Israeli strike on mosque

Imran Khan's party vows to continue its protest against govt

Bombastic claims on economy conceal choke

points that will strangulate growth: Cong Bypolls to 10 assembly seats INDIA bloc's first major test in UP since LS gains

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Voice of the hills people

Nijut Moina scheme gets going • New scheme to cover 10 lakh girl students with an outlay of ₹1,500 crore

# Himanta confident of ending child marriage in state

gramme was implemented.

According to Sarma, one of

the main requirements for participating in this programme is

that female students stay single

until they graduate. "Since the

goal of this programme is to

end child marriage, female stu-

dents enrolled in graduation-

level courses are required to

stay single until they complete

HT Bureau GUWAHATI, Oct 6: Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma on Sunday asserted that

'Nijut Moina' scheme would

end child marriage in the state. Sarma was speaking during a programme where he handed over the cheques to the girl students of Kamrup (M), Kamrup and Morigaon districts at Khanapara

Speaking further Sarma claimed that the Assam government has taken a big leap towards for eradicating child marriage with the launch of a financial support initiative— Nijut Moina scheme to help the education of girl students in the state. "Assam launched Nijut Moina today, which is a big initiative. Under this program, female students enrolled in graduation-level courses would get scholarships totalling over ₹ 1,000 per month, while those pursuing post-



graduation courses will receive ₹ 2,500 per month to help cover their educational costs. In this sense, we hope that female students will not have to rely on their parents to help them pursue higher education," he added.

The chief minister also contended that the number of child marriage cases in Assam would decrease once this pro-

There is no restriction on their ability to use the Nijut Moina plan if they remain single after they graduate. They will then attain the legal marriage age, and we also want the females to get married within a certain time frame and have happy lives," he said.

Sarma additionally stipulated that no MP, MLA, or minister's daughter may get the advantages of this financial assistance programme.

Furthermore, he stated that it is expected that girl students receiving scholarships will attend regular classes at colleges and institutions and will perform well on exams.

"I believe this initiative will be a game changer to fight child marriage. #NijutMoina is unique as it incentivises positive social outcomes, funds higher education, reduces family expenses and bars child marriage by encouraging girls girls will get ₹ 240 core.

to remain in college," taking to X handle, Sarma wrote. Notably, under Nijut Moina,

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each eligible girl student enrolled in Class 11 will receive an incentive of ₹1000/- per month for a maximum of ten months, for a total of ₹ 10,000/- per year. An incentive of ₹1250/- per month for a maximum of ten months, resulting in a total ₹ 12,500 per year will be paid to each of the eligible girl students enrolled in Graduation First Year.

Meanwhile, an incentive of ₹ 2500/- per month over a period of maximum up to ten months, resulting in a total ₹ 25,000 per year will be paid to each of the eligible girl stu-

dents enrolled in Post-Graduation First year. The latest government initiative aims to cover 10 lakh girl students with an outlay of ₹ 1,500 crore and in the first year, over 1.6 lakh

# NTPC ties up with Assam forest department for awareness drive

GUWAHATI, Oct 6: State-run power major NTPC said on Sunday it has joined hands with Assam Forest Department to carry out an awareness campaign to celebrate Wildlife

As part of the celebrations, observed annually from October 2 to 8, NTPC's Bongaigaon unit collaborated with the Divisional Forest Office (DFO) of Kokrajhar district to organise a day-long awareness programme on Saturday. The event was held at Chakrashila Wildlife Sanctuary, which is a part of the Choraikhola Forest Range, the company said in a statement.

"The event aimed at raising awareness about the importance of wildlife conservation among local communities, students and villagers, while highlighting the significant role of the Chakrashila Sanctuary in protecting the region's biodiversity," it added.

As part of the programme, quiz and drawing competitions were organised for 160 school students, designed to foster environmental awareness and interest in wildlife con-

Commenting on the initiative, NTPC Bongaigaon Head of Project Akhilesh Singh discussed the company's various efforts, including planting 2.5 lakh trees in the area, as part of its broader sustainable development



goals. "Such initiatives not only help the environment but also strengthen the organisation's relationship with local communities through impactful actions," he added.

NTPC Bongaigaon recently carried out an afforestation drive, in association with the Indian Army and planted 62,000 saplings at Chakrashila Wildlife Sanctuary.

The 45.57 sq km Chakrashila Wildlife Sanctuary is spread across Kokrajhar and Dhubri districts. It is famous for its golden langur and is the second protected habitat for the mammal in India.

A total of 119 species of birds, different kinds of mammals, 23 species of reptiles and more than 40 species of butterflies are found

#### **Uttarakhand: BJP leader** booked for trying to disrupt communal harmony

PAURI (UTTARAKHAND), Oct 6: BJP leader Lakhpat Singh Bhandari has been booked here for allegedly trying to disrupt communal harmony with his "objectionable" remarks on 'love jihad', police said on Sunday. While addressing an event in Srinagar on October 2, the party's Pauri Garhwal unit vice-president allegedly made comments warning people of a particular community to stay away from 'love jihad' or their "eyes would be gouged out and shops burned down".

BJP state unit media in-charge Manveer Singh Chauhan said his party does not support such statements, but attempts to spoil the atmosphere in the name of 'love jihad' and 'land jihad' in the state will not be allowed to succeed.

A video of Bhandari's speech went viral on social media, however, it has now been taken down. While talking to PTI on Sunday, Bhandari said that he had made the statement addressing the police. He claimed that he went to Srinagar Police Station a couple of times regarding 'love jihad' cases but no action was taken.

Now if anyone even raises his eyes or hands towards our daughter, we will gouge out their eyes and chop off their hands but not come to the police station," he said. Bhandari said "outsiders are polluting" the peace here and trapping our daughters in love jihad by hiding their son and Khonbamon hills and adjoining name and identity. Taking cognizance of the video, the areas, which fall under the Singhason and police have registered a case against Bhandari for trying Borjan MAC constituencies," the memoto disrupt peace and harmony between communities, randum states.

Sringgar Police Station (CONTD, ON PAGE-2)

### their undergraduate degrees. KLA raises alarm over Kuki influx Will campaign for BJP if states in KA amid Manipur violence

HT Bureau DIPHU, Oct 6: The Karbi Lammet Amei

(KLA), a Karbi literary body, has expressed concern about the rising influx of Kuki people from Manipur settling in the Singhason and Khonbamon hills of the Singhason range in Karbi Anglong, following the violence in Manipur that occurred between the two communities.

The KLA has recently submitted a memorandum to the chief executive member (CEM) of the Karbi Anglong Autonomous Council, Tuliram Ronghang, urging the KAAC and the state government to take necessary measures regarding the influx of the Kuki community from Manipur and to arrange makeshift shelters for the displaced Kuki people under strict overnment supervision.

"The KLA is concerned about the Manipur crisis, whereby two communities are engaged in an ethnic clash, resulting in the exodus of the Kuki community into Karbi Anglong. They are occupying the Singha-



grant land to the Kukis who have come from Manipur. Additionally, it has called on the KAAC and the government of Assam to arrange shelter or camps to accommodate the internally displaced victims of the violence in Manipur at a strict state supervision.

The KLA further urged both the district and state governments to identify those The KLA has urged the KAAC not to who have entered from Manipur and to de-

port them once the situation stabilises.

"There was a clash between two communities in Manipur last year, but things have since returned to normal. It has been learned from reliable sources that Kukis from the conflict state of Manipur have entered Karbi Anglong and are settling in the Singhason and Khonbamon hills of the Singhason range. If this influx continues in Karbi Anglong, it will pose a problem for the indigenous (CONTD. ON PAGE-2)

# ruled by it get free electricity before Delhi polls: Kejriwal

NEW DELHI, Oct 6: AAP supremo Arvind Kejriwal Sunday challenged Prime Minister Narendra Modi to provide free electricity in the 22 BJP-ruled states before the Delhi Assembly elections and promised to campaign for the saffron party if this demand is fulfilled.

Kejriwal dared the BJP to hold the Delhi Assembly elections along with those in Jharkhand and Maharashtra in November and said the AAP is

ready for it. Addressing a public gathering at 'Janta Ki Adalat', Kejriwal accused the BJP's "double engine" governments of failing in states and predicted the party's ouster

from Harvana and

Jammu and Kashmir. "Double engine governments mean inflation, corruption, and unemployment," he said, adding, "the exit polls show that the BJP's double engine governments will soon collapse in

Haryana and Jammu and Kashmir." During his speech, Kejriwal held a packet containing six 'revris' (sweets) and said that each "revri" symbolised the six free services provided by his government -- free electricity, water, bus rides for

women, pilgrimage for the elderly, healthcare, and education. He announced that the same packets would be distributed to the public and urged them to treat it as 'prasad". "When you return home, perform 'puja' with this and share it

with others," he told the gathering. "If by mistake you vote for the BJP all your six benefits will vanish," the former chief minister warned and alleged that if the BJP the DTC, government schools, and hospitals would be handed over to private entities.

"Modi Ji, there are elections in Delhi in February. BJP is in power in 22 states. Make electricity free in these states, I will campaign for Modi Ji in the Delhi elections," he said. Kejriwal claimed the BJP government has failed in Haryana, saying, "No one in Haryana is letting

them enter their villages. People are resisting them."

He also described the BJP's handling of the Manipur situation as disastrous, accusing them of allowing the state to burn for seven years under their rule.

The AAP supremo labelled the BJP's "double

model as "double loot and double corruption" and also accused it of being anti-poor while citing the removal of bus marshals and data entry operators, as well as the halting of home guards' salaries in

"Fear God; shame on you. He will punish you," Kejriwal said, accusing the BJP of affecting the livelihoods of many in the national

"There is no democracy in Delhi; it's under LG's rule," Kejriwal alleged and vowed to free the city from "LG Raj" and get full state-

Alleging that his insulin stopped in jail, he said, "My kidney could have failed, and I could have died."

The AAP supremo accused the BJP of deliberately targeting AAP workers and leaders while ignoring critical issues like law and order in

# UN like 'old company', not entirely keeping up with market: Jaishankar



NEW DELHI, Oct 6: External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar on Sunday took a critical view of the United Nations, saying it was "like an old company", not entirely keeping up with the market but occupying the space.

During an interaction at the Kautilya Economic Conclave here, he also said that two very serious conflicts are going on in the world. "And where is the UN on them, essentially a bystander," the minister said. In response to a query on the possible outcome of the US elections, he said the US actually has "made a shift", geopolitically and in its economic outlook, and irrespective of the outcomes in November, many of these trends will "intensify" in the days to come.

Jaishankar took part in the interactive session on 'India and the Globe' and spoke of India's role and challenges amid changing global dynamics.

"So, we are both a lifting tide and a bit of paradoxical one, a ballast as well," Jaishankar said as he enumerated some of the steps India has taken to help other countries, including its neighbours such as

Sri Lanka Asked about his upcoming visit

to Pakistan to attend a summit of the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation (SCO), he again sought to rule out any bilateral talks with his Pakistani counterpart. "I am going there for a certain job, a certain responsibility. And, I take my responsibilities seriously. So, I am going there to represent India at the SCO meeting, and that is what I am going to do," Jaishankar said.

At an event on Saturday, the external affairs minister said that he was going to Islamabad for a "multilateral event" and not to discuss India-Pakistan relations.

In his response to a query on the United Nations' role amid the changing global scenario, he took a rather critical view of the world body that was born in 1945 after the Second World War. Initially, it had 50 countries, which has grown over these years to nearly four times. "The UN is in a way like an old company, not entirely keeping up with the market, but occupying the space. And, when it's behind times, in this world you have startups and innovations, so different people start doing their own

things," Jaishankar said. "So, what you have today is that yes you have a UN at the end, however suboptimal in functioning, it is still the only multilateral

game in town," he added. "But, when it doesn't step up on key issues, countries figure out their own ways of doing it. For example, let's take the last five-10 years, probably the biggest thing that happened in our life was Covid. Now, what did the UN do on Covid? I think the answer is -not very much," the minister said. Jaishankar (CONTD, ON PAGE-2)

# BJP stoking communal tensions in Goa, its attempts will not go unchallenged: Rahul



NEW DELHI, Oct 6: Leader of Opposition (LoP) in the Lok Sabha Rahul Gandhi on Sunday accused the BJP of deliberately stoking communal tensions in Goa unchallenged as the people of the state and the whole of India "see through this divisive agenda".

