria to develop resistance.

In addition to this, a warming climate directly drives the proliferation of bacteria. Elevated temperatures allow bacteria little time to multiply; in this case, chances of developing resistance increase. The high temperatures make it possible for bacteria to exchange genes, i.e., horizontal gene transfer, thus spreading the genes carrying antibiotic resistance between additional bacterial strains. One 2020 article reports that a 10°C temperature increase predicts an added 5 percent rise in the antibiotic resistance rate of common pathogens like E. coli and S. aureus. In India, with a 0.7°C increment in temperature compared to that in 1901, the accelerated growth of bacteria is contributing to the vicious cycle of escalating antibiotic use and resistance.

AMR: A global and Indian public health crisis

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

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

The healthcare systems are overworked in rural areas, where a course of antibiotics is often used as a quick fix for most general ailments, whether required or not. With WHO support, India drew up the National Action Plan on AMR (NAP-AMR) in 2017, which targets improvement in regulation, education, and surveillance. Yet, the implementation has been sluggish, and the country remains a global hotspot for AMR.

Policy and solutions: What needs to change

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

According to the WHO 2024 guidelines on wastewater management, monitoring the antibiotic residues in manufacturing effluents is vital. The broad plan for tackling AMR is given in India's NAP-AMR, but it needs to go further to the local level. Needless to say, stricter regulations are needed concerning the disposal of pharmaceutical waste and the improvement of standards for the treatment of wastewater to cope better with the residues of antibiotics. The country should also strengthen its agriculture by advocating antibiotic stewardship and Climate Smart Agriculture to reduce overdependence on antibiotics.

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

Urgency in action

The time to take action on antibiotic pollution is now. Still, with climate change gathering at an accelerated pace, the dispersal of antibiotics in the environment will continue to worsen. The consequences of inaction are dire: millions of lives are at risk, and modern medicine itself could be un-

This calls for coordination by governments, industries, and the community to reduce antibiotic pollution by bringing in stricter regulations. It is only through such collective action that the dual crises of climate change and antimicrobial resistance can be mitigated. (Courtesy: ORF)

Letting go of habits that harm environment

By: Sanjay Chandra

ransitions are always difficult, more so when one is asked to break away from habits formed over an entire lifetime. We are hurtling towards a certain catastrophe if we do not change and start caring for nature. I used to leave the tap running while

brushing my teeth, shaving, or even washing my hands until a few years back. We installed water aerators in our taps to conserve water. I realised that my shave with running tap water without an aerator was

resulting in an additional three-fourths of a bucket going down drain. Even with the aerator it still resulted in s o m e wastage.

I had forgotten that my grandfashaved with just a

mug full of water. As I narrated the results of my experiment to others, I realised that a few were aware and were already into conservation, but many needed that extra push.I remember drinking tap water till much later in adulthood. I moved to Calcutta for my first railway posting. My well-wishers asked me to filter and boil

water if I were to survive. The initial filters were simpler devices with candles in the container or those screwed onto the

We started going up the professional ladder, and salaries increased. The devices also became more advanced, their advertising even more aggressive. We also switched to RO. We were now generating more wastewater and depleting essential minerals. We partly resolved the issue by utilising the drain water for plants and wet mopping the floor. We are now contemplating switching to

ultraviolet fil-

ters, a technology-driven improvement upon the earlier devices. A few years back I was in the market with my wife. As I carried the shopping of the day brightcoloured polythene bags, we

were

proached by a couple of young women. Their tone was aggressive as they asked us the reason for the synthetic bags. I brushed them aside rather rudely at this transgression in my private space. I might have been more receptive had they politely explained the agenda of 'Say No to Plastic' or might have felt shamed enough if they had silently handed over a couple of cloth bags that they carried with them for distribution. We now carry cloth bags during trips to the market and even malls.

Technology has made our lives comfortable. However, this has also resulted in an increased generation of e-waste. Electronic waste contains hazardous and toxic substances. These should not be dumped in landfills to avoid contamination of soil, water, and air. We now hand over the e-waste to designated agencies.I remember paper was expensive in our younger days. We did rough work on onesided paper, and even on margins, till the entire blank space was filled up. Unused pages were carefully taken out from the previous year's notebooks, and bound at home, to be used at home.

Old newspapers were used as covers to protect books. Younger siblings used the hand-me-downs from the older ones. A snip here and a tuck there by Mother and it was a changed dress. Peels or rinds of fruits or vegetables were used to the last ounce. The cattle thrived on it. My wife prepared a tasty chutney recently grinding the gourd peels with herbs and spices.

These are small steps; nonetheless, they are a move forward. American Professor of Psychology, Ellen Langer's words are appropriate, "There is always a step small enough from where we are to get us to where we want to be. If we take that small step, there's always another we can take, and eventually, a goal thought to be too far to reach becomes achievable." (Courtesv:



in Lebanon since last Octo-

ber, more than three-quarters

of them in the past month,

according to Lebanon's

Hezbollah's rocket attacks,

which have extended their

range and grown more in-

tense over the past month,

have driven around 60,000

Israelis from their homes in

the north. The attacks have

killed nearly 60 people in Is-

rael, around half of them sol-

Hezbollah has said it will

keep up its attacks until there

is a cease-fire in Gaza, but

that appears increasingly re-

mote after months of negoti-

ations brokered by the

United States, Egypt and

Israel invaded Lebanon

earlier this month after

airstrikes killed Hezbollah

leader Hassan Nasrallah and

most of his senior command-

ers, and has been carrying

out ground operations along

the border. It has vowed to

continue its offensive until

its citizens can safely return

some 1,200 people were

killed, mostly civilians, and

another 250 were abducted.

Around 100 captives are still

being held in Gaza, about a

Qatar sputtered to a halt.

Health Ministry.

Israeli strikes kill at least 15 in Qana, a Lebanese town with a dark history of civilian deaths

strikes have killed at least 15 people in the southern Lebanese town of Oana, which has long been associated with civilian deaths after Israeli strikes during previous conflicts with Hezbollah. Israel meanwhile struck Beirut's southern suburbs early Wednesday for the first time in nearly a week.

6 THE HILLS TIMES

Israel also carried out a wave of airstrikes on the southern city of Nabatiyeh, targeting what it said were Hezbollah militant sites embedded among civilians, without providing evidence.

The strikes killed at least five people and destroyed a municipality building, according to Lebanon's Health Ministry. The city's mayor, Ahmad Kahil, was among the dead, provincial governor Huwaida Turk told The Associated Press.

Earlier this week, Israeli airstrikes destroyed Nabatiyeh's century-old mar-

There was no immediate comment from the Israeli military on the strikes in late Tuesday. Lebanon's Civil Defense said 15 bodies had been recovered from the rubble of a building and that rescue efforts were still underway.

In 1996, Israeli artillery shelling on a United Nations



of displaced people in Qana killed at least 100 civilians and wounded scores more, including four U.N. peacekeepers. During the 2006 war, an Israeli strike on a residential building killed nearly three dozen people, a third of them children. Israel said at the time that it struck a Hezbollah rocket launcher behind the building.

The strikes on southern Beirut were the first in six days, and came after Lebanon's caretaker Prime Minister Najib Mikati said the United States had given him assurances that Israel would curb its strikes on the capital. There was no immediate word on casualties.

Hezbollah has a strong presence in southern Beirut, known as the Dahiyeh, which is also a residential and commercial area home to large numbers of civilians and people unaffiliated with

the militant group. The Israeli military said it targeted an arms warehouse under a residential building, without providing evidence.

It posted an evacuation warning on the X platform ahead of the strike, saying it was targeting a building in the Haret Hreik neighborhood. An Associated Press photographer saw three airstrikes in the area, the first coming less than an hour after the notice.

Hezbollah began firing rockets into Israel on Oct. 8 in solidarity with the Palestinian militant group Hamas, following the surprise Hamas attack on southern Israel that triggered the war in Gaza. A year of low-level fighting along the Israel-Lebanon border escalated into all-out war last month. and has displaced some 1.2 million people in Lebanon.

Some 2,300 people have

to communities near the bor-Israel is still at war in Gaza more than a year after Hamas' attack, in which

Israel has been carrying out a major operation for more than a week in Jabaliya, an urban refugee camp in northern Gaza dating back to the 1948 war surrounding Israel's creation. Israeli forces have repeatedly returned to Jabaliya and other areas after saying that Hamas militants had re-

Hospitals have received around 350 bodies since the offensive began on Oc. 6, according to Dr. Mounir al-Boursh, the director-general of Gaza's Health Ministry.

He told The Associated Press that more than half the dead were women and children, and that many bodies remain in the streets and under the rubble, with rescue teams unable to reach them because of Israeli strikes. "Entire families have disappeared," he said.

Israel's offensive has killed over 42,000 people, according to the Health Ministry, which does not say how many were fighters but says more than half were women and children. The offensive has left large areas in ruins and displaced around 90% of Gaza's population of 2.3 million people, forcing hundreds of thousands into crowded tent camps or schoolsturned-shelters. (AP)

At SCO meet in Pak, EAM Jaishankar says terrorism, extremism hurdle to regional cooperation

ISLAMABAD, Oct 16: Delivering a thinly veiled message to Pakistan from its soil, External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar on Wednesday said activities across borders characterised by the "three evils" of terrorism, extremism and separatism are unlikely to encourage trade, energy flows and connectivity.

In his address at a conclave of Shanghai Cooperation Organisation (SCO) chaired by Pakistan Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif, Jaishankar asserted that trade and connectivity initiatives must recognise territorial integrity and sovereignty and it is essential to have an "honest conversation" on the lack of trust.

Jaishankar spoke immediately after Sharif's inaugural address at the 23rd meeting of the Council of the Heads of Government (CHG) of the Member States of the SCO attended among others by Chinese Premier Li Qiang.

His remarks came amid the lingering military standoff between Indian and Chinese troops in eastern Ladakh and concerns over China's increasing military muscle-flexing in the Indian Ocean and other strategic waters.

"If activities across borders are characterised by terrorism, extremism and separatism, they are hardly likely to encourage trade, energy flows, connectivity and people-to-people exchanges in parallel," the external affairs minister said without naming Pakistan.

Jaishankar arrived in Islamabad on Tuesday, becoming the first Indian foreign minister to visit Pakistan in nearly a decade. He led the Indian delegation at the SCO-CHG summit in the Pakistani capital city.

Ahead of the deliberations, PM Sharif shook hands with Jaishankar and warmly received him and other leaders of the SCO member nations at the Jinnah Convention Centre, the venue of the summit.

In his remarks, the external affairs minister said cooperation must be based on mutual respect and sovereign equality and that the SCO member nations can benefit immensely if the grouping moves ahead collectively with mutual

trust. He, especially stressed on adhering to SCO charter, highlighting its underlying essence of strengthening mutual trust, friendship and good neighbourliness.

"It should recognise territorial integrity and sovereignty. It must be built on genuine partnerships, not unilateral agendas. It cannot progress if we cherry-pick global practices, especially of trade and transit," he said, in remarks seen as an indirect reference to China's assertive behaviour on several critical issues such as trade and connectivity.

"But most of all, our endeavours will progress only when our commitment to the Charter remains firm. It is axiomatic that development and growth requires peace and stability. And as the Charter spelt out, this means being firm and uncompromising in countering the 'three evils'." Jaishankar said there is a need to introspect if "good neighbourliness" is missing somewhere and there is a lack of trust.

"If we fast-forward from the inception of the charter to the situation today, these goals and these tasks are even more crucial. It is, therefore, essential that we have an honest conversation," he said. "If trust is lacking or cooperation inadequate, if friendship has fallen short and good neighbourliness is missing somewhere, there are surely reasons to introspect and causes to address," he said.

"Equally, it is only when we reaffirm our commitment most sincerely to the Charter that we can fully realise the benefits of cooperation and integration that it envisages," he added.

Jaishankar said the SCO's objective was to strengthen mutual trust, friendship and good neighbourliness. "It is to develop multifaceted cooperation, especially of a regional nature. It is to be a positive force in terms of balanced growth, integration and conflict prevention," he said. "The Charter was equally clear what the key challenges were. And these were primarily three, that the SCO was committed to combating: one, terrorism; two, separatism; and three,

Zelenskyy set to unveil 'victory plan' to Ukrainian lawmakers after presenting it to Western allies



KYIV, Oct 16: Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy was set to at least partially unveil a plan to win the war against Russia to his country's Parliament on Wednesday after weeks of dropping hints about the blueprint to lukewarm Western allies, including U.S.

The plan — comprising military, political, diplomatic and economic elements — is considered by many as Ukraine's last resort to strengthen its hand in any future cease-fire negotiations with Russia. Thus far, however, no country has publicly endorsed it or commented on its feasibility.

Zelenskyy is keen to get the "victory plan" in place before a new U.S. president is sworn in next year. though Ukrainian officials say neither presidential candidate will necessarily improve Kyiv's standing in the war. Zelenskyy's presentation to Parliament, announced on Monday by presidential adviser Serhii Leshchenko, comes during a bleak moment in Ukraine. The country's military is suffering losses along the eastern front as Russian forces inch closer to a strategically significant victory near the crucial logistics hub of Pokrovsk.

At every turn, Kyiv is outnumbered by Moscow: The country is struggling to replenish ranks with an unpopular mobilization drive: its ammunition stocks are limited: and Russia's superiority in the skies is wreaking havoc for Ukrainian defensive lines.

It's not clear how much of his victory plan Zelenskyy will reveal on Wednesday; Leshchenko indicated that it would be fully unveiled, while other officials suggested that the president would not divulge its most sensitive elements to all lawmakers.

Either way, the plan essentially puts Kyiv's future in the hands of its allies. Without it, any deal with Russia would almost certainly be unfavorable for Ukraine, which has lost a fifth of its territory and tens of thousands of lives in the conflict. Kviv would be unlikely to ever recover occupied territory, or receive reparations for widespread destruction across the country.

Several elements of the plan have already come to

light: making Ukraine a member of NATO; allowing the country to use Western long-range weapons to strike deep inside Russia; providing resources to strengthen Ukraine's air and other defenses, and intensifying sanctions against Russia.

Ukraine's surprise military incursion into Russia's Kursk region in August was also part of the plan, Zelenskyy told reporters. He said the 1,000 square kilometers (386 square miles) of territory captured by Ukraine — along with other provisions of the plan will likely serve as a bargaining chip in negotiations

NATO's Article 5 states that an attack against one member is considered an attack against all. Ukraine's inclusion in the alliance would deter Russian President Vladimir Putin from invading again, Ukrainian officials argue. Western leaders have so far been reluctant to guarantee an invitation, fearing escalation from Putin. Ukrainian officials were expecting feedback from Western allies at a meeting of the Ukraine Defense Contact Group at Ramstein Air Base in Germany, during which defense leaders from 50-plus partner nations gather to coordinate weapons aid for the war. Scheduled for this past weekend, the summit was postponed after Biden canceled his attendance in response to Hurricane Milton in the U.S.

Zelenskyy has since toured Western capitals to present other key allies an outline of his vision. But none so far have given any indication they will support the plan. Some expressed concerns over the tight deadline set by Zelenskyy, who gave allies just three months to adopt the blueprint's main tenets in late September.

