

Around 200 fall ill after consuming traditional 'jalpan'

Food inspector to visit village to investigate cause of food poisoning



GOLAGHAT, Oct 20: Around 200 people have fallen ill due to food poisoning after consuming snacks during an obituary function of a deceased in Assam's Golaghat district, officials said on Sunday.

The incident took place on Saturday night during a gathering at the memorial ceremony of

the mother of Pradip Gogoi at Pasghoria village of Uriamghat in the Sarupathar area.

According to an official, the guests were served with traditional 'jalpan' (snacks with puffed rice and cream) during the function.

"The people then complained of stomach ache, headache, vomiting and loose motion. A

total of 53 people were immediately admitted at the Community Health Centre in Sarupathar town and Public Health Centre in Uriamghat," the official said. Out of them, two were sent to Jorhat Medical College and Hospital for advanced treatment, he added.

"The condition of the victims is stated to be stable and many are being released after treatment," the official said. The remaining around 150 people, who have shown minor symptoms, are at their respective homes and their health conditions are being monitored, he added.

Sarupathar's BJP MLA Biswajit Phukan visited the hospital and enquired about the health condition of the people.

"The district administration informed me that the food inspector will visit the village and investigate the cause of the food poisoning," he added. Phukan said a medical camp has been set up in the village and health checkup is being carried out for the villagers.

"We have also sent medical teams to the individual houses of all the people, who had come to the function. The team is closely monitoring the health conditions. None of the people are showing any serious symptoms," he added. (PTI)

SC, ST, Tea Tribes and Gorkhas exempted from three-generation rule Mission Basundhara 3.0 launched in state

HT Bureau
GUWAHATI, Oct 20: Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma on Sunday launched Mission Basundhara 3.0 to provide land rights to indigenous people, at a function held at Srimanta Sankardev Kalakshetra.

Under Mission Basundhara 3.0, steps will also be taken to digitise various land-related services and publish maps for the benefit of the people of the state as several new rules have been implemented to simplify the process of giving land rights to the people, taking forward the experiences from the second edition of Mission Basundhara (MB).

Speaking on the occasion, Sarma said, "Immediately after we assumed office, we set out on a mission to provide land rights to indigenous communities in Assam an exercise undertaken after 75 years of independence. On October 2, 2021, Mission Basundhara was born with this vision."

He further said, "Immediately after setting out to implement this mission, the state government was astounded by the unprecedented number of applications, which were



received from different beneficiaries. This receipt of applications thereby validated the state government's efforts for land-related initiatives in Assam."

The chief minister further said that the state government disposed of eight lakh applications in nine months under MB 1.0.

Sarma also launched the Project Closed User Group (CUG) of ASDMA. CUG is a contiguous special series of mobile numbers, which will be allotted to the officials

and staff under the revenue and disaster management department for facilitating seamless communication and efficient coordination during emergencies.

Under project CUG, government officials of the department will be equipped with specially allocated SIM cards for critical communications. The chief minister also launched the revenue department's Digidoc, a digital directory for non-registrable and optional registrable documents. (CONTD. ON PAGE-2)

HT BRIEFS

NAAC assessments

GUWAHATI: Education Minister Ranajit Pegu has congratulated three prominent colleges in the state for their commendable performance in the recent National Assessment and Accreditation Council (NAAC) evaluations, a press release said on Sunday. In a post shared on the micro-blogging site X, Pegu extended his warm wishes to Pandu College, Darrang College, and Gogamukh College for their achievements. The education minister wrote, "Congratulations to Pandu College, Darrang College, and Gogamukh College for their success in the NAAC evaluation." Pandu College secured a CGPA of 3.12, earning a Grade A, while Darrang College followed with a CGPA of 2.85, receiving a B++ grade. Meanwhile, Gogamukh College, with a CGPA of 2.10, achieved a B grade. The education minister further commended their efforts and expressed his hope for continued growth and academic excellence, encouraging these institutions to strive for even greater accomplishments in the future.

Tobacco-free youth

GUWAHATI: The Ministry of Health and Family Welfare has launched the Tobacco-Free Youth Campaign 2.0, a significant initiative aimed at raising awareness about the dangers of tobacco use among young people, a news bulletin announced on Sunday. As part of this drive, Olympic medalist and acclaimed boxer Lovlina Borgohain has been appointed as the Youth Icon for Assam. Known for her outstanding achievements in sports and her influential public image, Lovlina is set to inspire the younger generation in Assam to make healthier lifestyle choices and stay away from tobacco. In support of the campaign, Lovlina Borgohain has also shared a video message, urging the youth to value good health and highlighting that today's youth are the future of the country. She further emphasised that the choices they make today will inspire future generations, calling on them to set an example by adopting a tobacco-free lifestyle.

Will not allow dilution of AIIMS brand: Nadda

NEW DELHI, Oct 20: Union Health Minister J P Nadda on Sunday said he would not allow any dilution in the standards of teaching and faculty at the new AIIMS and would protect the brand.

Addressing the BJMFCON 2024, a forum of doctors from Bihar and Jharkhand practising in Delhi and NCR, Nadda said that AIIMS-Delhi was set up in the 60s and it was only in the 80s that it became a brand name.

"It takes 10 to 20 years for any institution to grow and function in full swing. I will not allow the dilution of the standards of AIIMS and will protect the brand name," he said.

No compromise will be made in the faculty recruitment, he added. Nadda said that the groundbreaking ceremony for AIIMS-Darbhanga will soon be held, and the commis-



sioning of AIIMS-Deoghar has been done with the recruitment of staff underway.

Nadda said that in the last 10 years, several policy interventions have been made to transform medical education and medical health.

"In the 2017 health policy, we tried to make it comprehensive and

holistic. Earlier, the stress was on the curative aspect but now the focus is on preventive, promotive, curative palliative and rehabilitative aspects -- a holistic approach," he said. Nadda said that the facilities which were earlier called primary health care centres and sub-centres have been converted into Ayushman Arogya Mandirs. At present, there are 1.73 lakh Ayushman Arogya Mandirs and their quality assessment is being done digitally, he said.

The focus of these facilities is on early detection of non-communicable diseases.

In Bihar, 10,716 Ayushman Arogya Mandirs have been set up which have witnessed a footfall of 8.35 crore so far and there have been 4.36 crore screenings for NCDs. In Jharkhand, there are 3,825 Arogya Mandirs (CONTD. ON PAGE-2)

SC's 1971-cut off verdict not historic: Himanta

GUWAHATI, Oct 20: Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma on Sunday expressed a "mixed reaction of happiness and sorrow" regarding the Supreme Court judgment on the cut-off date of the Assam Accord.

Speaking to reporters on the sidelines of an official function on Sunday, Sarma emphasised that the Assamese people will have to move forward through "struggles."

"I don't know if this judgment is historic or not. The government enacted the Assam Accord, so its stand in the court was that the cut-off date should be 1971.

However, many people in Assam wished the cut-off date to be 1951," he said when asked for his comments on the judgment. In a majority verdict, the Supreme Court on Thursday upheld the constitutional validity of Section 6A of the Citizenship Act which grants Indian citizenship to immigrants who came to Assam between January 1, 1966 and March 25, 1971.

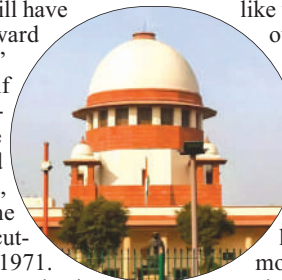
A five-judge Constitution Bench, headed by Chief Justice D Y Chandrachud, said the Assam Accord was a political solution to

the problem of illegal migration. "I feel that this verdict establishes 1971 as the cut-off date, and my reaction is mixed. There is both happiness and sorrow in it. Therefore, I don't want to label it a historic judgment; it is simply a blend of both emotions."

"The Assamese community has to move forward with struggles like this," Sarma said without elaborating further in his first reaction after the judgment was delivered by the apex court.

The Assam Accord was signed in 1985 after a six-year-long violent anti-foreigner movement. The pact stated, among other clauses, that names of all foreigners coming to Assam on or after March 25, 1971, would be detected and deleted from electoral rolls with steps taken to deport them.

The majority verdict of the Constitutional Bench held that the cut-off date of March 25, 1971, for entry into Assam and granting citizenship is correct. Section 6A was inserted into the Citizenship Act in 1985 as a special provision to deal with the citizenship of people covered under the Assam Accord. (PTI)



Rain-damaged infra disappoints tourists at Pobitora Wildlife Sanctuary

MORIGAN, Oct 20: Tourists visiting Pobitora Wildlife Sanctuary, the densest habitat of one-horned rhinos in the world, are facing hardship due to poor road conditions inside the forest on account of heavy rainfall a week ago.

The forest was reopened on October 14 after the monsoon break since May, but tourists had to be turned away as the authorities could start neither jeep nor elephant safaris due to poor road conditions inside the sanctuary, a senior official said on Sunday. During the last one week, already 1,585 tourists, including 21 foreign nationals from China and Thailand, visited the Pobitora Wildlife Sanctuary and it is a healthy trend, the forest's Ranger Nayan J Das told PTI.

"However, many of them could not go inside because we could not start the jeep or elephant safari. We had repaired the roads after the monsoon, but those got badly damaged in heavy rains that lashed the park at the time of reopening," he added.

Das said that the paths inside the sanctuary were waterlogged, and jeep and elephant safaris remained suspended for the first three days.

Usually, October is a non-rainy month in Assam but this year the state received heavy rainfall for several days till around Durga Puja earlier this month.

"When the rain stopped, we started repair work again. The damaged infrastructure was repaired and work on link roads inside the sanctuary is underway. We could finally start the jeep safari from October 17," Das said.

However, the elephant safari will take some more time to start and the forest authorities have set a target of November 7 for this, he added.

Sudip Bose, a tourist from Kolkata, said he reached Pobitora on October 16 but could not take the safari as it was closed then.

"I stayed one more night and took the jeep safari on October 17. It was worth waiting for. However, the roads inside were very bad and the safari guide did not take us to a few areas as the link paths were still in very bad shape," he said.

Another tourist, Lily Dubey from Delhi, said the authorities should have reopened the forest after preparing it fully for the tourists, otherwise, it brings a bad reputation for the sanctuary when visitors coming from outside the state are turned away. "Tourists spend time and money on vacations. If it does not fruitfully due to lack of preparedness by the management, it is not good. Also, there is no system for getting proper information." (CONTD. ON PAGE-2)

Heroin worth ₹ 6 cr seized in Assam, two arrested

HT Bureau
GUWAHATI, Oct 20: In a significant effort to curb drug supply in the state, a Special Task Force (STF) team on Saturday seized a Tata Nexon carrying 49 soap boxes of heroin from Assam's Kamrup district.

As per the official statement, the market price of the seized drugs was nearly worth Rs 6 crore as two persons were arrested.

Acting on a tip-off, a Special Task Force (STF) team launched an operation at the Amingaon area and seized the drugs coming from Manipur on Saturday night, Assam Police Chief Public Relations Officer Pranabjyoti Goswami said in a statement. (CONTD. ON PAGE-2)

'Will retain four seats in upcoming bypolls'

GUWAHATI, Oct 20: Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma on Sunday said the ruling NDA will retain all four seats and work hard to snatch the fifth seat from the opposition in the bypolls to be held next month.

By-elections will be held in Dholai, Sidli, Bongaigaon, Behali and Samaguri assembly segments as these seats fell vacant with their MLAs winning the Lok Sabha polls.

"In four out of five constituencies, we had our MLAs and they became parliamentarians. They have taken responsibility for the victory of the candidates in the upcoming bypolls. I am sure that we will be able to retain those four constituencies," he said.

"In the fifth constituency, we did not have an MLA. As a political party, we will try to win that also. If people bless us, we will be able to represent that seat too," he added. (CONTD. ON PAGE-2)

'To showcase the deep-rooted connection between tea, culture, and nature'

Three-day FolkTea Festival from Nov 29

GUWAHATI, Oct 20: The fourth edition of the 'FolkTea' festival, blending Assam's rich tea heritage with vibrant folk traditions, will begin on November 29 at Pabhoi in Biswanath Chariali district, festival organisers said on Sunday.

The three-day event will comprise a tea conclave, the state's traditional drama Bhaona performance by villagers, Jhumur dance by locals, a showcase of traditional folk performances and camping in the serene tea gardens, festival organiser Mrinal Talukdar told PTI.

"The FolkTea Festival is a platform for promoting Assam's tea industry, fostering collaboration, and embracing innovation by showcasing the deep-rooted connection between tea, culture, and nature, offering attendees an experience that blends tradition with adventure," he said.

The tea conclave serves as a



B2B summit where Small Tea Growers (STGs), Bought Leaf Factories (BLFs), and other industry stakeholders engage in meaningful discussions with knowledge partners like the Tea Board of India, TRA Tocklai, AAU Biswanath, among others, he said.

The conclave's four sessions

will be conducted in the local language to foster accessible and impactful discussions, he said.

The sessions will deal with climate change and pest management, marketing and quality management, financial solutions for Small Tea Growers (STGs) and crop support and enhancers.

NDA to form govt in Jharkhand: Himanta

GUWAHATI, Oct 20: Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma on Sunday said the next government in Jharkhand will be formed by the National Democratic Alliance (NDA).

Speaking to reporters on the sidelines of an official function here, Sarma, the BJP's co-in-charge for Jharkhand Assembly elections, offered his best wishes to all the party candidates. "We hope that the BJP will form the government in Jharkhand," he said.

Asked if the BJP will get an absolute majority on its own, Sarma said: "It is not my state, Jharkhand is a separate one. We are just guests there and guests can speak with limitations. Our leaders will speak there." He also said people will decide whether the party or NDA will get a majority in the

81-member Jharkhand assembly.

"However, from the people's mood that I have seen in Jharkhand, a BJP or NDA government will be formed there," he said.

Elections to the Jharkhand Assembly will be held in two phases, on November 13 and 20, with the counting of votes scheduled for November 23.

The BJP, which is looking to topple the JMM-led alliance from power in Jharkhand, on Friday said it would contest the upcoming assembly polls in alliance with AJSU Party, JD(U) and LJP (Ram Vilas). Under the seat-sharing arrangement, the saffron party will contest 68 seats, AJSU Party 10, JD(U) 2 and LJP (Ram Vilas) 1. However, a final decision will be made soon. (PTI)



CNG price may go up ₹ 4-6 on input supply cut, excise duty cut to ease situation

NEW DELHI, Oct 20: The government has slashed by up to 20 per cent the supplies of cheaper domestically produced natural gas to city retailers -- a move that may result in ₹ 4-6 per kg hike in the price of CNG sold to automobiles, unless excise duty on the fuel is cut, sources said.

Natural gas pumped from below the ground and from under the seabed from sites ranging from the Arabian Sea to Bay of Bengal within India is the raw material that is turned into CNG for sale to automobiles and piped cooking gas to households. Production from legacy fields, whose price is regulated by the government and which are used to feed city gas retailers, has been falling by up to 5 per cent annually due to natural decline that has set in. This has led to supply cuts to city gas retailers, four sources in know of the matter said.

While the input gas for piped cooking gas that households get is protected, the government has cut supply of raw material for CNG. Gas from legacy fields used to meet 90 per cent of the demand for CNG in May 2023 and has progressively fallen. The supply was cut to just 50.75 per cent of the CNG demand beginning October



16 from 67.74 per cent last month, they said. City gas retailers are forced to buy imported and costlier liquefied natural gas (LNG) to make up for the shortfall, which will lead to a hike in CNG prices that varies from ₹ 4-6/kg.

The gas from legacy fields is priced at USD 6.50 per million British thermal unit (MMBTu) as against imported LNG that costs USD 11-12 per MMBtu. For now, the retailers have not raised CNG rates as they are engaged with the Ministry of Petroleum and Natural Gas to find a solution, sources said. One of the options is for the government to cut excise duty on

CNG. Currently, the central government levies a 14 per cent excise duty on CNG, which translates into ₹ 14-15 per kg. If this is cut, the retailers will not have to pass on the increased cost to consumers, they said. CNG price hike is also a political issue since Maharashtra goes to the polls next month and elections are also due in Delhi soon. Delhi and Mumbai are among the biggest CNG markets in the country.

Sources said the gas supplies to city gas retailers had to be cut after the government decided to restore fuel to ONGC-promoted OPAI petrochemical plant in Dahej, Gu-

jarat. The plant was originally allocated 4.12 million standard cubic meters per day of domestically produced natural gas. However, the allocation for various reasons was cut to 1.95 mmscmd and during Covid was halted.

Lack of promised domestic gas was the main reason for OPAI running into losses, sources said, adding that the government has now approved a package to revive the unit. This package includes promoter Oil and Natural Gas Corporation (ONGC) infusing additional ₹10,501 crore as equity and the unit being made available domestically produced natural gas.

The Union Cabinet approved the allocation of 3.44 mmscmd of domestic gas -- mostly coming from new wells of ONGC. This led to lesser gas being available for city gas retailers. Girish Kadam, Senior Vice President & Group Head - Corporate Ratings, Iera Ltd, said, "The APM gas allocation has been reduced for the CGD sector by 20 per cent of the current domestic gas consumption by the sector. The reduction in APM allocation will have to be replaced by more expensive HPHT gas or (imported) LNG, which will push the overall gas costs for the sector." (PTI)

Two day FICCI Ladies Flo-Fest concludes

HT Bureau

GUWAHATI, Oct 20: The two-day 'FLO-FEST' the cultural extravaganza organised by the FICCI Ladies Organisation (FLO), the apex body of business women in the country concluded with a grand fashion show 'Runway to success'.