In a post on X, Gandhi said Goa's appeal lies in its natural beauty and the warmth and hospitality of its diverse and harmonious people. "Unfortunately, under BJP rule, this harmony is under

attack. The BJP is deliberately stoking communal tensions, with a former RSS leader provoking Christians and Sangh organisations calling for an economic boycott of Muslims," the former Congress chief said. Across India, similar actions by the Sangh Parivar

continue with impunity, backed by support from the highest levels, he alleged. "In Goa, the BJP's strategy is clear: divide the people while exploiting ecologically sensitive areas by illegally

converting green land and bypassing environmental and asserted that the ruling party's attempts will not go regulations - an assault on (CONTD. ON PAGE-2)

# 'A healthy weight is good for everyone'

# Normal body weight prior to pregnancy could help avoid half gestational diabetes, Swedish study

**NEW DELHI, Oct 6:** About half weight before conceiving. the cases of gestational diabetes, a common pregnancy complication, could be avoided if body weight was maintained in the normal range, according to a study that followed almost two million births in Sweden from 2000 to 2020.

Gestational diabetes, in which a pregnant woman develops high blood sugar levels, can increase the risk of type 2 diabetes later in life. Obesity and overweight, indicated by a higher-than-30 body mass index, have been studied to

have adverse pregnancy outcomes. In this study, researchers at Linköping University, Sweden, estimated the extent to which pregnancy complications could be averted if women had normal

"For example, we concluded that about half of all cases of gestational diabetes could potentially be prevented. This applies to both women born in Sweden and foreign-born women," Maryam Shirvanifar, a PhD student at Linköping University and first author of the study published in The Lancet Public Health journal, said.

The researchers also found that over a quarter of pre-eclampsia cases could be avoided if a healthy weight is maintained prior to pregnancy. The condition involves a high blood pressure and can be accompanied with severe headaches, vision problems such as blurring, and swelling in feet and ankles, among others.



The study looked at both women born in Sweden and those who had moved to the country from regions around the world, including Europe, Latin America and South

Asia. Efforts to promote a healthy weight could be beneficial to all women, regardless of ethnicity, according to lead researcher Pontus Henriksson, a senior associate pro-

fessor at the Department of Health, Medicine and Caring Sciences at Linköping University. "A healthy weight is good for everyone. The earlier in life the better, because once obesity is established, it is difficult to treat," Henriksson said. Of the nearly two million pregnant women studied, close to 17,000 were born in South Asia.

"The number of cases of gestational diabetes attributable to overweight and obesity was about four times higher for women born in South Asia, sub-Saharan Africa, and North Africa and the Middle East than for Swedish-born women, which is probably due to a higher prevalence of gestational diabetes in the former birth regions,' the authors (CONTD. ON PAGE-2)



# Godrej, Macrotech sell properties worth over ₹ 22,000 crore in Apr-Sep

NEW DELHI, Oct 6: India's two big realty firms Godrej Properties and Macrotech Developers have sold properties worth over ₹ 22,000 crore during April-September, up 56 per cent annually, on strong demand for premium homes

THE HILLS TIMES

Godrej Properties sells its real estate projects under the Godrej brand, while Macrotech Developers markets its properties under the 'Lodha' brand.

During the first six months of the current fiscal year, Godrej Properties sold properties worth over ₹ 13,800 crore, and Macrotech Developers' sales bookings stood at ₹8,320 crore. The bulk of these sales were of housing units.

The combined sales bookings of both Mumbai-based realty firms stood at ₹ 22,120 crore during April-September 2024 against ₹ 14,178 crore sales registered by the two companies in the year-ago pe-

According to the latest operational update, Godrej Properties' sales booking value grew 89 per cent year-on-year to over Rs 13,800 crore during April-September this year compared to Rs 7,288 crore in the year-ago period.

Macrotech Developers reported a 21 per cent annual growth in its sales bookings to ₹ 8,320 crore in the first half of this fiscal from ₹

#### **AMUL ready to** enter European market after US: MD

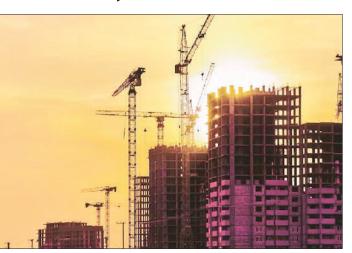
JAMSHEDPUR, Oct 6: Managing Director of AMUL and Gujarat Co-operative Milk Marketing Federation Ltd (GCMMF) Jayen Mehta said AMUL's recently launched milk in US has been "highly successful" and they are now ready to enter the European market, which would mark a historic moment for the brand.

Delivering the 11th Dr Verghese Kurien Memorial Oration on "AMUL Model: Transforming Lives of Million" organised by a private business management institute here on Saturday, Mehta said "India is now the largest milk producer in the world and is set to produce one-third of the world's total milk in the coming years", XLRI

in a statement said. "Dairy isn't just a business—it's a lifeline for rural India." he said. Talking about Amul's recent launch of milk in the US, Mehta said it has been "highly successful", and they are now ready to enter the European market for the first time. To stay relevant, Amul focuses on offering protein-rich. organic, and chemical-free products that customers trust, while continuously expanding their capacity and infrastructure, he said while praising the ecosystem developed by Dr Kurien, founder of AMUL. Mehta said "If India could offer a gift to the world, it would be the cooperative working system—a gift Dr Kurien gave us. His belief in cooperation has sparked a new revolution in India." Amul collects over 310 lakh litres of milk daily, with 107 dairy plants across India and over 50 products, Mehta said, adding that 22 billion packs are sold annually. Amul has a turnover of Rs 80,000 crore and is now ranked as the strongest dairy

36 lakh farmers, he claimed. Addressing the gathering, Nirmala Kurien - daughter of Dr Verghese Kurien, said more than half a century ago her father dared to dream that a milk-deficient country could one day become

and food brand globally, owned by



6,890 crore in the year-ago period. Godrej Properties has achieved the highest-ever H1 sales booking

Both Godrej Properties and Macrotech Developers have expressed confidence in achieving their sales bookings targets for the 2024-25 financial year.

While Godrej Properties has set a target of ₹27,500 crore worth of sales bookings for the full fiscal, Macrotech Developers has given a sales guidance of ₹ 17,500 crore.

Godrej Properties became the largest listed real estate firm in terms of sale bookings during the 2023-24 fiscal.

In the last fiscal, Godrej Properties sales bookings jumped 84 per ₹ 13,800 crore in H1 of FY25 sur-In the last fiscal, Godrej Proper-

passes our annual bookings in FY23"

Pandey said this sales growth was on the back of an improving project mix and strong volume

Godrej Properties is one of the leading real estate developers in the country, with a strong presence in Delhi-NCR, Mumbai Metropolitan Region, Pune and Bengaluru. It has entered the Hyderabad market recently. Macrotech Developers, erstwhile Lodha Developers, has a presence in Mumbai Metropolitan Region (MMR), Pune and Bengaluru.

The housing market has been performing exceedingly well post-COVID pandemic, driven by pentup demand, rising appetite for home ownership and a growth in the Indian economy.

Strong demand for residential properties, especially luxury homes, has led to a sharp appreciation in capital values.

Despite the rise in prices, the sales momentum continues to be robust. Post-pandemic, consumer demand has been shifting towards reputed builders with a better track record of executing projects.

Almost all listed real estate players have been reporting strong sales. During the current festive quarter, industry experts are expecting a flurry of launches and

## Mcap of nine of top-10 most valued firms erodes ₹ 4.74 lakh cr

**NEW DELHI, Oct 6:** Nine of the top-10 most valued firms together lost a whopping ₹ 4,74,906.18 crore in market valuation last week, with Reliance Industries and HDFC Bank taking the steepest hit, in line with weak trends in equities.

Markets faced heavy drubbing last week amid worsening tensions in the Middle East and foreign fund outflows. In a holiday-shortened week, the BSE benchmark plummeted 3,883.4 points, or 4.53 per cent. The valuation of Reliance Industries declined ₹ 1,88,479.36 crore to ₹ 18,76,718.24 crore.

HDFC Bank's market valuation slumped ₹ 72,919.58 crore to  $\mathbf{7}$  12,64,267.35 crore.

Bharti Airtel's valuation plunged ₹ 53,800.31 crore to ₹9,34,104.32 crore and that of ICICI Bank tumbled ₹ 47,461.13 crore to ₹ 8,73,059.59 crore.

The valuation of Life Insurance Corporation of India (LIC) plummeted ₹ 33,490.86 crore to ₹ 6,14,125.65 crore and that of Hindustan Unilever tanked ₹ 27,525.46 crore to ₹ 6,69,363.31 crore. The market capitalisation (mcap) of ITC dropped ₹

24,139.66 crore to ₹ 6,29,695.06 crore and that of Tata Consultancy Services (TCS) eroded by ₹ 21,690.43 crore to ₹ 15,37,361.57 crore.

State Bank of India's valuation went lower by ₹



5,399.39 crore to ₹ 7,10,934.59 crore.

However, the mcap of Infosys climbed ₹ 4,629.64 crore to ₹ 7,96,527.08 crore.

Reliance Industries retained the title of the mostvalued firm, followed by TCS, HDFC Bank, Bharti Airtel, ICICI Bank, Infosys, State Bank of India, Hindustan Unilever, ITC, and LIC. (PTI)

# L&T eyes role in NASA's successor to the International Space Station

NEW DELHI, Oct 6: After powering ISRO's space missions for more than five decades, India's largest engineering firm Larsen and Toubro has now set its eyes on the international market, particularly the next International Space

L&T was earlier in talks with Jeff Bezo's Blue Origin for supplying orbital launch capabilities and space habitat solutions but the negotiations ran into some difficul-

"Some remnants of that discussion continue till today but now with NASA. So, we are also hopeful that when the US requires its next space station, Indian firms will have a role to play in the supply chain," Vikas Khita, Vice President, L&T Precision Engineering and Systems, told PTI.

Khita, who was speaking on the sidelines of an industry meet organised by Geospatial World, said the firm was also interested in building space ports, space parks



and manufacturing clusters, areas which are expected to get a boost considering the government's opening up of the space sector for private participation in 2020.

"In commercial terms, we are looking at a fivefold increase in turnover by 2033 of the space economy and a large part of this increase is to come from the upstream and the downstream sectors," he said.

production of a range of hardware for every project of ISRO, including the Chandrayaan, Gaganyaan, and Mars Orbiter missions.

The Hindustan Aeronautics Limited-L&T consortium is also producing five Polar Satellite Launch Vehicles (PSLV), marking the industry's maiden foray in building rockets for the space

The engineering firm is also learnt to have evinced interest in the Small Satellite Launch Vehicle (SSLV), as ISRO is all set to transfer technology of the newly developed rocket to the private industry.

India is set to play a significant role in the future space economy, aiming to capture about eight per cent of the global market by 2033. The global space industry is projected to be worth around USD 1.8 trillion by 2035.

India's space economy is also expected to grow from its current value of around USD 8.4 billion to USD 44 billion by 2033. (PTI)

#### L&T has been involved in the Contd. from Page 1..

#### KLA raises alarm over Kuki

people here. Those entering Karbi Anglong from Manipur should be identified and deported back to Manipur," KLA general secretary Liladhar Teron said. He added that if necessary, the government should arrange temporary camps in a designated area until they can return to Manipur when normalcy returns.

### Will campaign for BJP if states

Kejriwal also took a jab at Modi's alleged "close ties" with big corporates and said, "Modi ji has a friend who gets all the contracts from the Centre." "I have only worked for the people; I did not do it for myself or my family. I never gave a ticket to my son; I gave it to your children," Kejriwal said, claiming the free public services provided under his government will be stopped by the BJP if they are elected to power in the city. "I pledge to liberate Delhi from the rule of the rich," he said. (PTI)

#### BJP stoking communal tensions

Goa's natural and social heritage," Gandhi said. "BJP's attempts will not go unchallenged. The people of Goa and the whole of India see through this divisive agenda and are standing united," he said. (PTI)

### UN like 'old company', not

said, "Now, you have two conflicts going on in the world today, two very serious conflicts, where is the UN on them, essentially a bystander," he said. So, what is happening, as it did during Covid also, countries did their own thing such as the initiative like Covax that was done by a group of countries, the minister said. "When it comes to big issues of the day, you have an increasing combination of countries coming together to agree to do something.

He cited the examples of connectivity initiatives like the India-MiddleEast-Europe Economic Corridor (IMEC), QUAD in Indo-Pacific to look after the global commons, the International Solar Alliance (ISA) and the Coalition for Disaster Resilient Infrastructure (CDRI), saying all these bodies came outside the UN frame-

"Today, the UN will continue, but increasingly there is a non-UN space which is the active space and I think it's telling on the UN," Jaishankar added. More than 75 years after its inception, the United Nations is still working to maintain international peace and security, give humanitarian assistance to those in need, protect

human rights, and uphold international law, according to the UN website. India has been demanding reforms in the world body and its UN Security Council in sync with the changed

Earlier this year, Jaishankar suggested that the "short-sighted" approach of the five permanent members of the UNSC is holding back forward movement in the long-pending reform of the global body.