Thus far, the U.S. has been Kyiv's main backer during the two-and-a-half-year war. But Biden has balked at the request to use long-range weapons to strike specific targets inside Russia, fearing a possible escalation in the war. Meanwhile, an intensifying conflict in the Middle East between Israel and Hezbollah that risks embroiling Iran has diverted Washington's atten-

Many expect Democratic nominee and Vice President Kamala Harris to continue Biden's policy and maintain the status quo. Under Biden, U.S. assistance to Kyiv, though substantial, has consistently arrived too late to make a significant difference for Ukrainian forces. Republican nominee and former President Donald Trump has only said that he'd end the war quickly, without saying how.

Meanwhile, Brazil and China have proposed alternate peace plans that Zelenskyy has rejected, saying they would merely pause the war and give Moscow time to consolidate its battered army and defense in-

No bomb found on Air India Express plane: Singapore police

SINGAPORE, Oct 16: No bomb was found aboard an Air India Express plane which landed in Singapore more than an hour after its scheduled arrival time, the police said on Wednesday.

The police said it found no bomb after completing security checks at Changi Airport on the low-cost carrier's aircraft from the Indian city of Madurai.

e-mail about a bomb on flight AXB684 scheduled to land at Changi Airport in Singapore at 8.50 pm on Tuesday. The flight escorted by

The airline received an

two F-15 fighter jets from the Republic of Singapore Air Force (RSAF) landed at 10.04 pm. The police said they were informed of the bomb threat at 8.25 pm and completed checks after the plane landed, reported The Straits Times. Investigations are ongo-

ing and action will be taken against those who intentionally caused public alarm, the police said. Flight tracker Fligh-

tradar24 showed the plane was circling for about an hour east of Singapore before landing. Defence Minister Ng Eng Hen in a

"The real issue for Australians is of an election in which housing af-

policy agenda

"For the prime minister to make

this purchase in this climate is just

Ghazarian said. Ghazarian said the

home also damaged Albanese's po-

litical brand. Albanese, who is paid

an annual salary exceeding

that being raised in

public housing by a single mom gave

him an appreciation

of the financial

struggles of low-in-

A Sydney radio

station first re-

ported the real es-

tate transaction on

come families.

distracting for the Labor Party,"

plane away from populated areas to finally land safely at Singapore's Changi Airport at around 10.04 pm tonight. Our

of our RSAF's F-15SGs

scrambled and escorted the

were also activated." to the airport police when

former public security chief is set Ground Based Air Defence to be sentenced in a U.S. court on systems and Explosive Wednesday after being convicted Ordnance Disposal team of taking bribes to aid drug traf-The plane was handed Federal prosecutors in Brook-

lyn are asking a judge to order that Genaro García Luna be incarcerated for life, while his lawyers say he should spend no more than 20 years behind bars.

Mexico's former public

security chief set to be

sentenced in US drug case

NEW YORK, Oct 16: Mexico's

García Luna, 56, was convicted early last year of taking millions of dollars in bribes to protect the violent Sinaloa cartel that he was supposedly combating. He denied

the allegations. Prosecutors wrote that Garcia Luna's actions advanced a drug trafficking conspiracy that resulted in the deaths of thousands of American and Mexican citi-

"It is difficult to overstate the magnitude of the defendant's crimes, the deaths and addiction he facilitated and his betrayal of the people of Mexico and the United States," prosecutors wrote.

"His crimes demand justice." García Luna headed Mexico's federal police before he served in a cabinet-level position as the country's top security official from 2006 to 2012 during the administration of former Mexican President Felipe Calderón.

García Luna was not only considered the architect of Calderón's bloody war on cartels, but was also hailed as an ally by the U.S. in its fight on drug trafficking.

During the trial, photos were shown of García Luna shaking hands with former President

Australia's PM is criticized for buying a waterfront home during a housing crisis scribed the timing as "questionable." the buy as "politically risky" ahead

MELBOURNE, Oct 16: Australian Prime Minister Anthony Albanese has been criticized for buying a multimillion-dollar waterfront home during a national housing crisis with federal elections just months away.

Critics argue that the purchase of the 4.3 million Australian dollar (\$2.9 million) clifftop home at Copacabana, north of his hometown of Sydney, made him appear out of touch with many Australians who are struggling to buy or rent a home due to elevated interest rates, rising prices and limited supply.

Albanese brushed off criticisms Wednesday when questioned by reporters about concerns raised privately within his own government.

"We want to get on with helping Australians, whether it be public housing, whether it be rentals or whether it be buying their own homes," Albanese said.

Copacabana and several other beaches in the area have mainly multi-million dollar price tags on their waterfront homes, owned by Sydney-siders who still have homes in the city or have moved to a more tranquil lifestyle.

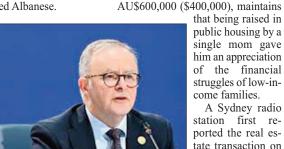
Opposition lawmaker Sussan Lev described the purchase as evidence that Albanese was "out of touch," and her colleague Angie Bell dea lot of people want to be able to buy fordability will be "at the top of the a home, but they're finding it very, very difficult and the current government is doing a very poor job at getting the policy settings in place to

make it easier," opposition lawmaker Paul Fletcher told Sky News Australia. Government lawmakers have publicly backed Albanese. "I think the average

Australian says, 'Fair enough leave him alone, I'll criticize his policies or I'll support polihis cies,

criticize or support his government, but I'm not going to criticize or support what he does with his own bank account with his own money," Cabinet minister Chris Bowen told Australian Broadcasting Corp

Albanese's center-left Labor Party seeks a second three-year term in office at elections due by May next year. Monash University political scientist Zareh Ghazarian described



Tuesday. banese's offer for the four-bedroom house was made in September and the sale was expected to be completed by the end of October. On Tuesday, Albanese explained

he was buying the house because the family of his fiancee, Jodie Haydon, lived on the Central Coast. Albanese lives in the prime minister's official residences in Sydney and the national capital Canberra. (AP)

Barack Obama and speaking with former Secretary of State Hillary Clinton and former Sen. John Mc-Cain. (AP)

At least 90 people killed and 50 injured after a gasoline tanker explodes in Nigeria, police say

ABUJA, Oct 16: More than 90 people have been killed and 50 others injured after a gasoline tanker overturned in Nigeria and sparked an explosion as dozens of people rushed to the vehicle to scoop up the fuel, police said on Wednesday. The explosion occurred past midnight in Jigawa state after the tanker driver lost control of the vehicle while traveling on a highway close to

a university, police spokesperson Lawan Adam said. "The residents were scooping up fuel from the overturned tanker when the explosion occurred, sparking a massive inferno that killed 94 people on the

Earthquake measuring 5.9 hits eastern Turkiye

ANKARA, Oct 16: A moderately strong earthquake struck eastern Turkiye on Wednesday, causing widespread panic, officials said. There were no immediate reports of any serious injury or damage.

The earthquake with a magnitude 5.9 struck the town of Kale in Malatya province at 10.46 am (07.46 GMT), according to the government-run Disaster and Emergency Management Presidency, or AFAD. It was felt in the nearby cities of Diyarbakir, Elazig, Erzincan and Tunceli, HaberTurk television re-

"We have not received any reports of any problems so far," Malatya Mayor Sami Er told the state-run Anadolu Agency, adding that officials were still assessing possible damage in more remote areas. (AP)

October's supermoon pairs with a comet for a special nighttime spectacle

CAPE CANAVERAL, Oct 16: October's supermoon is the closest of the year and it's teaming up with a comet for a rare stargazing two-for-one.

The third of four supermoons this year, it will be 222,055 miles (357,364 kilometers) away Wednesday night, making it seem even bigger and brighter than in August and September. It will reach its full lunar phase Thursday

In a twist of cosmic fate, a comet is in the neighborhood. Discovered last year, comet Tsuchinshan-Atlas is now prominent in the Northern Hemisphere after wowing stargazers in the Southern Hemisphere.

The moonlight will wash out

some of the comet's tail, but it's still worth a look after sunset. said NASA's Bill Cooke.

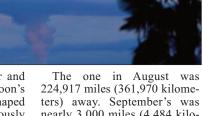
"Most astronomers hate the full moon because its bright light messes up observing other objects. So it's a bit hard for us to wax poetic about it even if it's the biggest supermoon of 2024," he said in an email. Better catch the comet; it may

never return. But don't fret if

you miss Thursday's supermoon. three or four times a year and The fourth and final supermoon of the year will rise on Nov. 15. More a popular term than a

scientific one, a supermoon occurs when a full lunar phase syncs up with an especially close swing around Earth. This usually happens only

consecutively, given the moon's constantly shifting, oval-shaped orbit. A supermoon obviously isn't bigger, but it can appear that way, although scientists say the difference can be barely per-



nearly 3,000 miles (4,484 kilometers) closer the night of Sept. 17 into the following morning.

A partial lunar eclipse also unfolded that night, visible in

much of the Americas, Africa and Europe as Earth's shadow fell on the moon, resembling a

October's supermoon is the year's closest at 222,055 miles (357,364 kilometers) from Earth. followed by the November supermoon at a distance of 224,853 miles (361,867 kilometers).

Scientists point out that only the keenest observers can discern the subtle differences. It's easier to detect the change in brightness — a supermoon can

be 30% brighter than average. With the U.S. and other countries ramping up lunar exploration with landers and eventually astronauts, the moon beckons brighter than ever. (AP)

Nagaland cabinet to soon meet **PM, Shah, Himanta: Dy CM**

Aim to resolve border dispute with Assam

KOHIMA, Oct 16: Representatives of the Nagaland government will soon meet PM Narendra Modi, Home Minister Amit Shah and Assam CM Himanta Biswa Sarma to address the ongoing border dispute with the neighbouring state, Deputy Chief Minister Y Pat-

Patton told this to villagers on Tuesday while visiting Tuli in the Mokokchung district that borders Assam to take stock of the situation on the ground.

Patton, who also holds the portfolio for home and border affairs, was accompanied by local MLAA Pangjung Jamir, DGP Rupin Sharma and officers of the district administration, an official statement said on Wednesday.

The team inspected key areas of concern, including the Assam Po-



lice Commando Battalion camp at Septsuyong Lu in Kangtsung village and Wameken Yimsen village,

The visit aimed to assess the situation on the ground and engage with local stakeholders amid growing tensions in the border area, it

During the discussions with the villagers and representatives of Ao Senden, the apex tribal body of the

district, Patton said the state cabinet during its meeting on October 9 deliberated on the matter, emphasising the government's serious approach to resolving the dispute.

He informed the villagers that letters had been sent to the PM, the home minister, and the CM of Assam to address the issue and that the state cabinet would be meeting them soon, it said.

Patton also urged the villagers not to sell their land to non-indigenous people, stressing the importance of preserving local land ownership in the region.

Nagaland shares 512.1 km of interstate border with Assam. While both sides accuse each other of occupation of land in the Disputed Area Belt, a case has been ongoing in the Supreme Court for several years now. (PTI)

Dhankhar lays foundation stone for Meghalaya Skill and Innovation Hub

SHILLONG, Oct 16: Vice President Jagdeep Dhankhar on Wednesday laid the foundation stone for the Meghalaya Skill and Innovation Hub in New Shillong.

He also launched the 'CM Business Catalyst: Student B-Plan Challenge', which is supported by IIM-Shillong, and presided over the signing of an MoU between UNDP and the Meghalaya government for promoting entrepreneurship.

The Meghalaya Skill and Innovation Hub will be built on a 6.54-acre plot at ₹ 77.5 Cr. It will be developed as a facility for incubation, training, collaboration and industry partnerships.

Speaking at the function, Dhankhar said the empowerment of youth is the need of the hour as it will boost the economy of the coun-

The Vice President believes that the Skill and Innovation Hub will have an impeccable impact on promoting entrepreneurship in the



He further stated that PM Modi has laid the grounds for the youth through different skilling and startup programmes, as he said that ₹ 60,000 crore has been reserved for skilling 5 lakh youth in the next five years. Meanwhile, the chief minister said that Meghalaya's young

population is its strength and his government is committed to supporting entrepreneurship in a big way. He further mentioned that to channel this strength of the youth and address the manpower shortage, the skill and innovation hub was

Three arrested, arms seized in Manipur

IMPHAL, Oct 16: Manipur Police arrested three persons for setting on fire the sub deputy commissioner (SDC) office at Kumbi in Bishnupur district last month, an official statement said on Wednesday.

It said the three persons were arrested on Monday. They have been remanded into police custody for

"Efforts are on to arrest other accused persons involved in the incident," it said.

Unknown miscreants on September 26 night torched the SDC office at Kumbi. However, timely intervention by locals and police prevented extensive damage to the office.

In another development, security forces seized a huge cache of arms during a search operation conducted at Leirongthel Pitra Uyok Ching areas in Thoubal district, it said.

The seized items include one 7.62 mm AK Rifle with a magazine, a 7.62 SLR Rifle with a magazine, a 9 mm SMG Rifle with a magazine, a 9 mm pistol with a magazine, a 12 mm bore single barrel gun and hand grenades, the statement said. (PTI)

More meetings to take place on Manipur ethnic crisis: Minister



IMPHAL, Oct 16: Manipur minister Awangbow Newmai on Wednesday said that there will be more meetings involving Meitei and Kuki leaders in the future to address the

ethnic issue in the northeastern state. Newmai, who belongs to the Naga community, returned from New Delhi after participating in the first such meeting convened by the ministry of home affairs (MHA) as part of its efforts to iron out differences between the Meiteis and Kukis and find an amicable solution to the cri-

"I am grateful to the Home Ministry for taking this initiative. We need frequent meetings as everyone

is longing for peace. We have to find out what is best for everyone," Newmai told reporters at Imphal airport.

Around 20 MLAs belonging to the Meitei, Kuki and Naga communities of Manipur met in New Delhi for the first time since ethnic violence broke out in the state 17 months ago.

"I saw a lot of positivity in the Home Ministry's initiative. There will be more meetings. Yesterday's was just the initial meeting," the water resource department and relief and disasters management minister

Asked when the next meeting will happen, Newmai said he could not say it "but it will happen soon

The main thing needed for both sides right now is to try to come together and be involved in dialogue. the Naga Peoples Front legislator

Law minister Th Basantakumar Singh and health minister Sapam Ranjan also returned from Delhi on Wednesday. They, however, did not

Nagaland's 4G project connecting remote areas: Sangtam at IMC 2024

KOHIMA, Oct 16: During the India Mobile Congress (IMC) 2024 held at Pragati Maidan, New Delhi on October 15, a delegation from Nagaland, led by H. Sethrongkhyu Sangtam, advisor, information technology & communication, economics & statistics, evaluation government of Nagaland, presented key developments in expanding connectivity across the state.

The event, organised by the department of telecommunications (DoT), Government of India, in partnership with the Cellular Operators Association of India (COAI), saw over 250 companies and 400 startups, making it one of the largest telecom and digital technology events in Asia, an official statement said.

H Sethrongkhyu Sangtam highlighted the progress under Nagaland's 4G Saturation Project, which is bringing connectivity to the most remote parts of the state. He expressed gratitude for the immense community support that has been instrumental in overcoming the state's unique geographical challenges, including



A key highlight was the Right of Way (RoW) policy amendment, facilitating the seamless deployment of telecommunications infrastructure. Sangtam also emphasised Nagaland's embrace of 5G technology as the state

In his address, Sangtam commended the collaboration between the government and local communities. where 277 villages donated land free

progresses toward improving connec-

telecom infrastructure.