The fashion entrepreneur's show 'highlighted the creativity, craftsmanship and cultural heritage of the organisations members. The 'FLO-FEST' was inaugurated by Rajeev Sethi an eminent Scenographer, cultural activist and chairman of the Asian Heritage Foundation.

"At FICCI FLO, we believe that creativity is the spark that ignites innovation, empowering our members to build businesses that are not only successful but also transformative. FLO Fest 2024 was a celebration of this creative spirit, where the fusion of art, culture, and entrepreneurship opened doors to new opportunities. Together, we are shaping a future where women lead with both style and substance, turning their creative visions into lasting impact," said Joyshree Das Verma, national president, FLO. Verma said that this event aimed to encourage FLO members' talents and offer them a significant platform.

"In this two-day cultural fiesta members of FLO from its 21 chapters across the nation sang, danced, showed their talent in various forms and walked the ramp, exuding grace, confidence and style as models.



Craftsmanship and detailed research behind this event captivated every attendee," Verma added.

She further said that the FLO has always been a pioneering platform for women entrepreneurs and leaders, and this event symbolised our commitment to embracing creativity as a fundamental pillar of leadership and business success. The FLO-FEST featured Four fashion designer entrepreneurs including Sanita Gupta, founder of Twenty Nine, Anju Narain, a Lucknow based designer of Chikankari and Zardozi, Sejal Mehta and Shradha Murarka founder of Vizyon and president FLO Kolkata Chapter, who presented their distinctive and creative designs, blending personal aesthetics with cultural inspirations.

Significant percentage of organisations see AI as key to competitive advantage: Report

NEW DELHI, Oct 20: A significant percentage of organisations see Artificial Intelligence as key to competitive advantage and said they have experienced a notable boost in productivity through AI integration, according to a new report.

According to the "Industry 5.0 and AI report", compiled by BML Munjal University, 44 per cent of organisations have experienced a significant boost in productivity through AI integration.

Additionally, 21 per cent reported that AI can play a pivotal role in driving innovation, enabling the development of new products, services and business models, particularly in sectors like finance, healthcare, manufacturing and marketing.

"Approximately 33 per cent of organisations focus on product development, while 29 per cent leverage AI for customer service through chatbots and robotic process automation (RPA). Marketing teams, representing 19 per cent of businesses, utilize AI for trend analysis, while 13 per cent apply AI to improve supply chain management. Financial planning, though less prominent (6 per cent), benefits from AI's efficiency-boosting capabilities," the report added.

Based on responses from 1,000 professionals and in-depth interviews with 50 industry experts, the report highlighted a significant shift in how businesses are integrating AI into their strategies.

While AI has delivered numerous benefits, the report also high-

lights some key challenges. "Around 34 per cent of organisations face a critical shortage of AI-trained personnel which hinders their ability to fully leverage AI's potential. This skills gap highlights the need for better AI education and continuous learning programmes. In fact, 31 per cent of organisations have started mentorship initiatives to help develop talent," the report said.

AI's impact varies by sector; in mergers and acquisitions, 28 per cent have seen benefits in personalized campaigns, but data privacy remains a hurdle for 22 per cent. IT and augmented reality sectors report enhanced productivity (44 per cent) but struggle with talent shortages. (PTI)

Dollar-starved Maldives notifies new foreign currency rules

MALE, Oct 20: Dollar-starved Maldives has floated a new foreign currency regulation, limiting types of transactions allowed in foreign currency and imposing mandatory foreign currency exchange controls on tourism establishments and banks.

Maldivian economy appears to have taken a hit after calls to Indian tourists to avoid the picturesque island nation as a response to President Mohamed Muizzu's 'India Out' campaign last year.

Maldives last month averted a potential default on an Islamic bond payment after India extended a USD 50 million interest-free loan. With its forex reserves not matching its import bill, the island nation's central bank, Maldives Monetary Authority (MMA) on October 1 introduced a new regulation, requiring all foreign currency income generated by the tourism industry to be deposited in local banks. MMA, which had in August imposed a strict dollar limit as Maldives found itself in a dollar shortage, published the new rules in the local Dhivehi language.

The Foreign Currency Regulation (Regulation No: 2024/R-91) mandates that all transactions within Maldives must be conducted in Maldivian Rufiyaa (MVR), except for those explicitly allowed in foreign currency. It also provides for payment for goods and services, value for works, fees, charges, rent and wages be made in local currency and prohibits invoicing for these transactions in foreign currency, according to the new regulation and FAQ released by MMA. Transactions exempt include payments for exports, international transactions, remittance service providers and those that are legally mandated to settle in US dollars. (PTI)

Meeting 2030 target may push India's solar imports to \$30 bn per yr: GTRI

NEW DELHI, Oct 20: The country's target of installing 500 GW of renewable energy by 2030 may push solar equipment import bill to about USD 30 billion per year and increase dependence on Chinese goods, think tank GTRI said in a report on Sunday.

It said developing a self-reliant solar manufacturing industry in India will require significant investment to create an integrated supply chain, especially in areas like polysilicon and wafer production. Without this, India may continue to face high import costs and struggle to meet its renewable energy goals.

India installed 15 GW of solar capacity in 2023-24, raising the total to 90.8 GW by September, compared to just 2.8 GW in 2014, it said. To meet the government's target of installing 500 GW of renewable energy by 2030, India needs to significantly ramp up installations to 65-70 GW each year, with over 80 per cent of this target expected to come from solar power, according to the Global Trade Research Initiative (GTRI).

"This target seems ambitious, particularly given India's reliance on imports, which could push solar import to USD 30 billion annually," it said. In 2023-24, India imported USD 7 billion worth of solar equipment, with China supplying 62.6 per cent of



global polysilicon production and 80 per cent of solar module manufacturing, making it difficult for India or any country to compete due to lower prices from China. GTRI Founder Ajay Srivastava said while initiatives like the production-linked incentive (PLI) scheme aims to boost local manufacturing, impact is limited as it relies on large scale use of imported inputs.

The report said India's solar manufacturing industry is in early stages, with most projects relying on imported ready-to-use modules.

During the last fiscal year, ready-to-use solar modules' imports reached USD 4.4 billion. The country also imported solar cells worth USD 1.9 billion and USD 1 billion worth of other essential

polysilicon production and requires advanced technology," Srivastava said. He added that cheap imports disrupt local pricing and the country has to also locally produce aluminum frames, glass, and other materials, which will require strong R&D efforts and government support.

According to the report, China is India's largest supplier, providing USD 3.89 billion worth of solar cells and modules, which accounts for 62.6 per cent of total imports. It is followed by Vietnam (USD 1.02 billion -- 16.5 per cent), Malaysia (USD 549.8 million -- 8.9 per cent, and Thailand (USD 248.8 million -- 4 per cent).

To reduce dependency on Chinese imports, India imposed a 40 per cent customs duty on solar modules and a 25 per cent duty on solar cells. However, imports from Vietnam, Malaysia, and Thailand are exempt from these tariffs under the India-Asean free trade agreement (FTA), provided they add at least 35 per cent value to the imported inputs used in their export products.

The think tank has suggested seven steps to boost domestic manufacturing and cut imports and that includes pushing investments in upstream solar production, from raw materials like silica sand to finished solar panels, reducing dependency on imported wafers, polysilicon, and cells. (PTI)

Mid- and small-cap MFs attract ₹ 30,350 cr in H1 FY25 on strong returns

NEW DELHI, Oct 20: Mid-cap and small-cap mutual fund schemes have continued to attract strong investor interest, garnering nearly ₹ 30,350 crore in inflows during the April-September period of the current financial year, driven by impressive returns delivered by these segments.

In comparison, the cumulative inflow into mid-cap and small-cap funds stood at ₹ 32,924 crore during the same period last year, according to data from the Association of Mutual Funds in India (Amfi).

The inflow trend persists despite concerns raised by market regulator Sebi over heightened inflows into small-cap and mid-cap funds, as experts believe investors will continue to favour these categories for their potential to deliver high returns.

"Small caps will continue to grow at a faster rate for years to come. I expect the inflows to continue as Indians want to invest in the high-growth sectors. Small cap funds should be seen as an integral part of one's portfolio allocation and not a tactical play," Trust Mutual Fund CEO Sandeep Bagla told PTI.

Individually, mid-cap funds saw an inflow of ₹14,756 crore and small-cap funds attracted ₹ 15,586 crore in the first half of FY25. This aggregates the total inflow to ₹ 30,342 crore, the data showed.

The strong investor interest in mid-cap and small-cap mutual funds is driven by the potential for high returns in these segments, Tradejini COO Trivesh said.

Mid-cap and small-cap indices have posted gains of about 20 per cent and 24 per cent, respectively, this financial year, outperforming both the Nifty and large-cap indices. While the previous year saw even higher returns that led to higher inflows, the current performance continues to draw investor interest.

In addition, stress test in March 2024 has also played a role, reinforcing confidence by ensuring that fund managers are prepared to handle market volatility. Feroze Azeed, Deputy CEO, Anand Rathi Wealth Ltd, said, "With the mid-cap and small-cap segments projected to grow at 20 per cent and 25 per cent, respectively, in FY25, we expect inflows to remain



strong, especially as SIP inflows continue to hit new peaks," he said.

Moreover, companies' earnings will drive flows in these categories. The last year has seen mutual funds launch new fund offerings (NFOs) of thematic funds and newer fund management strategies in the passive fund management space. If these NFOs deliver above broader market returns, we may see incremental flows moving to those categories, Manish Kothari, Co-Founder and CEO, ZFunds, said.

If there is a correction in the broader markets, we may see flows in mid- and small-cap category mutual fund schemes go down, he added.

Large-cap mutual funds experienced an inflow of over ₹ 7,067 crore in the April-September period of FY25 after witnessing an outflow of ₹ 5,700 crore in the same period of FY24.

In line with the increase in inflow, the number of investors (folios) in the two schemes shot up by 1.32 crore year-on-year to nearly 4 crore in the six months period ended September 30, 2024.

"With the number of folios increasing, we see rising confidence in these funds' performance, despite the regulatory cautions," Tradejini's Trivesh said.

Overall, the assets of the two categories of the mid-cap and small-cap schemes rose 63 per cent to Rs 7.26 lakh crore at the end of September 2024 from Rs 4.44 lakh crore a year earlier. (PTI)

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Will not allow dilution of AIIMS

which have recorded a footfall of 2.33 crore.

"So you can imagine how the Indian government is ensuring that health services reach people at the last mile and the benefits reach at the grassroots level," he said.

Nadga said 14 free diagnostic facilities are available in sub-health centres, 63 in primary health centres, 97 facilities in community health centres, 111 facilities in sub-district hospitals, and 134 in district hospitals. Under the Pradhan Mantri National Dialysis Programme, every district hospital offers free dialysis, he said.

Speaking on institutional deliveries, Nadga mentioned the implementation of the world's largest COVID-19 vaccination programme with more than 220 crore doses being administered. He also said that in the last 10 years, the number of medical colleges have been increased from 387 to 786 and 156 district hospitals have been converted into medical colleges.

"Could you imagine a medical college in Purnia, Saharan, Samastipur, Siwan, and Buxar in Bihar and Dumka, Hazaribagh, Palamu, and Koderma in Jharkhand?" he asked in a rhetorical fashion. He said there is a plan to increase PG and MBBS seats by more than 75,000.

The minister claimed that the Swachh Bharat Abhiyan helped reduce child mortality and the Ayushman Bharat health insurance scheme reduced the out-of-pocket expenditure of the people. (PTI)

Restoration of Article 370 would

taken on a societal level to ensure it. "As far as the return of Kashmiri Pandits is concerned, my stand is unchanged. We have had some discussions with some KP (Kashmiri Pandit) friends in Delhi. We want to expand that initiative and in that, we need your help. We want to do something about it on the societal level. You have seen the seriousness of the BJP over the past 10 years," he said.

"Let's, as a society, try to find a roadmap for the return of Kashmiri Pandit brethren," he added. The Cabinet headed by chief minister Omar Abdullah on Thursday passed a resolution, urging the Centre to restore the statehood of Jammu and Kashmir. The resolution got the Lieutenant Governor's nod on Saturday and would now be sent to the Union government. (PTI)

Heroin worth ₹ 6 cr seized

"The narcotic substance was transported in a truck from Kangpokpi district of the neighbouring state. Based on the input, the receiver was intercepted in an SUV, where 49 soap boxes of heroin were found and seized," he added.

"Later, the driver of the truck who had transported the narcotics from Manipur was apprehended from a parking place in Changsari. Both the vehicles were seized and necessary legal proceedings have been being initiated," he added.

Further investigation is on regarding the case, the official said.

Rain-damaged infra disappoints

"There should be a website or social media account with regular updates," she added. During the 2023-24 tourist season, a total of 51,293 tourists, including 2,029 foreigners, came to Pobitora and enjoyed jeep and elephant safaris.

Pobitora Wildlife Sanctuary harbours the world's highest density of one-horned rhinoceros. Located in Morigaon district, about 35 km from Guwahati, the habitat comprises Assam alluvial grassland with hilly forests for an area of 38.81 sq km.

Apart from rhinos, other mammals found are leopard, leopard cat, fishing cat, jungle cat, feral buffalo, wild boar, Chinese pangolins, different types of deer, several hundred species of migratory and resident birds, amphibians and reptiles.

Pobitora supports two critically endangered, four endangered, eight vulnerable and three near-threatened bird species. (PTI)

'Will retain four seats in

BJP MPs Parimal Suklabaidya and Ranjit Dutta were MLAs of the Dholai and Behali constituencies. Its ally Asom Gana Parishad's Phani Bhusan Choudhury represented Bongaigaon for eight consecutive terms since 1985 before stepping into Parliament for the first time.

Another NDA constituent United People's Party Liberal's Joyanta Basumatary was the MLA of the Sidli constituency before winning the Lok Sabha polls.

Congress MP Rakibul Hussain, who won the Dhubri Lok Sabha seat for a record margin of over 10.12 lakh votes, was the MLA from Samaguri for five consecutive terms.

BJP on Saturday named Nihar Ranjan Das as its candidate for the Dholai seat, Diganta Ghatowar for Behali, and Dipul Sharma for Samaguri. Bongaigaon and Sidli will be contested by ACP and UPPL, respectively.

The polling of the by-elections in the five assembly constituencies will take place on November 13, while the votes will be counted on November 23. (PTI)

Three-day FolkTea Festival

Organised by the Nanda Talukdar Foundation, the FolkTea Festival has grown into a platform for knowledge-sharing, collaboration, and innovation within Assam's tea industry, along with highlighting the region's diverse folk culture, he added. (PTI)

Mission Basundhara 3.0

The directory will streamline services, reduce processing time, and enhance public convenience while improving accessibility and efficiency. CM Sarma on the occasion also handed over financial grants of Rs 1 lakh each for the digital upgrade of the offices of the Mouzadars across the state.

Sarma moreover said, "Realising the immense potential, especially in conferring land rights to the indigenous people of the state, his government launched the second edition of Mission Basundhara in November 2022 and gave land rights to over two lakh indigenous people within one year."

"Through this comprehensive Mission, we aim to allot land ownership to priority groups at the earliest and bring transparency to various land-related services. MB 3.0 will be another firm step taken by our government to safeguard the land rights and the identity of the people of Assam," he added.

The chief minister also mentioned that to be entitled to land rights under Mission Basundhara, three-generation ancestry is required. However, people belonging to SC, ST, Tea Tribes and Gorkhas will not be required to prove three-generation ancestry as they are the sons of the soil.

He also informed that the premium rate was reduced to 3 per cent of zonal valuation for city dwellers. He moreover announced that his government would shortly introduce unprecedented land reforms and issue Land Passbooks to all landholders. He further observed that through conferring land pattas the State government is strengthening its resolve of 'Jati, Mati and Bheti' (identity, land and base).

Highlighting the services that will be available, the chief minister said, "MB 3.0 will enable review of MB 2.0 cases pending for clarification, end to end digitization of annual pattas to periodic pattas conversion with rationalised premium rates in urban and peripheral areas, one-time conversion of tea grant land to periodic patta, settlement of erstwhile Bhoodan/Gramland land etc."

He moreover, said that in the coming days State government will launch many more initiatives which have the potential to revolutionise the convenience of the people of the state.

Infiltrator nabbed, sent back to Bangladesh: Himanta

GUWAHATI, Oct 20: Chief minister Himanta Biswa Sarma on Sunday said that one Bangladesh national has been apprehended in Karimganj district while illegally entering India and sent back to the neighbouring country.

"A Bangladeshi infiltrator, Mollahulla, was apprehended near the international border and pushed back across the border in Karimganj," Sarma said in a post on X. Karimganj, Cachar, Dhubri and South Salmara-Mankachar districts share 267.5 km of international border with Bangladesh.

"Our forces of @assampolice and @BSF India are alert 24/7 to thwart all infiltration attempts along the border. Good job Team," Sarma said.

There is an Integrated Check Post (ICP) at Sutarkandi in Karimganj. Northeast has a total of three ICPs with the other two being located at Dawki in Meghalaya and Akhaura in Tripura.

Assam DGP GP Singh had earlier said that the state police and BSF would do everything possible to prevent any attempt by non-Indians to enter the country from Bangladesh as per the law.

However, all Indian passport holders would be allowed to return from trouble-hit Bangladesh through the entry point in the state, he had said. (PTI)

Dibrugarh celebrates first successful kidney transplant

Apeksha Hospital achieves a significant breakthrough in affordable healthcare for the region

HT Correspondent
DIBRUGARH, Oct 20: Affordable healthcare is becoming increasingly vital in India, particularly in smaller cities where infrastructure and medical expertise are often limited. However, Dibrugarh is now setting a new standard by overcoming these challenges.