The five permanent members are Russia, the UK, China, France and the US and these countries can veto

any substantive resolution. Jaishankar was asked about a possible outcome of the US elections and how will India engage with the new

"You spoke of one possibility of the two in the American elections. I stress to you, look back over the last

five years, how many of the policies which in 2020 people thought were the Trump administration's policies actually not just carried over by Biden but they doubled down on those policies," he said. So, this is not just a politician, it's not just a fashion, just one administration. "I think there are very deep

shifts happening," the minister added. "This is... America which actually has made a shift, geopolitically and in its economic outlook and has come

to the conclusion that the order which itself devised many years ago no longer works to its benefit to that degree," he said. "So, I would argue, irrespective of the outcomes in November, many of these trends will intensify in the

days to come. And, you are going to get, I would call it a more fractured world, but I would say, in some ways, reliability and transparency are going to be two very key factors which will become a metric for countries to have enterprises and domains to have dealings with each other," he said.

On a question on the Global South, Jaishankar said that it itself has a "great value". "It is a collective. We don't expect to be the leader. We are seen as a trusted member, an articulate member...

So, I am not really comfortable with the idea that you walk away from the Global South. On the contrary, I see value," the minister said

He also spoke on the role and impact of artificial intelligence in shaping the world going forward. (PTI)

### Normal body weight prior to

wrote. Some of the other complications the researchers looked at included infant death in the first year of life, premature births and unusual baby sizes at birth. They took data from national registers to analyse the relationship between a woman's body mass index prior to pregnancy and complications depending on which region of the world she was born in.

"Promotion of a healthy weight in pregnancy has the potential to reduce the burden of adverse pregnancy outcomes and possibly reduce inequalities in reproductive health," the authors wrote. (PTI)

#### Uttarakhand: BJP leader booked

Inspector Manibhushan Srivastava said.

Bhandari has been booked under BNS sections 196 (promoting enmity between different groups on grounds of religion, caste, etc. and disturbing harmony) and 223 (disobedience to order duly promulgated by public servant), he said. (PTI)

# SBI plans to recruit around 10,000 new employees during FY25 for efficiency

cent to a record ₹ 22,527 crore

from ₹ 12,232 crore in the preced-

ing year. Macrotech Developers

had registered a 20 per cent growth

in sales bookings to a record ₹

14,520 crore against ₹ 12,060

Having achieved 21 per cent an-

nual pre-sales growth in the first

half and with the festive season

commencing, Macrotech Develop-

ers said the company is on target to

meet its full-year guidance of 20

Godrej Properties MD and CEO

Gaurav Pandey said, "We are de-

lighted with the scale-up we have

achieved in the past couple of

per cent pre-sales growth.

crore a year ago.

NEW DELHI, Oct 6: The country's biggest lender State Bank of India (SBI) intends to recruit about 10,000 new employees during the current financial year to meet its general banking requirement and foster its technical prowess.

The bank has invested significantly in technology to provide seamless customer service as well as to strengthen the resilience of its digital channels.

"We are strengthening our workforce, both on the technology side as well as on the general banking side. We have recently announced around 1,500 technology people recruitment both at the entry level and slightly at the higher level," SBI Chairman C S Setty told PTI in an interview.

"Our technology recruitment is also on specialized obs like data scientists, data architects, network operators etc. We are recruiting them for a variety of jobs in the technology side...So, in all, our current year requirement will be around 8,000 to 10,000 people. Head count will be added to both specialized and general sides," he said.

The total staff strength of the bank stood at 232,296 as of March 2024. Of this, 110,116 officers were on the rolls of the bank at the end of last fiscal.

Asked about capacity building, Setty said, it is continuous exercise and the bank undertakes reskilling and upskilling of the existing employees to meet the emerging needs of customers. "Customer expectations are changing, technology

changing, digitalization is widely adopted. So, we are constantly reskilling our employees at all levels,' Besides, he said, the bank provides specialised up-

skilling in certain niche areas to meet the growing need of customers and provide superior banking ex-

As far as network expansion is concerned, Setty



said, SBI is planning to open 600 branches across the country in the current financial year.

SBI has a network of 22,542 branches across the country as of March 2024.

"We have strong branch expansion plans...this would be mainly focused on emerging areas. A lot of residential colonies are not covered by us. Around 600 branches is something we are planning in the current year," he said.

Apart from a vast branch network, SBI reaches its customers through 65,000 ATMs and 85,000 business correspondents. "We serve about 50 crore customers and we take pride in saying that we are the banker to every Indian, and, more importantly, to every Indian

He also said it would be his endeavour to transform SBI into the best bank, the most valued bank not only from a shareholder's point of view but also from every stakeholder's who deals with SBI.

"It could be my customers, it could be our shareholders, it could be the larger ecosystem -- the society, the institutional framework -- all the stakeholders should be saying that this is the best bank to deal

### Ather Energy rolls out festive offers worth ₹25,000 on 450X and 450 Apex Scooters

HT Bureau
GUWAHATI, Oct 6: Ather Energy, a pioneer in India's electric two-wheeler segment, has introduced exciting festive offers on Sunday on its flagship models—the Ather 450X and 450 Apex.

Customers can now avail of benefits worth up to ₹25,000, which include an extended 8-year battery warranty, free Ather Grid charging for a year, cash discounts, and cashback offers on select credit card EMI transactions. The Ather 450X, available with both 2.9 kWh and 3.7 kWh bat-

tery options, offers an IDC range of up to 150 km and a top speed of 90 km/h. The newly launched 450 Apex delivers a higher IDC range of 157 km and a top speed of 100 km/h, along with innovative features like MagicTwist<sup>TM</sup>, which allows for seamless acceleration and decelera-

tion with the same throttle. In addition to performance and technology upgrades, Ather is focused on enhancing customer convenience through its rapidly growing charging infrastructure, Ather Grid, with over 2,000 fast-

The company also operates 230 Experience Centers, where customers can test ride and purchase Ather scooters. With two manufacturing plants in Hosur, Tamil Nadu, and a third one coming up in Maharashtra, Ather Energy continues to scale its operations to meet rising demand. This festive season offer presents an excellent opportunity for customers to experience Ather's innovative electric scooters while benefiting from substantial savings

# India's high tax curbing soft drinks segment reach potential: ICRIER report

NEW DELHI, Oct 6: Carbonated soft drinks segment in India is unable to reach its potential in terms of scale expansion due to barriers such as high taxation under the GST regime despite government's initiatives like 'Make in India' and 'Aatmanirbhar Bharat', according to a report by economic think tank ICRIER.

The cross-country comparative data on sugar-sweetened beverages (SSB) taxes collated by the World Bank shows that India has one of the highest tax rates for carbonated soft drinks (CSDs) at a total tax rate of 40 per cent as of 2023. Over 90 per cent of countries that tax SSBs

> are placed in the highest GST slab of 28 per cent with a compensation cess of 12 per cent, irrespective of their sugar or fruit content.

"The high tax of 40 per cent, irrespective of sugar content, is making it difficult for innovative firms to come up with low-sugar varieties and scale up and existing firms to invest in

port said India has one of the highest tax rates for CSDs at a total tax rate of 40 per cent as of 2023. Over 90 per cent of countries that tax SSBs have a lower tax rate than India. The Indian CSDs market is relatively small.

It generated revenue worth USD 18.25 billion in 2022, and grew at a CAGR of 19.8 per cent between 2017 and 2022.

manufacturers of CSDs, and the processing of CSD products in the country is much below its potential. The varieties are also much fewer than is available in other developing countries such as Thailand or the Philippines, it added.

in CSDs in India," it said. (PTI)

#### have a lower tax rate than India, as per the report titled 'Carbonated Beverages Industry in India: Tax Policy to Promote Growth, Innovation and Investment'. Consumers, globally and in India, are shifting towards low-sugar and no-added sugar varieties of beverages amid heightened health awareness.

"The CSD market is also changing from its traditional high sugar carbonated beverages to low-sugar and fruit-based and/or flavoured carbonated drinks to zero-sugar aerated water, catering to changes in consumers' choice for

healthier options and government policies like

layered-sugar-based taxes," the report said.

Producers, across the globe, are reformulating their products to meet consumer demand. and these are supported through government policies and both fiscal and non-fiscal incentives. In India too, producers are re-examining their product portfolios and coming up with products like zero-calorie, low/no sugar con-

"However, despite government initiatives like 'Make in India' and 'Aatmanirbhar Bharat', the CSD segment is unable to reach its potential in terms of scale expansion due to barriers such as the high tax brackets and compensation cess under the GST regime, implemented since 2017," it said.

Currently, carbonated or aerated beverages

product reformulation," the ICRIER report said. Citing cross-country comparative data on

SSB taxes collated by the World Bank, the re-

Pointing out that India is one of the largest global producers of fruits such as mango, banana, guava, papaya, sapota, pomegranate, and lime, and sugar, which in some cases are used in the CSD category, the report said,"It has the potential to be used in greater capacity, if the right policies promote their uses in CSDs." However, India is not among the top global

"While the Indian consumer wants to experiment with different products such as low-sugar CSDs or fruit-based CSDs, and startups are trying to come up with new products, investment, product varieties and innovation is much lower

# 'Nijut Moina Aasoni' cheques distributed across state

MONDAY, OCTOBER 7, 2024

GUWAHATI, Oct 6: A significant initiative aimed at empowering girl students through financial assistance, the 'Mukhya Mantrir Nijut Moina Aasoni', was officially launched on Sunday at Lal Field, Haflong. The program seeks to promote education and self-reliance among female students across Assam by providing much-needed financial aid.

At the event, 1,226 students from various schools across Dima Hasao were awarded the financial grant, marking a crucial step forward in supporting girls at different stages of their education.

Chief executive member of the North Cachar Hills Autonomous Council (NCHAC), Debolal Gorlosa, addressed the gathering, highlighting the district's educational development and youth empowerment efforts. He expressed deep appreciation for chief minister Himanta Biswa Sarma's continued support for Dima Hasao's progress.

CEM Gorlosa emphasised the ongoing initiatives to resolve educational challenges in the district. He proudly announced the deployment of 150 qualified teachers throughout Dima Hasao, signifying a strong commitment to enhancing the quality of education. However, his vision extended beyond infrastructure. "We are on a mission to not only improve academic standards but also guide our youth toward a future free from the perils of drug and substance abuse," Gorlosa declared.

While acknowledging the numerous demands for educational institutions across the district, CEM Gorlosa assured attendees that efforts are underway to address them over time. He also urged principals and education officers to instil a spirit of sportsmanship among students, while advising learners to reduce excessive screen time. He encouraged them to pursue technical education and underscored the importance of skill-based learning in today's competitive job mar-

Minister Nandita Gorlosa, speaking at the event, shed light on the transformative potential of the 'Mukhya Mantrir Nijut Moina Aasoni'. She stressed the importance of judiciously using the monetary assistance provided through the program, particularly in today's rapidly advancing digital age. "Access to technology can greatly enhance the learning experience," she remarked, urging students to consider investing in educational

Minister Gorlosa also highlighted the significance of financial literacy and saving for the future. She noted that the scheme not only aims to meet the immediate educational needs of students but also encourages them to develop good

The 'Mukhya Mantrir Nijut Moina Aasoni' is an ambitious initiative by the government of Assam aimed at empow-



ering young girls and reducing the incidence of child marriages through education. Launched in 2024, the scheme provides financial assistance to girl students from class 11 to postgraduate levels, supporting them throughout their educational journey.

The launch event was graced by executive members (EMs), members of Autonomous Council (MACs), the chairperson and vice chairman of Haflong Municipal Board, district commis-Simanta Kumar Das, superintendent of police Mayank Kumar, and other officials from the education department and district administration. Principals, teachers, students from various schools and colleges, and members of the media also attended, marking the occasion as a significant milestone in Dima Hasao's educational progress.

Similarly, a special ceremony held on Sunday at the India Club Indoor Stadium in Silchar celebrated the initiative, graced by Silchar MLA Dipayan Chakraborty, Cachar districteCommissioner Mridul Yadav, IAS, and chairman of District Development Manjul Deb, among other distinguished guests.