With the remaining uncovered villages set to receive connectivity under the 4G Saturation Project, Nagaland is positioning itself as a key player in India's digital revolution, aligning with the vision of Atmanirbhar

Sangtam expressed his sincere gratitude to the Prime Minister, Union minister, and the department of telecommunications for their continued support in transforming Nagaland's connectivity landscape, the

Nagaland's delegation to IMC 2024 includes commissioner & secretary, IT&C, Mohammed Ali Shihab (IAS); director IT&C, Er. Sabou Yashu; joint director IT&C, Er. Chura Katiry; program officer IT&C, Vizosielie Semou and PA to the advisor IT&C, Athrili Anar.

During the event, Union minister, Jyotiraditya M. Scindia, minister of state Dr Chandra Sekhar Pemmasani, ministry of communications, Government of India, along with chief ministers, IT ministers, and officials from various states across India, also attended the event, further enriching the discussions on the future of India's telecom sector.

IMC is Asia's largest telecom and digital technology event, showcasing cutting-edge innovations in 5G, AI, smart mobility, and more. This year, IMC 2024 coincided with the World Telecommunications Standards Assembly (WTSA), bringing global industry leaders together to discuss the future of telecommunications, it

AMMOCOC cites MHA for sidelining Pangal community during talks



IMPHAL, Oct 16: All Manipur Muslim Organizations' Coordinating Committee (AMMOCOC) has lamented that legislators from the Pangal (Meitei Muslim) community have been sidelined on Tuesday's talk in New Delhi convened by the Ministry of Home Affairs (MHA).

Legislators from Naga, Kuki-Zo, and Meitei communities were invited for the talk by the MHA in New Delhi today on the prevailing situation of Manipur.

Addressing a press conference at Hatta in Imphal East today, AMMO-COC president SM Jalal said the organisation welcomed the talk. However, it was hurt as the Pangal (Meitei Muslim) community was sidelined as none of the legislators belonging to the community was invited to engage in the talk/dialogue although legislators belonging to of the state. (NNN)

Meitei, Kuki-Zo and Naga commu-

nities were invited to the talk. The AMMOCOC president then urged both the Central and State Governments to engage the Meitei Pangal legislators in the talk while asserting that the same community the ties between various communities in Manipur as a neutral community since the onset of the ongoing

He then expressed strong reservations about the ongoing talks facilitated by the ministry of home affairs to resolve the Manipur crisis. Jalal said that they will not accept

any outcome which will be detrimental to Manipur's integrity.

Notably, the talk, which began today in New Delhi, aimed to address the prolonged crisis that has ravaged the state since May 3, 2023. He wished for a positive outcome which would put an end to the vio-

lence from May 3, 2023. Jalal, however, cautioned that AMMOCOC and the Meitei Pangal community will take firm decisions against any outcome, which will be detrimental to the peaceful coexistence of different communities in

Manipur and the territorial integrity

Bye-election for Meghalaya constituency announced

'Model Code of Conduct applicable in concerned districts

SHILLONG, Oct 16: The Election Commission of parties and the state government concerned. India (ECI) has announced November 13 for holding the bye-election for the Gambegre Assembly con
"The model code of conduct will be applicable in the concerned district, where the Assembly constituency in West Garo Hills district of Meghalaya, stituency falls in the West Garo Hills," the CEO said. chief electoral officer BDR Tiwari said on Tuesday. The bye-election was necessitated following the resignation of Saleng A Sangma from the opposition

Congress after he was elected as a Member of Parliament from Tura constituency earlier this

The notification for the Gambegre bye-election will be issued on October 18 while the last date for filing of the nominations will be on October 25, and scrutiny of nomination papers on October 28, the CEO said.

The last date of withdrawal of nominations will be on October 30 and the bye-election will be held on November 13, he said, adding that the results will be declared on November 23.

"The election machinery is fully prepared for the conduct of free, fair and smooth elections," Tiwari

The election commission also said that the model code of conduct shall come into force with immediate effect in the district in which the whole or any part of the Assembly constituency is going for bye-election. It will also be applicable to all candidates, political

Meanwhile, the ruling National People's Party (NPP) has announced its decision to field chief min-

ister Conrad K Sangma's wife Mehtab Chandee Sangma while opposition TMC is fielding lone woman GHADC member from Dengnakpara Sadhiarani M Sangma, who is also the wife of former Rangsakona

legislator Zenith M Sangma. However, the opposition Congress and Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) are yet to announce their candidates.

On Monday, NPP leader and cabinet minister Ampareen Lyngdoh said that the party was preparing itself adequately for the upcoming bye-election. She had also expressed confidence that the NPP will fight to win

The constituency has a total of 32, 254 voters including 16,331 males and 15,923 females, 3 service voters, 64 senior citizens, and 100 persons with disabilities (PwDs).

Of 51 polling stations, 31 are identified as critical polling stations. There are no vulnerable polling stations under the constituency. (NNN)

MSP rate hike will empower farmers: Arunachal CM

GUWAHATI, Oct 16: Chief Minister Pema Khandu took to microblogging site X on Wednesday to hail the Union Cabinet's decision to increase the MSP for Rabi crops for the 2025-26 marketing season. Taking to X, Khandu wrote, "It is so heartening to share today's Union Cabinet's decision to approve increased MSP for Rabi crops for the 2025-26 marketing season." Khandu emphasised on the importance of the decision for the farmers in his tweet. He wrote, "The significant hike, especially for rapeseed and mustard, is a positive move that will empower our farmers and ensure they receive fair compensation for their hard work." Meanwhile, the Union Cabinet on Wednesday at proved the increase in MSP rates of all rabi crops for the season 2025-26. The highest increase in MSP was observed in Mustard and Rapeseed, each at ₹ 300 per quintal followed by Lentil (Masur) at ₹ 275 per quintal. Moreover, for gram, wheat, safflower, and barley, a hike of ₹210 per quintal, ₹150 per quintal, ₹140 per quintal, and ₹ 130 per quintal was announced, respectively.

Sikkim constitutes five-member panel ahead of bypolls

GANGTOK, Oct 16: The ruling Sikkim Krantikari Morcha (SKM) on Wednesday constituted a five-member parliamentary board comprising senior ministers to select candidates for by-elections to Soreng-Chakung and Namchi-Singhithang assembly constituencies in the Himalayan state, a party statement said. Bypolls will be held in the two constituencies on November 13. "In exercise of powers conferred under Article XI of the Constitution of the SKM, the president (chief minister Prem Singh Tamang) hereby constitutes the parliamentary board for the upcoming bypolls in Soreng-Chakung and Namchi-Singhithang assembly constituencies," the statement issued by party general secretary (headquarters) Pawan Gurung said. SKM working president Kunga Nima Lepcha has been appointed as the chairman of the parliamentary board with senior ministers Sonam Lama, Arun Kumar Upreti, Bhoj Raj Rai, and Nar Bahadur Dahal (Chettri) being the members, he said. (PTI)

'Ghost of the mountains' has high significance in local culture Arunachal Pradesh home to 36 snow leopards

ITANAGAR, Oct 16: The survey by the Department of Environment, Forests and Climate Change (DoE-FCC), in collaboration with the WWF-India was released by Arunachal Pradesh forest minister Wangki Lowang on Tuesday.

The report provides the first-ever scientifically robust estimates of the snow leopard population and density in Arunachal Pradesh. The report provides a baseline of the state of snow leopards in Arunachal Pradesh to establish a long-term monitoring plan for the species.

The snow leopard (Panthera uncia) is the apex predator of the trans-Himalayas. It also has a high significance in the local folklore, culture, and traditions of the Himalayan communities that share space with this

In 2008, the government of India launched a flagship project called Project Snow Leopard to conserve and safeguard the unique natural heritage of high-altitude wildlife populations and their habitats by promoting conservation through participatory policies and actions.

This is a significant recognition that the unique cultures, traditions and livelihoods of the mountain communities are closely linked with these landscapes, and they have a stewardship role to play in conserving them.

Cat species hold a special significance across most tribes of Arunachal Pradesh as totemic symbols of spiritual significance, and often most of these tribes have the highest sanctions (in-kind) if they violate the taboo on hunting carnivores. The high-altitude areas of Arunachal Pradesh have largely remained unexplored from a wildlife research and conservation perspective.

Solitary, almost silent and majestically beautiful, the snow leopard is one of the most enigmatic big cats. It is also one of the most elusive and endangered. Highly adapted to life on the cold, rocky slopes of high Asia, the snow leopard is a master of

stealth and camouflage. Very rarely seen by humans, it has come to be known as the 'ghost of the mountains'. It has also become an



icon for these breathtaking and critically important landscapes, which house a diverse array of unique highaltitude species and provide critical ecosystem services for hundreds of millions of people.

In India, the snow leopard is found in the Union territories of Ladakh and Jammu and Kashmir, the states of Uttarakhand and Himachal Pradesh in

Western Himalayas and Arunachal Pradesh and Sikkim in the Eastern Himalayas. Even though Arunachal Pradesh

has more than 15,000 square kilome-

tres of potential snow leopard habitat, no rigorous assessment of the status of the snow leopards exists so far. The DoEFCC initiated a pioneering project to assess the population of snow leopards in 2021, the report It said the exercise was challeng-

ing given that the snow leopard habitat in Arunachal Pradesh, unlike most other places, is not easily accessible, and the terrain is particularly challenging.

This is the first study that attempts a robust assessment of the population of snow leopards in the state and does it at a scale that covers the entire potential habitat of the snow leopards. The study used state-of-the-art simulations to develop a robust design for the state-level assessment, followed by a gruelling period of fieldwork when the frontline staff of the state forest department participated with

great enthusiasm. DoEFCC co-opted WWF-India as the technical knowledge partner to design the study, train the staff and execute the fieldwork

As a part of the fieldwork, the department used camera trapping exercises from June 24 to December 9, 2021, covering 115 locations across

They also conducted interviews with herders and ex-hunters in 160 locations (hamlets, villages, and grazing camps), to assess state-level snow leopard presence, perceptions, and threats to the species and its habi-

wees positively confirmed the presence of snow leopards from all the surveyed districts During the fieldwork, eight indi-

Over 80 per cent of the intervie-

vidual snow leopards were detected in over 40 snow leopard capture events in 16 different camera traps in Tawang and Bomdila divisions. It identified that the most signifi-

cant threat to snow leopards is accidental killing or snaring in all the surveyed districts except West Kameng and Tawang, where retaliatory killing is the primary threat, followed by accidental killing and snaring.

It was also identified that the development of large-scale infrastructure and free-ranging dogs seriously threatens the wildlife in high-elevation areas of the West Kameng and Tawang districts. (PTI)

Bank robbed in Manipur's Kakching



IMPHAL, Oct 16: A public sector bank was robbed at gunpoint in Manipur's Kakching district on Wednesday, officials said.

The incident happened at the branch of UCO Bank in Kakching

Bazar around 3 pm, they said. CCTV footage showed masked men forcing the unarmed guard and bankers to guide them inside the branch, they added.

As per preliminary calculations, not more than Rs 6 lakh in cash was robbed from the bank, officials said.

An investigation is underway, they said. Police said that were searching for those behind the robbery. (PTI)

Omar Abdullah sworn in as J&K CM, Cong stays away from govt for now

Conference leader Omar Abdullah took oath as the chief minister of Jammu and Kashmir on Wednesday, heading the first elected government in the Union territory since 2019 when Article 370 was abrogated and one the Congress is staying away from for now.

As Jammu and Kashmir turned another page in its troubled history, Lt Governor Manoj Sinha administered the oath of office and secrecy to Abdullah and five ministers, including Surinder Choudhary from Jammu who is deputy chief minister.

Abdullah, who takes over as chief minister for a second term, is the third generation of the influential Abdullah family to occupy the office -- after his grandfather Sheikh Abdullah and father Farooq Abdullah.

His first term as chief minister was from 2009 to 2014 when Jammu and Kashmir was a fullfledged state.

Congratulating Omar Abdullah, Prime Minister Narendra Modi wished him the best and said, "The Centre will work closely with him and his team for J&K's progress."

The five ministers sworn in were Choudhary, Sakina Masood (Itoo), Javed Dar, Javed Rana and Satish Sharma -- three from Jammu and two from the Kashmir Valley, a clear effort to assuage some of the apprehensions of people in Jammu

Choudhary is from Jammu as



only woman minister, and Dar are from the Valley. While Abdullah took his oath in English, Choudhary did so in Hindi.

"I had said that we will not allow Jammu to feel they do not have a voice or representatives in this government. I have chosen a deputy chief minister from Jammu so the people of Jammu feel that this government is as much theirs as it is of the rest," the new chief minister said soon after the ceremony at the Sher-i-International Convention Centre (SKICC).

He also said there are three vacancies and "they will gradually be

speculation mounted whether those would go to alliance partner Congress - while the NC won 42, the Congress bagged six the event was also an occasion for INDIA bloc leaders to demonstrate

The swearing-in ceremony of

the NC government comes in the

backdrop of the NC-Congress win

in Jammu and Kashmir and the

Congress loss to the BJP in Among those who attended were Congress leaders Rahul Gandhi, Priyanka Gandhi Vadra and Mallikarjun Kharge, SP chief Akhilesh Yadav, Left leaders Prakash Karat and D Raja, DMK's Kanimozhi and NCP's Supriya Sule. PDP chief Mehbooba Mufti was there as

JKPCC chief Tariq Hameed Karra said the Congress will not join the council of ministers for the moment because it is "unhappy" that statehood has not been re-

He added in a statement that the Congress would continue to fight for the restoration of statehood to

ner, PDP chief Mehbooba Mufti, said the day was "very auspicious" as the people of Jammu and Kashmir have got their government after several years.

"People have elected a stable government. People of Jammu and Kashmir suffered a lot especially after 2019, and we hope that this new government will heal the wounds we got," she said.

for the people (of J&K)."

them. Principally around the fact

that as a UT with a unicameral

house, we don't have the upper

government is severely restricted.

Gone are the days when you would

Abdullah said, "I have always

maintained that our status as a UT

is temporary one. We have com-

mitments from the government of

India, particularly from the prime

minister, home minister and others

that statehood will be restored to J-

K and we hope that happens at the

Omar Abdullah's family, includ-

ing his father and mother Molly

sons were present on the occasion.

gress have a strength of 48, a ma-

jority in the 95-member assembly

-- five members are to be nomi-

PM Modi becomes first

'active member' of BJP

NEW DELHI, Oct 16: Prime Min-

ister Narendra Modi on Wednesday

became the first person to be enrolled

as the 'active member' of the BJP as

he launched the party's 'Sakriya

He took his 'Sakriya Sadasyata'

(active membership) in the presence

eral secretary Vinod Tawde, who is

convener of the nationwide member-

ship drive. An 'active member' of the

BJP has to enrol at least 50 persons as

party members in a booth or in an as-

sembly seats. Only active members

take part in the party's organisational

elections, which will begin after the

membership drive ends. Modi said on

X, "Adding momentum to our en-

deavour of making a Viksit Bharat!

As BJP Karyakarta, proud to become

the first Sakriya Sadasya and launch

the Sakriya Sadasyata Abhiyan

today... This is a movement which

will further strengthen our Party at the

grassroots and ensure effective con-

of BJP president J P Nadda and gen-

Sadasyata Abhiyan' here.

nated by the LG. (PTI)

earliest".

see 40 or 45 ministers," he said.

"We hope that the government will pass a resolution condemning the decision of August 5, 2019, that the people of J-K do not ac-

cept those decisions," she added. The chief minister's father, NC president Farooq Abdullah, bluntly spelt out the hurdles in the road

"The state is full of challenges and I hope this government will do what it had promised in the election manifesto... It is a crown of thorns," he said, hoping that Allah helps the new CM fulfil the hopes of the people.