On October 1, 2024, Apeksha Hospital made history by successfully completing the city's first-ever kidney transplant, marking a significant leap forward for healthcare in the region. The young patient received a kidney donated by their mother, with the entire procedure completed at only 25 percent of the usual cost compared to larger hospitals outside Assam. This marks a milestone not only in terms of medical achievement but also in making advanced healthcare affordable for residents of smaller cities.

The renal transplant team was led by nephrologist Dr Dibya Jyoti Kalita, supported by resident doctor Dr Nandita Jaiwal and nurses Hima Lama, Purnima Thapa, and Susmita Thapa. The external team



included Dr Anand Jain (nephrologist) and Dr Mridul Plaban Borah (paediatric nephrologist). The surgical team consisted of Dr Safdar Hayat Hussain (urologist), Dr Vikas Kumar Agarwal (surgeon), Dr Raja Roy (anaesthesiologist), and Dr Abhinav Poddar (anaesthesiologist).

The entire process was mentored by a team from Delhi for additional guidance.

Reflecting on the success, Dr Dibya Jyoti Kalita emphasised the significance of the achievement, "Transplantation is often the best

treatment for advanced kidney disease, but financial issues, lack of donors, and long periods away from home have made it an unrealistic dream for many in our region. After my residency at one of India's top organ transplant institutes, I always dreamed of bringing such healthcare to Dibrugarh. I am grateful to everyone involved and hope this is the beginning of wider access to affordable healthcare in our hometown."

Dr Ashok Kumar Agarwal, an active partner at Apeksha Hospital, highlighted the long-term vision, "Our goal is to provide high standards of care at affordable costs so that people in our region can access top-tier medical services. I invite young doctors to return to Assam and serve their hometowns, where we are committed to providing the right infrastructure."

"With modern options like Bone Scan, Cathlab, and Urolaser to be available at Apeksha locally within a week, Dibrugarh is becoming a hub for quality medical care. Support from local administration through public-private partnerships is helping to improve the city's healthcare infrastructure," he said.

He further added, "We're in the process of obtaining a cadaveric organ transplant licence within a month. We are also going to establish an eye bank in our hospital within a month."

This landmark event is expected to inspire other hospitals in the region to upgrade their facilities, further enhancing the medical landscape and increasing access to affordable care in and around Dibrugarh.

District Level Committee Meeting held in Cachar



HT Bureau
GUWAHATI, Oct 20: A pivotal District Level Committee meeting was convened at the conference hall of the Cachar DC's office here on Saturday. The meeting was presided over by DC Mridul Yadav and focused on assessing the progress of constructing Model Anganwadi Centres (MAWCs) across the district under various development schemes such as NIDA, RIDF, and SCBC.

Attendees included additional district commissioner (Women and Child Development) Dr Khaleda Ahmed, Cachar district social welfare officer (I/C) Anjali Kumari, child development project officers (CDPOs), chairpersons and member secretaries of Anganwadi Level Construction Committees (ALCCs), as well as other key officials involved in the project.

DC Yadav provided a comprehensive review of the construction progress of MAWCs, addressing the status of each legislative assembly constituency and individual Anganwadi centres. He also explored the challenges faced by the ALCCs and proposed strategies to resolve these issues efficiently. To accelerate progress, DC Yadav instructed

the immediate disbursement of funds for centres with completed documentation and visible construction activities.

Highlighting the importance of addressing land acquisition challenges, DC Yadav urged officials to expedite the process of obtaining No Objection Certificates (NOCs) from relevant authorities, ensuring that no project is stalled due to procedural delays. He further emphasised the significance of community involvement, encouraging CDPOs and ALCCs to engage local residents actively in the construction process to ensure smooth execution.

While emphasising the role of Model Anganwadi Centres, DC Yadav said, "Effective coordination between departments is crucial for the timely completion of these critical infrastructure projects. These Model Anganwadi Centres will play a key role in enhancing child development facilities in the district, and it is our responsibility to ensure their successful and prompt completion."

The meeting reaffirmed the district administration's commitment to improving child welfare and development services in Cachar through these model centres.

Tripura CM claims no issue with law and order



AGARTALA, Oct 20: Tripura chief minister Manik Saha on Sunday asserted that there is no issue with the law and order situation in the state and the police are taking action against those who are violating laws.

His comment comes in the backdrop of a tribal man's death due to alleged torture by policemen, murder of a shopkeeper in Agartala and clashes between two communities in Kadamtala and Panisgar areas in North Tripura district.

"Providing security to the people is at the top of the government's agenda. The law and order situation in the state is normal. There are reports of several incidents but the police are taking action as per the law," he told the reporters here.

Saha, who joined the BJP's membership drive in his home constituency- Town Bardowali,

said his government will make efforts if there is any lapse on the part of the intelligence wing of the police.

"The party's ongoing membership drive has received a massive response. Around 6 lakh people have already enrolled their names as members of the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) in the northeastern state. Our target is 12 lakh. Over 13,000 people have registered themselves with the BJP in my constituency," he said.

Saha said the party has initiated a process to carry on the membership drive via offline mode due to the lack of facility for online registration, especially in rural areas where people either don't have mobile phones or internet facilities.

He also said the state has already geared up to introduce super speciality treatment facilities at GBP hospital to reduce referral cases in the state. "A kidney transplant procedure has been successfully performed at GBP hospital and another case will be done shortly. We want to introduce more speciality departments so that people don't need to go outside for treatment," Saha added. (PTI)

Indefinite strike by Mizoram commercial vehicle owners from Oct 23

Price of petrol has been hiked from Rs 93.93 to ₹ 99.24 per litre

AIZAWL, Oct 20: Commercial vehicle owners in Mizoram have decided to go on an indefinite strike from October 23 demanding reduction in prices of fuel.

The price of petrol has been hiked from ₹ 93.93 to ₹ 99.24 per litre, while the diesel rate has been increased to ₹ 88.02 from ₹ 82.62 for a litre from September 1. The Mizoram government, after a cabinet meeting, on October 17 announced it would not roll back the hike in fuel prices.

Protesting the decision, 11 commercial vehicle owners' associations on Saturday called for the indefinite strike.

Initially, the commercial vehicle owners had decided to go on an indefinite strike from October 14 but withdrew their plan after Chief Minister Lalduhoma requested them to be patient and wait till the cabinet meeting on October 16.

A statement issued by Mizoram Commercial Vehicle Union (MCVU) said that the meeting of the union held on Saturday decided that all commercial vehicles will remain off the roads for an indefinite period from October 23 as the state cabinet had decided not to re-



duce prices of petrol and diesel by ignoring the promise the chief minister had made to the MCVU and civil society organisations that fuel prices will be reduced. The MCVU said that the union leaders had on October 11 met Lalduhoma, who urged the union leaders to wait till the cabinet meeting.

Earlier, the union had also acceded to the request of the NGO Coordination Committee (NGOCC), a conglomerate of major civil societies and student organisations, to cancel its proposed strike from October 14 as the chief minister informed the committee that the government was mulling to reduce the fuel prices and that the order hiking fuel prices will be kept in abeyance till the cabinet meeting, the statement said.

3rd edition of Autumn Festival aims to attract crowd

DIMAPUR, Oct 20: The inaugural programme of the 3rd edition of Autumn Festival, a prelude to the 25th Hornbill Festival, was launched at Nagaland House, Dr APJ Abdul Kalam Road, New Delhi on October 18. The Autumn Festival will go on till October 20, 2024.

Temjen Inma Along, minister of tourism and higher education, Government of Nagaland, was the chief host of the event. Union minister of state, consumer affairs, food and public distribution, social justice and empowerment, B L Verma graced the inaugural function along with Mugdha Sinha, director general, Ministry of tourism, Government of India, as chief guest and Javier Manuel Paulinich Velarde, ambassador of Peru in India as the honoured guest, a DIPR report said.

Temjen Inma Along, while addressing the gathering, said that the Autumn Festival is a countdown to the Hornbill Festival and called on the 17 Naga tribes

to unite and prepare for the upcoming festival. He invited those present to be a part of the 25th edition of Hornbill Festival which will be celebrated from 1st - 10th December 2024 at Kisama. He said that it is not just a festival but much more than that, where bonds are made, and trusts, faith and affection of the Nagas earned. He thanked the Ministry of Tourism, Government of India and Country Partner, Peru for partnering with the state during the Hornbill Festival, the DIPR report said.

Director general, Ministry of tourism, Mugdha Sinha, congratulating the government and the people of the State, said that the success of the Festival stands as an exemplar, and commended the Naga's persistence and continuity that they have managed to reach the 25th edition of Hornbill Festival, where today it has international bands performing at the Festival and different countries wanting to partner with the State in celebrating the Festival, the report also said. She also

lauded the State for promoting sustainability through the Festival, by nurturing the coming together of nature and culture, which she added, is something to be admired and learnt from by other states. She thanked the state government and the community for educating and sharing their cuisines, music, and textiles with people from outside the State.

Dr G Hukugha Sema, IRS, commissioner & secretary, tourism, Government of Nagaland delivered the welcome address. Guests were treated to a cultural extravaganza which included, song performance by Ao Naga Choir, cultural song by Ao students, a fashion show on traditional Naga wear by Kitem and traditional Naga wrestling match was played. DGP Band also performed at the programme.

The event is being organized by the tourism department, Government of Nagaland in collaboration with Office of the Resident Commissioner, Nagaland House, New Delhi. (NNN)

'Abhijnana Shakuntalam' staged in Sanskrit for first time in state

HT Correspondent
NAGAON, Oct 20: The greatest Sanskrit play 'Abhijnana Shakuntalam' by Mahakavi Kalidasa, edited and adapted by Professor Guna Saikia and directed by Rajen Phukan, was staged for the first time in Assam at the Nagaon District Library Auditorium on Saturday. The drama was sponsored by the Nagaon District Sanskrit Bikash Bhasa Manch. The play received an overwhelming response from the audience.

The main characters were portrayed as follows: Raja Dushyanta by Nirmal Jyoti Muktiyar, Shakuntala by Tanmi Phukan, Priyamvada by Chinki Kalita Barua, Anasuya by Nivedita Gautam, Kanva/Marich by Dr Divyesh Sharma, and Sarvadaman by Khyati Priyam Barua. The music throughout

the play was directed by Deepak Kumar Sarma. The set design and costumes were managed by Mridu Mausam Barua, while the lighting and sound were handled by Rajen Phukan and Utpal Barua.

The production was made possible by the Nagaon District Sanskrit Bikash Manch, under the guidance of president Guna Saikia and the overall management of secretary Dr Dharmeswar Goswami, with noted Sanskrit expert and singer Ranjan Bezbaruah serving as the playback singer.

The auditorium was packed throughout the performance, with many audience members unable to find seats and watching from outside. Some viewers even came from outside Nagaon, from places like Guwahati, Tezpur, and Tinsukia-Dibrugarh.

NFR introduces additional festive special trains

HT Bureau
GUWAHATI, Oct 20: In a bid to clear the extra festive rush of passengers, it has been decided to operate two additional pairs of festive special trains during the forthcoming festive season. These festive special trains will run between Anand Vihar Terminal - Jogbani - Anand Vihar Terminal for three trips and Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj Terminus - Agartala - Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj Terminus for two trips each in both directions.

Special train no 04010 (Anand Vihar Terminal - Jogbani) Special will depart from Anand Vihar Terminal every Tuesday from October 29 to November 12, 2024, at 23:45 hours, reaching Jogbani at 05:20 hours on the third day. In the return direction, train no 04009 (Jogbani - Anand Vihar Terminal) Special will depart from Jogbani every Thursday from October 31 to November 14, 2024, at 09:00 hours, reaching Anand Vihar Terminal at 16:05 hours the next day. During its journey in both directions, the train will run via Ghaziabad, Bareilly Cantt., Gonda Jn., Gorakhpur Jn., Siwan Jn., Hajipur Jn., Barauni Jn., Begusarai, Kha-



garia Jn., Katihar Jn., Araria Court, and Forbesganj. This special train will have one AC 2-tier cum 3-tier coach, sixteen sleeper class coaches, and two general second-class coaches for the convenience of passengers.

Another special train, no 01065 (Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj Terminus - Agartala), will depart from Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj Terminus at 11:05 hours every Thursday from October 31 to November 7, 2024, reaching Agartala at 01:10 hours on Sunday. In the return direction, special train no 01066 (Agartala - Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj Terminus) will depart from Agartala at 15:10 hours every Sunday from November 3 to November 10, 2024, reaching Chha-

trapati Shivaji Maharaj Terminus at 08:25 hours on Wednesday. During its journey in both directions, the special train will run via Badarpur, Guwahati, Rangiya, New Jalpaiguri, Katihar, Patliputra, Satna, Jabalpur, Khandwa Jn., Bhusaval Jn., Igatpuri, Kalyan Jn., and Dadar. The special train will consist of two AC 3-tier coaches, eight sleeper class coaches, and six general second-class coaches for the convenience of passengers.

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

Training camp on health & wellness conducted in Haflong

The two-day program focused on common ailments and preventive healthcare

HT Correspondent
HAFLONG, Oct 20: A two-day training program on health and wellness was successfully held in Haflong, Dima Hasao district, on Saturday and Sunday. Organised under the aegis of Kesav Smarak Niyas as part of the Arogya Mitra training curriculum, the camp saw the participation of 16 male and female trainees from 13 villages across the district.

The primary goal of the camp was to provide in-depth knowledge of common ailments affecting the community and preventive measures that can promote overall health and wellness. The participants were trained to share the knowledge gained with their respective communities, particularly in remote villages, to spread awareness and improve health outcomes.

Key speakers at the event in-



cluded Dr Parikshit Barman, senior medical and health officer at Haflong Civil Hospital, and Dr Nilkanta Bhusan, medical officer at Umrangshu. Additional resource

persons were Dr Sandip Nath, medical officer at Gunjung CHC, and Dr Nirmal Singh, an expert in Integrative Medicine and Community Health Promotion (CHP).

During the training, participants learned about a wide range of health topics, including the importance of immunisation, mother and child care, nutrition, hygiene, sanitation, prevention of lifestyle diseases, and the effects of environmental pollution on health. Mental and spiritual well-being were also discussed, with an emphasis on providing basic healthcare services.

Each participant received a medical kit equipped with first-aid supplies and essential medicines for common ailments. The camp was attended by several dignitaries, including Lallan Sharma, district coordinator of Seva Bharti; Radha Krishnan, organising secretary; Samendra Langthasa, chief trustee of Kesav Smarak Niyas; and Nidhuban Paul, secretary of RSS, Prant Pramukh, along with Kamali Medhi and other esteemed guests.

QUOTE OF THE DAY

Time is money. - Benjamin Franklin

Diplomacy at crucial juncture

Prime Minister Narendra Modi is attending the summit of the expanded BRICS block at Tatarstan city of Kazan in Russia on October 22 to 24 to be hosted by President Putin. This summit is of crucial importance for both the Indian PM as also the President Putin. Narendra Modi is attending it in a situation when he is facing diplomatic as well as political embarrassment at the hands of the western powers led by the USA over the government agency's alleged involvement with the killing of a Canadian national in Canada and also with the assassination attempt on another in USA. He has to get out of it and he needs friendly help from non-western nations. The open positioning of the US favouring Canada despite the Global South being the strategic partner of India in QUAD must have hurt the Indian PM who hoped high on Indo-US relationship and deserted the Global South in the recent years to endorse the western position on Israel in the current war, causing disappointment to the member nations of Global South. Distanced by India's allies of the developing world and rebuked by the western friends on Canada issue, Indian Prime Minister will be in the BRICS summit looking for a role in the emerging world order.

As regards President Putin, after a long gap, he is hosting this summit in the context of the Ukraine war, sanctions by the West and the indictment by the International Crime Court. Russia has withstood the sanctions in the last two years, economy has prospered. President Putin through this summit, will try to show to the west as also all the nations in the globe that Russia remains as a super power and it will remain so. At the Tatarstan summit, apart from the original five members Brazil, India, Russia, China and South Africa, five more new members - Egypt, Ethiopia, Iran, Saudi Arabia and United Arab Emirates (UAE) will be attending for the first time. Apart, President Putin has invited more than two dozen other countries that have applied for or are considering membership of this expanding bloc which is now the largest bloc in terms of economic strength. The theme for this summit is 'Strengthening Multilateralism For Just Global Development And Security'. Prime Minister will be in the summit city for two days on October 22 and 23. Apart from conference deliberations, three bilateral meetings are very important. First with the Chinese President Xi Jinping, then President Putin and the third most important bilateral talks will be with the President of Iran. Though the programmes for the bilateral talks have not all been officially announced, it is quite likely that all these meetings will be held because the discussions are important for both sides. As regards China, Prime Minister Modi will be getting a chance to put the Indo-China bilateral relations in proper perspective focusing on the border issue which is still an irritant blocking the process of growth of bilateral relations.

There is a communication gap between the two and both the leading Asian nations are carrying a stigma which goes back to late 1950s. The world has changed fundamentally since then. Now is the time to look at the bilateral relations from a new angle of cooperation with competition. A small beginning can take place at the Modi-Xi meeting if both heads assert the requisite political will. As regards Russia, President Putin has remained a trusted friend of India carrying the legacy of the Soviet period on relationship with India. That India is in a better position in 2024 in terms of the balance of payment and inflationary pressures, is mostly due to the cheap crude supplies by Russia in the last two years. Prime Minister Narendra Modi has to do some rethinking on the twists and turns of Indian diplomacy in the recent years directed by him and the PMO marginalizing the experienced officials of the external affairs ministry.