Addressing the gathering, MLA Dipayan Chakraborty expressed his deep appreciation for Dr Sarma's unique initiative to empower young girls through education. He highlighted Dr Sarma's unwavering commitment since 2021 to position Assam as a leading state in India. Noting the chief minister's developmental vision, Chakraborty acknowledged the substantial funding allocated to enhance educational infrastructure across Silchar, including significant upgrades at Adadharchand Higher Secondary School and Government Boys' School. Additionally, he recognised CM Sarma's efforts in promoting Lakhipur to a co-district status, underscoring his dedication to the holistic development of the region.

Earlier, in his welcome address, Cachar district commissioner Mridul Yadav extended his gratitude to CM Sarma for his continual support of educational advancement in Cachar. Addressing the girl stu-

dents who benefitted from the scheme, Yadav highlighted the transformative impact of the 'Mukhya Mantrir Nijut Moina Aasoni', emphasising its role in empowering young women and shaping a brighter future for the district.

The event also featured a live telecast of speeches from chief minister Himanta Biswa Sarma and Education minister Dr Ranoj Pegu, which were broadcast from Guwahati on an LED screen. This allowed students and dignitaries present in Silchar to witness the chief addresses, further connecting the ceremony with the state's broader educational vision.

As part of the scheme, a total of 7,829 girl students from 58 higher secondary schools and colleges in Cachar received cheques of ₹ 1,000 each. Notably, 2,600 students from the Silchar constituency alone benefitted from this program. To symbolise the state's commitment to girl education, MLA Chakraborty, DC Mridul Yadav, and other dignitaries handed over cheques to 15 girl students during the ceremony.

Our Kokrajhar correspondent adds: To encourage and accelerate the progress of girl students in the education sector, a significant cheque distribution ceremony under the 'Mukhya Mantrir Nijut Moina Aasoni' was held across the state on Sunday. While the central event took place in Guwahati, simultaneous ceremonies were organised at key locations in Kokrajhar district. In Kokrajhar district, a total of 5,704 students received cheques.

At Kokrajhar Girls College, MLA Lawrence Islary attended as chief guest, where 801 beneficiaries received their cheques. BTC EM Ukhil Mushahary and Kokrajhar DC Masanda Pertin presided over the event at Bodofa Cultural Complex, with cheques given to 1,133 beneficiaries. Meanwhile, at Bodoland University, BTC EM Wilson Hasda served as chief guest alongside vice chancellor Prof BL Ahuja.

In the Gossaigaon sub-division, MLA Jiron Basumatary and SDO (C) Mridul Shivhare distributed cheques to benefici-

aries at Gossaigaon College. Additionally, Banendra Kumar Mushahary, vice chairman of APTDC, attended the financial assistance programme at Tipkai Senior Secondary School in Parbatjhora as

MLA Rabiram Narzary took part in the program at Fakiragram College with 596 beneficiaries. The event was also held at Janata College in Serfanguri with 761 beneficiaries, and UN Brahma College in Dotma, which saw 636 beneficiaries receiving financial aid.

More than 5,000 girl students across Kokrajhar district will benefit from this initiative, reaffirming the government's commitment to fostering sustained educational and personal growth and empowering the next generation of young

Our Nagaon correspondent adds: The flagship scheme of the state government, 'Nijut Moina Aasoni', aimed at empowering girl students, was launched in seven assembly constituencies in the district on Sunday.

The first instalment of financial assistance under the flagship scheme was distributed among 8,170 girl students from various colleges and higher secondary schools in the district.

The event was attended by local MLAs, officials from the district administration and education department, teachers, students, and parents. The scheme provides monthly financial assistance of ₹ 1,250 to college students and ₹ 1,000 to higher secondary students.

MLA Rupak Sarma attended the ceremonial distribution programme at Nowgong College and Nowgong Girls' College, and expressed gratitude to chief minister Himanta Biswa Sarma for initiating the scheme. He urged students to utilise the financial assistance for educational purposes only.

Our Demow correspondent adds: The inauguration ceremony of the 'Mukhya Mantrir Nijut Moina Aasoni' was held at Demow College on Sunday. Demow constituency MLA, Sushanta Borgohain, attended the event and distributed cheques to 902 girl students from various educational institutions within

The programme was also attended by Partha Khanikar, the new ADC in charge of Demow co-district, Pritam Das, Demow circle officer, Dr Krishna Jyoti Handique, principal of Demow College, and several other dignitaries.

Our Margherita correspondent adds: Chief minister Himanta Biswa Sarma officially launched 'Nijut Moina Aasoni' on Sunday, distributing cheques to students via video conferencing at Margherita College.

Margherita MLA Bhaskar Sharma inaugurating the cheque distribution cere-

During the event, Margherita MLA Bhaskar Sharma handed over the first cheques to deserving students, emphasising the importance of financial support for educational pursuits.

The Margherita co-district commissioner, Parikshit Thoudam, was also present as the chief guest, and he delivered an inspiring speech on the impact of the initiative and participated in distributing cheques to numerous students.

In the first phase of this initiative, a total of 443 cheques were distributed to students from various institutions, including Margherita College, Margherita Public Higher Secondary School, Ledo Senior Secondary School, and Tirap High Secondary School, all located within the 83 number Margherita constituency under Tinsukia district.

Margherita College principal Dr Atonu Kakoty, Ledo College principal Dr Kripa Prasad Upadhyay, Margherita Public Higher Secondary School principal, Ledo Junior College principal, and Tirap High Secondary School principal were also present during the distribution of Mukhya Mantrir Nijut Moina Aasoni' cheques to the students.

Margherita MLA Bhaskar Sharma, while briefing media persons in Margherita, said that under the 'Mukhya Mantrir Nijut Moina Aasoni', a girl student shall benefit as, through this scheme, girl students can pursue higher education, and they do not have to depend on others. This is only possible due to the able leadership and dynamic chief minister Himanta Biswa Sarma, whose vision is to work for the development of the people of Assam in every sphere.

This scheme aims to empower a total of 159,093 girl students across Assam, providing them with the financial assistance needed to further their education and enhance their prospects for the fu-

Our Biswanath Chariali correspondent adds: A total of 2,904 'Nijut Moina Aasoni' cheques were distributed in Biswanath district, covering the three LACs of Biswanath, Behali (SC), and Gohpur on Sunday.

A total of 731 cheques for the benefi-

ciaries under Biswanath LAC were distributed at a function held at Biswanath College, which was addressed by Biswanath MLA Pramod Borthakur and attended by ADC Hridoy Kumar Das, principal Dr Chinta Mani Sharma, and other officials from the district adminis-

Similarly, a total of 526 cheques for the beneficiaries of Behali LAC were distributed at a function held at Behali Degree College, which was addressed by Tezpur HPC MP Ranjit Dutta and attended by ADC Dhruba Jyoti Das, principal Dr Ramen Bora, along with officials from the district administration. On the other hand, a total of 1,647 cheques were distributed at Chaiduar College and Kalabari College. Munindra Nath Nagatey, district commissioner of Biswanath, and vice chairman of the OBC Board Dr Ranjan Gogoi, along with Gohpur co-district commissioner Lukumani Bora, attended the programme. Utpal Bora, MLA of Gohpur, addressed the inaugural session of the 'Mukhya Mantrir Nijut Moina Aasoni' at Kalabari

Our Jorhat correspondent adds: Along with the rest of the state, 'Mukhya Mantrir Niiut Moina Aasoni' cheques were distributed to 4,539 girl students of Jorhat on Sunday.

The Jorhat district administration informed that cheques were distributed at different venues under the four Assembly constituencies in the district.

For the beneficiaries of the Jorhat Assembly constituency, the ceremony was held at CKB Commerce College, Jorhat, in which Jorhat MLA Hitendra Nath Goswami distributed the cheques.

For the beneficiaries of the Titabar Assembly seat, the function was held at the office premises of the newly-formed Titabar co-district, where Kaziranga MP Kamakhya Prasad Tasa distributed the cheques.

For the beneficiaries of the Teok Assembly seat, the function was held at Bahona College and Sarbodaya College, where the cheques were distributed by Jorhat Municipal Board chairperson Lakhimi Khargharia and Jorhat Development Authority chairman Prasanta Jyoti Goswami, respectively.

For the beneficiaries of the Mariani Assembly constituency, the function was held at Teok Chandra Kamal Bezbaruah College and Mariani College, where the cheques were distributed by Mariani Municipal Board chairperson Smriti Biswa Prabha Saikia and Mariani MLA Rupjyoti Kurmi, respectively.

Under the scheme, the government will provide monthly stipends to all girl students from class 11 to post-graduation. Girl students of classes 11 and 12 will receive a monthly stipend of ₹ 1,000, while degree students will receive ₹ 1,250, and post-graduation stu-

# **Gandhi Jayanti observed**

HT Bureau **GUWAHATI**, Oct 6: Gandhi Jayanti was observed at Patorikhat in Chhaygaon Group, with the collaboration of the resi-

dents of Patorikhat and women's group.

The event began with flag hoisting by Dipak Choudhury, followed by lighting of the lamp by Ramcharan Thakuriyah, offering of garlands at the statue of Mahatma Gandhi by Dhaniram Saud, and homage to martyrs by Tarinicharan Saud. Tree plantation was done by Shankar Thakuriyah, Ganesh Thakuriyah, Sharad Saud, Bharat Saud, Bubul Saud, and Jyotish Saud.

The program concluded with a public meeting that included a tribute ceremony, a drawing competition, a quiz competition based on Assam, and a traditional dress competition. The quiz was conducted by Jintu Thakuriyah, Dabor Mani Ojha, and Sanjeev Das. The public meeting featured speeches from guests and the distribution of awards to the winners of the competitions. The event was further enriched by dance performances from child artists.

The meeting was presided over by social worker Madan Choudhury, with a speech from Professor Upendra Deka,



head of the Assamese department at Sixgaon College

Efforts of Sanjeev Das, an advocate from the Guwahati High Court and a resident of Patorikhat lauded, along with full cooperation of many local residents including Tutumoni Das and Biraj Saud, the event was a grand success, a release stated. The meeting was presided over by social worker Madan Choudhury, with a speech from Professor Upendra Deka, head of the Assamese department at Chhavgaon College. Distinguished guests included senior journalist and NKTV reporter Bishwajit Das, Bonbichara Dipak Choudhury, and Anupama Anjali Mahekia, editor of the discussion forum Shewali Das Kalita. Finally, advocate Sanjeev Das proposed the

### **Education is passport** New Co-District Commissioner Offices inaugurated to future: EM Hasda

the future; therefore, never compromise on your studies. Strive to become a sensible and responsible citizen," emphasised BTC executive member Willson Hasda during a

program Bodoland University on Sunday. EM Hasda reaffirmed the Pramod Boroled BTC's commit-

empowering youth through education.

He highlighted various innovative initiatives aimed at providing deserving students with resources and guidance to help them confidently pursue their dreams. In his address, Dr BL Ahuja, vice chancellor of Bodoland University, underscored the importance of multilingualism.

He encouraged students to engage with peers from diverse linguistic and cultural backgrounds, promoting a spirit of assimilation and understanding. The programme was attended by the registrar of Bodoland University, Dr S Basumatary, circle officer Rituparna Das, and CHD of Information and Public Relations, Zahid Ahmed Tapadar,

Water Resources, Information and Public Relations, Parliamentary Affairs, and Social Justice and Empowerment. officially inaugurated the office of the Co-District Commissioner Office at Jagiroad. This initiative marks a significant step toward enhancing administrative efficiency and decentralised governance. The minister stated that this effort will usher in a new era of governance in the district, ensuring timely public services and promoting comprehensive development

Meanwhile, the Office of the Co-District Commissioner in Laharighat was inaugurated by Keshab Mahanta, the minister of Technology, Climate Change, and the district's guardian minister. In his remarks, he emphasised that this new office will address the region's needs and foster economic growth, social justice, and empowerment. District commissioner Devashish Sharma commended the initiative, expressing confidence that the new offices will bring about more organised and effective governance in the Jagiroad and Laharighat areas. He believes these new offices will act as a catalyst for growth.