Taking the cue from his grandfather, Zahir Abdullah, Omar Abdullah's son, said the true struggle for the restoration of Article 370 will start after statehood. "Article 370 will always be our priority," he

In 2019, Article 370 was abrogated and the erstwhile state was bifurcated into the union territories of Jammu and Kashmir, and

In an interview with PTI Videos before taking office, Omar Abdullah addressed speculation of a rift

'Buoyed' BJP aims to win all 7 bypoll seats in Rajasthan; ruling party to draw blank, says Congress "If all is not well, why would (Mallikariun) Kharge (Congress



JAIPUR, Oct 16: The recent victory of the BJP in Haryana has buoyed the confidence of the party's Rajasthan unit ahead of the house. Therefore, the size of the bypolls on seven assembly seats going to take place on November 13. The ruling party leaders are hoping to win all the seats while the Terming Jammu and Kashmir's opposition Congress leaders are exunion territory status unfortunate, pecting the results to be in its

> Out of the seven seats on which bypolls are to be held, four of them were with the Congress and one each with the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP), Bharat Adivasi Party (BAP) and Rashtriya Loktantrik Party (RLP).

Voting for bypolls on seven assembly seats -- Jhunihunu, Dausa, Deoli-Uniara, Khinvsar, Chaurasi, Abdullah, his two sisters, and two Salumbar and Ramgarh will be held on November 13 and the results Together, the NC and the Conwill be declared on November 23.

> The BJP has been proactive in its preparations, having compiled a list of probable candidates for each vacant seat and which has already been submitted to the central leadership for final decision.

On the other side, the Congress is also engaging in candidate selection, seeking feedback from party members and local leaders to ensure they choose representatives who resonate with the electorate.

BAP is also planning to contest three seats. BJP state president Madan Rathore claimed that the party will win all the seven seats in the assembly bypolls.

"The BJP workers are fully prepared. 'Lotus' will bloom on all seven seats going to the bypolls," Rathore said. Expressing confidence in the functioning of the Bhajanlal Sharma government, which came to power in December, Rathore said the state government has done welfare work for all sections of society in 10 months. "The BJP workers will go among

the people with the works of the government and the party candidates will register victory with majority on all seats," he said.

Reacting to Rathore's claim, Congress state president Govind Dotasra said that the BJP will get zero seats in the bypolls as the people are fed up with the governance

in the state in just 10 months.

"People are disappointed and fed up with the BJP government. No governance is seen and law and order has completely deteriorated. There are multiple power centres and it is not clear who is ruling the state," he said.

"People have seen the misrule of the BJP government and will not vote for the BJP in the bypolls... The nine to ten months of the BJP government in Rajasthan have left people completely disappointed and distressed. People are saying that the government has become a circus," Dotasra said.

Rajasthan Pradesh Congress Committee general secretary Swarnim Chaturvedi said the present political atmosphere is in favour of their party.

He said the party is actively doing consultation to select the best candidate to ensure victory.

"Detailed work on candidate selection is going on. The atmosphere is in the favour of the Congress

"We are conducting thorough consultations to identify the best candidates for each seat," said Swarnim Chaturvedi, Congress

The BAP MP from Banswara-Dungarpur, Rajkumar Roat, said the party was planning to contest elections on Chorasi, Salumbar and Dausa seats. It has not been decided yet whether an alliance with any party will be made, he said.

"Our party leaders will take an appropriate decision whether an alliance should be done or not," he said. Two of these by elections are being held due to the death of the sitting MLAs -- Ramgarh's Congress MLA Zubair Khan and Salumbar's BJP MLA Amritlal Meena. In five constituencies, the MLAs were elected as MPs in the Lok Sabha polls, necessitating bypolls. Congress MLAs Brijendra Ola (Jhunjhunu), Harish Chandra Meena (Deoli-Uniara) and Murari Lal Meena (Dasau); RLP MLA Hanuman Beniwal (Khinvsar) and BAP MLA Rajkumar Roat (Chaurasi) were elected as MP in the Lok Sabha elections this vear (PTI)

MUDA chairman Marigowda resigns

BENGALURU, Oct 16: The land and gifted it to Parvathi --Mysuru Urban Development Authority (MUDA) chairman K Marigowda quit on Wednesday, amid a row over irregularities in allotment of sites to Chief Minister Siddaramaiah's wife Parvathi

He submitted his resignation from the post to the Urban Development Department Secretary.

"I have resigned following directions from the CM. Also, as I had health issues, I have resigned...there was no pressure on me, as I had health issues I have resigned," Marigowda, who is considered close to Siddaramaiah, told reporters here.

Responding to a question, he said, "Probe is on (in MUDA case allegedly involving CM) and it will continue...it will be known from the probe whether there were any irregularities."

Siddaramaiah is facing the Lokayukta and ED probes into alleged irregularities in the allotment of 14 sites to his wife by the

Siddaramaiah's wife, brotherin-law Mallikarjuna Swamy, Defrom whom Mallikarjuna Swamy purchased which he left the scene. (PTI)

SRINAGAR, Oct 16: Chief Min-

ister Omar Abdullah on Wednes-

day said the first task of his

government will be to become the voice of the people and expressed

optimism that Jammu and Kashmir

will not remain a Union territory

for a long time and regain full

Hours before taking oath of of-

fice, the National Conference

leader also told PTI Videos that all

his well with the alliance partner

Congress and that his party is in

talks with the grand old party and

also with his own team on filling

Stressing that his government

has a responsibility towards the

people, he said, "We have the man-

date from the people to get to work

to resolve their problems and that

is what we aim to do from day

On speculation of a rift between

National Conference and its coali-

tion partner Congress, Omar

quipped "No, why is not all well.

If all is not well, why (Mallikarjun)

Kharge (Congress president),

leaders of Congress would be com-

MLA in his cabinet, he said the na-

tional party is not out of the cabi-

"It is for the Congress to decide.

We have been in discussions with

them. Principally around the fact

that as a UT with a unicameral

house, we don't have the upper

house. Therefore, the size of the

government is severely restricted.

Gone are the days when you would

see 40 or 45 ministers," he said

while recalling that all MLAs in

the Mufti Sayeed government had

people (of J&K).

statehood soon.

ministerial vacancies.

and others are named as other accused in the case by Lokavukta.

Stating that Siddaramaiah is his leader and he has been with him for 40 years, Marigowda said, "He made me taluk and zilla panchayat president, has never asked to do illegal things, even on the MUDA issue."

Asked whether he was resigning to "save" the CM, he said, "No. I'm resigning on personal grounds. I had a stroke twice. I felt I cannot continue, so I have resigned."

To a question whether there was pressure on him to quit from Urban Development Minister Bvrathi Suresh, Marigowda said, "it is far from the truth."

On September 27, Congress workers and CM's supporters, who had gathered in large numbers in a show of support to Siddaramaiah at the Mysuru airport on his arrival there, tried to gherao Marigowda alleging that he was responsible for the CM's

Despite his attempts to explain, they did not listen to him and asked him to go back, following

Nayab Singh Saini elected leader of BJP legislature party

CHANDIGARH/PANCHKULA , Oct 16: Nayab Singh Saini on Wednesday staked claim to form the next government in Haryana, hours after he was unanimously

elected as the leader of the BJP

legislature party in the state. Saini will take oath as chief minister on Thursday, his second time. In a departure from tradition, the BJP had declared that Saini would remain chief minister if the party returned to power in Haryana after

At a meeting of newly elected Haryana BJP MLAs in Panchkula, Saini was unanimously picked as the leader of the BJP legislature

the assembly polls.

His name was proposed by MLA Krishan Kumar Bedi and seconded by Anil Vij, who had thrown his hat in the ring for the chief minister's post despite the party backing Saini. The announcement in this regard was made by Union Home Minister Amit Shah.

Shah and Madhya Pradesh Chief Minister Mohan Yadav attended the meeting as central observers of

Later, Saini met Haryana Governor Bandaru Dattatreya at the Raj Bhavan in Chandigarh and staked

claim to form the government in the state Saini had replaced Manohar Lal Khattar as the chief minister of

Haryana in March. The BJP secured an unprecedented third term in Haryana, winning 48 seats in the 90-member assembly. The Congress won 37

During a brief address at the party office in Panchkula, Shah said the BJP is going to form the government in Haryana for a third

"Today is an auspicious day for the BJP and the people of Haryana," he said.

Shah said the MLAs unanimously gave the responsibility of the chief minister's post to Saini. The Union minister congratu-

Minister Narendra Modi and party workers. He credited the Modi government's policies for the BJP's victory in Haryana. (PTI) Omar optimistic about early restoration of statehood to J&K

tribution of our Party Karyakartas for Centre will work closely with Omar, his team for J&K's progress: PM



NEW DELHI, Oct 16: Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Wednesday congratulated Omar Abdullah on being sworn in as the chief minister of Jammu and Kashmir, and said the Centre will work closely with him and his team for J-K's progress.

National Conference leader Omar Abdullah was sworn in as the chief minister of Jammu and Kashmir on Wednesday, the first elected government in the Union territory since 2019 when Article 370 was

In a post on X, Modi said, "Congratulations to Shri Omar Abdullah Ji on taking oath as the Chief Minister of Jammu and Kashmir. Wishing him the very best in his efforts to serve the people.'

"The Centre will work closely with him and his team for J&K's progress," the prime minister said.

Lt Governor Manoj Sinha administered the oath of office and secrecy to Abdullah, who takes over as chief minister for a second term and is the third generation of the Abdullah family to occupy the office -after his grandfather Sheikh Abdullah and father Farooq Abdullah.

Five ministers -- Sakina Masood (Itoo), Javed Dar, Javed Rana, Surinder Choudhary, and Satish Sharma -- also took the oath of office.

While Itoo and Dar are from the Kashmir valley, Rana, Choudhary and Sharma are from the Jammu region. (PTI)

CORRIGENDUM NO- 6 FOR TENDER NOTICE NO.: CON/2024/AUG/03 DATED. 05-08-2024 Corrigendum-6 has been issued against Tender No. CE/ CON/LTD/EPC/2024/09. For details please visit in website www.ireps.gov.in. CE/CON/1, Maligaon NORTHEAST FRONTIER RAILWAY

PARKING CONTRACT OVER TINSUKIA DIVISION

Finsukia, Silapathar, Moranhat, Borhat, Sibsagar Town (Stand-II), Jorhat Town (Goods Railway Station & Bogibeel (Guide Bund) for both North and South Bank. Auctio Catalogue No.: TSK-Parking-24. Category: Parking - Mixed & Parking - Passeng Carrying Commercial Vehicles; Rate Unit: Annual Licensing Fee. Days: 1095 Auction Start Date & Time (All Lots): 10:00 hrs. on 30-10-2024.

oeq 140.	Lot No.	Edition Date of Time
AA/1	PARKING-TSK-SRTN-MX-36-24-1	10:30 hrs. on 30-10-2024
AA/2	PARKING-TSK-BDLN-MX-37-24-1	10:40 hrs. on 30-10-2024
AA/3	PARKING-TSK-DBRT-MX-1-22-1	10:50 hrs. on 30-10-2024
AA/4	PARKING-TSK-NCH-MX-9-22-2	11:00 hrs. on 30-10-2024
AA/5	PARKING-TSK-NMT-MX-10-23-1	11:10 hrs. on 30-10-2024
AA/6	PARKING-TSK-TSK-MX-38-24-1	11:20 hrs. on 30-10-2024
AA/7	PARKING-TSK-SPTR-MX-39-24-1	11:30 hrs. on 30-10-2024
AA/8	PARKING-TSK-MRHT-MX-3-22-1	11:40 hrs. on 30-10-2024
AA/9	PARKING-TSK-DMGN-MX-30-24-1	11:50 hrs. on 30-10-2024
AA/10	PARKING-TSK-BFD-MX-6-22-2	12:00 hrs. on 30-10-2024
AB/1	PARKING-TSK-JTTN-PCCV-29-23-1	12:10 hrs. on 30-10-2024

ninutes. Note: Prospective bidder are requested to visit e-Auction leasin nodule on IREPS website www.ireps.gov.in for more details. Sr. Divisional Commercial Manager, Tinsuki NORTHEAST FRONTIER RAILWAY

E-AUCTION FOR CATERING UNITS AT TINSUKIA DIVISION

E-Auction for catering units (General Minor Unit) over Tinsukia Division. Rate Unit: Annual Licensing Fee. Trips/Days. 1826.

Auction Catalogue No. Catg-GMU-6		
Seq No.	Lot No./Category	Description
AA/1	Catg-TSK-LEDO-GMU-81-24-1	At PF-1,GMU tea stall no 3,size 8X4=32 sq feet
AA/2	Catg-TSK-SLGR-GMU-53-24-1	At PF-1,GMU Tea stall no-2, size 8X4=32 sq feet
AA/3	Catg-TSK-SRTN-GMU-78-24-1	At PF-1,GMU tea stall no 4,size 8X4=32 sq feet
AA/4	Catg-TSK-SRTN-GMU-1-24-2	GMU (tea stall no:1) at Sibsagar Town Station
AA/5	Catg-TSK-NAM-GMU-60-24-1	At PF-1,GMU tea stall no 4 size 8X4=32 sq feet
AA/6	Catg-TSK-LEDO-GMU-80-24-1	At PF-1,GMU tea stall no 4,size 8X4=32 sq feet
AA/7	Catg-TSK-NAM-GMU-64-24-1	At PF-1,GMU tea stall no 2 size 8X4=32 sq feet
AA/8	Catg-TSK-SRTN-GMU-77-24-1	At PF-1,GMU tea stall no 2,size 8X4=32 sq feet
AA/9	Catg-TSK-NAM-GMU-6-24-1	GMU(Tea stall no 1 at Namrup station)
AA/10	Catg-TSK-SLGR-GMU-55-24-1	At PF-2,GMU Tea stall no- 6, size 8X4=32 sq feet at Simaluguri Jn. station

Auction Start Date & Time: 11.00 hrs. of 31-10-2024. Auction Close Date & Time: 13.00 hrs. of 31-10-2024. Prospective bidders are requested to visit E-Auction Leasing Module on IREPS website www.ireps.gov.in

Divisional Railway Manager (C), Tinsukia **NORTHEAST FRONTIER RAILWAY**

ministerial ranks.

"It is not the case this time. So I will not be filling all nine vacancies in the council of ministers... So not all vacancies would be filled, some vacancies would be kept to be filled going ahead as I said we are in talks with Congress but also from within my own team. Let us see how we go," Abdullah

Rahul (Gandhi) and other senior The Congress on Wednesday said it has decided not to join the ing here. Their presence here is indicative of the fact that the alliance council of ministers in the newly formed Jammu and Kashmir govis strong, and we will work for the ernment as the party was "un-Replying to a question about happy" that statehood was not non-inclusion of any Congress restored to the Union territory.

Abdullah noted that J-K is without an elected government since 2018 so it has been a long gap without democracy and people have felt "voiceless"

"I think the first thing obviously this government has to do is to be the voice of the people of J-K. They must feel a part of this government, they must feel that they have a voice and we must also ensure that they are heard. We cannot suppress their voice," the NC

He also said that the people's voice gets magnified through the press and you cannot have a democracy without having a functional press. "A strong democracy requires a

strong institution of press and I am committed to that," he said. On the challenges ahead, he said it is a mix and obviously, governing Jammu and Kashmir comes

with its own challenges.