Jaishankar's visit to Pakistan and the future of India-Pakistan relations

The optics surrounding Indian External Affairs Minister S. Jaishankar's visit to Islamabad have stirred both intrigue and optimism, especially given the strained relations between India and Pakistan over the last decade. This visit, which took place during the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation (SCO) summit, marked the first time in nine years that an Indian foreign minister had set foot in Pakistan. For many, the personal warmth displayed in Jaishankar's meetings with Pakistan's Finance Minister Ishaq Dar and Interior Minister Mohsin Naqvi stood out in sharp contrast to the frostiness that has traditionally defined India-Pakistan relations.

The Shadow of Cross-Border Terrorism

India's headline stance on terrorism has become a cornerstone of its foreign policy, particularly concerning Pakistan. From New Delhi's perspective, Pakistan has consistently failed to dismantle the terrorist networks operating within its borders, some of which are believed to enjoy the tacit support of the Pakistan Army and intelligence agencies. These concerns were once again underscored during Jaishankar's visit, when he made it clear that terrorism, extremism, and separatism are roadblocks to regional peace and cooperation.

The Indian government has repeatedly called for Pakistan to create the "right conditions" for dialogue, a euphemism for taking serious action against terrorist groups that target India. The ball, as they say, is firmly in Pakistan's court. Until Islamabad demonstrates a genuine commitment to curbing terrorism, any attempts at dialogue or rapprochement are likely to be superficial at best.

The Role of Cricket Diplomacy

Among the various subtexts of Jaishankar's visit, one that garnered significant attention was the potential revival of cricketing ties between India and Pakistan. With Mohsin Naqvi, who is also the chairman of the Pakistan Cricket Board, playing host to the meeting, there was speculation that the topic of India's participation in

the upcoming 2025 ICC Champions Trophy, set to be held in Pakistan, was discussed. Although the Indian government officially denied any such conversation, it is hard to imagine that cricket, one of the few areas where India and Pakistan have historically found common ground, did not come up during their interactions.



the upcoming 2025 ICC Champions Trophy, set to be held in Pakistan, was discussed. Although the Indian government officially denied any such conversation, it is hard to imagine that cricket, one of the few areas where India and Pakistan have historically found common ground, did not come up during their interactions.

Cricketing ties between India and Pakistan have long been seen as a potential ice-breaker in their otherwise fraught relationship. Historically, cricket has often served as a bridge, fostering a sense of camaraderie and competition that transcends political tensions. The last time India played in Pakistan was in 2008, and since then, bilateral cricketing ties have been suspended, largely due to security concerns following the 2009 Lahore attack on the Sri Lankan cricket team.

The question now is whether India will agree to send its cricket team to Pakistan for the Champions Trophy in 2025. Such a decision would undoubtedly require a thorough assessment of security risks, as well as a political calculation about the optics of engaging with Pakistan in a high-profile international event. While cricket diplomacy may not resolve the deep-rooted issues between the two nations, it could pave the way for further dialogue and cooperation in other areas.

The SCO Summit and the China Factor

Jaishankar's participation in the SCO summit also provided a platform for India to address its concerns with China, another regional rival. Over the past few years, India's relationship with China has deteriorated significantly, primarily due to border clashes along the Line of Actual Control (LAC) and Beijing's increasing assertiveness in the region. During his address at the summit, Jaishankar subtly alluded to China's unilateral actions at the border, framing them as a violation of trust and good neighborliness.

In recent months, India has taken a more assertive stance in its dealings with China, particularly following the Galwan Valley clash in 2020, which resulted in the deaths of 20 Indian soldiers. While the SCO summit provided an opportunity for India to engage with China diplomatically, the trust deficit between the two nations remains significant. Jaishankar's remarks at the summit underscored India's insistence on respecting sovereignty and territorial integrity, signaling that any rapprochement with China would require Beijing to take tangible steps to address India's security concerns.

The Way Forward: Limited Engagement and Realistic Expectations

While Jaishankar's visit to Islamabad may not result in an immediate thaw in India-Pakistan relations, it does mark a step forward in maintaining limited engagement between the two countries. The smooth completion of the visit, devoid of the usual

rhetorical fireworks, suggests that both sides are willing to keep the channels of communication open, even if substantive dialogue remains elusive.

For India, the challenge lies in balancing its principled stance on terrorism and border security with the need to engage diplomatically with Pakistan. While cricket diplomacy and informal meetings at international forums like the SCO may provide a starting point for rebuilding trust, they cannot substitute for the hard political decisions that will ultimately determine the future of India-Pakistan relations.

In the end, any progress in relations between the two countries will depend on a combination of diplomatic efforts, confidence-building measures, and, most importantly, political will at the highest levels of leadership. For now, the ball is in Pakistan's court. Whether Islamabad is willing or able to take the necessary steps to address India's concerns remains to be seen. But for the moment, Jaishankar's visit has at least created a sliver of hope that the deep freeze in bilateral relations might be starting to thaw, even if only a little.

S. Jaishankar's recent visit to Pakistan for the SCO summit is an important moment in India's foreign policy. While it would be premature to call it a breakthrough, the visit has at least laid the groundwork for future engagement between the two nations. The geopolitical dynamics of the region remain complex, with terrorism, border disputes, and China's role all playing a part in shaping the future of India-Pakistan relations. However, the personal warmth displayed during Jaishankar's meetings, the potential for renewed cricketing ties, and the measured tone of the SCO summit suggest that there may be room for cautious optimism moving forward. Whether this optimism translates into real diplomatic progress, however, will depend on the actions of both India and Pakistan in the coming months. (The writer can be reached at dipakkurmigpltd@gmail.com)

How will Delhi react to Sheikh Hasina's arrest warrant?

By: Saleem Samad

The International Crimes Tribunal (ICT) in Bangladesh has issued a warrant of arrest against the Iron Lady Sheikh Hasina to surrender by November 18. Her autocratic regime collapsed on August 5 after a 36-day-long countrywide student-led bloody Monsoon Revolution, which killed more than 700 students and protesters. The cases against Hasina have held her responsible for the deaths of hundreds of students and protesters in the anti-government street demonstration, which turned violent. When she announced that the doors of Gonobhaban, the official residence of the Prime Minister were open for the student leaders, it was too late and too little.

Instead of negotiating with the student protesters, she ordered the police to shoot, kill and detain protesters. More than 10,000 protesters were bundled in prison vans and taken to magistrate courts accused of terrorism. The ICT was established in Hasina's tenure for the trial of those who have committed crimes against humanity during the brutal birth of Bangladesh in the 1971 liberation war. The majority of the indicted persons were Islamist political leaders, a few police and local village elites. It was believed that political Islam would come to an end after the trial.

Hasina has been squarely blamed for indulging political leaders, party henchmen, and civil and police administration into kleptocracy. All the Prime Minister's men were involved in money laundering, siphoning money from banks, buying properties in foreign countries, stashing money in off-shore banks and procuring second-country resident permits and dual citizenship after depositing millions of dollars in various countries.

After the ICT has issued a warrant of arrest, it is time to observe how Delhi's South Block will react to the pressing issue. International media has already made screaming news of the arrest warrant against Hasina and others. She is presently living in a safe house on the fringes of New Delhi, the capital of India.

She fled Bangladesh on August 5 by a Bangladesh Air Force transport aircraft from Kurmitola Air Force base in Dhaka. On her arrival, Ajit Doval, the National Security

Adviser to the Indian government, met her at the Hindan Air Force Base at Ghaziabad, not far from New Delhi.

No senior officials of Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi's administration have met her at the safe house since she arrived more than two months ago. Her Red Passport, a diplomatic travel document and her Deshi Green Passport, have been revoked by the Interim Government. The United States and several countries in Europe and the United Kingdom have refused her entry.

Meanwhile, even after 73 days, more than two months Hasina's eldest son Sajeb Wazed Joy, living in Washington DC, USA, and her daughter Saima Wazed Putal have been unable to meet her.

Saima, who is working in Delhi as Saima Wazed, has been serving as the South East Asian Regional Director for the World Health Organisation (WHO) since November 2023 and lamented in her Twitter (X) that she has not been able to hug her and wrote a strange message that she is too busy in her workplace, series of planning meetings, meeting delegations and visit to several countries.

A high-profile Indian journalist who was with Ajit Doval's outfit National Security Council, who is privy to the issue and does not wish to be named, said Delhi South Block has unofficially explored possibilities with a few countries for her stay in a third country.

Hasina is literally stranded in India and has nowhere to go. Delhi bigwigs are in dilemma about what should be their next step after India's friendly countries did not respond to requests. Well, it is too early for the Indian government to react as they will have to wait and see what is likely to happen after the deadline for appearance at the ICT expires.

Delhi will have to further wait for the verdict against the cases against Hasina to be delivered by the ICT. It is not likely before another year or more, as defence lawyers will appeal to the higher court against the verdict, which will take several additional months.

(The author is an award-winning independent journalist based in Bangladesh. He could be reached at saleemsamad@hotmail.com; Twitter (X): @saleemsamad)

The Supreme Court's citizenship ruling



By: Himangshu Ranjan Bhuyan

The Supreme Court's ruling on citizenship in Assam is one of the most significant legal interventions in the state's history, shaping not only the state's future but also the broader discourse on citizenship in India. The judgment pertains to the contentious issue of illegal migration from Bangladesh and its impact on Assam's demographics, identity, and political landscape. The court's decision specifically addressed the provisions of Section 6A of the Citizenship Act, 1955, and reaffirmed the cutoff date of March 25, 1971, as a critical reference point for determining citizenship in Assam. This ruling, while aimed at providing clarity and legal finality, has also sparked widespread debates on its implications for those directly affected, as well as the future of Assam's socio-political fabric.

To understand the Supreme Court's ruling, it is necessary to examine the historical context that has shaped Assam's citizenship issues. Assam has long been a site of tension regarding immigration, particularly from the eastern borders. The partition of India in 1947 and the subsequent formation of East Pakistan (now Bangladesh) led to waves of migration into Assam, as people sought refuge from communal violence, political instability, and economic hardships.

However, this migration brought with it fears among the indigenous Assamese population of being overrun by outsiders, leading to a growing sense of insecurity about their cultural identity and demographic dominance.

The tension surrounding illegal immigration reached its peak in the 1970s, particularly after the Bangladesh Liberation War of 1971, which saw an influx of refugees into Assam. Many locals felt overwhelmed by the numbers and began agitating against what they perceived as the dilution of their identity. This discontent eventually culminated in the Assam Movement, a powerful six-year-long campaign (1979-1985) that demanded the detection, deletion, and deportation of illegal immigrants.

The movement garnered widespread support among the indigenous Assamese and placed immense pressure on both state and central governments to address the issue of illegal immigration.

The Assam Accord, signed in 1985, was the outcome of negotiations between the leaders of the Assam Movement and the Indian government. It was intended to bring peace to the state by addressing the immigration issue in a manner acceptable to both sides.

One of the key provisions of the Accord was the establishment of March 25, 1971, as the cutoff date for determining citizenship. This meant that all individuals who had entered Assam from Bangladesh before this date were to be considered Indian citizens, while those who arrived after would be treated as illegal immigrants and face deportation. Section 6A of the Citizenship Act was introduced in 1985 to give legal backing to this provision, creating a framework for identifying and addressing illegal immigration in Assam.

However, this framework has remained highly contentious. Many indigenous Assamese continue to believe that the cutoff date is too lenient and does not adequately protect their interests, as they argue that illegal migration has continued even after 1971. On the other hand, those who migrated before and after the cutoff date have lived in Assam for decades, integrating themselves into the social, economic, and political life of the state. For these communities, the idea of being labeled as illegal immigrants and facing the threat of deportation is deeply unsettling, as it questions their identity and place in the state they now call home.

The Supreme Court's ruling on Section 6A and the cutoff date must be understood within this broader context of demographic anxiety, historical migration patterns, and legal provisions. Over the years, numerous petitions have been filed in the Supreme Court challenging the constitutionality of Section 6A and the Assam Accord. These petitions raised concerns about the discriminatory nature of the cutoff date, arguing that it effectively created two classes of cit-

izens and violated the principles of equality and justice enshrined in the Indian Constitution.

Moreover, questions were raised about whether the central government had the authority to sign an accord that altered the citizenship status of individuals in a particular state.

In its landmark judgment, the Supreme Court upheld the constitutionality of Section 6A, reaffirming the validity of the March 25, 1971, cutoff date. The court's ruling emphasized the unique historical and social context of Assam, arguing that the provisions of Section 6A were a necessary compromise to address the state's specific challenges related to illegal immigration.

The court noted that while citizenship laws must be applied uniformly across the country, exceptions could be made in cases where there were compelling historical and social reasons for doing so. In Assam's case, the massive influx of refugees during the Bangladesh Liberation War and the subsequent social unrest justified the need for a separate legal framework.

The court's decision was seen as a victory for those who support the Assam Accord and its provisions. For these groups, the ruling provided legal clarity and reaffirmed the importance of the cutoff date in maintaining the demographic balance of the state. The court's endorsement of Section 6A was viewed as a step toward ensuring that Assam's indigenous communities would not be overwhelmed by illegal immigration and that the state's cultural identity would be preserved.

However, the ruling has also raised significant concerns, particularly among the communities affected by the cutoff date. For those who arrived in Assam after March 25, 1971, the court's decision represents a continuation of their uncertain legal status. Many of these individuals and families have lived in Assam for decades, raising generations in the state and contributing to its economy and social fabric.

The prospect of being labeled illegal immigrants, facing deportation, or being sent to detention centers is deeply distressing for them. Moreover, the process of proving citizenship through documentation is often fraught with difficulties, as many marginalized communities lack the necessary records to substantiate their claims.

The ruling also places immense pressure on the state machinery to implement the provisions of the Assam Accord effectively. The National Register of Citizens (NRC), a key mechanism for identifying illegal immigrants in Assam, has already proven to be a highly contentious exercise. The 2019 NRC update left out nearly two million people from the final list, sparking widespread protests and legal challenges.

Many of those excluded from the NRC were individuals who had lived in Assam for decades but were unable to provide the

necessary documentation to prove their citizenship. The Supreme Court's ruling, by reaffirming the cutoff date, has renewed concerns about the potential for further exclusions and the bureaucratic hurdles individuals may face in proving their status.

Furthermore, the court's judgment has broader political and social implications for Assam and India as a whole. The issue of illegal immigration has long been a politically charged topic in Assam, with various parties using it as a rallying point to mobilize support. The Supreme Court's ruling is likely to intensify political debates around immigration, identity, and citizenship in the state. It may embolden political factions that advocate for stricter immigration policies and push for more stringent measures to identify and deport illegal immigrants. At the same time, the ruling may also fuel opposition from those who argue for more inclusive and humane approaches to citizenship, particularly for individuals who have already settled in Assam and made it their home.

On a national level, the Supreme Court's judgment on Assam's citizenship issues is likely to have ripple effects on debates about immigration and citizenship across India. The controversy surrounding the Citizenship Amendment Act (CAA), passed by the Indian government in 2019, has already sparked widespread protests and raised concerns about the future of citizenship in the country. While the CAA does not directly affect Assam's cutoff date, it has added another layer of complexity to the already fraught citizenship landscape in the state. The Supreme Court's ruling on Section 6A could serve as a precedent for future legal challenges to the CAA and other citizenship-related laws, influencing the broader discourse on immigration and identity in India.

At the end, the Supreme Court's ruling on Section 6A of the Citizenship Act and the March 25, 1971, cutoff date is a landmark decision that will shape the future of Assam's citizenship landscape. While the ruling provides legal clarity and reaffirms the provisions of the Assam Accord, it also raises significant concerns about the rights and status of individuals affected by the cutoff date. As Assam moves forward, the implementation of the court's ruling will require careful balancing of legal, social, and political considerations.

The challenge lies in ensuring that the citizenship process is fair, transparent, and respectful of human rights while addressing the legitimate concerns of the indigenous population. Ultimately, the court's decision underscores the need for continued dialogue and engagement on the complex issues of citizenship and identity in Assam and beyond. (The writer is Editor in Chief of the Assamese E-Magazine SAMPRO-TIK. He can be reached at himangshur1989@gmail.com)

The silent struggle: Coping with depression

By: Satyabrata Borah

Depression is a formidable challenge that many individuals face, but it's crucial to remember that overcoming it is entirely possible. The journey begins with acknowledging your feelings and understanding that seeking help is a sign of strength, not weakness.

One effective way to combat depression is through establishing a routine. Structure can provide a sense of normalcy and purpose, making daily tasks feel more manageable. Additionally, engaging in physical activity has been shown to release endorphins, which can elevate your mood significantly. Whether it's a brisk walk or an intense workout, movement plays an essential role in mental health.

Another powerful tool in overcoming depression is connecting with others. Isolation can exacerbate feelings of sadness; reaching out to friends or family members for support can create a lifeline during tough times. Consider talking to a mental health professional as well - they are trained to help you navigate through these difficult emotions and develop coping strategies tailored to your needs.

Lastly, practicing mindfulness and gratitude can shift your perspective over time. Simple techniques such as journaling about what you're

thankful for or meditating can foster positivity amidst the darkness.

Remember, the path may not always be straightforward, but with perseverance and the right support systems in place, overcoming depression is within reach. You are not alone on this journey; there are resources available and people who care deeply about your well-being.

Overcoming depression may seem daunting, but it is entirely possible with the right approach and mindset. First and foremost, acknowledging that you are struggling is a crucial step. It's important to understand that seeking help is not a sign of weakness; rather, it demonstrates strength and courage.