The event was attended by local MLA Ramakant Deuri. Laharighat MLA Asif Md Nazar, superintendent of police Hemant Kumar Das, district development commissioner, additional commissioners, and officers from various de-

Our Demow correspondent adds: Dr Ranoj Pegu, the state Education minister and guardian minister of

Sivasagar district, inaugurated the Office of the Co-Dis-MORIGAON, Oct 6: Pijush Hazarika, the minister for trict Commissioner for the newly formed Demow co-district. The inauguration was attended by Sushanta Borgohain, Thowra MLA: Avush Garh, distri sioner of Sivasagar district; Subhrajyoti Bora, SP of Sivasagar district; chairpersons of the Demow Municipality Board and Sivasagar Municipality Board; and a host of dignitaries. Partha Khanikar has been appointed as the new additional deputy Commissioner (ADC) in charge of the Demow co-district. Following the inauguration of the Office of the Co-Dis-

trict Commissioner, a meeting was held at Demow Public Playground. Ayush Garh, the district commissioner of Sivasagar district, delivered the welcome speech. In his address, Dr Ranoj Pegu remarked that it was a historic day, marking the inauguration of the Office of the Co-District Commissioner for Demow co-district. He mentioned that during the first cabinet meeting after forming the government, discussions were held regarding the government's future plans. He emphasised that the government's main focus will be to provide rights to citizens.

Dr Pegu stated that the Office of the Co-District Commissioner will offer services related to Panchavats, Land. and Revenue, among others, allowing residents to access these services in Demow without the need to travel to Sivasagar. Sushanta Borgohain, the Thowra MLA, expressed gratitude to the chief minister, stating that the establishment of the co-district will benefit the poor in

Renowned

# NTPC Bongaigaon organises wildlife awareness prog at Chakrashila Sanctuary

HT Correspondent KOKRAJHAR, Oct 6: As part of the celebrations for Wildlife Week, observed annually from October 2 to 8, NTPC Bongaigaon, in collaboration with the Divisional Forest Office (DFO), Kokrajhar, organised a comprehensive day-long awareness program at the Choraikhola Forest Range, located within the Chakrashila Wildlife Sanctuary. The event aimed to raise awareness about the importance of wildlife conservation among local communities, students, and villagers, while highlighting the significant role of the Chakrashila Sanctuary in protect-

ing the region's biodiversity. The program saw participation from several dignitaries and key stakeholders from the region. JK Brahma, divisional forest officer, Haltugaon division, Kokrajhar, opened the event by addressing the gathering, focusing on the importance of wildlife conservation and the critical role of local communities in preserving natural habitats. Dhiren Basumatary, divisional for-



est officer (Wildlife), Kokrajhar, added valuable insights into the challenges facing wildlife in the area and the efforts needed to protect the region's rich biodiversity.

In his address, Akhilesh Singh, head of project, NTPC Bongaigaon, spoke about NTPC's inithat reflect the organisation's commitment to environmental sustainability. Singh

discussed NTPC's various efforts. including the plantation of 2.5 lakh trees in the area as part of its broader sustainable development goals. Singh emphasised that such initiatives not only help the environment but also strengthen the organisation's relationship with local communities through impactful ac-

Earlier, Sanatan Deka, a

renowned wildlife expert from the Wildlife Trust of India, provided a compelling lecture on the importance of preserving biodiversity, emphasising the urgent need for conservation initiatives. His presentation highlighted the environmental challenges faced by the sanctuary and how collective action could help mitigate them.

As part of the program, a quiz and drawing competition was organised for 160 school students, designed to foster environmental awareness and interest in wildlife conservation. The children's creative interpretations during the drawing competition and their impressive knowledge displayed in the quiz demonstrated their growing awareness and commitment to environmental issues.

The event concluded with an award ceremony recognizing the winners of the competitions. In his closing remarks, Akhilesh Singh emphasised the importance of such initiatives in educating the public, especially the younger generation, about the vital role of wildlife in

maintaining ecological balance. He reiterated NTPC's dedication to continuing its efforts in promoting environmental awareness and protecting local ecosystems.

This collaboration between NTPC Bongaigaon and the DFO Kokrajhar during Wildlife Week underscores their shared commitment to protecting the environment. The day-long event not only raised awareness about wildlife conservation but also inspired local communities to take proactive steps in preserving the natural heritage of the region. The program ended with a collective sense of responsibility toward safeguarding the future of the region's

Paresh Mathur, additional general manager (TS), Onkar Nath, additional general manager (HR), and Sheeja Ambika Sasidharan, additional general manager (EMG), all of whom played key roles in supporting the event's objectives and ensuring active engagement from the community, were also present on the occasion.

#### playwright Dhiru Bhuyan remembered **HT Bureau**

GUWAHATI, Oct 6: Renowned playwright, radio artist, film director & actor Dhiru Bhuyan, was remembered recently with joint effort from "D'Passion Collective"

A play titled "Ami Aso" by Dr Amarjyoti Choudhury, which was performed in the evening on October 4, 5 and 6, which was designed and directed by Satyaki D'Com Bhuyan - the son of Dhiru Bhuyan.

The play attracted a huge crowd of theare lovers.

Apart from this, the famous Assamese film "Pratham Ragini" (1987), which won the Rajat Kamal Award directed by Dhiru Bhuyan, was screened at 11 am here on Sunday at the behest of "D'Passion Collective" and "Udara" and with the special effort of "Heritage Jhankar".

A documentary titled "Dhiru Bhuyan - Let's take a look back" by Tridip Goswami, founder of Heritage Jhankar, was also screened at the event. A portrait of Dhiru

Bhuyan, painted by Dr Sanjeev Handique, was unveiled at the beginning of the event by Rita Bhuvan. wife of late Dhiru Bhuyan.

"Pratham Ragini" was a hearttouching, life-oriented realistic film that was ahead of time. Based on Rama Das's widely popular story titled "Achal Toka", "Pratham Ragini" (1987) was made under the able direction of Dhiru Bhuyan.

Purabi Sarma, Bandana Sharma (Ravi Sarma's mother), Malabika Bora (vocalist of the famous "Paharor Bhaje Bhaje" song of the film), the family members of Dhiru Bhuyan, and many other renowned, popular artists, eminent personalities and movie-loving audiences were present during this time.

On the occasion eminent person Pradeep Acharya spoke in memory of Dhiru Bhuyan. Apart from this, Purabi Sarma, Malabika Bora, Bandana Sarma, Tapan Das etc. also reminisce about Dhiru Bhuyan.

The show was conducted by Nayan Prasad.

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QUOTE OF THE DAY

Love's a malady without a cure.
-John Dryden

# Politics smeared Kumbh

ttar Pradesh Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath will be in Prayagraj on October 6 with the stage set for the next explosive episode of 'Hindu-Muslim'. Prayagraj is anticipating a monstrous 'Maha Kumbh' in 2025 and preparations are in swing. Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath will announce the dates for the major "baths", which is what the 'Kumbh Mela' has been all about for centuries. The sheer size of the 'Kumbh' cannot be imagined. The last 'Maha Kumbh' saw 20 crore devotees. Double that number will get their underclothes drenched in the 2025 'Maha Kumbh'. Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath will hold a meeting with seers of 13 "akharas" and release the logo of the Maha Kumbh. The Chief Minister will also be requested to remove Urdu words like 'Shahi' and 'Peshwai' from the Kumbh lexicon. 'Shahi' and 'Peshwai' had crept into the Kumbh language during the time of the Mughals. After 2014 there were requests to get rid of them, but the Modi and Yogi governments were doing their brand of Muslim appeasement and it was only after the 2024 "half-defeat" that "courage" returned. The Akhil Bharatiya Akhara Parishad, which runs the 'Maha Kumbh', split in two. But these are extraordinary times and calls for "unity" have brought them together. The spectre of Islamic challenge to the Sanatana Dharma could not be ignored. Hindu seers are at the forefront of the Hindus' return challenge. The contamination of Tirupati laddus and the "thook jihad" and "urine jihad" have together put the fear of the devil in the hearts of Hindus.

Therefore, Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath will be asked to quarantee "purity" of the 'Kumbh Mela' by keeping people of Abrahamic faiths out of the 'Maha Kumbh'. Muslims and Christians will be prevented from entering the limits of the 'Kumbh Fair'. State government officials tasked with running the arrangements for the 'Maha Kumbh' must also be "Hindu". If that isn't a breach of fundamental rights, what is? Muslim panelists invited to a fiery debate on the 'Maha Kumbh' swore not to take things lying down. They have warned such diktats do not apply to secular India. They're alleging economic boycott of Muslims. Thousands of state government officials are expected to be posted in Prayagraj for the duration of the 'Maha Kumbh'. Will the BJP-led Uttar Pradesh government agree to the Hindu seers' demand? Gorakhpur's mahant Yogi's 'secular' status will be questioned. Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath is not divorced from his 'monk identity'

Does Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath wear a secular choga? The answer is 'no'. But the Chief Minister swore on the Constitution. That is what counts. He is duty-bound to stick to the law of the land, and play fair and square. There should not be a dilemma, no Hamlet to cloud his decision-making prowess. That being said, there is nothing that prohibits the Yogi Adityanath administration from "taking precautions". What if the sight of skull caps leads to a stampede, as is being argued? So, everything, from the "settlement of akharas in the fair area, their arrangements, their needs, and possible construction", all of these should be in the hands of sanatanis. Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath must post only Sanatanis in the fairground, goes the text.

# Healthy competition and domestic production – A mantra of the Indian economy

By: Gajendra Singh

n recent times, some market related events have made a deep Land worrying impact on the minds of the general public. In March, mobile companies shocked consumers by raising mobile data prices by 40%, citing rising infrastructure costs. This growth came in a market where Reliance Jio and Bharti Airtel control 67% of the telecom market. In April, the market availability of essential drugs witnessed a drastic reduction due to API supply chain issues. In May, the merger of two large private banks led to the closure of many rural branches, while in June the prices of electric vehicles (EVs) increased by 25% due to a shortage of components.

The Herfindahl-Hirschman Index (HHI) Survey 2024 released by the Competition Commission of India has provided important information about the corporate share of the market in various industries. The total share of the three corporates in the telecom sector is 82 per cent, with Jio having 35%, Airtel 32% and Vi 18% market share.

The total participation of five major corporates in the banking sector is 71 per cent, with SBI at 23%, HDFC at 16%, ICICI at 13%, Axis at 11% and Kotak at 8%. Pharmaceutical API production shows 70% import dependency. The sector is highly sensitive with three corporates accounting for 86 per cent of the EV market, where Tata Motors has 52%, Mahindra 23% and MG 11%. The three corporates have 80 per cent share in the e-commerce space, with Amazon at 32%, Flipkart at 30% and Reliance at 18% market share.

For the average Indian, the findings of these statistics have a significant impact. In addition to the immediate effects on the economic condition of the common life and access to services, corporate monopoly in the market has become a challenge for small, traditional Indian businesses.

These 63 million enterprises, which account for 30% of India's GDP and 45% of exports, are strug-

gling to compete with large corporations, and are at risk of extinction, which could further increase market monopolies.

The survey highlights sectorspecific problems and solutions. In telecom, encouraging new entrants and basic relief for small players can balance the market. The pharmaceutical sector needs to focus on domestic API production, aiming to reduce import dependence from 70% to 40% within five years.

The larger banking sector will benefit by promoting a mix of traditional and digital finance services to sustain diverse financial scenarios

The automobile industry needs support for domestic production of EV components to reduce import dependence and increase sustainable transport from 1.3% to 30% by 2030. Stringent regulations are needed to ensure fair competition in e-commerce and prevent aggressive pricing.

To address these challenges, the Government of India should implement policies that encourage competition, promote domestic production and create a fair environment for small businesses. The goal should be to reduce average HHI across key sectors over the next decade, so that the benefits of economic growth are widely distributed, spur innovation, and ensure consumers have access to diverse, competitively priced products and services.

ucts and services. It is important to address corporate share in the market to protect the economic condition of consumers from future shocks and to ensure stable access to essential goods and services. By promoting a balanced market structure, India can harness the benefits of healthy competition, promote innovation, improve the quality of products and ultimately benefit both businesses and consumers in its journey towards becoming a global economic superpower. (The author is a Social Thinker & Development Professional Bikaner, Rajasthan who can be reached at shekhawatga*jendra@live.com or* +91 9828 272

# Continuing ethnic clashes in Manipur show the collapse of governance

Tragic situation in Manipur has been continuing without any respite. To resolve the crisis the efforts made are almost half hearted. The peace stands fragmented. Responsibility to restrain the violence has been left with the forces of violence itself. Security forces are expected to restore peace. Then there are also central police forces including Assam Rifles to take part in peace keeping. It is now over a year that the ethnic violence rules the roost here. The government refuses to make any effort for return of normalcy.

Ethnic clashes have been reaching their zenith. Governance stands paralysed; state has to reinvent its identity as situation has deteriorated beyond hope. The total failure to resolve the political deadlock as the government is still engaged in celebrations for winning over third time, State and the Centre both are now well known for their inertia.