"This is also an incredible opportunity for a generational shift in government, for a new team to come and we are UT therefore this is a chance to figure out how it works. This is a new mandate from the people so yes there are a lot of challenges but it also is an incredible opportunity, it will be a crime to allow this opportunity to go to waste," he said.

On former Delhi Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal expressing his willingness to share his experience with him on governing a 'halfstate' like Delhi, Abdullah said "I have a lot of lessons to learn. I learnt a lot of lessons in six years, made some mistakes and intend not to repeat those mistakes again

and again". "I definitely am not doing that. But nobody is perfect so every day

because it is only a fool who keeps

is an opportunity to learn. So yes, one will learn from everybody who has experience governing this country. But again I make the point I sincerely believe that we will not be a UT for a long time. Therefore, this so called half state is very much a temporary phase and we will be a full state soon," he said.

Abdullah took over as the first chief minister of J-K post abrogation of Article 370 and bifurcation of the erstwhile state into two Union territories. He had earlier ruled the erstwhile state from 2008 to 2014,

Terming the Union territory status of Jammu and Kashmir as unfortunate, he said.

"I have always maintained that our status as a UT is temporary one. We have commitments from the Government of India, particularly from the prime minister, home minister and others that statehood will be restored to J-K and we hope that happens at the earliest".

On MP Sheikh Rashid's statement on statehood, he said, "I don't need lessons from him. The people know who he is ... I am setting aside everything that he did at the behest of whoever he did it for. The public has spoken and he needs to respect the mandate of the

"And the people's mandate could not be clearer both in favour of the government and for his own party. Therefore, before you take a little bit of time to analyse why his party is where it is. Do some corrective action for his own party, then we will sit down and see what he has to say about J-K," he said. (PTI)

curity at the border immediately

Police Force of Nepal and asked

them to check any unnecessary

movement of people across the

India-Nepal border through Ru-

paidiha (Bahraich) and increase

The SSB officer said the to and

fro movement at the border here

usually goes up around the time of

Dussehra, which is an important

UP Udyog Vyapar Mandal's

Bahraich chapter president Gauri

Shankar Bhaniramka said the sus-

pension of internet services has

impacted the business in the dis-

impacted due to internet services'

"Business worth crores has been

The police said so far five FIRs

have been lodged in connection

with the violence, mostly against

unidentified persons. Searches for

key accused Abdul Hamid, his

IndiGo Mumbai-Delhi flight diverted to

Ahmedabad after bomb threat; turns out hoax

night, the aircraft, carrying nearly

200 passengers and crew, was thor-

oughly checked by the security

agencies overnight. However,

nothing suspicious was found. The

flight took-off for Delhi at around

8 am today after getting a green

In a statement, IndiGo said

flight 6E 651, operating from

Mumbai to Delhi, was redirected

to Ahmedabad due to a "security-

all passengers were safely disem-

barked. Ensuring the safety and se-

curity of our customers and crew

remains paramount in all facets of

our operations. We worked closely

with the relevant authorities, and

standard operating procedures

"We sincerely regret any incon-

venience this situation may have

caused our customers and appreci-

were followed," it said.

"The aircraft was isolated, and

signal from the security person-

nel," the official said.

related alert".

festival in Nepal.

suspension," he said.

frisking there," Udawat told PTI.

"We have spoken to the Armed

after the Sunday incident.

Bahraich violence: No internet for third day, security beefed up along Nepal border

BAHRAICH (UP), Oct 16: Mobile internet and and broadband services remained suspended for the third day in a row in troubletorn Maharajganj on Wednesday, impacting daily life and businesses, officials said.

THURSDAY, OCTOBER 17, 2024

However, the situation in and around the two is returning to normalcy with no untoward incident being reported since Tuesday, they

There was heavy police deployment in the district, particularly in the 20-km radius of Maharajganj town in the Mahsi tehsil where communal violence broke out on Sunday leading to the death of a

In view of the situation in Bahraich, which shares an international border with Nepal, the Sashastra Seema Bal has increased vigilance on the border and reached out to their counterparts, too, asking them to put a check on "unnecessary" movement of people, a senior officer said.

Ram Gopal Mishra, 22, was shot dead and about half a dozen people were injured in stone pelting and



firing as communal violence broke out during a Durga idol immersion procession in Bahraich on Sunday.

The incident prompted heavy security deployment in the area and a police crackdown, leading to the arrest of over 50 suspected rioters till Tuesday evening and the lodging of five separate FIRs over the violence and arson.

"No untoward incident has been reported since Tuesday. The situation is under control in the area that witnessed the violence on Sunday

and Monday," a local police officer

The situation in other parts of the district is said to be normal, with open markets and people going about their business as usual.

However, the suspension of internet services for the third day in a row has impacted business, local trade body officer-bearers said, as the district remained virtually cut

SSB's 42nd battalion Commandant Ganga Singh Udawat said that sons Rinku alias Sarfaraz alias

AHMEDABAD, Oct 16: A Delhi-

bound IndiGo aircraft from Mum-

bai was diverted to Ahmedabad

after receiving a bomb threat,

which later turned out to be a hoax,

The aircraft was isolated, and all

bassengers were safely disem-

barked. After a thorough checking,

nothing suspicious was found and

the the flight took-off for Delhi on

Soon after the flight took-off

from Mumbai on Tuesday night,

an unidentified person, through a

tweet, claimed a bomb had been

placed in the aircraft which was

carrying nearly 200 passengers and

crew, an official from the Sardar

Vallabhbhai Patel International

After being alerted by the Mum-

bai ATC, the pilots decided to

make an emergency landing at

Ahmedabad airport, which was the

closest airport when the flight was

Airport here said.

Wednesday morning, they said.

officials said on Wednesday.

they were instructed by the force's DIG-IG headquarters to step up se-

It was in their house where Mishra was injured, an official

Meanwhile, physically disabled Satyavan Mishra (45) who was injured during the Sunday violence was on Tuesday evening referred to Lucknow for better treatment, a hospital official said.

He was admitted to the medical college Bahraich at the district headquarters here, the official

In a statement Tuesday night, the UP government said Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath was receiving hourly updates on the situation in Bahraich and had directed for the deployment of additional force along with senior police and administration officers on the

A control room has been set up, and a survey is underway to assist those impacted, while "anarchists" were being monitored via social media, with additional intelligence teams gathering information on the

Notably, several flights have re-

ceived similar hoax bomb threats

in the last few days. An Akasa Air

flight en-route to Bengaluru re-

turned to New Delhi on Wednes-

day afternoon following a bomb

On Monday, three international

flights originating from Mumbai

received bomb threats. While a

New York-bound Air India flight

was diverted to New Delhi and

rescheduled, the other two, both

operated by IndiGo, were delayed

on any of the planes, police offi-

carrying 211 people from Delhi to

Chicago was diverted to an airport

in Canada on Tuesday following a

bomb threat, according to officials.

Chicago flight, six other Indian

flights on Tuesday received bomb

Apart from Air India's Delhi-

Nothing suspicious was found

On Tuesday, an Air India plane

by several hours.

cials had said.

threat, according to sources.

SC censures Punjab, Haryana govts for lack of action against stubble burning, summons top officers



NEW DELHI, Oct 16: The Supreme Court on Wednesday pulled up the Punjab and Haryana governments over the non-prosecution of violators found guilty of stubble burning while summoning the state chief secretaries to appear before it on October 23 for an ex-

A bench of Justices Abhay S Oka, Ahsanuddin Amanullah and Augustine George Maish pointed out "complete insensitivity" on the part of both states, directing the Commission for Air Quality Management (CAQM) to take penal action against both the government officials for the failure to take action against the violators.

Stubble burning is a major contributor to the rising pollution levels in the national capital.

The top court was upset over Punjab and Haryana governments not taking taken any steps to implement the directions issued by the CAQM in the national capital region (NCR) in June 2021 to stop stubble burning.

"This is not a political matter. If the chief secretary is acting at somebody's behest, we will issue summons against them as well. Next Wednesday (October 23) we are going to physically call for the chief secretary and explain everything. Nothing has been done, same is with the Punjab government. The attitude is of complete defiance," the bench remarked.

Slamming the Punjab government, the top court said not even a single prosecution has been carried out in past three years and it was only tolerating breaches.

Why are you shy of prosecuting people. This is not a political matter. This is a matter of implementation of statutory directions of the commission. No political considerations will apply. There is defiance on your part. You are encouraging people to commit breaches. You are only imposing nominal fines. ISRO (Indian Space Research Organisation) is telling you the location of the stubble burning and you say fire location is not found "the bench said

Punjab Advocate General Gurminder Singh submitted it was difficult to implement the directions on the ground and the authorities made "red entries" in the revenue records of the farmers who caused fires at farms

The apex court also took exception to a purported incorrect statement of the Punjab government of having submitted a proposal to the Central government for the grant of funds to provide a tractor along with driver and fuel to small farm-

It said no endeavour has been

seek funds from the Centre for ensuring tractors to farmers.

On the CAQM, the Supreme Court called it a toothless tiger that only passed directions without any implementation. The bench noted the Union government was at fault for not choosing renowned experts in the field of pollution as members of CAQM.

"We have great respect for the members and their academic qualifications but they are not qualified or experts in the field of air pollution," the bench said.

Additional Solicitor General Aishwarya Bhati said that one of the members had been a chairperson of the Madhya Pradesh Pollution Control Board for six years.

But the bench remarked, "Heading pollution control board of states in no qualification. You know how pollution control boards function.

The judges subsequently suggested that the CAQM should engage with some expert agency to address the issue of air pollution.

Slamming the Commission for Air Quality Management for failing to control instances of stubble burning in NCR and adjoining areas, the SC had said it had taken no efforts to implement its direction to prevent such incidents.

The apex court had earlier rapped CAQM over its failure to curb air pollution in Delhi due to crop residue burning in the neighbouring states and said it needs to be proactive in its approach. The CAQM needs to exercise its power under the Commission for Air Quality Management in National Capital Region and Adjoining Areas Act, 2021, it added.

On August 27, it termed the pollution control boards of Delhi and NCR states "ineffective" due to staff shortage and asked the body responsible for air quality management in the national capital and adjoining areas to explain how it proposed to tackle pollution and stubble burning which spiked with the onset of winter.

The top court had wondered ow the sub-committee on safe guarding and enforcement to be constituted by CAQM would function owing to the lack of representation from the pollution control boards of Delhi, Punjab, Harvana, Rajasthan and Uttar Pradesh due to vacancies.

It directed the five NCR states to fill up the vacant posts urgently, preferably before April 30, 2025.

The top court had directed the CAOM chairperson to file an affidavit explaining the steps to curb air pollution, often attributed to the burning of paddy straw in states adjoining the national capital.

WB govt failed to carry out duties; Raj Bhavan intervening in RG Kar impasse constitutionally: Guv



KOLKATA, Oct 16: Alleging that the West Bengal government headed by Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee has failed to carry out its basic duties to protect the lives and properties of citizens, Governor C V Ananda Bose on Wednesday said that his office is already intervening in the RG Kar impasse under provisions in the Constitution

Expressing disgust over the ongoing impasse following the rapemurder incident, Bose said that the arrest of a police officer and a senior doctor in the case again pointed to "institutional criminality", rampant in various sectors.

"It is the duty of the state government, particularly of Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee, to protect the lives and properties of

"Here (in West Bengal), the government has failed to carry out ts basic duties. Who should own up? If the chief minister is the chief (head of the administration), the answer lies in itself," Bose told PTI in an exclusive interview on the ongoing stalemate in the

On whether his office would intervene in the matter, Bose said, "Raj Bhavan is intervening and cannot be stopped from doing it because the Raj Bhavan intervenes under the provisions mandated in the Constitution of India.'

Incidentally, a group of agitating doctors had met Bose at Raj

AMARAVATI, Oct 16: Imple-

mitted a deputation highlighting their demands for quick investigation into the rape and murder of an on-duty woman doctor at RG Kar Medical College and Hospital besides overhaul of the security infrastructure at the hospitals and removal of Health Secretary N S Nigam.

Bose, in an apparent reference to the chief minister's 'Dandiya dance' at Tuesday's Durga Puja Carnival on Red Road, drew parallels to Roman emperor Nero, who "played the fiddle while Rome burned".

"Festivities of Durga Puja should not be embellished with the dance of death. Nero, they say, played the fiddle while Rome was burning. Is history repeating itself in West Bengal? Who is trying to imitate? It is said, 'I am the Roman Emperor, therefore above grammar'. Is there anyone who says, 'I am the ruler, therefore above the law'?" Bose ques-

On whether the state government was trying to hide something by not addressing the impasse and the demands of the doctors, Bose declined to comment anything citing the ongoing CBI probe into the rape-murder

He, however, criticised the role could have been more transparent in its approach while dealing with the situation.

"I cannot pass judgments on the state government at this stage of investigation," he said.

On the arrest of a Kolkata Police civic volunteer as the prime suspect in the RG Kar rape-murder, the officer-in-charge of Tala police station and ex-principal of the medical establishment, the governor said, "It reflects the institutional criminality, which seems to be rampant in various sectors, including police and healthcare." (PTI)

Computer-based model to determine liquor

brands availability in Andhra Pradesh: Official

threat messages through a social media handle. (PTI) en-route to Delhi, said the official. ate their understanding," the airline "After landing here during mid-Delhi HC asks BCI stand on attendance norms in law courses

New Delhi, Oct 16: The Delhi High Court has asked the Bar Council of India (BCI) to convene a virtual meeting of its legal education committee to finalise its of suicides being reported in different institutions.

A bench of Justices Pratibha M Singh and Amit Sharma was hearing a case stemming from the death of a law student who died by suicide in 2016 for allegedly being barred from writing his semester exam due to shortage of attendance.

The court had previously questioned the mandatory attendance norms and asked the BCI to file an affidavit on October 14. Sushant Rohilla, who was a third year law student of Amity Law School had died by suicide on August 10, 2016, leaving behind a note which allegedly stated that he was a failure and did not wish to live. The present petition was initiated by the Supreme Court in September 2016 following the incident but the case was subsequently transferred to the high court in March 2017. On October 14, the bench directed the BCI's legal education committee to hold a meeting and file its affidavit within two weeks.

Senior advocate Dayan Krishnan, appearing as the amicus curiae, informed the court about several cases

stand on the requirement of attendance in law courses.

The court then asked him to place a note on record regarding the same and listed the matter for hearing on November 6. It granted further time to Amity Law School to state its stand on the granting ex-gratia compensation to the family of the deceased

The lawyer for Amity Law School said the institution was not at fault, adding the parents of the deceased student had duly been notified about the shortage of atten-

The court further asked the Centre to inform about the outcome of a stakeholder consultation with respect to having mandatory attendance in higher education.

The court, which earlier directed a consultation to be held on the issue, observed that a "short note" filed by the Centre did not capture the outcome of the meeting held on October 7 with all the statutory councils, the University Grants Commission and the All India Council for Technical Education. (PTI)

Efforts were made to erase Indian 'sanskriti', but our culture remains eternal: Gajendra Shekhawat

menting a market-driven model dictated by demand and supply dynamics, the Andhra Pradesh Prohibition and Excise Department will employ a computer-based Unavailability of popular liquor model to procure more liquor from the highest selling brands, said an official. The official noted that the brand

which sells the most will be procured more but noted that every registered liquor brand will be given an opportunity to sell its

After scrapping the old liquor policy, the N Chandrababu Naiduled NDA government is implementing a brand new liquor policy from today. "We will have a computerbased model in which on the basis of demand whichever (liquor brand) sells more it will be procured more. So, it is a market-driven thing (mechanism)...but the procurement will be on a demand and supply basis as per market dynamics," the official told PTI.