One effective way to combat depression is through professional support. Therapy can provide you with tools to navigate your feelings, while medication may be beneficial for some individuals.

Additionally, establishing a strong support network of family and friends can make a significant difference in your journey toward recovery. Connect with those who uplift you and share your experiences; this connection can foster understanding and compassion.

Incorporating physical activity into your routine also plays a vital role in overcoming depression. Exercise releases endorphins - natural mood lifters - which can help alleviate

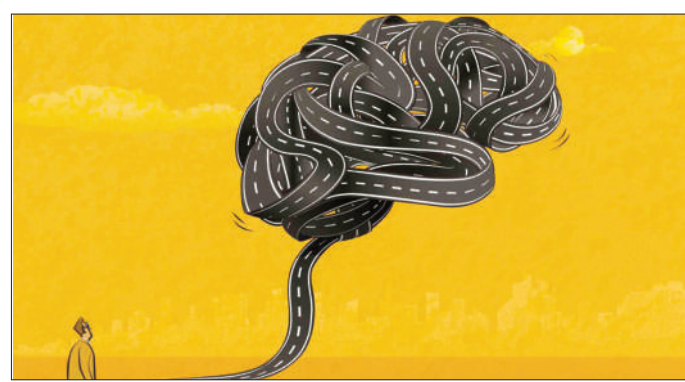
symptoms over time. Furthermore, engaging in activities that bring you joy or fulfillment can redirect your focus from negative thoughts.

Mindfulness practices such as meditation or yoga are powerful tools that promote self-awareness and help manage stress levels. Finally, maintaining a balanced diet rich in nutrients supports both mental and physical health.

Remember: recovery takes time, but embracing these strategies can lead to profound changes in your life. You are not alone on this journey - there is hope, healing, and happiness waiting for you just beyond the horizon.

Creating a long article of at least 1500 words is not just a task; it's an opportunity to delve deep into a subject, providing comprehensive insights and value to your readers. In today's fast-paced digital landscape, where attention spans are fleeting, crafting an extensive piece can set you apart as an authority in your niche.

When you commit to writing a lengthy article, you allow yourself the space to explore nuances that shorter pieces simply cannot accommodate. This provides the chance to engage your audience on multiple levels - offering them detailed information, answering their potential questions, and even addressing counterarguments. Such thoroughness not only enhances reader en-



agement but also boosts SEO performance by incorporating relevant keywords naturally throughout the text.

Moreover, long-form content tends to perform better in terms of backlinks and shares on social media platforms. When readers find substantial value in your writing, they are more likely to share it with their networks or link back to it from their own sites. This creates opportunities for increased traffic and brand visibility.

Incorporating various multimedia elements such as images, infographics, and videos can further enhance these longer articles. Not only do they break up the text for easier readability, but they also cater to different learning styles among your audience.

Ultimately, committing time and effort into producing a long article can yield significant dividends - not just in terms of direct reader engage-

ment but also as part of a broader content strategy that positions you or your brand as knowledgeable and trustworthy within your field. So why not take this opportunity? Embrace the challenge of crafting that 1500-word masterpiece today!

Creating a long article with a minimum of 2000 words allows for in-depth exploration of a topic, providing the reader with comprehensive insights and nuanced perspectives. This format not only enhances the reader's understanding but also positions your content as an authoritative resource in your field.

In today's fast-paced digital landscape, where concise snippets often dominate, longer articles stand out by offering substantive information that can engage and educate your audience.

By investing time in crafting a thorough piece, you demonstrate commitment to quality and depth, which can

significantly improve user engagement and retention on your website.

Moreover, the SEO benefits of longer articles are undeniable. Search engines tend to favor content that provides extensive value to users - longer articles often rank higher due to their potential to cover relevant keywords more comprehensively and keep readers on the page longer. This not only drives traffic but also establishes credibility within your niche.

Additionally, a well-structured 2000-word article allows for various sections and subsections that can effectively break down complex ideas into digestible parts. With appropriate headings, bullet points, and visuals interspersed throughout, you create an engaging reading experience that encourages deeper exploration of the subject matter.

In conclusion, while shorter pieces have their place in content marketing strategies, committing to producing long-form articles is essential for those looking to make a significant impact. Embrace this opportunity to showcase your expertise - your readers will appreciate the effort you put into crafting detailed narratives that inform and inspire action.

Depression is a complex condition that can affect anyone, regardless of age, gender, or background. Understanding the causes of depression is the

first step towards recognizing its impact on our lives. Various factors contribute to this mental health disorder, including genetic predisposition, traumatic life events, chronic stress, and even hormonal changes. It's important to note that depression isn't merely a fleeting feeling of sadness; it manifests in several forms - major depressive disorder, persistent depressive disorder (dysthymia), bipolar disorder, and seasonal affective disorder being just a few.

So how do we overcome this overwhelming challenge? A multifaceted approach is essential. Professional help such as therapy or medication can provide significant support. Cognitive-behavioral therapy (CBT) has proven effective in challenging negative thought patterns associated with depression.

Additionally, lifestyle changes like regular exercise, healthy eating habits, and mindfulness practices can enhance emotional well-being. Connecting with supportive friends and family also plays a crucial role in recovery.

In conclusion, while the road to overcoming depression may be daunting, it is navigable with the right tools and support systems in place. By addressing its causes and types head-on and taking proactive steps toward healing, individuals can reclaim their lives from this pervasive condition.

Why are my hands shaking? Causes, is it normal, and remedies

By: Amanda Barrell

Tremors are involuntary muscle contractions that cause body parts to tremble. Hand tremors are common and are often due to stress or tiredness. They may also indicate several health conditions. For some people, shaky hands may be a minor inconvenience. For others, the symptom may lead to difficulty using the hands for everyday tasks.

This article describes what tremors are, outlines some potential causes of shaky hands, and asks whether it is common. We also provide tips on how to stop the hands from shaking and discuss some of the treatment options available.

What are tremors?

Tremors are involuntary, rhythmic muscle contractions that make a body part appear to be shaking or trembling. Everyone has a slight tremor when moving or maintaining a particular posture. They are often so small that a person does not see or notice them. Hand tremors may be more noticeable when a person holds their hands out straight in front of the body or when they are stressed or anxious.

Tremors mostly affect the hands. However, it can also occur in other body parts, such as:

- the head
- the arms
- the legs
- the torso
- the voice box (larynx), which may cause a shaky voice

There are several types of tremors. However, most fall into two categories:

Resting tremors: These occur when the muscles are relaxed, including when the hands are resting on the lap.

Action tremors: These occur when the muscles are contracted due to voluntary movement. The majority of tremors are action tremors.

Sometimes, tremors can indicate an underlying health issue, especially if they are persistent or very pronounced.

What are the causes of shaky hands?

Tremors can be normal or could result from neurological conditions, other health problems, or medication use. Below are some potential causes of hand tremors.

Enhanced physiologic tremor

Enhanced physiologic tremor (EPT) is perhaps the most commonly observed postural tremor. It usually affects the hands and fingers on both sides of the body.

The following may worsen EPT in some people:

- stress
- anxiety
- fatigue
- lack of sleep
- excessive caffeine intake
- vigorous exercise
- overactive thyroid

Enhanced physiologic tremor does not require medical treatment, except when a person needs to rely on fine muscle coordination for their work or other activities.

Neurological conditions

Tremors are generally due to an issue in the deep parts of the brain that control movement. Some neurological conditions that can cause shaky hands include:

Multiple sclerosis (MS): Many people with MS experience some degree of tremor. This often develops when the disease damages areas in the pathways of the central nervous system that control movement.

Parkinson's disease (PD): About

75% of people with PD have tremors, whether resting, action, or mixed. Tremors usually begin on one side of the body, and may spread to the opposite side. Shaking may become more pronounced during periods of stress or strong emotion.

Stroke: After a stroke, a person can show a variety of tremors depending on the area affected. Damage to the basal ganglia causes a person to have resting tremors, while damage to the cerebellum causes intention tremors.

Traumatic brain injury (TBI): Tremor as a consequence of TBI is called post-traumatic tremor (PTT). A 2020 study found that PTT happens as a result of damage to specific brain areas responsible for movement. These tremors are uncommon.

Dystonia: A 2021 study stated that dystonia and tremor are closely linked. Tremors occurring in people with dystonia are either jerky and irregular, regular and wave-like, or mixed. Mixed types commonly affect the hands.

Other health conditions The following health conditions can also cause shaky hands:

- alcohol misuse or withdrawal
- mercury poisoning
- hyperthyroidism
- liver or kidney failure
- stress, anxiety, or fatigue
- psychiatric conditions, such as post-traumatic stress disorder
- inherited degenerative disorders, such as hereditary ataxia or fragile X syndrome

Medications Certain drugs can also cause hand tremors. Examples include:

- some asthma medications
- drugs for psychiatric conditions, such as certain antidepressants and mood stabilizers
- seizure medications, such as valproate (Depakene) and valproic acid (Depakote)
- anti-arrhythmic drugs, such as procainamide
- cancer medications
- medications that suppress the immune system, such as cyclosporine
- corticosteroids
- certain antiviral drugs
- specific antibiotics
- amphetamine

Is it normal to have shaky hands? It is normal to have shaky hands. This is especially true if a person is feeling stressed or anxious or has had insufficient sleep.

Mild hand tremors that do not affect a person's daily life are not usually a cause for concern. However, if a person experiences severe or persistent hand tremors that interfere with their daily activities, they should see a doctor to help determine the cause.

How do you stop the hands from shaking? Below are some methods people may be able to use to help stop their hands from shaking.

Lifestyle changes: The following lifestyle changes may help to reduce hand tremors in people with enhanced physiologic tremor:

- avoiding vigorous exercise
- avoiding excess alcohol consumption
- avoiding stimulants, such as caffeine and amphetamines

Treating underlying conditions: Hand tremors that occur due to an underlying condition, such as hyperthyroidism or alcohol withdrawal, typically improve following appropriate treatment.

Psychological techniques: People who experience tremors due to anxiety

or panic attacks may benefit from practicing relaxation techniques, such as mindfulness and breathing exercises.

Switching medications: A person who experiences tremors while taking a medication should report the side effect to their doctor. The doctor may be able to adjust the medication dosage or switch the person to a different drug.

Physical therapy: A physical therapist can teach people exercises to improve the following:

- muscle control, functioning, and strength
- coordination
- balance

Occupational therapy: An occupational therapist can help people living with tremors to continue to engage in their usual daily activities.

When to see a doctor Anyone who suddenly develops tremors in their hands or other parts of their body should see their doctor for a diagnosis. A doctor will need to rule out more serious causes, some of which may require prompt medical treatment.

People with existing tremors should see a doctor if the tremors worsen or begin to interfere with their daily lives.

How can a person stop their hands from shaking?

Most types of tremors are incurable. However, treatment options are available to help a person manage the symptoms.

Medications Doctors may prescribe medications to help reduce the frequency and severity of tremors. Possible treatment options include:

- beta-blockers, such as propranolol
- anxiety medications
- anti-seizure medications, such as primidone

Doctors may also prescribe disease-specific drugs for people with tremors related to specific conditions such as PD and MS. If doctors are unable to determine the cause of tremors, they may prescribe tranquilizers to help relax the involuntary muscle movements.

Botox Botox is a neurotoxin that causes localized paralysis. Botox injections may be beneficial in treating voice and head tremors. However, botox injections for hand tremors can lead to weakness in the hands.

Surgery In severe cases where medication and other treatments are ineffective, surgical options like deep brain stimulation (DBS) or radiofrequency ablation may be recommended.

DBS surgery sees a doctor place a small generator under the skin in the upper chest. The generator sends electrical signals to electrodes implanted in the thalamus, which is the part of the brain that coordinates and controls some involuntary movements.

Radiofrequency ablation involves using an electric current to heat nerve tissue in order to disrupt its ability to relay signals for several months.

Summary

It is normal for most people to experience a slight tremor in their hands or other body parts when moving or maintaining a particular posture. Certain factors can make the tremor more noticeable, including stress or anxiety, caffeine consumption, and lack of sleep.

In some cases, severe or persistent tremors may indicate an underlying medical condition or a side effect of a particular medication. Anyone who suddenly develops tremors should see their doctor as soon as possible for a diagnosis. (Courtesy: MNT)

Suicide: A Major mental health problem

By: Er. Prabhat Kishore

Suicide is one of the leading causes of untimely natural death, especially among teenagers and people below the age of thirty. It is the act of intentionally giving up one's own life for various reasons. It is one of the leading causes of death.

Psychological conditions, such as depression, anxiety, failure to achieve targeted mission, loss of joy in life, reduced problem-solving ability, impairment in emotional regulation etc. increase the risk of suicide. Factors such as unemployment, poverty, discrimination, homelessness, encourage the risk of suicide.

Doctors and psychologists consider the suicide attempts as a series of symptoms of depression. The person having high moral strength soon recover from depression and lead a normal life; but the discouraged people succumb to the challenging situation and eventually take their own lives. It is often associated with mental illness, bipolar disorder, personality disorder, schizophrenia, autism, obesity-related disorder, post-traumatic stress disorder.

People suffering from cancer, AIDS and other chronic painful diseases end their lives. Sometimes family problems also become the reason for suicide. Presently a large number of students are ending their lives either due to low grading or not being able to compete in competitive examinations.

According to ICMR report about 12% of Indian students suffer from psychological, emotional and behavioural conditions. 63% students are stressed due to academic pressure and 56% have symptoms of anxiety. 29% students lack concentration and 43% have mood swings.

Constant use of smartphones has led to mental health issues developing in the students. Our education system does not impart moral and ethical values to students. These situations lead to suicide attempts and country loses young minds.

WHO says that India is the most depressed country in the world. One in four Indian children in 13-15 age-groups suffer from depression. One in seven Indians between 15-24 age groups feel depressed and lack interest in doing things. In India, the National Crime Records Bureau (NCRB) statistics show a consistent rise in suicide rate from 9.9 per lakh population in 2017 to 12.4 per lakh population in 2022, ranging from 0.6 per lakh population

in Bihar to 43.1 per lakh population in Sikkim.

As per WHO report, more than 700000 people die by suicide every year worldwide. Approximately 1.5% of all deaths worldwide are by suicide. 77% of suicides occur in low and middle-income countries. Although suicide deaths are underreported in many countries due to social, cultural, and legal concerns.

Economic condition is also one of the causes of suicide. As per a report, in 64% of the suicide cases, the person's income has been found below ₹ 1 lakh, while in 32% of the cases the income has been only ₹ 1 lakh to ₹ 5 lakh.

Women have higher rates of suicidal thinking, non-fatal suicidal behaviour, and suicide attempts. Suicide statistics show that although suicide attempt rate is about 3 times higher in women, but the suicide death rate is 2 to 3 times higher among men than women. Men choose violent suicide methods such as firearms, asphyxiation hanging etc, whereas women are more likely to self-poisoning, exsanguination etc.

Attempted suicide is a crime in many countries. Assisted suicide is when a person helps another person to die either by advice or any other means. In this case the person assisting is more responsible. In some countries and jurisdictions, helping a person to die is illegal. Physician Assisted Suicide (PAS) is an end-to-life measure for a person suffering from a painful, terminal illness. In some countries, PAS is legal under certain circumstances, whereas in some countries it is illegal.

Suicide is a global phenomenon and occurs throughout the lifespan. Hence, effective and evidence-based interventions are needed to prevent it. Individuals, families, and societies must play constructive role to save lives and create healthy and strong citizens. Most people who are contemplating suicide do not know who to speak to. Talking openly can give the concerned people other options or time to rethink their decision, thus preventing suicide.

Multiple psychosocial interventions have assessed, that can be applied to reduce the chance of suicide attempt by an individual. Cognitive behavioural Therapy (CBT), Dialectical behavioural therapy (DBT), medication or combination of medications, team-based collaborative care approaches and other preventive techniques, which may vary on an individual-to-individual basis, may be helpful. (The author is a technocrat and educationist)

Micra Leadless Pacemaker: Advanced, Minimally Invasive Heart Care

By: Dr. Balbir Singh

Pacemakers have long been a lifeline for individuals with heart rhythm disorders, ensuring that the heart beats at a regular pace. Traditionally, these devices involve leads or wires that connect the pacemaker to the heart. However, the Micra Leadless Pacemaker represents a groundbreaking advancement in cardiac care, offering a less invasive, more efficient solution for patients needing this vital support.

What is the Micra Leadless Pacemaker?

The Micra Leadless Pacemaker is a self-contained, small pacemaker implanted directly into the heart's right ventricle. Unlike conventional pacemakers, which require a surgical pocket in the chest to house the device and to connect it to the heart, the Micra is entirely leadless and much smaller—about the size of a large vitamin capsule.

This design eliminates the need for a surgical pocket and reduces the risk of lead-related complications, such as infections or lead dislodgement. The device is inserted via a catheter through the femoral vein in the leg, making the procedure minimally invasive and typically quicker than traditional pacemaker implantation.

Benefits of the Micra Leadless Pacemaker

Minimally invasive procedure: The Micra is implanted via a catheter,

meaning no chest incision is needed. This approach reduces scarring, infection risks, and recovery time, allowing patients to resume normal activities sooner.

Lead-free design: Traditional pacemakers rely on leads to transmit electrical impulses to the heart, which can sometimes cause complications. The Micra's leadless design removes this risk, making it a safer option for many patients.

Long battery life: Despite its small size, the Micra boasts a battery life of up to 16 years. This extended longevity means fewer replacements, reducing the overall number of surgical procedures a patient might need over their lifetime.