No response is seen coming in all these seventeen months despite the horror staring at the masses, both physically and emotionally. Basic issues have grown ominous since no respite has come either from state government or from the Centre

Ethnic divide could have been

resolved if the initiatives could have been taken in time, but they were left to harden further and divide is almost permanent. Manipur is torn and destroyed. A buffer zone has come into existence, between hill regions dominated by Kukis and valley where Meiteis are pow-

Sixty thousand are displaced, and they are forced to live in camps where life continues with scant amenities. It is also a fact that state itself has started its own atrocities. There are 60,000 Central police force stationed in this most beautiful hill region and the valley. People are aware that there is hardly any end to their woes.

As the unrest in Manipur continues unabated in north-east India, authorities remain quiet. With a population of three million, Manipur, a state in north-east India, has been witness to continued violence among the tribes. In the recent flare up, many more have been killed

More than thousand have been reported injured. There have been set up more relief camps and people in their own country have turned refugee looking for shelter, security, food and medicine. Several thousands have taken shelter in

neighbouring states. Some have come to Delhi also. The unrest started on May 3, 2023, with the solidarity rally by various tribal groups underlining the issues of social status and tribal rights. It provoked distrust in communities especially between Meities and Kukies.

In fact the state is burning for all these months, and yet it does not qualify to receive any concern from the regime. The citizens are left to fend for themselves. They do neither receive any help, nor any sympathy. The devastation that the Hindutva has

wreaked in Ma-

nipur knows no

bound. Its concept of Hindu nationalism has made the state weaker and nationalism hollow. This otherisation of non-Hindus has pushed the masses towards fragmentation, instead of common

There is in fact no space for negotiations and dialogue to resolve the political issues. There is also a growing fear of external forces getting involved in the conflict which will affect national security. The reality is that one community cannot

This was admitted even by the army chief General Upendra Dwivedi recently. Talking to a news website, he said Manipur has "become a battle of narratives" over time and battlelines in the state are "getting hardened". And yet the Manipur government is behaving as if it is merely a question of insurgency – a fact reflected in the latest state government decision to extend the Armed Forces (Special Powers) Act for another six

There is every possibility that instead of resolving the crisis, attempts may be

By: Krishna Jha

made to revive insurgency at a higher scale. A

process may be initiated to open the way for a renewed insurgency in the hill areas which can lead to the army having to be deployed to combat the insurgency.

It was chief minister Biren Singh who kept encouraging one community against the other. What began with the demand of ST status for the one community and the backslash from the other community was exacerbated by the partisan role of chief minister. It is Biren

tial approach as chief minister, which is the root cause for the problem.

The Modi government and the central BJP leadership, despite knowing fully well the divisive role of the chief minister, has chosen to stick with him. At the political level, the BJP and the RSS prefer to stoke the flames of Meitei extremist chauvinism as seen by the fact that the founder of the extremist outfit Arambai Tenggol, L Sanajaoba, was made a Rajya Sabha MP. The long impasse has only strengthened the hands of extremists in both communities.

The abandonment of the Centre's responsibility towards Manipur is made all the more stark by the fact that Prime Minister Narendra Modi has not thought it fit to visit Manipur even once in the past seventeen months.

What is required is for central government to directly intervene and start the process of political negotiations with major ethnic groups and to create conditions for peace and normalcy, where the rights of citizens of all communities are safeguarded. If the festering sore in Manipur is not healed, it will have wide ranging repercussions for the North-East. (IPA Service)

# The escalation of conflict: The impact of Israel's strike on Hezbollah leadership

By: Dipak Kurmi

The recent Israeli strike on a southern Beirut suburb, resulting in the death of Hezbollah leader Sayyed Hassan Nasrallah, marks a significant turning point in the ongoing conflict in the Middle East. Nasrallah's 32-year reign as the secretary-general of Hezbollah, a group that has evolved into a formidable military and political force, has ended, leading to fears of a broader escalation in the region. This operation, meticulously planned over months of intelligence gathering, is seen as a response to the ongoing threats posed by Hezbollah, particularly following the October 7 attack on Israel by Hamas, which has intensified tensions and violence across the region

The strategic implications of Nasrallah's death

The assassination of Nasrallah, a key figure in shaping Hezbollah's military capabilities since the early 2000s, has significant strategic implications. Hezbollah, often described as the world's most heavily armed non-state actor, has been launching missile attacks against Israel at an alarming rate since the recent Hamas assault. While the strike on Nasrallah may seem like a substantial victory for Israel, it does not necessarily cripple Hezbollah's military operations. The group has a deep-rooted infrastructure and a large pool of skilled fighters, many of whom re well-armed and trained. The organization's resilience and ability to maintain its missile capabilities are likely to continue despite the loss of its leader.

Moreover, Iran's response to this incident will be crucial. As a principal backer of Hezbollah, Iran's actions following this targeted strike will shape the future dynamics of the conflict. Ayatollah Khamenei, Iran's Supreme Leader, has made it clear that Hezbollah's military capabilities remain intact and that it will continue to lead the resistance against Israel. This rhetoric suggests that Iran may opt to bolster its support for Hezbollah, possibly increasing the flow of advanced weaponry into Lebanon. The impact of this external support could further complicate the situation and escalate hostili-

Israel's offensive and the regional response

Israel has adopted an aggressive stance following the October 7 Hamas attacks, targeting not just Gaza but now expanding its operations into Lebanon. The opening of a second front against Hezbollah is a strategic move to preemptively weaken the group's capabilities. Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's insistence on continuing military operations, despite international calls for restraint, reflects his political stakes and commitment to Israel's security narrative. His recent address at the United Nations, coinciding with military strikes, underlines his determination to project strength against perceived threats.

As the conflict intensifies, there is a palpable sense of unease among Israeli citizens, particularly those living near the Lebanese border. Many have fled areas within range of Hazbollah's missiles, reflecting widespread

fear of potential retaliatory attacks. The dynamics of the conflict have shifted significantly with Nasrallah's elimination, but the question remains whether Israel's military actions will lead to a prolonged confrontation or further escalation.

The broader context: Historical perspectives and moral dilemmas

The ethical implications of Israel's military campaign against Hezbollah are contentious. On one hand, Israel argues that its actions are justified in the face of existential threats posed by militant groups that have historically engaged in terrorist activities against Israelis and other nationalities.

Conversely, critics question the morality of using extreme military force in densely populated areas, particularly given the significant civilian casualties resulting from ongoing operations. The death toll among Palestinians in Gaza and the West Bank is staggering, with estimates indicating that about 47,000 lives have been lost since the conflict escalated.

Netanyahu's approach has garnered criticism for its potential long-term repercussions on Israel's image and its diplomatic relations. The potential for war crimes allegations looms large, as the scale of military actions raises questions about adherence to international humanitarian law. Israel's justification for its military actions, rooted in a narrative of self-defense, becomes increasingly complex in light of the severe humanitarian impact on civilians caught in the crossfire.

The role of Iran and regional stability Iran's strategic calculus will be pivotal in determining the trajectory of this conflict. Historically, Iran has utilized proxy groups like Hezbollah to exert influence in the region while maintaining plausible deniability. The current situation, marked by a direct Israeli strike against one of its key allies, poses a dilemma for Tehran. Direct military engagement could escalate tensions further and draw major powers into the conflict, potentially leading to a wider regional war with catastrophic consequences.

Despite this precarious situation, Iran has thus far demonstrated a level of restraint, opting to support Hezbollah and its other proxies without direct involvement. This calculated approach indicates Iran's awareness of the delicate balance of power in the region and its desire to avoid an all-out conflict that could jeopardize its interests.

The assassination of Sayyed Hassan Nasrallah has catalyzed a series of events that could redefine the geopolitical landscape of the Middle East. Israel's strategic offensive, coupled with the potential for Iranian retaliation through its proxies, poses a significant threat of escalating violence. As the situation unfolds, the moral, ethical, and strategic dimensions of this conflict will be scrutinized both regionally and internationally.

The need for a sustainable solution that addresses the underlying grievances while promoting stability in the region has never been more urgent. How major powers respond to this crisis will play a crucial role in shaping the future trajectory of Middle Eastern politics and security. (The writer can be reached at dipakkurmiglpltd@gmail.com)

# Preserving Assam Agricultural University's integrated structure: A path to agricultural excellence

By; Mowsam Hazarika

he agricultural landscape of India has long been a foundation for the nation's economic and rural development. Assam, with its diverse agro-climatic conditions, relies heavily on the interconnected sectors of agriculture, animal husbandry, fisheries, and rural industries for both livelihoods and economic growth. At the heart of this ecosystem is Assam Agricultural University (AAU), which has been a vital institution for the state, offering cominterdisciplinary prehensive, education, research, and extension services. However, recent proposals to split AAU and establish a standalone veterinary university have raised concerns regarding the potential disruption to Assam's agricultural progress.

This call to action highlights the need to reconsider the benefits of maintaining AAU as an integrated institution, encompassing agriculture, veterinary science, fisheries, and community science, rather than fragmenting it into specialized entities. The National Agricultural Research and Education System (NARS), which includes the Indian Council of Agricultural Research (ICAR) and State Agricultural Universities (SAUs), has long endorsed an integrated model of agricultural education and research. Assam Agricultural University's current structure aligns with this vision, fostering collaboration across disciplines and driving Assam's agricultural development

forward.

Assam Agricultural University: A crucial institution for

Assam's agricultural sector
Since its inception in 1969,
Assam Agricultural University has
played a crucial role in transforming the state's agricultural sector.

The university's multidisciplinary approach has equipped students with a broad understanding of agriculture and its allied fields, allowing them to address the complexities of Assam's agro-cli-

matic diversity. AAU's comprehensive programs in agriculture, veterinary science, fisheries, and community science have empowered graduates to approach agricultural challenges holistically. In Assam's rural areas, smallholder farmers typically rely on a combination of crop production, livestock rearing, and fish farming for their livelihoods. By integrating research and extension services across these fields, AAU has been able to develop solutions that cater to the specific needs of Assam's farming communities, addressing issues such as food security, rural development, and sustainable agriculture.

The university's commitment to research and extension has been instrumental in improving agricultural productivity, promoting sustainable practices, and enhancing rural livelihoods. Over the years, AAU has collaborated with both national and international organizations to advance research in fields such as crop diversification, pest management, soil health, and climate-resilient agriculture. These efforts have significantly contributed to Assam's agricultural progress, benefiting not only farmers but the state's entire agricultural ecosystem.

The consequences of fragmenting Assam Agricultural University

The proposal to establish a separate veterinary university in Assam threatens to fragment AAU's integrated structure, raising concerns about the duplication of resources and the potential disruption to collaborative research. One

of the primary challenges of this proposal is the financial burden it would place on the state. Establishing a new veterinary university would require significant investment in infrastructure, faculty, and administrative resources, straining the state's budget and diverting funds away from other essential

areas of education and research. In addition to financial concerns. the fragmentation of AAU could undermine the collaborative research environment that has been a hallmark of the university's success. Agriculture, veterinary science, fisheries, and community science are deeply interconnected fields, particularly in a state like Assam, where smallholder farmers rely on a combination of these activities for their livelihoods. An integrated university structure allows these disciplines to collaborate seamlessly, facilitating interdisciplinary research and innovation.

If AAU were to be divided into specialized institutions, the result could be a siloed approach to education and research, which would hinder the ability to address Assam's complex agricultural challenges. Veterinary science, for example, is not an isolated discipline - it is intrinsically linked to agriculture, animal husbandry, and public health. A standalone veterinary university may not provide students with the same level of interdisciplinary exposure and collaboration that they currently receive at AAU. This lack of exposure could ultimately impact their ability to contribute effectively to the state's agricultural develop-

The value of an interdisciplinary approach to agricultural education

Maintaining an integrated Assam Agricultural University is essential for preserving the inter-

disciplinary approach that is so crucial to the future of Assam's agricultural sector. ICAR, as the governing body overseeing agricultural universities in India, has consistently emphasized the importance of an interdisciplinary model of education and research. This model ensures that students receive a comprehensive education that prepares them for the diverse challenges they will face as agricultural professionals.

cultural professionals.

In line with these recommendations, AAU has consistently strived to meet the minimum standards for staffing, infrastructure, and educational quality, as set by ICAR and the University Grants Commission (UGC). The university's research and extension programs have been particularly impactful, addressing a wide range of agricultural issues, from improving crop yields to promoting sustainable livestock and fisheries practices.

fisheries practices.

The integrated structure of AAU has also facilitated collaborations with international organizations, further advancing research in areas such as climate-resilient agriculture, food security, and sustainable farming practices. By working with partners like the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) and the International Rice Research Institute (IRRI), AAU has been able to contribute to both national and global efforts to address agricultural challenges.