Further elaborating the model, the official noted that initially liquor brands will be allowed to supply 10,000 cases in the market to be followed by the market-driven model which will kick in the market dynamics cycle.

Moreover, the official noted that based on liquor sales over the past three months, brands will be allowed to sell 150 per cent of that

According to the official, all liquor brands, domestic and international, have already started coming into the state as the new liquor policy has come into force.

brands and exorbitant cost were major allegations against the erstwhile YSRCP government as tipplers complained of being deprived of choice and quality. Earlier, Excise Minister K Ravin-

dra observed that consumers were deprived of the luxury of choosing the brands they liked, compelling buyers to purchase only available liquor brands between 2019 and

He had highlighted that the government is giving importance to make quality brands available in the state and officials also toured several states across the country to study the best practices in liquor retail sales, procurement, quality control and pricing mechanism.

In the run-up to the 2024 assembly elections, current Andhra Pradesh Chief Minister Chandrababu Naidu, who was then an opposition leader, accused the previous YSRCP government of high liquor prices and poor quality.

Under the new NDA government liquor policy, consumers can buy a 180 ml bottle liquor as low as Rs 99

"From now on, quality liquor

will be available in all liquor shops across the state. Premium brands will be available in all liquor shops," said an official statement on Tuesday. Unlike under YS Jagan Mohan

liquor sales, this time all liquor shops across the state will mandatorily facilitate digital payments. According to an official statement, digital payments at liquor shops rose by nine per cent monthly

from June, following the swearing

Reddy-led YSRCP government,

which allowed cash only mode of

in of the new NDA alliance government of TDP, BJP and Janasena. The southern state raked in an application fee of ₹ 1,800 crore from nearly 90,000 applicants for liquor shops and successfully allocated licenses to 3,396 shops on October

14 through a draw of lots. Interestingly, Andhra Pradesh received applications from abroad and within the country as it did not restrict applications on the basis of region. It allowed all citizens of India above 21 to apply by paying

a non-refundable fee of ₹ 2 lakh. Excise revenue is a major source of income for Andhra Pradesh which it hopes to fund the govern-

Cash-strapped Andhra Pradesh expects to earn about ₹ 20,000 crore through the sale of licensing fees and liquor in the remaining months of fiscal 2024-25. (PTI)

NEW DELHI, Oct 16: Union Culture Minister Gajendra Singh Shekhawat on Wednesday extolled India's ancient civilisations and said efforts were made in the past to "erase" its 'sanskriti' (culture) and Sanatan traditions, but "our culture remains eternal" in

In his address at the opening ceremony of the six-day International Festival on Indian Dance, Shekhawat said India is the country of "Ganga and Gita" and rich culture and folk traditions.

Classical and folk dances are incredible, and together they make it a kaleidoscope of colours and lend multiple dimensions to it. Culture is such that it even lends colours to arid deserts, the minister said at the event hosted by the Sangeet Natak Akademi in

This event is taking place at a time when the world is treading the path of "moral downfall" and geopolitical turbulence has shaken" the whole world, which is the dark side, he said.

"But on the other hand, it is taking place at a time when India is standing at the threshold of limit-



less possibilities. At a time, when India's culture, traditional values, art, science, yoga, Ayush and agricultural traditions, their acceptance in the world is growing in a new way," Shekhawat asserted.

Without naming any rulers or dynasties which have ruled India over the centuries, the Union minister said, "We are one of the oldest civilisations, but many efforts were made to erase this Indian culture, these Sanatan traditions, many conspiracies were hatched

at the point of a bayonet and they tried to obliterate it.

"To ruin our intellectual resources and capabilities, many invaded us, they even tried and conspired to pollute our education system, still our culture remained eternal in flow," he added.

The culture minister lauded the 'purveyors of Indian culture" and said, through the old traditions, art exponents kept the Indian culture perennial and relevant using the "soft power" despite the "cultural

The event was also attended by noted dancer Sonal Mansingh and several other artistes.

"When there is a geopolitical turbulence the world over, at that time to maintain the unbroken and all-encompassing 'bhav' of 'ras' and 'anand' (in India), we can take pride in it, and work towards making it more contextual," he

"Today, when India is carving a place for itself on the world stage, as a Vishwa Bandhu, this cultural strength will give India a new indentity globally," he added.

The minister in his address also underlined the essence of soft power in making of a superpower nation.

"I was reading a book by a Nobel Laureate and he speaks of four things that are essential for a country to become a superpower," Shekhawat said.

While economic rise, technological prowess and military strength are key components, a superpower also possess "culture and soft power", and India is "rapidly moving in that direction". (PTI)

NEW DELHI, Oct 16: Actor-comic Vir Das and streaming platform Netflix are once again teaming up for a comedy special, the makers announced on Wednesday.

This marks his fifth project with the streamer after the International Emmy Awardwinning "Landing", "Abroad Understanding", "Losing It", and "For India".

In a press release issued by Netflix, the new globetrotting special offers "a unique narrative of self-discovery and global connection".

"As he moves from familiar stages to unexpected settings, he uncovers a profound truth: kindness is the only true universal language. In an era where roasts dominate the comedy land-scape, Vir boldly challenges the norm by embracing joy and encouraging the world to share happiness freely," it read.

Vir said comedy has the power to bring people together, no matter where they come from.

"With this special, we are trying to bring something fresh to comedy by sharing stories and experiences that celebrate love and kindness while showing that laughter really is a universal language. This special will be an unapologetic, direct shot of happiness to the heart," he said.

"In my fifth special partnership with Netflix, I'm honoured to be able to showcase Indian comedy on a global stage, and I can't wait for audiences everywhere to join me on this journey," the comedian added in his statement.

At the 2023 International Emmy Awards, Vir won the best comedy award for Landing. He shared the trophy with the much-acclaimed British series Derry Girls. The comedian is set to host this year's International Emmy Awards, becoming the first Indian to do so. The ceremony will be held in New York City on November 25. (PTI)

Payal Kapadia's 'All We Imagine As Light' receive 5 nomination for Asia Pacific Screen Awards

NEW DELHI, Oct 16: Filmmaker Payal Kapadia's Cannes-winning title "All We Imagine As Light" has bagged five nominations at the 17th edition of the Asia Pacific Screen Awards.

The Asia Pacific Screen Academy announced the nominations, which saw representation by 31 films from 23 Asia Pacific countries and areas, a press release said.

"All We Imagine As Light", which scripted history by becoming the first Indian movie to win the Grand Prix award at the Cannes Film Festival, has

Film Festival, has been nominated for top honour of best film as well as best director and best screenplay for Kapadia.

Actor Kani Kusruti received a nod for best performance, and lensman Ranabir Das for best cinematography. The Malayalam-Hindi film is an official collaboration between Chalk and Cheese Films and Another Birth from India and petit chaos from France.

Led by Kani and Divya Prabha, All We Imagine As Light narrates the story of two Kerala nurses, Prabha and Anu, co-habiting in Mumbai. It is titled Prabhayay Ninachathellam in Malayalam. It also features Chaya Kadam in a pivotal role.

The Asia Pacific Screen Awards aims to honour the "cinematic excellence of 78 countries and areas of the Asia Pacific and films that best reflect their cultural origins and the diversity of the vast region".

Besides Payal's movie, April by Dea Kulumbegashvili is nominated for five awards. The film, which presents the story of an obstetrician-gynecologist, is also nominated for best film, best director, best screenplay, best cinematography and best performance.

Another Indian title, Boong, backed by Farhan Akhtar and Ritesh Sidhwani, received a nomination in the best youth film category. The movie, which had its world premiere at the Toronto International Film Festival, is directed by debutante director Lakshmipriya Devi.

Filmmaker PS
Vinothraj bagged a best screenplay nomination for his Tamil language movie Kottukkaali. The movie is titled The Adamant Girl in English

The 17th Asia Pacific Screen Awards will be held on November 30 at The Langham, Gold Coast, Australia. (PTI)

IT WAS TOO TEMPTING, I MANIFESTED IT: Samantha Ruth Prabhu on Citadel

MUMBAI, Oct 16: Actor Samantha Ruth Prabhu, who is playing the role of an agent in "Citadel: Honey Bunny", on Tuesday said women doing the "heavy lifting" in action sequences in spy stories is fantastic. The Prime Video series, also starring Varun Dhawan in the lead, is billed as a riveting narrative that fuses elements of a gritty spy action thriller with the heartwarming allure of a love story. "From time immemorial, if there's a spy series or film, there's always a male character at the centre of it, doing all the cool action, dialogues, and saving the day. What sets this apart is, I get to kick some a**, and it's fantastic," Prabhu said at the trailer launch of the India chapter of the series.

Priyanka Chopra Jonas leads the parent show of "Citadel" while Matilda de Angelis stars in "Citadel: Diana". "With people like Priyanka Chopra and Matilda doing some of the heavy lifting, I think it is an amazing way to represent women of society correctly. We do it all, don't we? It is a balanced world of 'Citadel: Honey Bunny'. It was too tempting an offer and I manifested it," the actor said.

The actor, who has previously tried her hands on action while working on season two of "The Family Man", said it's great to see women doing action sequences and that the future seems "bright".

"It sounds cool that it is female (driven) but it should be an equal playing ground where intelligence, talent, and strength decide your fate, irrespective of gender, and that would be an amazing place to be at. I'm happy to be part of this world, and that has already started to take centre stage. The opportunity to work with talent from across the world, the platform is becoming wider, and the future seems bright for everyone." The India chapter of the global drama "Citadel", also starring Kay Kay Menon, Saqib Saleem, and Sikander Kher, will premiere on November 7 on Prime Video. (PTI)

Ajay Devgn reveals his most memorable action stunt

NEW DELHI, Oct 16: Ajay Devgn on Tuesday said out of all the action sequences he has performed in his 33-year career, the most memorable one remains his iconic entry scene in his 1991 debut film Phool Aur

The Kuku Kohli directorial introduced Ajay as a daredevil student Ajay who enters college standing on two moving motorcycles.

The stunt, which keeps circulating on social media as meme content, was choreographed by none other than the actor's late father and veteran action director Veeru Devgan.

In an #AskAjay session on X, a user asked Ajay to name one action scene that stood out as "the most challenging or memorable" in his career.

"Still standing on two bikes, always," he said, referring to the popular sequence from the movie which turns 33 next month.

A day after his wife, actor Kajol called herself the "real Singham"

when she was asked who was the boss at home, Ajay reiterated her

Asked who is the real Singham, the actor said: "You should ask this question to the real Singham at home." Ajay is set to reprise the role of the fan-favourite cop Bajirao Singham in Singham Again, set to be released on Diwali on November 1. When a user asked what his favourite scene in Singham Again was, the actor replied: "The Ramayan angle." The upcoming multi-starrer movie, also starring Kareena Kapoor Khan and Akshay Kumar.

ing multi-starrer movie, al starring Kareena Kapoor Khan and Akshay Kumar, borrows elements from the Ramayana and marries its themes with the characters of director Rohit Shetty's

universe. He also

ambitious cop

called Akshay "Khiladi", a persona synonymous with the other action star's fearlessness on screen, when asked to describe his colleague.

If you had to choose one of your iconic film characters to live as in real life for a week, which one would it be? Ajay said: "only Bajirao Singham."

Singham Again also features Ranveer Singh, Deepika Padukone, Tiger Shroff, Arjun Kapoor, Jackie Shroff, Dayanand Shetty, and Shweta Tiwari.

The franchise started with 2011's Singham and was followed by Singham Returns in 2014, launched Shetty's copuniverse that also include films fronted by characters played by Akshay and Panyagar in

played by Akshay and Ranveer in Sooryavanshi and Simmba, respectively. (PTI)

Wanted to explore essence of Kabir through 'Jhini Bini Chadariya': director Ritesh Sharma

NEW DELHI, Oct 16: Filmmaker Ritesh Sharma says his debut feature "Jhini Bini Chadariya" is an attempt to explore the essence of Kabir through the stories of a reclusive weaver and a headstrong dancer, both searching for "identity and space" in a fast changing city like Varanasi.

Though the two protagonists, played by Muzaffar Khan and Megha Mathur, don't meet except for a brief moment when their paths cross, they end up having an impact on each other's life. The city, he said, is a backdrop as well as a character in the story.

"Kabir wasn't literate, but he questioned every single aspect of religion. As a filmmaker, I want to explore the essence of Kabir through my films," Sharma told PTI.

"Jhini Bini Chadariya" follows Rani, a street dancer trying to raise money to give a better

life to her deaf daughter, and a weaver named Shahdab who befriends an Israeli tourist. Their story is set against the backdrop of recent redevelopment of temples in Varanasi.

"When I was in Benaras, there were many such stories. The city was changing, and so was the country and the world. Suddenly, we felt fear around us. When I met people from the Muslim community, I sensed their fear, and that's what I tried to capture in the film.

"My goal was to express what I feel about Benaras and the changes that have occurred there. People should understand that even if these events are not happening to them, they can still become victims. The underlying politics can surface at any time, and we must face it," Sharma

The filmmaker, who earlier directed the 2010 documentary "The Holy Wives" focusing on

caste-based sexual exploitation, said the idea for the film came to him in 2015 when he was visiting the city.

"Around Holi, I saw a woman dancing with a bottle of beer at a temple in front of the Manikarnika Ghat, while people were throwing water at her... I had heard that vulgar songs are played in Bihar and UP, but to see it happening so openly, especially at a temple, felt like full-on exploitation."

He then spoke to many female dancers to understand their experiences and it gave him the idea to explore a character like that.

"I felt a strong need to tell their side of the story. I wanted to understand their experiences, so I stayed in Benaras for six months, writing the character of Rani, the dancer. I also came across weavers in Benaras. It was important to tell the story of a human who is a weaver and a human who is a dancer, both trying to find their own identity and space," he said.

The title "Jhini Bini Chadariya" is taken from a poem by Kabir, the 15th century mystic poet-saint, who drew a lot from the different languages of the day as well as his profession as a weaver to call out the hypocrisy in both Hindus and Muslims.

"I don't think I ever understood Kabir in childhood when we were made to memorise him but not imbibe him. When I began to grasp his teachings, I realised how much we need Kabir in today's time of religious madness."

Sharma initially wanted to call the movie "Tana Bana", another phrase that has often appeared in Kabir's poetry and comes from weaving, a major profession in the city known for its silk saris.

Since the title was already

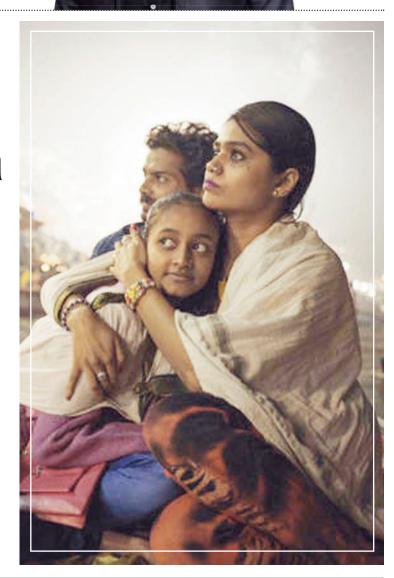
registered, he decided to go with "Jhini Bini Chadariya". In English, the film is titled "The Brittle Thread".