Enhanced comfort: Patients often find the Micra more comfortable and less noticeable without the need for a chest pocket. There's no visible bulge under the skin, and the risk of device-related discomfort is significantly reduced.

MRI compatibility: Many patients with pacemakers require regular imaging studies, such as MRIs, to monitor other health conditions. The Micra is designed to be safe for use in an MRI environment, providing greater flexibility in managing a patient's overall health.

Who is a Candidate for the Micra Leadless Pacemaker?

The Micra Leadless Pacemaker is primarily designed for patients with bradycardia, a condition characterised

by an abnormally slow heart rate. It is especially suitable for individuals who have experienced complications with traditional pacemakers, such as infections or lead issues, or those who require a more discreet option or those with several comorbidities or elderly age.

The Future of Pacemaker Technology

The development of the Micra Leadless Pacemaker is a significant step forward in the evolution of cardiac care. As technology continues to advance, we can expect even more innovative solutions that improve patient outcomes, reduce risks, and enhance quality of life. For now, the Micra offers a revolutionary option for those needing a pacemaker, combining cutting-edge technology with patient-centred design.

Conclusion

The Micra Leadless Pacemaker represents a new era in heart rhythm management. Its leadless, minimally invasive design, combined with long battery life and patient comfort, makes it a compelling choice for many patients.

As more people benefit from this technology, it may become the standard of care in pacemaker therapy, providing a safer, more efficient alternative to traditional devices. (The author is the Group Chairman - Cardiac Sciences, Pan Max & Chief of Interventional Cardiology and Electrophysiology, Max Hospital, Saket)

Israeli strikes on northern Gaza leave at least 87 dead or missing, Palestinian officials say

DEIR AL-BALAH (GAZA STRIP), Oct 20: Israeli strikes on multiple homes in the northern Gaza Strip overnight and into Sunday left at least 87 people dead or missing, the territory's Health Ministry said.

It said another 40 people were wounded in the strikes on the town of Beit Lahiyah, which was among the first targets of Israel's ground invasion nearly a year ago. The Israeli military said it carried out a precise strike on a Hamas target.

Israel has been carrying out a large-scale operation in northern Gaza for the last two weeks, saying Hamas has regrouped there. Palestinian officials say hundreds of people have been killed and that the health sector in the north is on the verge of collapse.

The United States is meanwhile investigating an unauthorised release of classified documents that assess Israel's plans to attack Iran, according to three US officials. A fourth US official said the documents appear to be legitimate.

The documents, attributed to the US Geospatial Intelligence Agency

and National Security Agency and marked top secret, indicate that Israel was moving military assets in place to conduct a military strike in response to Iran's ballistic missile attack on Oct 1.

The US officials spoke on the condition of anonymity because they were not authorised to discuss the matter publicly.

The US is urging Israel to press for a cease-fire in Gaza following the killing of Hamas leader Yahya Sinwar last week. But neither Israel nor Hamas has shown any renewed interest in such a deal, after months of negotiations spluttered to a halt in August.

Lebanese army says 3 soldiers killed in Israeli strike

Iran supports Hamas and the Hezbollah militant group in Lebanon, where a year of escalating tensions boiled over into all-out war last month. Israel sent ground troops into Lebanon at the start of October.

The Lebanese army said three of its soldiers were killed in an Israeli strike on their vehicle in southern Lebanon. There was no immediate

comment from the Israeli military on Sunday's strike.

Lebanon's army has largely kept to the sidelines in the war between Israel and the Hezbollah. The military is a respected institution in Lebanon but is not powerful enough to impose its will on Hezbollah or defend the country from an Israeli invasion.

On Saturday, a drone targeted Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's house, causing no casualties. It wasn't clear if the house was hit. The military said Hezbollah fired around 160 projectiles into Israel on Sunday. There were no immediate reports of casualties.

Israel has meanwhile ramped up strikes on southern neighbourhoods of Beirut known as the Dahiyeh, a crowded residential area. Hezbollah has a strong presence there, but it is also home to large numbers of civilians and people unaffiliated with the militant group.

US Defence Secretary Lloyd Austin, has called civilian casualties in Lebanon "far too high" in



the Israel-Hezbollah war and urged Israel to scale back some strikes, especially in and around Beirut.

Medics warn of a catastrophic situation in Gaza

Among the dead from the strikes in Beit Lahiyah were two parents and their four children, and a woman, her son and her daughter-law and their four children, according to Raheem Kheder, a medic. He said the strike flattened a multi-story building and at least four neighbouring houses.

The Israeli military said it used precise munitions against a Hamas target and rejected casualty figures published by the Hamas-run government's media office, which is separate from the Health Ministry.

It said the area is an active war zone and that it is trying to avoid harming civilians.

Mounir al-Bursh, director general of the Health Ministry, said the flood of wounded from the strikes compounded "an already catastrophic situation for the health care system" in northern Gaza, in a post on X.

Doctors Without Borders, the international charity known by its French acronym MSF, called on Israeli forces "to immediately stop their attacks on hospitals in North Gaza" after the Health Ministry said Israeli troops had fired on two hospitals over the weekend.

The military said it was operating near one of the hospitals but had not fired directly at it, and that it was looking into the other incident.

"The ever-worsening escalation of violence and non-stop Israeli military operations that we have been witnessing over the past two weeks in northern Gaza have horrifying consequences," said Anna Halford, an emergency coordinator for MSF.

"When hospitals are attacked, their infrastructure destroyed, and the electricity cut off, the lives of patients and medical staff are under threat."

Internet connectivity went down in northern Gaza late Saturday and had not yet been restored by midday Sunday, making it difficult to gather information about the strikes and complicating rescue efforts.

Large Israeli operation in northern Gaza enters third week

Israel has been carrying out a major operation in Jabaliya, also in northern Gaza, for the last two weeks. The military says it launched the operation against Hamas militants who had regrouped there.

Over the course of the war, Israeli forces have repeatedly returned to Jabaliya, a densely populated urban refugee camp dating back to the 1948 war surrounding Israel's creation.

The north has already suffered the heaviest destruction of the war, and has been encircled by Israeli forces since late last year, follow-

ing the deadly Hamas' attack on Israel.

Israel ordered the entire population of the northern third of Gaza, including Gaza City, to evacuate to the south in the opening weeks of the war and reiterated those instructions earlier this month. Most of the population fled last year, but around 400,000 people are believed to have remained in the north.

Palestinians who fled the north at the start of the war have not been allowed to return.

On Oct 7, 2023, Hamas-led militants blew holes in Israel's security fence and stormed in, killing some 1,200 people, mostly civilians, and abducting another 250. Around 100 captives are still being held in Gaza, a third of whom are believed to be dead.

Israel's offensive in Gaza has killed over 42,000 Palestinians, according to local health authorities, who do not distinguish combatants from civilians. The war has destroyed large areas of Gaza and displaced about 90% of its population of 2.3 million people. (AP)

Indonesia swears in ex-general Prabowo Subianto as president

JAKARTA, Oct 20: Prabowo Subianto was inaugurated Sunday as the eighth president of the world's most populous Muslim-majority nation, completing his journey from an ex-general accused of rights abuses during the dark days of Indonesia's military dictatorship to the presidential palace.

The former defence minister, who turned 73 on Thursday, was cheered through the streets by thousands of waving supporters after taking his oath on the Quran in front of lawmakers and foreign dignitaries. Banners and billboards filled the streets of the capital, Jakarta, where tens of thousands gathered for festivities.

Wearing a blue Betawi traditional cloth and a dark baseball cap, Subianto stood up in the sunroof of a white van and waved, occasionally shaking people's hands, as his motorcade struggled to pass through the thousands of supporters calling his name and chanting "Good luck Prabowo-Gibran," filling the road leading from the parliament building to the presidential palace.

"I see a firm and patriotic figure in him," said Atalaric Eka Prayoga, 25. "That's a figure we need to lead Indonesia."

Another resident, Silky Putri, said he hopes Subianto "can build Indonesia to be more advanced and improve the current gloomy economic situation."

Subianto was a longtime rival of the immensely popular President Joko Widodo, who ran against him for the presidency twice and refused to accept his defeat on both occasions, in 2014 and 2019.

But Widodo appointed Subianto



as defense chief after his reelection, paving the way for an alliance despite their rival political parties. During the campaign, Subianto ran as the popular outgoing president's heir, vowing to continue signature policies like the construction of a multibillion-dollar new capital city and limits on exporting raw materials intended to boost domestic industry.

Backed by Widodo, Subianto swept to a landslide victory in February's direct presidential election on promises of policy continuity.

Subianto was sworn in with his new vice president, 37-year-old Surakarta ex-Mayor Gibran Rakabuming Raka. He chose Raka, who is Widodo's son, as his running mate, with Widodo favouring Subianto over the candidate of his own former party. The former rivals became tacit allies, even though Indonesian presidents don't typically endorse candidates.

But how he'll govern the biggest economy in Southeast Asia — where nearly 90% of Indonesia's 282 million people are Muslims — remains uncertain after a campaign

in which he made few concrete promises besides continuity with the popular former president. After decades of dictatorship under President Suharto, Indonesia was convulsed by political, ethnic and religious unrest in the late 1990s and early 2000s. Since then, it has consolidated its democratic transition as the world's third-largest democracy, and is home to a rapidly expanding middle class.

Subianto, who comes from one of the country's wealthiest families, is a sharp contrast to Widodo, the first Indonesian president to emerge from outside the political and military elite.

Subianto was a special forces commander until he was expelled by the army in 1998 over accusations that he played a role in the kidnappings and torture of activists and other abuses. He never faced trial and went into self-imposed exile in Jordan in 1998, although several of his underlings were tried and convicted.

Jordanian King Abdullah II bin Al-Hussein was expected to attend Sunday's ceremony, but cancelled

at the last minute because of escalating Middle East tensions, instead deciding to send Foreign Affairs Minister Nancy Namrouqa as his special envoy. Subianto and Abdullah met in person in June for talks in Amman on humanitarian assistance to people affected by the war in Gaza.

Subianto, who has never held elective office, will lead a massive, diverse archipelago nation whose economy has boomed amid strong global demand for its natural resources. But he'll have to contend with global economic distress and regional tensions in Asia, where territorial conflicts and the US-China rivalry loom large.

Leaders and senior officials from more than 30 countries flew in to attend the ceremony, including Chinese Vice President Han Zheng and leaders of Southeast Asia countries. US President Joe Biden sent Linda Thomas-Greenfield, the US ambassador to the United Nations. Adm Samuel Pappas, the US commander of the Indo-Pacific Command, was also among the American delegation.

Analysts and the media consider Subianto a leader with greater international awareness than Widodo. He's already held dozens of meetings with scores of foreign officials, said Adhi Priamarizki, a fellow researcher at Singapore's S Rajaratnam School of International Studies. He said that defence development was at the top of his list of priorities. Subianto has advocated an expansion of the military through the purchases of submarines, frigates and fighter jets and wants to initiate more defense cooperation with various countries, Priamarizki said. (AP)

US investigating unauthorized release of classified documents on Israel attack plans

WASHINGTON, Oct 20: The US is investigating an unauthorized release of classified documents that assess Israel's plans to attack Iran, three US officials told The Associated Press. A fourth US official said the documents appear to be legitimate. The documents are attributed to the US Geospatial Intelligence Agency and National Security Agency and note that Israel continues to move military assets in place to conduct a military strike in response to Iran's blistering ballistic missile attack on Oct 1. They were sharable within the "Five Eyes," which are the US, Great Britain, Canada, New Zealand and Australia. The documents, which are marked top secret, were posted online to Telegram and first reported by CNN and Axios. The officials spoke on the condition of anonymity because they were not authorized to discuss the matter publicly.

The investigation is also examining how the documents were obtained — including whether it was an intentional leak by a member of the US intelligence community or obtained by another method, like a hack — and whether any other intelligence information was compromised, the official said. As part of that investigation, officials are working to determine who had access to the documents before they were posted, the official said. (AP)

Iraq's Kurdish region goes to polls with flagging economy

IRBIL, Oct 20: Residents of Iraq's semi-autonomous northern Kurdish region went to the polls in long-awaited parliamentary elections Sunday under the shadow of ongoing rivalries, economic instability, and unresolved disputes with Baghdad.

The primary competitors are the two dominant Kurdish parties: the Kurdistan Democratic Party and the Patriotic Union of Kurdistan. Historically, these two parties have controlled different parts of the region, with the KDP overseeing Irbil and Dohuk, and the PUK governing Sulaymaniyah.

This division has frequently led to political deadlock. The parliamentary elections, originally set for 2022, were postponed several times amid disputes over the election law and procedures.

Ministry of Interior personnel and peshmarga forces — the regional military — voted in special elections Friday, with the general public voting Sunday.

In Friday's special election, the KDP secured a significant lead, capturing 60 per cent of the votes, while the PUK got around



30 per cent. The New Generation Movement, an opposition party that has seen a gradual rise in support, garnered 5.3 per cent of the total, up from 3 per cent in the 2018 special election. In that special election, the KDP garnered 40 per cent of the vote and the PUK 28.5 per cent.

While New Generation's appeal continues to grow, particularly among younger voters frustrated with the traditional political system, it still faces significant challenges in competing with the well-established dominance of the KDP and PUK.



KYIV, Oct 20: Russian air defences shot down more than 100 Ukrainian drones Sunday over Russia's western regions, Moscow officials said, while 17 people were injured in the Ukrainian city of Kryvyi Rih in a ballistic missile attack.

Such large-scale aerial attacks are still relatively rare over Russia 2 1/2 years after Moscow launched its full-scale invasion of Ukraine in February 2022.

The Russian Defence Ministry said 110 drones were destroyed in the overnight barrage against seven Russian regions. Many targeted Russia's border region of Kursk, where 43 drones were reportedly shot down.

Social media footage appeared to show air defences at work over the city of Dzerzhinsk in the Nizhny Novgorod region, close to a factory producing explosives. Local Governor Gleb Nikitin wrote on social media Sunday that four firefighters were injured repelling a drone attack over the city's industrial zone, but did not give further details.

Meanwhile, the General Staff of Ukraine's Armed Forces posted on Telegram that it targeted Dzerzhinsk's state-owned Sverdlov factory, which it said had been making chemical components for artillery ammunition and aerial

bombs. It also said a drone sparked a fire at a military airfield in the Lipetsk region. The comments couldn't be independently verified by the Associated Press.

A similar attack at the end of September saw Russia's Ministry of Defense report the destruction of 125 drones across seven regions.

In Ukraine's Kryvyi Rih, 17 people were injured after two Russian ballistic missiles hit the city late Saturday evening, officials said Sunday. The attack damaged homes and businesses, said local administration head Oleksandr Vilkul.

Ukraine's air force said Russia launched 49 drones and two Iskander-M ballistic missiles in total overnight. It said 31 of the drones

were shot down over 12 regions, including the Ukrainian capital, Kyiv, while another 13 disappeared from radar — suggesting they were knocked out by electronic defences.

In a statement on social media, Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy said that Russia had launched some 800 guided aerial bombs and more than 500 attack drones over Ukraine in the past week alone.

"Every day, Russia strikes our cities and communities. It is deliberate terror from the enemy against our people," he said, renewing calls for continued air support from the country's allies.

"United in defence, the world can stand against this targeted terror." (AP)

No anti-China activities will be allowed in Nepal's territory: PM Oli

KATHMANDU, Oct 20: Nepal's Prime Minister KP Sharma Oli said Sunday that no anti-China activities will be allowed in the country, reaffirming the Himalayan nation's commitment to the "One China" policy.

Oli made the remarks in a meeting with a high-level Chinese delegation led by Chen Jining, a member of the Communist Party of China's Central Committee. The meeting took place at his official residence in Baluwatar, Kathmandu. Reaffirming Nepal's commitment to the One China policy, Oli told the visiting delegation that no anti-China activities would be allowed to operate within Nepal's territory.

China claims that the breakaway nation of Taiwan is part of it and makes it mandatory for all the countries having diplomatic ties with it to follow the "One China" policy, which effectively states that Taiwan is part of China.

During the meeting, Oli also expressed hopes for continued support from China for Nepal's economic development.

Talks were also held about strengthening bilateral relations and enhancing collaboration between the Communist Party of China (CPC) and the Communist Party of Nepal (Unified Marxist-Leninist) parties, according to the PM's secretariat. Oli is the Chairman of the CPN (UML) and is seen as a pro-China leader.

He underlined the need to continue the exchange of high-level visits between the two countries to enhance government-to-government, people-to-people and historical ties, as well as to promote trade.

The Prime Minister underscored the role of the CPC and President Xi Jinping's leadership in "alleviating poverty and driving holistic development in China" and expressed Nepal's interest in benefiting from such advancements.

He also informed the delegation about the coalition government formed by Nepal's two largest parties, the CPN (UML) and the Nepali Congress, aimed at bringing about political stability in the country. (PTI)

Bangladesh SC reinstates Supreme Judicial Council

DHAKA, Oct 20: Bangladesh's Supreme Court on Sunday reinstated the Supreme Judicial Council with authority to investigate allegations of judicial misconduct, while upholding its previous ruling that declared the 16th constitutional amendment, which transferred the power of removing judges to parliament, as "illegal".

"The order was passed by a six-member bench of the Supreme Court's apex Appellate Division led by Chief Justice Syed Rfaat Ahmed," said Supreme Court lawyer Ruhul Kuddus told reporters after the apex court announced its judgement. Kuddus, who was present in the hearing, said the ruling reinforced the original constitutional provisions.