The way forward: Preserving AAU's integrated structure

As Assam continues to develop its agricultural sector, it is imperative that the state government and other stakeholders recognize the importance of maintaining the integrated structure of Assam Agricultural University. An interdisciplinary approach is essential for addressing the complex

challenges faced by Assam's agri-

cultural communities. By fostering collaboration between agriculture, veterinary science, fisheries, and rural development, AAU has created a unique ecosystem that drives innovation and improves rural livelihoods.

Establishing a separate veterinary university would not only place an unnecessary financial burden on the state but also risk disrupting the collaborative environment that is essential for Assam's agricultural progress.

The state's agricultural sector is facing multifaceted challenges, from climate change and environmental degradation to rural poverty and food security. Addressing these challenges requires a coordinated, interdisciplinary approach that can only be achieved within the existing integrated framework of AAU.

Ing integrated framework of AAU. It is crucial that the proposal to split AAU into specialized institutions be reconsidered, with a focus on preserving the university's unique interdisciplinary model. By maintaining AAU's integrated structure, Assam can ensure that its agricultural education system remains robust, resource-efficient, and capable of adapting to the state's evolving agricultural needs.

In conclusion, the future of Assam's agricultural sector depends on the continued success of institutions like Assam Agricultural University. The university's integrated approach to education, research, and extension has been key to its success in addressing the state's agricultural challenges. As Assam looks ahead to the future, preserving this integrated structure s essential for ensuring that the state's agricultural sector remains resilient, innovative, and capable of meeting the needs of its rural communities. (The author is a poet, freelance science journalist and a People's Science Activist)

# Depression: The hidden struggle and how to overcome it

By: Satyabrat Borah

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epression is one of the nost common mental health conditions worldwide. It's more than just feeling sad or having a bad day; it's a serious condition that can have serious effects on both the mind and body. While there isn't a single cure for depression, it can be managed and treated through a combination of professional help, lifestyle changes and support. This guide will cover several aspects of depression to offer a broad understanding of the condition and provide insight into effective treatments and coping strategies.

Depression or Major Depressive Disorder (MDD) is a mood disorder characterized by persistent sadness, loss of interest in previously enjoyable activities and a range of emotional and physical symptoms that interfere with daily functioning. It's important to distinguish depression from temporary sadness or grief. Depression is a prolonged condition that doesn't necessarily need a triggering event and can last weeks, months or even years.

There are several symptoms of depression like- Persistent sad, anxious or "empty" mood, loss of interest or pleasure in hobbies and activities, fatigue or loss of energy, difficulty in concentrating or making decisions, insomnia, early-morning wakefulness or excessive sleeping appetite or weight changes, restlessness or irritability, feelings of hopelessness, pessimism or guilt, thoughts of death or suicide or suicide attempts, aches or pains, headaches or digestive problems without a clear physical cause

There are various types of

**Depression:** Major Depressive Disorder (MDD) is the most common form of depression which is characterized by severe symptoms that affect daily life, work and relationships.

Persistent Depressive Disorder (Dysthymia) is a chronic form of depression that lasts for at least two years, but symptoms may be less severe than those of MDD.

Bipolar Disorder is characterized by episodes of depression alternating with periods of mania (elevated mood, energy and be-

Seasonal Affective Disorder (SAD) is a kind of depression that occurs at specific times of the year, typically during the winter months when daylight hours are shorter.

Postpartum Depression is a form of depression that occurs after childbirth, due to hormonal changes and the physical and emotional stress of giving birth.

Depression doesn't have a singular cause but results from a combination of genetic, biological, environmental and psychological factors.

Biological Factors are imbalances in brain chemicals such as serotonin, norepinephrine and dopamine

Genetics factor is a family history of depression.

Medical conditions are chronic illnesses like diabetes, heart disease and thyroid disorders can invulnerability

Psychological Factors are trauma or stressful life events, such as abuse, the death of a loved one or financial difficul-

ties. Personality traits, such as low self-esteem or being overly self-critical, can increase susceptibility to depression.

Environmental Factors are social isolation, poverty and exposure to violence can contribute to the onset of depression.

Long-term stress, such as workplace pressures or an unhappy marriage can trigger depressive episodes. When dealing with depression,

seeking professional help is often the most effective first step. There are various types of therapies such as Cognitive Behavioral Therapy (CBT) which is one of the most common forms of psychotherapy; CBT focuses on identifying and changing negative thought patterns and behaviors that contribute to depression. It helps patients develop healthier thinking patterns and coping mechanisms.

Then we have psychodynamic Therapy. This type of therapy explores past experiences and unconscious patterns to understand how they contribute to present feelings of depression. Interpersonal Therapy focuses on improving communication skills and relationships, which can alleviate depression, especially in people whose depression stems

from social conflicts or major life changes

Dialectical Behavior Therapy combines cognitive-behavioral techniques with mindfulness practices to help people regulate emotions, tolerate distress and improve relationships.

Certain medications available for the treatment of depression. Antidepressants is selective seroreuptake inhibitors (SSRIs), such as fluoxetine and sertraline, are commonly prescribed to adjust brain chemistry

Other classes include serotonin-norepinephrine reuptake inhibitors (SNRIs), tricyclic antidepressants and monoamine oxidase inhibitors (MAOIs). Mood Stabilizers are some-

times prescribed for bipolar disorder, these medications, such as lithium, help control extreme mood swings.

In some cases, antidepressants are combined with antipsychotic medications to treat severe depression or psychotic features.

Electroconvulsive Therapy is used for severe cases of depression that haven't responded to other treatments, ECT involves sending small electrical currents through the brain to trigger a brief seizure, which can quickly

While professional treatment is essential, self-care practices are crucial in managing depres-

Practices such as mindfulness, deep breathing and progressive muscle relaxation can help calm the mind and reduce anxiety. Mindfulness teaches individuals to focus on the present moment without judgment, which can prevent negative thoughts from spiraling.

Physical activity stimulates the release of endorphins, which improve mood and reduce stress. Regular exercise, even moderate activities like walking or swimming, can significantly alleviate symptoms of depression.

Certain nutrients play a critical role in mental health, such as omega-3 fatty acids, B vitamins and antioxidants. A diet rich in whole grains, fruits, vegetables, lean proteins, and fatty fish can boost mood and energy levels.

Avoiding excessive caffeine, alcohol and sugar can also help stabilize mood.

Depression often disrupts sleep, but lack of sleep worsens depressive symptoms. Establishing a sleep routine, such as going to bed and waking up at the same time daily, can improve sleep quality and mental clarity.

Writing down thoughts and feelings can help individuals understand and process their emotions, reduce stress, and identify triggers for depressive episodes.

Depression often leads to social isolation, but maintaining connections with others is essential for recovery.

Social support from loved ones can provide emotional comfort and practical help. It's important to communicate openly about

seeking help when needed. Sharing experiences with others who have been through similar struggles can provide a sense of community and reduce feelings of isolation. Many organizations offer in-person or online support groups.

Building a strong, trusting relationship with a therapist can provide a safe space to explore and confront the emotional roots of depression.

Certain lifestyle modifications can play a pivotal role in managing depression.

Techniques such as yoga, tai chi and meditation can help manage stress levels, which in turn reduces the likelihood of depression flare-ups. Practicing gratitude, even in small ways, helps shift focus from negative thoughts to positive moments in

Spending time outdoors, particularly in green spaces or near water, has been shown to reduce symptoms of depression. Sunlight exposure can also help regulate sleep-wake cycles and improve mood.

Excessive social media use has been linked to feelings of inadequacy, anxiety, and depression. Limiting time on these platforms or unfollowing accounts that negatively impact mood can be beneficial.

For those experiencing suicidal thoughts, immediate help is crucial.

**Hotlines:** Many countries have 24-hour helplines that can connect individuals with a counselor. For example, the National Suicide Prevention Lifeline in the U.S. is 1-800-273-8255.

A safety plan involves listing

dal, such as calling a trusted friend, contacting a therapist, or

going to a hospital. It's important to talk to a mental health professional as soon as suicidal thoughts arise. Crisis intervention therapies, medications, or hospitalization may be

necessary in acute cases. Depression is much more complex than temporary sadness. It's a medical condition that requires attention and often, professional treatment.

Depression isn't a choice or a sign of weakness. Suggesting that someone can simply "snap out of it" minimizes the seriousness of the condition.

When prescribed correctly, antidepressants help balance brain chemistry without altering one's personality.

Supporting someone with depression can be challenging, but it's important to approach the situation with empathy and under-

Sometimes, just being present is the most important form of support. Listen without judgment, offer a shoulder to lean on and avoid giving unsolicited ad-

While it's important to be supportive, it's also crucial to encourage professional help. Offer to help find a therapist or accompany them to an appointment if they feel hesitant.

Supporting a loved one doesn't mean sacrificing your own wellbeing. Make sure to set healthy boundaries and practice self-care.

Curing depression requires a multifaceted approach that combines professional treatment, self-help strategies and lifestyle

# Alcohol plays key role in cancer risk, new expert report warns

**By: Corrie Pelc** 

ccording to the 2024 edition of the American Association for Cancer Research's Cancer Progress Report, advances in cancer research and treatment have helped decrease the ageadjusted overall cancer death rate in the United States by 33% between 1991 and

However, barriers to certain prevention tools like vaccines and early screenings, as well as unhealthy lifestyle choices – such as excessive alcohol use — lead researchers to predict that more than 2 million new cases of cancer will be diagnosed in the U.S. in 2024. "Remarkable progress has been made in

reducing cancer mortality over the last 30 years, which came about because of fronts," Ernest Hawk, MD, MPH, head of Cancer Prevention and Population Sciences at The University of Texas MD Anderson Cancer Center, who was not involved in this report, told Medical News

"This includes effective tobacco control, a greater awareness and uptake of cancer screening to identify many cancers earlier at a more treatable stage, and more effective treatments that can often be delivered while minimizing toxicities. While very encouraging, the rising rates of many incident can-

cers also indicates that there's much more to be done," Hawk noted. MNT has spoken with four cancer experts to discuss the re-

port's most striking findings. Here is w h a t they had to 40% of can-

cers associated with modifiable risk factors

According to the latest Cancer Progress Report, 40% of all cancer diagnoses in the U.S. are linked to modifiable risk factors.

"I think the report really highlights something that a lot of people are not aware of - 40% of cancers in the U.S. are associated with modifiable risk factors," Wael Harb, MD, a board-certified hematologist and medical oncologist at MemorialCare Cancer Institute at Orange Coast and Saddleback Medical Centers in Orange County, CA, told MNT after reviewing the report. "So by reducing these risks, we can prevent cancer altogether."

"These include quitting smoking, moderation of alcohol intake, maintaining a healthy diet and weight, staying physically active, and protecting the skin from UV radiation," Harb detailed.

"With these things in mind, there's a lot we can do for any individual at the risk of developing cancer — [it's] really important to detect early or prevent it in the first place, so we don't deal with advanced cancer situations," he emphasized.

#### Excessive alcohol use top modifiable risk factor for cancer

Out of all the modifiable risk factors associated with cancer, the report highlighted excessive alcohol use as one with a strong impact: 5.4% of all cancer cases diagnosed in the U.S. in 2019 were attributable to alcohol use.

'This is a reminder of the impact of lifestyle choices that can have on cancer risk," Harb said.

'There's definitely a link between excessive alcohol intake and multiple cancers, including breast, colorectal, [and] liver cancer. It's really important for public health initiatives to focus on reducing alcohol consumption, increasing awareness about these dangers. I think that will lead to decreased risk of developing can-

 Wael Harb, MD. MNT also spoke with Anton Bilchik, MD, PhD, surgical oncologist, chief of medicine and Director of the Gastrointestinal and Hepatobiliary Program at Providence Saint John's Cancer Institute

in Santa Monica, CA, about this report. of alcohol in cancer development is obviously important, the report does not provide sufficient information on the quantities of alcohol involved.

'We know that alcohol in large quantities is associated with many diseases, including cirrhosis and cancer, but we also know that the Mediterranean diet — that has been well prescribed [and] which [often] includes one glass of red wine

at night — is actually protective against heart disease," Bilchik continued. those looking to lower their alcohol-use-related cancer Bilchik said a person's biological sex and metabolism may play a role in this equation,

too. He noted that, in female bodies, less alcohol may lead to higher risk

"I think limiting alcohol to half a glass of wine a night is unlikely to be dangerous, but every person is different, the metabolism of every person is different," Bilchik advised.