The film is presented by filmmaker Anurag Kashyap who has championed it through social media. It is currently streaming on pay-per-view platform MovieSaints. "Jhini Bini Chadariya" had its

first screening at the Tokyo International Film Festival in 2021, followed by the Dharamshala International Film Festival as well as International Film Festival of Kerala, receiving acclaim from the viewers.

According to the director, independent filmmaking is difficult, especially if one is a newcomer.

"It was not easy to secure funding when I decided to tell this story. Today, Malayalam cinema is investing in unique stories, but the Hindi belt is still stuck in the star system. (PTI)





Neetu David, AB de Villiers and Alastair **Cook inducted into ICC Hall of Fame**

spinner Neetu David, who still holds the record for the best figures (8/53) by a woman in an individual Test innings, on Wednesday became only the second female cricketer from the country to be inducted into the ICC Hall of Fame.

South African legend Ab de Villiers and former England captain Alastair Cook were also inducted along with David.

David, the current chairman of selectors for Indian women's team, enters the ICC Hall of Fame a year after the induction of former captain Diana Edulji.

David made more than 100 appearances (10 Tests and 97 ODIs) for India as a prolific left-arm spinner and was inducted alongside South Africa and England legends AB de Villiers and Alastair Cook, joining a long list of great cricketers.

The 47-year-old David is the second-highest wicket-taker for India in ODIs cricket with 141 scalps and was also the first female player from the country to claim 100 wickets in the 50-over

Topping the wicket-taking list at the World Cup in 2005, to inspire her country to their first-ever final, is also among her standout achievements.

David said in an ICC release: "It is truly an honour to be inducted into the ICC Hall of Fame, something that I consider to be the highest recognition available to anyone

Denmark Open

Indian challenge

ends in doubles

ODENSE (DENMARK), Oct

16: India's doubles campaign

ended at the Denmark Open

badminton tournament after the

women's and mixed pairings

from the country bowed out

following hard-fought first-

round losses here on Wednes-

Treesa Jolly and Gayatri

Gopichand (women's doubles)

and B Sumeeth Reddy and N

Sikki Reddy (mixed doubles)

suffered three-game defeats in

Taking the court first, Treesa

and Gayatri squandered a

game's lead to go down 21-19

17-21 15-21 against fifth-

seeded Malaysian combination

of Pearly Tan and Muralitharan

Thinaah in a match that lasted

against the world no.21 Indian

team as it had an inferior 1-5

head-to-head record against

their world no.7 opponents

But Treesa and Gayatri gave their rivals a tough fight before

In mixed doubles too, Sumeeth Reddy and Sikki

Reddy let slip a game's lead to lose 22-20 19-21 22-24 to the

Canadian pair of Kevin Lee

and Eliana Zhang in one hour

Later on Wednesday, the

promising Unnati Hooda will

be up against USA's Lauren

Lam in her women's singles

opening-round match, while

Satish Kumar Karunakaran

will play Li Yang Su of Chi-

On Tuesday, Lakshya Sen, a

2021 World Championships

bronze-medallist, crashed out

of the men's singles event after

suffering a three-game defeat

at the hands of China's Lu

Malvika Bansod and

Aakarshi Kashyap too made

first-round exits from the

women's singles competition.

However, two-time Olympic medallist PV Sindhu moved

into the second round after her

opponent Pai Yu Po of Chinese

Taipei retired midway in the

second game with the score

reading 21-8 13-7 in the In-

dian's favour. (PTI)

Guang Zu in the first round.

nese Taipei in men's singles.

from Malaysia.

bowing out.

and two minutes.

The odds were stacked

one hour and 14 minutes.

their opening contests.

badminton:

who puts on their national team

"This comes after a lifetime of dedication to this great sport, and it caps a very special journey for me to get to this point.

"To be considered a Hall of Famer alongside the greatest players that ever lived is humbling, and I am thrilled to be part of this exclusive club.

Following some impressive performances with the ball at domestic cricket for Uttar Pradesh, David won a first international appearance for India as a 17-year-old in a Test against New Zealand in Nel-

She impressed with four wickets in that contest and was again selected for the ODI leg of that tour as India claimed the New Zealand Women's Centenary Tournament.

In late 1995, David truly rose to prominence as she recorded sensational figures of 8/53 — still the best individual bowling spell in a single innings of a women's Test - against England in Jamshedpur as India fell to a narrow two-run

While David excelled at Test cricket with 41 wickets from 10 matches, it was in ODI cricket that she performed best with 141

scalps from 97 matches at a miserly bowling average of 16.34.

David retired from international cricket in 2006, only to reverse that decision two years later for a brief return in ODI cricket at the Asia Cup and on India's tour of

She played her final domestic match in 2013, calling time on an illustrious career by helping Railways to the 2012-13 Senior Women's T20 League title.

Cook represented England over 250 times in international cricket, making his most significant impact in the longest format.

est Test run-scorer and centurymaker, spearheading notable successes both home and away with the bat and as captain.

In his 14-year-long career, de Villiers hit over 20,000 international runs across all three formats.

De Villiers, fondly known as "Mr 360", excelled in Test and T20I cricke while setting South African records for the fastest fifty, century and 150 in ODI cricket to earn a reputation of being one of the most feared, destructive batters in the history of

The ICC Hall of Fame was launched in January 2009 as part of the global governing body's centenary celebrations.

The Class of 2024 will be celebrated in a special series of engagements in Dubai this week, coinciding with the conclusion of the Women's T20 World Cup.

ICC Chief Executive Officer. Geoff Allardice said, "Once again, we find ourselves celebrating not only truly great players, but elite innovators, record-breakers and passionate competitors that excelled on the field of play during their glittering international ca-

"Beyond their remarkable statistics spanning all formats of the game, all three have made significant contributions to the way the game is played today and are worthy additions to the ICC Hall of

NorthEast United

to stretch unbeaten

away run against

GUWAHATI, Oct 16: Chennaiyin FC will look to prolong their unbeaten away run at the Indian Super League 2024-25 season when they lock horns with deter-

mined hosts here on Thursday. CFC have been on the road for two out of their first three matches

Speaking to the media ahead of their third away match, Chennaiyin head coach Owen Coyle praised NorthEast United while highlighting the need for his team to be

more clinical. "What you have is two very good teams," Coyle told the media.

"Two very attack-minded teams, going all out to win a tough game. NorthEast (United) are always a very dangerous opponent -- they were last year and they certainly are this year. I think Juan Pedro Benali has done a fantastic job."

"Equally, we know we have a good team, we know we have good players and can stand toe-to-toe with the best teams in this league when we are at our best. So that's our focus, being very respectful of our opponents but focusing on our

"In truth, we should probably be sitting with 7-9 points; in the last two games alone, we had just

Due to heavy rainfall in Chennai, the Marina Machans had to travel to Guwahati prematurely and resume training away from

home. Coyle expressed gratitude to the Highlanders for their sporting integrity in opening their gates early and also wished for the safety of those back home.

"We haven't been able to train for the last three days because of the severe weather in Chennai. But, more importantly, we want to make sure everyone's safe and well, so that's the priority," Coyle

This was echoed by left-back Ankit Mukherjee, who joined Coyle for the presser.

During the international break, CFC's Lalrinliana Hnamte made his international debut for India, while Farukh Choudhary returned to the fold with a goal.

Coyle emphasized their achievements and confirmed that they had returned to training ahead of the NorthEast United match.

Chennaiyin's clash with North-East United will be the 23rd meeting between the teams in the ISL. NorthEast United have played four matches this season, one more than under 40 chances, so we know we have to be more clinical," he loss, and two draws. (PTI)

Handling pressure will play a big part in Jaiswal's success in Australia: Childhood coach

BENGALURU, Oct 16: Yashasvi Jaiswal was oblivious to the cheers of a handful of spectators as he walked across a soaked M Chinnaswamy Stadium turf on Wednesday, chatting intensely with assistant coach Abhishek Nayar.

There was no pressing demand for him to spend an hour at indoor nets as rain held up the first day's play of the opening Test between India and New Zealand.

After all, he is going through a roseate phase in Test cricket for over a year now.

But that deep caring for his craft and a focused mind will come handy when Jaiswal crosses over to Australia next month for the biggest challenge yet in his fledgling career, feels his childhood coach Jwala Singh.

"At this level, it is more about how you handle pressure. You can always work on technique, but if you don't have the right attitude and mindset then you will end up as a failure. But fortunately, Yashasvi has a mature head on his shoulder," Jwala told PTI when he was informed about skipper Rohit Sharma's high eval uation of his younger colleague.

"It is even more true when you go and play in Australia because they play some hard cricket there and put a lot of pressure on opposition,"

As someone who saw Jaiswal from a very young age, Jwala feels that the 21-year-old has grown as a batsman since making his debut in 2023 against the West Indies.

"I think being around players like Rohit and Virat has helped him a lot. After all, there is nothing like learning from such masters," he said. Since his baptism in international cricket, Jaiswal has made 1217 runs from 11 Tests at an average of 64.05 and has three daddy knocks -171, 209 and 214.

So, what are the changes that he has observed in the left-hander in the last one year or so? "He always has been aggressive as a bats-

man. Earlier, he had a tendency to attack almost every ball, especially fast bowlers, but now he uses aggression more judiciously.

"Yashasvi now has more awareness of his



and which one to let go. Of course, he has also become a very good fielder now, espe-

cially in slip region," Jwala noted. The trait was visible in Jaiswal's batting while going through a breakout series against England earlier this year.

The way he handled English legend James Anderson was impeccable. At Rajkot, Jaiswal respectfully patted a fuller length delivery from Anderson back to the bowler in the 85th over.

But once the pacer erred in length, Jaiswal creamed the Lancastrian's next three balls for sixes -- a sweep over square leg, a loft over midwicket and straight mousse over the bowler's head.

Jaiswal was highly effective against Anderson throughout the series -- extracting 98 runs from 150 balls that he faced off the quick and

getting out twice. It was not entirely surprising then that he became only the second Indian batter after the legendary Sunil Gavaskar to score over 700 in a

But then it is always easy to play down that

What are the challenges a sub-continent bat-

ter will face Down Under? "First thing first, what India did in Australia

during their last two visits here has been fantastic. Not many teams have managed that (winning back-to-back series). So, the Aussies will go hard at Indians to overturn it.

"I am sure they are going to pepper them with some short stuff and I guess the pitches too could offer some more spice. "In that sense, I think the batters coming here

should be well-prepared to play a few more cuts and pulls," former England pacer Alan Mullaly. who is now settled in Perth, told PTI.

India skipper Rohit Sharma had little doubt about the skill level and adaptability of Jaiswal.

"He has got the game to play in all sorts of conditions. You can bet on him and expect him to do wonders for the team. We've found a great

"Now, it is just about how he manages himself in the next couple of years," said Rohit. So far, the signs have been encouraging. (PTI)

Rohit explained 'significance of Gabba' to young Pant

NEW DELHI, Oct 16: For some time, Rishabh Pant couldn't understand why fans had gone hysterical after his unbeaten 89 against Australia at the Gabba in 2021 until Rohit Sharma stepped in to tell him that his knock was not just another match-winning effort in an epic Test.

A second string India, without its then regular skipper Virat Kohli, senior player KL Rahul and three main bowlers, had beaten Australia by three wickets at a venue which was considered a fortress for the home team which hadn't lost a single game there since 1989

It was a chase of 328, and Pant's counter-attacking knock was not just a match-defining one. It was to find a place among the greatest innings by an Indian in adverse overseas conditions.

"Sometimes, there are performances that you remember for a lifetime, and one of them for me is the Gabba Test," the 27-year-old told Star Sports' 'Star Nahi Far' event. Initially, it was just satisfaction of winning a tough Test for India but

as time went by, Pant understood the magnitude of his achievement, something that Rohit had told him about. "At the time, I didn't realise how significant it was. Rohit bhai was

there, and he told me, 'You have no idea what you've done.' I was like, 'What have I done? My aim was just to win the match.' Rohit bhai said, 'Later, you'll understand what you've done'," he recalled. "Now, whenever I hear people talking about that Gabba match, I un-

derstand what he meant and how important it was," the Delhi player said. Pant has commanded the cricketing world's awe and respect for coming back after recovering from a life-threatening car accident in 2022. This was after he made a name for himself Down Under for being a significant contributor to India's back-to-back Test series wins.

His career-best 159 came in Sydney during the 2018-19 series. In the 2021 series, he scored 97 in Sydney and an epic 89 not out in Brisbane to earn respect and adulation from both the fans and the oppo-

Tendulkar's presence makes evening memorable for NCL champions Chicago Cricket Club

CANVAS

DALLAS, Oct 16: Legendary Sachin Tendulkar, presented the Championship trophy to the victorious Chicago Cricket Club as the National Cricket Championship ended on a memorable note.

Chicago clinched the title in a high-stakes final against the Atlanta Cricket Club at the University of Texas at Dallas, in what marked a landmark moment for USA cricket. With more than 2.5 billion view-

ers tuning in globally, the NCL final captured the growing influence of cricket in the United States. Fans at UT Dallas Cricket Stadium were treated to an exhilarating contest, with Chicago's Leonardo Julien leading the charge. Julien's explosive innings—scoring 61 runs off just 22 balls, including five boundaries and six towering sixes—earned him the Man of the Match award and propelled Chicago to a com-

manding victory. Tendulkar's electric presence lifted the evening. As he presented the champions' trophy to Chicago's head coach, Robin



Uthappa, he also took time to interact with the crowd, shaking hands, posing for photos, and delighting fans with his graciousness. His connection with the crowd underscored the growing excitement surrounding the sport in the U.S.

"Cricket has given me so much, and to be here in Dallas, witnessing this incredible final and presenting the trophy, is truly humbling," Ten-

dulkar said. "This victory and the energy in the stadium show that cricket has a bright future in America." NCL Chairman Arun Agarwal echoed the sentiment, describing the moment as a turning point for

"This championship goes beyond just a win—it's a defining

cricket in the U.S.

moment for the rise of cricket in America," Agarwal said. "With billions watching globally, this final shows how much progress we've made, and this is just the beginning of something truly special.'

The NCL, known for its innovative Sixty Strikes format, has quickly gained attention by merging world-class cricket with cultural entertainment.

The 2024 season featured retired international cricket stars like Shahid Afridi, Suresh Raina, and the semiretired Shakib Al Hasan, with cricket legends such as Sunil Gavaskar, Wasim Akram, and Sir Vivian Richards serving as mentors.

The league's broadcast partnerships with ESPN, SKY Sports, and Sony Max have brought NCL matches to millions, accelerating the sport's growth in the U.S.

As the NCL continues to expand its influence, Chicago Cricket Club's championship win, with Tendulkar at the helm of the celebration, marks a significant milestone in cricket's journey to becoming a major force in U.S. sports. (PTI)

Hemang Badani in running to become DC head coach; Pant, Axar,

NEW DELHI, Oct 16: Former India left-hander Hemang Badani is emerging as a front-runner in the race to become the chief coach of Delhi Capitals, while pacer Munaf Patel's name is doing the rounds for a role in the support staff of the franchise.

DC had parted ways with Australian Ricky Ponting as head coach a few weeks ago owing to his availability issues. Ponting had been with the team since 2018.