The verdict also meant scrapping of the 16th constitutional amendment, passed during deposed prime minister Sheikh Hasina's regime, giving the task of impeaching judges to Parliament instead of the Supreme Judicial Council comprising apex court judges. (PTI)

Pakistan Cabinet approves controversial constitutional amendment bill

ISLAMABAD, Oct 20: The Pakistan Cabinet Sunday approved the proposed draft of the controversial 26th Constitutional Amendment during a meeting chaired by Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif after seeking consensus from the coalition partners, his office said.

The coalition government is set to table the proposed judicial reforms bill in the Senate and the National Assembly on Sunday.

"The federal cabinet has approved the proposed draft of the 26th constitutional amendment of the government and its coalition partners, including the Pakistan Peoples Party," Dawn News reported, quoting a statement issued by the Prime Minister's Office.

Ahead of the cabinet meeting, Prime Minister Shehbaz met with President Asif Ali Zardari for detailed discussions on the proposed constitutional amendment, during which the president was briefed and consulted, Express News reported.

After the meeting, Federal Minister Musadik Malik said the government approved its draft, which was prepared in collaboration with the Pakistan People's Party (PPP), the government, and coalition partners. The cabinet has officially endorsed the draft.

The coalition government is highly optimistic about getting the much-anticipated 26th Constitutional Amendment passed in parliament, Geo News reported.

A notification from the Senate secretariat said that the upper house session will commence at 3 pm. The National Assembly session will start at 6 pm, according to

a separate notification from the NA secretariat.

Strict security arrangements have been made for today's session of the National Assembly, with guest entry strictly prohibited, according to the assembly's spokesperson.

On Saturday night, the bill was discussed with Pakistan People's Party (PPP) Chairman Bilawal Bhutto-Zardari and Jamiat Ulema-e-Islam-Fazl (JUI-F) chief Maulana Fazlur Rehman.

The details of the amendments are still a mystery as the government has not officially shared it with the media or discussed it publicly. What has been reported so far shows that the bill's alleged objective is to dilute the power of an independent judiciary.

Reports indicate that the government plans to raise the retirement age for judges and fix the tenure of the Chief Justice of the Supreme Court.

A constitutional amendment requires separate passage in the National Assembly and Senate, with a two-thirds majority vote.

Earlier, the government lacked the required numbers in the Senate and the National Assembly. However, Defence Minister Khawaja Asif has claimed that the government now has the support to reach the required numbers.

Maulana Rehman of JUI-F, in a late-night talk with the media along with Bilawal, said his party would support the 26th constitutional amendment after receiving a response from the Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) and sought a day for further deliberation. (PTI)

MONDAY, OCTOBER 21, 2024

BJP retains 71 sitting MLAs in first list of 99 nominees for Maharashtra assembly polls

MUMBAI, Oct 20: The BJP has retained 71 sitting MLAs in the first list of 99 candidates for the forthcoming Maharashtra assembly polls and also fielded kind of some regional satraps including Congress-turned-BJP politician Ashok Chavan's daughter.

Deputy CM Devendra Fadnavis, state BJP president Chandrashekar Bavankule, Assembly speaker Rahul Narwekar, ministers Girish Mahajan, Sudhir Mungantiwar, and Chandrakant Patil, are among the prominent faces feature in the first list released on Sunday.

The list includes 13 women candidates. The saffron party has retained 71 MLAs and dropped three.

Fadnavis is renominated from home turf Nagpur South West, Narwekar from Colaba in south Mumbai, and ministers Sudhir Mungantiwar, Girish Mahajan, and Chandrakant Patil from Ballarpur, Jamner, and Kothrud constituencies, respectively.

Mungantiwar had unsuccessfully contested the Lok Sabha election from Chnadrapur constituency which he lost to his nearest Congress rival.



Out of 16 MLAs of BJP in Mumbai, the party has renominated 14 in the first list.

The list also includes Mumbai BJP president Ashish Shelar, fielded from the Vandre West seat, and senior party leader and Lok Sabha member Narayan Rane's son Nitesh Rane, renominated from Kankavli constituency in coastal Sindhudurg.

Notably, Bavankule, a minister in the erstwhile Devendra Fadnavis-led government, was denied a ticket in the 2019 elections from

the Kamthi constituency he had represented for three terms. He has been renominated from Kamthi.

The BJP has replaced the sitting MLAs from Chinchwad in Pune district, Kalyan East in Thane district, and Srigonda in Ahilyanagar district.

In some constituencies, the BJP has allotted tickets to family members of satraps including Sulbha Gaikwad, wife of sitting MLA Ganpat Gaikwad who is in jail for allegedly shooting at a rival politician in a police station.

In Mumbai, the BJP has fielded its Mumbai unit chief Ashish Shelar from the Bandra West assembly segment for the third time, while his brother Vinod Shelar will test the electoral waters from the Malad West seat. Vinod will challenge sitting Congress MLA and former minister Aslam Shaikh.

Sulbha Gaikwad will contest from the Kalyan east constituency; Pratibha Pachpute will replace her husband Babanrao Pachpute from Srigonda segment in Ahilyanagar district. Chinchwad MLA Ashwini Jagtap has been replaced by her brother-in-law Shankar Jagtap.

Ashwini had won the bypoll from Chinchwad after the death of her husband and sitting MLA Laxman Jagtap.

Perhaps the most high-profile candidate is Srijaya Chavan, daughter of former Congress politician Ashok Chavan. She will make her electoral debut from the Bhokar constituency, represented by her father, in Nanded district.

Chavan senior switched to the BJP on the eve of the Lok Sabha elections. He is now a Rajya Sabha member.

The BJP has given Mahesh

Baldi, an independent MLA from Uran in Navi Mumbai, a ticket for the November 20 polls.

Former Congressman and Independent MLA Prakash Awade has made way for his son Rahul Awade in Ichalkaranji.

Anuradha Chavan, chairperson of the Phulambri APMC and member of the state BJP working committee, has been nominated from the Phulambri constituency in Chhatrapati Sambhajanagar district place of Haribhau Bagade, who held the seat before being appointed as the Governor of Rajasthan.

MLC Ram Shinde is fielded from the Karjat Jamked constituency. Shinde will take on sitting MLA Rohit Pawar of NCP (SP), the grandson of Sharad Pawar.

The elections to the 288-member assembly will be held on November 20.

The BJP is looking to contest around 150 seats in the state but is involved in tough bargaining with its allies Chief Minister Eknath Shinde-led Shiv Sena and Deputy Chief Minister Ajit Pawar-led NCP. (PTI)

BJP's 'dirty politics' responsible for growing air, water pollution in Delhi: Atishi

NEW DELHI, Oct 20: The "dirty politics" of the BJP is responsible for growing air and water pollution in Delhi, Chief Minister Atishi said on Sunday.

The air quality in the national capital has started deteriorating with the onset of winter while thick layers of toxic chemical froth was seen covering the Yamuna river's surface at various places, especially Kalindikunj.

Atishi gave a clean chit to AAP-ruled Punjab and blamed 'parali' (paddy stubble) burning, diesel buses and brick kilns in BJP-ruled Haryana for poor air quality in Delhi.

She also alleged that thousands of diesel buses from UP reaching the Kaushambi bus depot on the Delhi-Ghaziabad border, brick kilns in NCR and thermal plants in the region also contributed to air pollution in Delhi.

The Delhi chief minister slammed the BJP, saying the froth appearing on Yamuna in Delhi was because of untreated industrial wastewater released in Yamuna.

Haryana releases 165 million gallons per day (MGD) industrial untreated wastewater through Badshahpur, Mungeshpur and other drains into Yamuna, while 65 MGD of such polluted water is

discharged by UP through various drains into the river, she said.

"The dirty politics of the BJP is responsible for growing air and water pollution in Delhi but AAP led by Arvind Kejriwal is committed to help people of the city," she said.

In a press conference, Atishi claimed the central government data showed Punjab reduced farm fires from 71,300 in 2021 to 36,600 in 2023.

"Even this year, the Indian Agricultural Research Institute data show that there was a 27 per cent decrease in parali burning in Punjab between October 1 and 15, from 1105 in 2023 to 811," she claimed.

Meanwhile, farm fires this year increased from 341 to 417 in Haryana, while in UP the number went up from 244 to 417, between October 1 and 15, as compared to the last year, she said.

"This clearly shows the dirty politics of the BJP. If the Punjab government can reduce parali burning, why can't the BJP governments in Haryana and UP do it?" she asked.

Atishi said the use of silicone-based defoamers will start from Sunday night to subside the froth layer on Yamuna's surface. (PTI)

Congress, SP followed policy of appeasement, overlooked Varanasi: Modi



VARANASI (UP), Oct 20: Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Sunday accused the Congress and Samajwadi Party of practising nepotism and the policy of appeasement, to the extent that they overlooked Varanasi's development.

"The PM, who kickstarted developmental projects worth over ₹ 6,700 crore in his parliamentary constituency, also said that till 10 years ago scams worth billions used to be in the headlines, "but it is no longer the case."

"What was the mentality due to which Kashi was deprived of development? Remember the situation 10 years ago, Varanasi had to yearn for development," he said.

"Why did those who ruled the government for a long time in Uttar Pradesh and for decades in Delhi take no care for Varanasi? The answer is - nepotism and politics of appeasement.

"Be it the Samajwadi Party or the Congress, the development of Varanasi was neither their priority nor will it be in future. The BJP government runs on the ideology of 'sabka vikas'," the PM said.

"Today, in just 125 days, the start of work worth over ₹ 15 lakh crore is being discussed in every household," he added.

Modi said his government has

two major goals - to increase the convenience of the people and to give people jobs.

"Today, new highways are being built in the country, railway tracks are being laid on new routes, and new airports are being built. This is not just a work of stone and iron, but it is increasing the convenience of the people and creating jobs for the youth," he said.

Modi on Sunday announced or inaugurated developmental projects worth ₹ 6,700 crore here from Sports Complex, Sigra.

Earlier, Modi inaugurated RJ Sankara eye hospital being run by the Kanchi Math.

The hospital will benefit people of 20 districts of eastern Uttar Pradesh as well as those living in the border areas of Bihar, Madhya Pradesh, and Chhattisgarh, according to people associated with the Kanchi Math.

Among the projects, 16 development projects worth over ₹ 3,200 crore are in Varanasi.

The PM also laid the foundation stone for the extension of the runway, construction of a new terminal building and allied work to be done at Lal Bahadur Shastri International Airport in Varanasi at a cost of approximately ₹ 2,870 crore. (PTI)

AAP names candidates for Punjab bypolls

CHANDIGARH, Oct 20: The AAP on Sunday released a list of candidates for the November 13 bypolls to four assembly seats in Punjab. The party shared the list on X.

The bypolls to the four assembly seats were necessitated after MLAs representing them were elected to the Lok Sabha.

The AAP has fielded Hardeep Singh Dimpoy Dhillon, who joined the party after quitting the Shiromani Akali Dal (SAD) in August, from Gidderbaha.

Once considered close to SAD chief Sukhbir Singh Badal, Dhillon (57) had unsuccessfully contested elections from Gidderbaha seat on the party's tickets in 2017 and 2022 and served as chairman of Muktsar district planning board.

Gidderbaha seat fell vacant after Congress MLA Amrinder Singh Raja Warring was elected to the Lok Sabha from Ludhiana early this year.

The AAP has named Ishank Chhabawal, a doctor and the son of AAP Hoshiarpur MP Raj Kumar Chhabawal, as its candidate from Chhabawal (SC) segment.

The Chhabawal bypoll was necessitated after Raj Kumar Chhabawal, who was a Congress MLA but later joined the AAP, was elected to the Lok Sabha from Hoshiarpur.

Harinder Singh Dhaliwal is the party candidate from Barnala seat.

Dhaliwal, 35, is a close friend of Sangrur MP and former Barnala MLA Gurmeet Singh Meht Hayer and has been associated with the AAP since 2012.

Barnala assembly seat fell vacant after Hayer was elected to the Lok Sabha. Hayer had won the seat in 2017 and 2022.

AAP in-charge of Dera Baba Nanak assembly constituency Gurdeep Singh Randhawa is the party's pick for the seat.

Randhawa had contested the 2022 polls from Dera Baba Nanak but was defeated by the Congress' Sukhjinder Singh Randhawa.

Dera Baba Nanak seat fell vacant after Randhawa was elected to the Lok Sabha from Gurdaspur.

The counting of votes for the bypolls will be done on November 23. (PTI)

Newly elected J&K MLAs to take oath in Srinagar

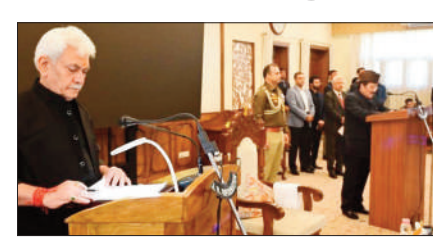
SRINAGAR, Oct 20: The newly elected MLAs of Jammu and Kashmir will be administered the oath of office in the Legislative Assembly here on Monday, ending a six-year-long legislative hiatus.

Pro tem Speaker Mubarak Gul will administer the oath to the MLAs, who include 51 first-time members. The ceremony is scheduled to take place at 2 pm.

The National Conference (NC) emerged as the single largest party in the assembly polls held in September and October.

The oldest political party of Jammu and Kashmir has formed the government with external support from Congress, which has six MLAs. Five independent MLAs, one MLA from the AAP, and the CPI(M) have also extended their support.

The BJP with 29 seats is the second-largest party - its best-ever performance in the state. BJP MLA from Kishtwar, Shagun Parihar is the youngest legislator at 29, while NC's veteran and MLA from Charar-e-Sharif,



Abdul Rahim Rather, the oldest at 80.

Rather and party colleague Ali Mohammad Sagar (MLA Khanar) are the only two people to have been elected to the assembly for a record seven terms.

While Sagar has been a member of the Legislative Assembly since 1983, Rather started his long stint as a legislator in 1977. However, the former finance minister lost the 2014 assembly elections.

There are three women MLAs in the house including Parihar, MLA of DH Pora Sakina Masood Itoo and MLA of Habba Kadal Shameema Firdous, both from NC. (PTI)

MVA must not be overconfident, allocate seats to partners: CPI(M) leader Ashok Dhawale

NEW DELHI, Oct 20: The opposition alliance must not be overconfident in Maharashtra and allocate seats to Left parties if it wants to win the upcoming state assembly polls, senior CPI(Marxist) leader Ashok Dhawale said.

In an interview with PTI, Dhawale said the Left parties are looking at getting around 20 seats out of 288.

Dhawale, who is the president of All India Kisan Sabha (AIKS) and a member of CPI(M)'s Politburo, said the Left parties have a presence in all districts of Maharashtra barring a few, which will be important in the state where the difference of vote share between the NDA and INDIA bloc was just 0.4 per cent even though the latter won 29 seats.

"Left and secular parties are looking at fighting on around 20 of the 288 seats, many of these are ones that we have won earlier, and in areas where we are strong," Dhawale told PTI.

The CPI(M) will be fighting from Dahanu, a seat it has won in nine of the last 10 assembly elections since 1978, and Kalwan, where its candidate won in 2014, but lost by a margin of around 7,000 votes in 2019.

Apart from these two, among



the seats that CPI(M) is keen on fighting, are Solapur City Central, where CPI(M) had MLAs in past, Nashik West, and Akole, where they have been getting significant vote share.

Kinwat in Nanded, and Majalgaon in Beed district, both in Marathwada region, are also being claimed by the CPI(M).

The Peasants and Workers Party of India (PWP), which has a strong base in the Raigad district, wants to contest from Sangole, Alibaug, Pen, Panvel, and Uran. It has a sitting MLA in Loha assembly seats.

Communist Party of India (CPI), meanwhile, wants to fight from Wani in the Vidarbha region, Shirpur, Aurangabad Central and

liance partners.

"In Haryana, there were other factors, but one factor was lack of inclusiveness. Parties like SP and AAP could have been given some seats," he said.

In the LS polls held earlier in the year, the MVA - Congress, Shiv Sena (UBT), NCP (SP), and the Left parties - got around 44 per cent votes, while the National Democratic Alliance led by the BJP got 43.6 per cent votes.

Dhawale also alleged that the recently launched Ladli Behna scheme and schemes for construction workers by the NDA were mere pre-poll sops.

He said taking along the Left parties, which has a dedicated cadre, will help the alliance.

"Left parties have their pockets of influence, and there are supporters across Maharashtra. The CPI(M) has district units in over 32 districts and has a vote share ranging from 5,000 to 10,000, and even up to 50,000 in certain areas. It will strengthen the alliance," he said.

He also stressed that the Left cadre cannot be bought. Asked if going with a party like Shiv Sena (UBT), which has a Hindutva ideology, may impact the Left voters, he said people have al-

ready seen Uddhav Thackeray's work as a chief minister and it is not an issue anymore.

"It was an issue in the beginning, but in the two and a half years when Uddhav Thackeray was the chief minister, people have seen his performance. He took a balanced position," he said.

In the upcoming polls, the MVA is challenging the ruling NDA government, which took over after several MLAs from Thackeray's Shiv Sena and found the support of the breakaway faction of Sharad Pawar's NCP.

Seat-sharing talks among the MVA remain stuck, with Thackeray warning on Friday that it must not reach a breaking point, after which Congress rushed party leader Ramesh Chennithala to Mumbai to hold talks with partners.

A convention of 'progressive parties', which includes the Left parties and the SP, was held in Pune on October 16, where the parties stressed that MVA should adopt an "inclusive approach" in seat-sharing and give these parties their just share.

Assembly polls will be held in Maharashtra on November 20, and results will be announced on November 23. (PTI)

Bihar by-polls: RJD names candidates for 3 seats, one to be contested by CPI(ML)

PATNA, Oct 20: The INDIA bloc in Bihar on Sunday announced candidates for by-polls to four assembly seats of the state, scheduled next month, three of which fell vacant upon its MLAs getting elected to the Lok Sabha.

The announcement came at a press conference addressed by state Congress president Akhilesh Prasad Singh, his RJD counterpart Jagadanand Singh and leaders of CPI(ML), CPI and CPI(M).

Three of the seats, Ramgarh, Belaganj and Imamganj, will be contested by RJD, while the CPI(ML) will seek to retain Tarari.

From Ramgarh, the RJD candidate is Ajit Singh, a son of Jagadanand Singh and brother of Sudhakar Singh whose election to Lok Sabha from Jehanabad necessitated the by-poll.

In Belaganj, Vishwanath Kumar Singh will be making his debut from the seat represented, formerly, by his father Surendra Prasad Yadav, now the MP from Jehanabad.

In Imamganj, the only seat which the INDIA bloc seeks to wrest from BJP-led NDA, the RJD has given ticket to Roshan Manjhi, a former member of the Zilla Parishad in Gaya.

The CPI(ML)'s candidate in Tarari is Raju Yadav, who had in 2019 unsuccessfully contested Arrah Lok Sabha seat which was wrested this year, from two-term

BJP MP and former Union Minister R K Singh by Sudama Prasad whose election necessitated the by-poll.

From the NDA camp, BJP has announced its candidates for Ramgarh and Tarari. Ramgarh candidate Ashok Kumar Singh is a former MLA while Tarari nominee Vishal Prashant is son of several term former MLA Sunil Pandey.

Imamganj will be contested by ally Hindustani Awam Morcha of Jitan Ram Manjhi whose election from Gaya Lok Sabha seat necessitated the by-poll.

Speculations are rife that the party will field Deepa Manjhi, married to Manjhi's son and state minister Santosh Suman. A formal announcement is likely in a day or two. Belaganj is likely to be fought by Chief Minister Nitish Kumar's JD(U), the runner-up of 2020 assembly polls. The party is yet to reveal its cards.

Much spotlight, in the by-polls being held a year ahead of the all important assembly elections, is on Prashant Kishor's Jan Suraj which has thrown its hat in the ring and named candidates for all seats except Ramgarh where an announcement is expected in a few days.

The last date for filing nomination papers is October 25. Polling will take place on November 13 and votes are to be counted on November 23. (PTI)

That day belonged to Nadeem: Neeraj on Paris Olympics javelin final

LUCKNOW, Oct 20: Star Indian javelin thrower Neeraj Chopra says nothing went wrong in his silver-winning performance in the Paris Olympics final earlier this year and Pakistani Arshad Nadeem emerged champion as the "day belonged to him".

Chopra became the first Indian track-and-field athlete to win two successive Olympic medals by clinching a silver with a throw of 89.45m on August 8, but the day belonged to Nadeem, who destroyed the field with a new Olympic record effort of 92.97m for his country's maiden individual gold at the show-

piece.

"Nothing was wrong, everything was right. The throw was also good. Getting a silver (medal) in the Olympics is also not a small thing. There was disappointment. But, I feel that the competition was very good, and it was tough," Chopra told PTI in an interview.

"The gold medal is won by the person to whom the day belongs to. That day was (Arshad) Nadeem's day."

Chopra was in Lucknow on Saturday to inaugurate Under Armour's larger, new format brand house store at the Phoenix Palasio Mall.

He brushed aside any notion of India-Pakistan rivalry in javelin throw competition replacing the same seen in cricket and hockey.

"In javelin, there are no two teams (playing against each other), but there are 12 athletes from different countries, who are competing with each other. I have been competing with Nadeem since 2016, and it is for the first time that he has won," said the 26-year-old athlete from Khandra village in Haryana's Panipat district.

"He (Nadeem) is a nice person, speaks in a good manner, gives respect,

so (I) feel good."

Chopra said it was a sudden moment when he picked up the javelin for the first time in his life when he was boy.

"It (taking up javelin throw) was a sudden moment. I did not know anything about it. When I went to the ground, at that time, it was decided," said Chopra, who had picked up the javelin for the first time in 2011.

Asked what is required the most by a javelin thrower --- strength, stamina, mental endurance ---, he said, "It is the combination of all these things, and one thing will not work. And, with all these

things combined, the person who will have the best technique will perform good."

Chopra, who had visited Lucknow earlier as well, said, "I had come to Lucknow earlier in 2012 to play, and after Tokyo Olympics, when I was asked to come by the Chief Minister. This is my third visit (to Lucknow).

"There is a lot of difference (between the earlier Lucknow and the current Lucknow). At that time, I was quite young, and do not remember things much.

"At that time, I had come by train.

Now, a good airport has been built. Good mall has been built. And, it is for the first time that I am able to see the city so much by travelling. I felt very nice," he said.

Chopra also had tea at a famous outlet ('Sharma kee Chai') in Lucknow's Lalbagh area, and took selfies with people.

Giving a piece of advice to the youth, Chopra said, "To the youth, I would say that they should not assume in the starting itself that they would be bagging medals. They should exercise patience, because sports consume a lot of your time. (PTI)

NO FINAL-DAY TWIST

New Zealand triumph by 8 wickets for first Test win in India in 36 years



BENGALURU, Oct 20: New Zealand survived a hostile Jasprit Bumrah spell to foil India's attempt to add a final-day twist to an absorbing series-opener, slaying the cricketing giants at home by eight wickets and ending a 36-year long wait to taste Test success in the country, here Sunday.

This is Kiwis' first Test win on the Indian soil after the John Wright-led outfit towelled India by 136 runs at the Wankhede Stadium in Mumbai, way back in 1988.

Even hunting a modest 107 on the fifth day against a world-class attack could be nervy, and New Zealand did that after some initial scares.

Will Young (48 not out) and Rachin Ravindra (39 not out) fuelled their chase with a 75-run stand for the third wicket, hand-holding their side a 1-0 lead in the three-match series.

However, the Indians will not be an entirely despondent lot despite the defeat as they showed admirable spunk to claw back from the depths of getting bowled out for 46 in the first innings.

They will need to build on it and

pretty quickly too as the second Test at Pune starts on October 24.

The Rohit Sharma-marshalled side will also have to think deeply about retaining Sarfaraz Khan, who made a 150 in the second dig, as Shubman Gill is poised to return after recovering from a stiff neck. The other point they will moot long is whether to go back to the three-pace strategy or continue three spinners, a move which backfired here spectacularly, in Pune. New Zealand victory did not come without its share of drama once the day's play started at 10.15am, a wet outfield pushing back the proceedings by an hour.

Bumrah (2/29), operating from the dressing room end, found appreciable movement and Tom Latham fell in the first over of the day itself for his overnight naught. Latham was behind the ball to cover the in-dipper but it swung back further to thud on to his pads as umpire Michael Gough raised his finger after vociferous appeal from the bowler and the crowd.

The New Zealand captain reviewed the decision more in hope than in conviction and the DRS

confirmed his worst fears as well, and he had to walk back.

India might just have felt the absence of a third pacer as both Bumrah and Siraj found movement and carry to trouble the Kiwi batters under a largely overcast skies. Kuldeep Yadav, who gave away 26 runs in three overs, had replaced Akash Deep in the eleven for this Test after India went with a three-pronged pace attack against Bangladesh recently.

Devon Conway, the other overnight batter, was shaky throughout his stay and would consider himself fortunate to have found a last-minute edge on a Bumrah skidder that otherwise would have trapped him plumb in front. But as luck would have it, the ball beat the gully fielder and raced to the fence.

However, the left-hander eventually reached the road's end when Bumrah, operating from around the stumps, caught him right in front of the wicket with another one that skidded and swung back into him.

The on-field umpire did not relent but the DRS upheld India's ap-

peal to send Conway (17) back.

New Zealand were 35 for two at that point, and one would say the match in balance as a couple of more strikes could have left the cat among the pigeons.

But Young and Ravindra, the first-innings centurion, found some solidity to resist the Indian charge.

Once the sun came out for a while, the ball-movement was much more predictable and the Kiwi batters used favourable conditions to rack in a few boundaries to ease the pressure. Ravindra

Jadeja, who started with a no-ball, too did not make much of an impression, conceding 14 runs in his first two overs. There was not much on the Chinnaswamy pitch for him to exploit either as the 22-yard track did not disintegrate on the final day, courtesy rain and cooler climes here. With the margin getting reduced alongside each run, the New Zealand batters became more daring and brought out their shots from the shelf, such as a clean hoist over mid-wicket for a six off left-arm wrist spinner

Kuldeep. (PTI)

India U17 squad for AFC Asian Cup Qualifiers picked

NEW DELHI, Oct 20: India U17 men's national team head coach Ishfaq Ahmed, on Sunday, named a 23-member squad for the AFC U17 Asian Cup 2025 Qualifiers to be held in Thailand from October 23-27.

India are placed in Group D, where they will meet Brunei Darussalam (October 23), Turkmenistan (October 25) and hosts Thailand (October 27).

There are 10 groups in the qualification phase, from which the group winners and five best second-placed teams will join hosts Saudi Arabia at the AFC U17 Asian Cup 2025.

India's 23-member squad for the AFC U17 Asian Cup 2025 Qualifiers: Goalkeepers: Aheebam Suraj Singh, Rohit, Nandan Roy. Defenders: Karish Soram, Mohamed Kaif, Chingtham Renin Singh, Brah-macharyamayam Sumit Sharma, Thougamba Usham Singh, Yaipharemba Chingakhkam, Jordric Abranches.

Midfielders: Abdul Salha Sheergoji, Ahongshangbam Samsom, Kh Azlaan Shah, Lewis Zangminlin, Mahmud Sami, Manbhakpar Malngiang, Md Arbash, Ningthoukhongjam Rishi Singh, Vishal Yadav, Ngamgouhou Mate. (PTI)

WTC: INDIA REMAIN ON TOP DESPITE DEFEAT TO NZ

DUBAI, Oct 20: India loosened their grip somewhat but continued to lead the World Test Championship (WTC) standings, despite suffering an eight-wicket defeat to New Zealand in the three-match series opener here on Sunday.

India's percentage dropped to 68.06 percent after the humbling experience in Bengaluru, and they will now look to get their act together before the upcoming two Tests and the ensuing five-match series in Australia at the end of the year.

The Black Caps chased down their victory target of 107 with relative ease, with the win catapulting the side from sixth up to fourth on the updated standings with a win-loss percentage of 44.44 percent.

Reigning champions Australia and Sri Lanka are currently India's closest challengers on the standings, with Pat Cummins' side in second place on 62.50 percent and the island nation narrowly behind with 55.56 following

their recent series sweep over New Zealand.

But New Zealand's triumph over India has the Kiwis back in the running for a second appearance in the World Test Championship final, as they overtake England and South Africa to re-claim fourth position.

New Zealand host England for three Tests in November and December and may still be in contention for a top two finish on the standings with a pair of positive results from the remaining matches against India.

After bowling India out for a historic low of 46 on the first morning of the match, New Zealand piled up a massive 402 thanks largely to a Rachin Ravindra century (134) and a Tim Southee cameo (65) lower down the order.

India responded strongly in their second essay with Sarfaraz Khan (150) and Rishabh Pant (99) masterminding an excellent comeback, before the second new ball turned the match in New Zealand's favour. (PTI)

We won four against England after losing first Test, says skipper Rohit

BENGALURU, Oct 20: Indian skipper Rohit Sharma is confident that his team will bounce back from the eight-wicket defeat against New Zealand in the opening Test by winning the next two games, just like it won four on trot against England earlier this year.

India paid the price for getting all out for 46 in the first innings, their lowest-ever total at home, despite special efforts from Sarfaraz Khan (150) and Rishabh Pant (99) in the second essay.

Rachin Ravindra was regal in both innings as he nullified India's ace spinners with ease.

"Games like these happen. We will move forward. We lost a game against England and won four games after that. We know exactly what is needed from each one of us," Rohit said at the post-match presentation ceremony here on Sunday.

He had been upfront in admitting that he read the conditions wrong but having said that, he never thought India would be bowled out for 46.

"I said in my press conference that we knew it will be sticky early on but we didn't expect to be out for 46. New Zealand bowled well and we failed to respond to that," Rohit said.



For the skipper, the silver lining was Sarfaraz and Pant's approach in the second innings where India scored 462 to set a target of 107.

"It was a good effort with the bat in the second innings. We didn't bat well in the first innings. So we knew what was ahead and couple of guys stood out.

"When you are 350 behind you can't think too much about it, just got to see the ball and bat. Couple of partnerships were really exciting to watch. We could have easily been bowled out cheaply but

proud of the effort."

He was really happy that the young duo batted only in the manner they knew.

"Everyone is on the edge of the seat when those two bat. Rishabh left a few balls and then played shots. Sarfaraz showed great maturity as well."

Rachin Ravindra is a Chennai Super 'King' and no wonder the city gave him ample opportunity to bat on red and black soil tracks in order to prepare for Ravichandran Ashwin and Ravindra Jadeja. (PTI)

Special feeling to win after 36 years, but India have firepower to hit back: Latham

BENGALURU, Oct 20: New Zealand skipper Tom Latham reminded his team not to lose focus on the second Test amid the reveries after winning the first match, as India has the firepower in its ranks to hit back.

The Kiwis defeated India by eight wickets here on Sunday in the first Test to take a 1-0 lead in the series, but they will now have to prepare for the second match, beginning at Pune from October 24. This was their first Test victory in India after 1988, and overall just the third win in red-ball format on these shores.

"I think 36 years is the last time that we've won here. So, it's a really special feeling to be in this position. It's a proud moment for this

group and one we'll celebrate," Latham said in the post-match press conference.

"We certainly know that it's going to be a challenge against India (in the second Test), who obviously have a lot of firepower in that line-up," he added.

Latham credited his pace trio of William O'Rourke, Matt Henry and Tim Southee for keeping the pressure on India throughout the Bengaluru Test.

"I think the work we did with the new ball yesterday evening was outstanding. I think Southee, Henry and William asked lots of questions and obviously managed to get the rewards.

"We certainly knew India were going to get themselves right back



in the game and just happy that we weren't chasing too many more than 100," he said.

The left-handed opener also un-

derlined the importance of the eighth partnership between Rachin Ravindra and Southee that gave him a substantial lead.

"The game was in the balance a little bit when Tim and Rachin formed their partnership. I think they put on 137. It was massive for us. I think if you said to us the day before during the press conference that we'd be chasing 100 on day five, I would have shaken your hand and said we'll take that," he added.

However, Latham is now turning his focus on the second Test at Pune.

"I think we've got to shift our focus to Pune and that will be our focus for the week in terms of the approach that we want to go in

with. We've built a little bit of confidence up this week," he noted.

But Latham was not able to give an exact timeline to the return of veteran batter Kane Williamson, who is recovering from a groin strain.

"I'm sure those conversations will be had over the next 24-48 hours, I guess anyone of Kane's calibre, if he's right and able to come back and decide, that would be obviously great.

"But yeah, I guess selection headaches are obviously always a great thing to have from a team point of view. So, fingers crossed he'll be right. I'm not 100% sure on his return yet, but fingers crossed he can get over here as soon as possible," he signed off. (PTI)

Modric becomes Real Madrid's oldest player and passes for winner at Celta Vigo

BARCELONA (SPAIN), Oct 20: Luka Modric became the oldest player in Real Madrid's history while also delivering the game-winning assist in a 2-1 victory at Celta Vigo in La Liga on Saturday.

At 39 years, 40 days old, the former Ballon d'Or winner surpassed the milestone held by Ferenc Puskas since 1966 by four days. Modric went on as a second-half substitute after Celta pulled level.

The Croatia midfielder immediately made an impact when he threaded a through-ball forward for Vini-cius Junior to score the 66th-minute winner at Balaídos Stadium.

"It was a hard-fought game," Madrid coach Carlo Ancelotti said. "But we knew how to hang in there and got three important points thanks to a great pass by Modric. Luka always gives us something."

Kylian Mbappé put the visitors ahead with a long-range strike in the 20th, only for Williot Swedberg to equalize in the 51st from a cross by Óscar Mingueza.

That set the scene for Ancelotti to look to his bench and call on Modric to set things right for the defending champion.

When asked about Modric's legacy with the club, Ancelotti said: "There is nothing else to say about a fantastic game; he is a great professional and with a character. Real Madrid has been, and is, lucky to have

him."

Modric has the most titles in the history of Real Madrid with 27, including six Champions League titles and four Spanish leagues.

This victory was not an easy one, however.

Celta took it to the defending champions. Thibaut Courtois had to save shots by Swedberg and Jonathan Bamba, and Celta substitute Anastasios Douvikas went inches from grabbing an extra-time equalizer.

"We leave with a bittersweet feeling," Celta midfielder Fran Beltran said. "We took the game at Real Madrid and were better than them in stretches."

Ancelotti's side stayed unbeaten through 10 rounds in La Liga and pulled level with Barcelona before it hosts Sevilla on Sunday.

Madrid started a busy week with a home game against Borussia Dortmund in the Champions League on Tuesday before it hosts Barcelona in the first clasico of the season next weekend.

Williams doubleİnaki Williams scored twice as Athletic Bilbao rolled to a 4-1 win at home over the promoted Espanyol.

Spain striker Mikel Oyarzabal scored with a header for Real Sociedad to beat Girona 1-0, while Real Betis forward Chimy Avila struck to secure a 2-1 win over Osasuna, his previous club. (AP)