"DC management is looking at quality home-grown coaches and Hemang and Munaf's names have cropped up. A final decision is yet to be taken but in case of Munaf, it could be bowling coach's job," an IPL source told PTI on conditions

of anonymity. Delhi Capitals, like most of the other franchises, is likely to opt for three retentions -- skipper Rishabh Pant (18 crore), all-rounder Axar Patel (Rs 14 crore) and left-arm wrist spinner Kuldeep Yadav (Rs 11 crore). (PTI)

12 THE HILLS TIMES

Day 1 of first Test between India and NZ called off due to rain



Competition is stronger this year but

India can lift SAFF trophy: Ashalata

KATHMANDU, Oct 16: The quality of football has improved immensely

in the region but the Indian team is equipped to win the SAFF Women's

Championship, senior defender Ashalata Devi said on Wednesday as the

lata will become India's first woman footballer to play 100 international

matches when she takes field on Thursday at the iconic Dasarath Stadium.

help them play freely in the following matches. The last time the two teams

for them. They have grown as a unit. Last time, we won against them, but

we are not taking them lightly. They are motivated, prepared well and will

"I have watched Pakistan's recent matches, including the one against

"All the teams are very close in terms of quality, and they fight hard.

When asked about Ashalata Devi's milestone, coach Kashyap said, "It's

a great achievement for her as well as for women's football. I always tell

young players to look up to her and how she has maintained herself for

such a long time." Pakistan, who have players like Maria Khan and Nadia

Khan in the ranks, will not be pushovers. Skipper Maria is an experienced

midfielder, who plies her trade for Saudi Arabian pro side Eastern Flames.

Two other Pakistan players, goalkeeper Rumaysa Khan and striker Isra

Khan, play in Canada and the United States, respectively. (PTI)

Whether it's the men's or women's teams, we can't afford to think we are

Singapore, where they put up a tough fight and narrowly lost 1-0. They

India head coach Santosh Kashyap is expecting a close contest.

The clash against Pakistan on Thursday assumes significance since Asha-

Ashalata said the first game always sets the tone, and a strong start will

"It's always exciting to face a team like Pakistan. We have a lot of respect

side gears up to take on arch-rivals Pakistan in its tournament-opener.

BENGALURU, Oct 16: Unrelenting rain wiped out play on day one of the opening Test between India and New Zealand here on Wednesday.

The play was called off at 2.34 PM as heavy rain lashed the M Chinnaswamy Stadium after relenting for about half an hour

The match officials came out to inspect the pitch around 2 PM after outfield and first layer of covers were removed around

But there were large damp areas on either side of the pitch as hessians were brought out in a last-ditch attempt to get some

However, it was a futile effort as extensive damage was already done by rains of varying intensity from early morn-

clashed, India had emerged a 3-0 winner.

surely put up a good fight," said Ashalata.

the favourites and will win easily.

have strong physicality and play good football.

Earlier, even the toss, which was scheduled at 9 AM, could not take place as rain came down relentlessly over the city from

There was a smattering of spectators at the stadium despite the inclement weather.

But the only moment of excitement for them was the sighting of star batter Virat Kohli and opener Yashasvi Jaiswal, who went for an indoor net session along with assistant coach Abhishek Nayar. They might have to wait further for action even on the second day as the current forecast is for more rain on Thursday at least till noon.

It may be recalled that even the training sessions of both teams were washed away by heavy downpour on Tuesday. Play on day two is scheduled at 9.15 am and toss at 8.45 am. (PTI)

Messi's 10th hat trick raises total to 112 international goals

Argentina wins World Cup qualifier

BUENOS AIRES, Oct 16: Lionel Messi scored his 10th international hat trick to raise his career total to 112 goals and also had a pair of assists to lead Argentina over Bolivia 6-0 in a World Cup qualifier on Tuesday.

After missing a pair of October qualifiers while recovering from a right ankle injury sustained in the Copa America, Messi played the entire match before raucous fans at Estadio Monumental who chanted his name after he opened the scoring in the 19th

Messi added goals in the 84th and 86th minutes. The 37-year-old is second on the career scoring list behind the 133 of Portugal's Cristiano Ronaldo.

Rival Brazil and under-pressure coach Dorival Júnio got some relief with a convincing performance in a 4-0 home win

Argentina leads South American qualifying with 22 points after 10 matches, three points clear of second-place Colombia, who beat Chile 4-0. Uruguay, which earlier had a goalless draw with Ecuador, and Brazil have 16 points each, with the Uruguayans in third place on goal difference.

Ecuador and Paraguay follow with 13 points apiece, with Ecuadorians fifth on goal

The top six teams secure automatic berths in the 2026 World Cup. The seventh-place team, currently Bolivia, will play in an international playoff for a spot in the tournament. Two more rounds will be played in No-

Messi in strong form on return

a Bolivian defender, who missed a pass and allowed Messi to run freely and finish unchallenged in front of goalkeeper Billy Viscarra. Messi assisted on Lautaro Martínez's 43rd-minute goal and gave a decisive pass once again Julián Álvarez scored in the third minute of first-half stoppage time.

Thiago Almada in the 69th minute off a low cross by Nahuel Molina before Messi had great finishing touches from the edge of

"We enjoyed this, we are happy to be here

again refused to say whether he will play in the next World Cup in 2026. "This could be one of the last (matches in front of the Argentinian crowd)."

Bolivia, which is seeking to qualify for the World Cup for the first time in 30 years, remains in contention with 12 points. Brazil reappears under Júnior

This month's rounds of South American qualifying were important for coach Dorival Júnior. His team was knocked out in the quarterfinals of the latest Copa America and was struggling against rivals it used to beat easily, such as Paraguay and Venezuela.

Júnior's chances of success seemed low in matches against Chile and Peru due to injuries affecting several of his starters; goalkeeper Alisson, defender Éder Militão and striker Vinicius Júnior were all out. But a last-minute win against the Chileans and a convincing display against the Peruvians will give the Brazil coach some re-

Raphinha scored from the spot twice to put Brazil in front in Brasilia, the first in the 38th minute and the second in the 54th.

Substitute Andreas Pereira made more than 60,000 fans at the National Stadium gasp when he scored with a volley in the 71st minute. Another substitute, Luiz Henrique, scored for the second consecutive match for the national team with a classy shot from the edge of the box.

"These were two matches that we controlled well," Raphinha said. "We are far from perfection, but we are on the right track

Chile in last place

Chile's loss to Colombia has placed the job of coach Ricardo Gareca at risk. Davinson Sánchez, Luis Díaz, Jhon Durán and Luis Sinistierra scored the goals for Colombia. Chile is in last place in the qualifying group with only five points.

Paraguay beat Venezuela 2-1 and moved into a qualifying position in the standings. Jon Aramburo opened the scoring for the visitors in the 25th minute, but striker Antonio Sarabia came off the bench to win it for the hosts with goals in the 59th and 74th

Champions Trophy without India not an option, contingencies available: Top ECB officials

cials of the England and Wales Cricket Board (ECB), including chairman Richard Thompson, have suggested that staging the Champions Trophy without powerhouse India is not an option and there are "contingencies available" if Rohit Sharma's team doesn't travel to host country Pakistan.

India have not played in Pakistan since 2008 due to the tense relations between the two countries and their travel to the South Asian nation is solely dependent on government clearance.

With the government unlikely to give the BCCI permission to send the team to Lahore, the Champions Trophy in a hybrid model seems the most likely option. Like the Asia Cup last year, India can play their matches in a third country while the other games can be staged in Pakistan.

The tournament will be held in February-March.

"It would not be in cricket's interests for India not to be playing in the Champions Trophy," Thompson, who is in Pakistan alongside ECB CEO Richard Gould, was quoted as saying by ESPNcricinfo.

The decision on India's travel to Champions Trophy could be taken



before current BCCI secretary Jay Shah takes charge of the International Cricket Council in December. Shah was elected as ICC chairman in August.

"It's interesting, with Jay Shah the former secretary of the BCCI and now chair of the ICC - (who) is going to have a big role to play in that. There's geopolitics, and then there's cricketing geopolitics. I think they'll find a way. They have to find a way," said Thomp-

ECB CEO Gould added: "If you

play the Champions Trophy with-

out India, or Pakistan, the broad-

cast rights aren't there, and we

tion. We've seen the developments

going on, and we're all waiting to

understand whether India are

"We think there are some dis-

cussions and relationships where

are expecting India to travel. There

and contingencies available if that

going to travel. That's the key.

'They (Pakistan) are the host na-

need to protect them.

other in multi team events like the World Cup and Asia Cup. "There are always security con-

doesn't happen."

India and Pakistan play each

cerns in this part of the world when those two countries play each other. That will probably drive the key decisions. But I know relationships between the two countries are as amicable as they can be at the moment: we saw it play out at the (men's T20) World Cup in New York," said Thompson.

Though top teams have visited Pakistan recently, the country last hosted an ICC event in 1996, when it co-hosted the ODI World Cup with India and Sri Lanka.

Thompson expects a decision on India's participation in the tournament would be taken in the 11th

"That's between India and Pakistan, and I think they will find a way where India will participate in the Champions Trophy... These things tend to go to the wire, as history has shown us, so I think that in those [last] six months,

they need to be. I know Pakistan are lots of different alternatives

they'll find a way," he said.

The event will feature eight

teams including Afghanistan, Australia, Bangladesh, England, India, New Zealand, Pakistan and South

Serena says she had a benign cyst removed from her neck and 'all is OK



NEW YORK, Oct 16: Serena Williams says she had a benign branchial cyst "the size of a small grapefruit" removed from her neck and "all is OK."

The retired tennis star, who turned 43 last month, posted Wednesday on social media that she found a lump on her neck in May, had an MRI exam, and was told she didn't need to get it removed if she didn't want to. So she didn't then, "but it kept growing," Williams said.

After more tests, including a iopsy that was negative for cancer, Williams said, her doctors said she should have a procedure.

She showed video of herself in a hospital bed and wrote: "So this is me removing it. I am feeling so grateful, and fortunate everything worked out, and most of all I'm healthy.

In a separate social media post, she said she is "still recovering, but getting better. Health always comes first."

Williams announced her retirement — famously eschewing that term and saving instead she was "evolving" away from professional tennis — shortly before playing in the 2022 U.S. Open, her last tournament.

She won 23 Grand Slam titles in singles, the most by a woman in the sport's professional era, and another 14 in doubles with her older sister Venus. Serena Williams spent more than 300 weeks at No. 1 in the WTA rankings and collected four

Australia start overwhelming favourites against South Africa

DUBAI, Oct 16: Australia will start as overwhelming favourites in their quest for an unprecedented eighth final appearance when they take on South Africa in the semifinal of the ICC Women's T20 World Cup here on Thursday.

Australia have now made it to the semi-finals of the global T20 tournament in all its nine editions held so far since 2009 in England.

the Proteas women in a last-four clash in what seems to be a repeat

Women's T20 WC Semi-final

of the summit showdown during the 2023 edition in South Africa, which the Southern Stars won by

Going by pure statistic, South Africa are no match for Australia who have won nine out of the 10 WT20I games, with the former's

Women's T20 World Cup is even more intimidating as Australia

have won all the seven encounters. The best part about the current Australian feam is the core which has remained intact for years now with only Meg Lanning retiring

from international cricket.

Mooney, Ellyse Perry, Megan Schutt, Ashleigh Gardner being the pillars of the team.

On a slow Dubai track, the depth in batting has been Australia's biggest strength, with Phoebe Litchfield and Annabel Sutherland capable of muscling the balls to the fence.

For South Africa, one of their biggest assets has been slow leftwho has so far taken 10 wickets in

You are the most talented cricketer I've played with: Virat Kohli writes to AB de Villiers

AITA lines up 13 tournaments

NEW DELHI, Oct 16: The All India Tennis Association (AITA) on Wednesday announced that it has lined up 13 international tournaments at home, including four ATP Challengers and a WTA 125 event in the first quarter of the 2025 season, offering a combined prize purse of nearly Rs 10 crore and 1100 ranking points. Three back-to-back ITF events for women will be held in January

2025, starting with a USD 40,000 tournament in New Delhi from January 13, a USD 100,000 event in Bengaluru from January 20 and a USD 70,000 event in Pune.

Mumbai will host the second edition of L&T Mumbai Open from Feb-

only win coming in January this "These four tournaments will offer over 350 WTA points and a com-All the 10 others, who played in The six-time champions take on arm orthodox Nonkululeko Mlaba. the 2023 final are here with the bined prize purse of USD 350000 with a great opportunity for Indian The head-to-head record at likes of Alyssa Healy, Beth women players to accelerate their growth," an AITA release said. (PTI) Olympic gold medals. (AP) four group league games. (PTI)

DUBAI, Oct 16: Virat Kohli on Wednesday described AB de Villiers as "the most talented cricketer" he has played with after the South African great was inducted into the ICC Hall of Fame.

De Villers was included in the long list of great players along with England legend Alastair Cook and India's Neetu In an open letter to the inductees by

those close to them, Kohli was effusive in praise of his teammate at IPL side Royal Challengers Bengaluru. "You are thoroughly deserving of your place – after all, the Hall of Fame

game, and yours has been truly unique,' he wrote. "People have always spoken about your ability, and rightly so. You are the

is a representation of your impact on the

most talented cricketer I have played with, the absolute number one. Kohli described de Villiers' belief and doggedness to uphold the game's values as the qualities that had an impact on the

psyche of those watching. "A lot of players can have impressive numbers but very few have an impact on the psyche of those watching," he wrote. "For me, that is the highest value you

can have as a cricketer and that is what

makes you so special.'

"Through my time playing with and against you, you always had a very clear understanding of how the game should be played and you never really veered from that, regardless of whether you were doing well or not," he added. Kohli said de Villiers was someone

who was bailing his teams out of troubles more often than not. "It was never about someone else. It

was never about competing with another player," he described. "It was always about what impact you

uations, you were the man bailing out your team more often than not. "Your drive to want to be the guy to win the game for your team was tremendous and something I learned a lot

could create for the team. In difficult sit-

from," he said. Kohli said de Villiers taught him about the importance of not resting on

"I remember taking from you that it doesn't matter what you have done in the last four games, it is about how you approach the game today. "It is about always being positive, al-

ways taking the game on and finding a way to get the job done." "You were always completely in tune with the needs of the team, which made



you one of the hardest players to make plans for when we were on opposing sides in international cricket," he added.

Kohli, who shared the RCB dressing room with de Villiers for a decade from 2011-2021, said the former South

African captain's 'self-belief' is one trait that stood out for him.

"But what truly stood out to me was

your belief in that ability. You had a crazy amount of belief that you could execute whatever you wanted to on a cricket field, and you normally did. That is why you ended up being so special," he wrote.

Alongside recalling a special moment while playing together for RCB in a contest against Kolkata Knight Riders, Kohli also recollected memories of the 2015 Test in New Delhi, one in which the Proteas batters fought hard to force a draw.

"Everyone remembers your attacking shots but you would adapt to the situation. Take 2015, in Delhi, when you faced 297 balls and made 43 trying to

save the Test match," Kohli said. "There must have been a temptation at some stage to think 'I've faced 200 balls, I need to hit a boundary'. But once you locked yourself into what the situation required, you just kept going on and

"It all comes back to that belief in your ability. It wasn't just about the crazy, extravagant shots. You had the ability to defend the ball and had belief in that defence. To play that way because South Africa needed you to do so is a classic example of the team player you were," he added. (PTI)

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