Early-onset cancers on the rise in the

The Cancer Progress Report states that another obstacle that still needs to be overcome is making early detection screenings and vaccines for vaccine-preventable cancers like cervical cancer accessible to everyone.

The report found that early-onset cancers are on the rise, including diagnoses rates for colorectal, breast, and other cancers in young adults younger than 50 years of age.

Additionally, the overall cervical cancer rate in women between the ages of 30 to 34 rose by 2.5% between 2012 and 2019. "Cancer is the second leading cause of

death in the U.S.," Jamie Koprivnikar, MD, oncologist and hematologist in the Division of Leukemia at the The John Theurer Cancer Center at Hackensack University Medical Center in New Jersey who was not involved in this report –

"It represents a major public health crisis. Alarmingly, reports suggest that there

has been a nearly 80% increase in earlyonset cancer cases worldwide since 1990. The old adage prevention is worth a pound of cure definitely holds weight in this situation," she added. Koprivnikar told us that, while it re-

mains unclear why the number of earlyonset cancer cases is increasing, experts do have some theories: 'While there is no clear answer as to why early-onset cancers are increasing,

we believe that this may largely be due to diet and lifestyle factors. Specifically, we believe that obesity, smoking, alcohol consumption, eating processed foods, and a sedentary lifestyle may underlie this recent spike in earlier-onset cancer.'

Where do we go from here?

All of the experts we interviewed agreed that, while progress is being made mains to be done.

"I think this is very important work," Koprivnika said. "Every day, I have a patient question 'why me?' with regards to his or her cancer diagnosis. To be honest, in many situations, we do not understand why one individual developed cancer and another did not."

'While I don't think that this [report] provides all of the answers, it is certainly a step in the right direction. More importantly, if we better understand cancer risk factors, this allows us to more effectively counsel our patients about behaviors that will ultimately help to prevent cancer diagnoses," she added

Bilchik explained that: "The 40% reduction in the risk of cancer is largely attributed to the risk factors we've mentioned, but also the ability to get screened and underserved populations have less access to screening and therefore have a higher mortality. At the end of the day, the 40% preventable reduction in getting cancer attributable to lifestyle, smoking, and screening, and that's really the take home message, but also that there are big disparities in healthcare world-

"There has been great progress against cancer and cancer-associated mortality over the last 30 years through careful scientific investigations into the causes of cancer and how the process of cancer development can be identified earlier, more accurately, and more reliably," Hawk also

'Nevertheless, to realize [cancer] research's promise, it's critical that we act on scientific discoveries to improve our personal lifestyle choices, medical-care practices, and public-health actions - including health-related public policies implemented at the population level," he

"I'm optimistic and we're definitely making good progress in the fight against cancer - there's new therapeutics, cutting edge technologies, improving survival and quality of life for the patient," Harb commented. "There are still some challenges that we have."

'We're far from taking care of all cancer in all patients and we're seeing some increased incidence of cancer in certain cancers, especially the young population, which is concerning and we need to address that. It's good to always look back and look at the big picture and assess where we're at and where we need to go from here," he pointed out. (Courtesy: Medical News Today)

#### **Pancreatic Cancer: Silent** killer with growing impact spreads rapidly and tends ing a potential causal relaproving imaging tech-

By: Dr. Neeraj Chaud-<u>hary</u>

Dancreatic cancer is one of the deadliest and most challenging cancers, often called a "silent killer" due to its subtle symptoms and aggressive nature. Unlike many other cancers that present early warning signs, pancreatic cancer remains asymptomatic in its early stages, making early detection extremely difficult. As a result, it is often diagnosed late, leading to poor survival outcomes.

**Late Detection** One of the most unique aspects of pancreatic cancer is the absence of early symptoms. The pancreas is located deep within the abdomen, making it difficult to detect tumours in their early stages. Symptoms such as jaundice, weight loss, and abdominal pain often only appear when the cancer has spread to other organs, usually by Stage IV. This contributes to the low 5-year survival rate, which globally is less than

**Aggressive Progression** 

to invade nearby organs like the liver, lungs, and peritoneum early in its development. It also tends to metastasize to distant organs, making it more difficult to treat and contributing to its aggressive nature.

**Treatment Resistance** Pancreatic cancer is notoriously resistant to traditional treatments like chemotherapy and radiation. Surgery is the most effective option, but only about 20% of patients are candidates for surgical resection due to the advanced stage at which the disease is typically diagnosed. Furthermore, the pancreas' proximity to major blood vessels complicates surgical removal, limiting the

options for curative treat-Links to Diabetes and

Obesity Interestingly, pancreatic cancer has a strong association with metabolic disorlike diabetes, particularly Type 2 diabetes. Many patients are diagnosed with diabetes shortly before the onset of pancreatic cancer, suggesttionship. Additionally, obeand pancreatitis are significant risk factors for developing A Growing Concern

ognized health issue in rare compared to other cancers, the incidence of pancreatic cancer is on the rise tributing to this upward

Currently, there are no

at an earlier stage.

Pancreatic cancer is a

significant but under-rec-India. Though relatively in India, with lifestyle changes, increasing rates of diabetes, and obesity con-

The lack of awareness about the disease also plays a role in the delayed presentation, with many patients only seeking medical attention when the cancer has progressed to an advanced stage.

Early Detection and **Future Directions** 

routine screening tests for pancreatic cancer, which makes early detection nearly impossible. The key to improving outcomes lies in better diagnostic tools, increased awareness, and early intervention. Research is ongoing into imniques and developing blood tests that can detect pancreatic cancer markers

Raising awareness about the symptoms, risk factors,

and importance of early medical consultation is essential in improving survival rates. Regular health check-ups for those at high risk, such as individuals with a family history of pancreatic cancer, longstanding diabetes, or chronic pancreatitis, could

better treatment outcomes. Pancreatic cancer remains one of the most challenging forms of cancer. Its late detection, rapid progression, and resistance to treatment make it a formidable adversary.

lead to earlier detection and

However, with continued advancements in research and a focus on early diagnosis, there is hope that outcomes for pancreatic cancer patients will improve in the years to come. (The author is the Director Robotic and Laparoscopic GI-HPB Surgery and GI-HPB Oncology, Yatharth Hospital, Greater

## Persistent headaches and blurred vision: When to consider a brain tumour

By: Prof. (Col.) Dr. Bipin Walia

magine waking up every morning with a pounding headache that won't go away, no matter how much you rest or what painkillers you take. Or suddenly experiencing blurred vision that persists despite blinking repeatedly. These are just a couple of examples of symptoms that might initially seem harmless but could potentially signal something more serious—a brain tumour.

**Common Signs and Symptoms** Brain tumours can present a myriad of symptoms, often depending on their size, location, and how fast they grow. Here are some signs to watch

• Persistent headaches: Severe or

frequent headaches, especially in the morning, accompanied by nausea and vomiting. • Vision changes: Blurred or double vision, difficulty with peripheral

• Seizures: Unexplained seizures in adults, particularly if they occur for the first time.

vision, or sudden changes in eye-

problems, confusion, difficulty concentrating, or changes in reasoning abilities. · Personality or behavioral

• Cognitive changes: Memory

determine the tumour type. changes: Mood swings, irritability, or noticeable changes in personality.

ness or numbness in one side of the body, difficulty with coordination, or problems with walking.

Speech and language difficul-

**ties:** Slurred speech, trouble finding

words, or difficulty understanding

language. What to do if you suspect a brain tumour If you or someone you know experiences any of these symptoms per-

sistently or if there's a nagging

feeling that something isn't right, it's

crucial to take action: • Consult a doctor: Make an appointment with a doctor, particularly a neurologist or

evaluation. Medical evaluation: The doctor will conduct a comprehensive assessment, likely including a neurolog-

neurosurgeon,

for a thorough

ical exam and imaging tests such as MRI or CT scans to examine the brain. In some cases, a biopsy may be necessary to

• Treatment planning: If a brain tumour is diagnosed, the treatment approach will depend on various factors, such as the type of tumour, its • Motor function issues: Weaksize, location, and the patient's over-

all health. Treatment options may involve surgery, radiation therapy, chemotherapy, or a combination of these therapies.

• Support and care: Throughout the diagnostic and treatment process, it's essential to receive adequate support. This may include managing symptoms, addressing emotional or cognitive changes, and accessing re-

sources for additional support. Recognizing potential signs of a brain tumour and seeking prompt medical attention can significantly impact outcomes.

While not every symptom means a

brain tumour is present, being proactive about your health and listening to your body's signals is crucial. By taking

early action and working closely with healthcare professionals, individuals can

improve their chances of early detection, effective treatment, and better overall health outcomes.

Your well-being matters—don't hesitate to seek medical advice if you have concerns about your health. (The author is the Vice Chairman & Head- Neurosurgery Max Hospital,



### Palestinian residents report heavy Israeli strikes across northern Gaza

# Israeli strike on mosque kills 19

STRIP), Oct 6: An Israeli strike on a mosque in the Gaza Strip early Sunday killed at least 19 people, Palestinian officials said, as Israel intensified its bombardment of northern Gaza and southern Beirut in its widening war on Iran-allied militant groups across the re-

6 THE HILLS TIMES

Israel is still battling Hamas in Gaza nearly a year after its Oct 7 attack, and has opened a new front against Hezbollah in Lebanon, which has been trading fire with Israel along the border since the war in Gaza began. Israel has also vowed to strike Iran itself after it launched a ballistic missile attack on the country last week.

The widening conflict risks drawing in the United States, which has provided crucial military and diplomatic support to Israel, as well as US-allied Arab countries that host American forces. Iran-allied militant groups in Syria, Iraq and Yemen have also joined in with longdistance strikes on Israel.

The strike in Gaza hit a mosque where displaced people were sheltering near the main hospital in the central town of Deir al-Balah. Israel said it targeted a Hamas command and control center embedded among civilians, without providing ev-

Agsa Martyrs Hospital morgue. Hospital records showed that the dead were all men, while another man was wounded.

The military meanwhile announced a new air and ground offensive in Jabaliva, in northern Gaza, home to a densely populated refugee camp dating back to the 1948 war surrounding Israel's creation. It circulated photos and video footage showing a column of tanks heading toward the area.

The military said its forces had encircled Jabaliya as warplanes struck militant sides ahead of their advance. Over the course of the war, Israel has carried out several large operations there, only to see militants re-

Israel also ordered new evacuations in northern Gaza, which largely emptied out in the early weeks of the war when Israel ordered its entire population to flee south. Up to 300,000 people are estimated to have remained there despite harsh conditions and heavy destruc-

"We are in a new phase of the war," the military said in leaflets dropped over the area. "These areas are considered dangerous combat zones."

Avichay Adraee, spokesman for the Israeli military, said it has expanded the socalled humanitarian zone in



southern Gaza, urging people to head there. The zone includes sprawling tent camps where hundreds of thousands of people have already sought refuge, and Israel has carried out strikes inside it against what it says are fighters sheltering among civil-

Palestinian residents reported heavy Israeli strikes across northern Gaza. The Civil Defense, first responders who operate under the Hamas-run government, said several homes and buildings had been hit and they were not able to reach them because of the bombard-

Many posted about the airstrikes and mourned their relatives on social media Imad Alarabid said in a Facebook post that an airstrike on his

home in Jabaliya killed a dozen of his family members, including his parents

Local journalists said one of their colleagues, Hassan Hamd, was killed in artillery shelling on his home in Jabaliya. He had worked as a freelance TV reporter and his footage had aired on Al Jazeera and other networks. Anas al-Sharif, an Al Jazeera reporter in northern Gaza, confirmed his death.

The latest strikes add to the mounting Palestinian death toll in Gaza, which is nearing 42,000, according to the Palestinian Health Ministry. The ministry does not differentiate between civilian and militant deaths, but many of the dead were women and children.

Hamas-led militants killed

hostage. They are still holding around 100 captives, a third of whom are believed to be dead.

In Beirut, airstrikes lit up the skyline and loud explosions echoed across the southern suburbs, known as the Dahiveh. throughout the night, as Israel struck what it said were Hezbollah militants sites. The strikes reportedly targeted a building near a road leading to Lebanon's only international airport and another formerly used by the Hezbollah-run broadcaster Al-Manar.

Israel's military confirmed it was striking targets near Beirut and said about 30 projectiles had crossed from Lebanon into Israeli territory, with some intercepted.

Hezbollah said it successfully targeted a group of Israeli soldiers in northern Israel "with a large rocket salvo, hitting them accurately." It was not possible to confirm the claim.

At least 1,400 Lebanese, including civilians, medics and Hezbollah fighters, have been killed and 1.2 million driven from their homes in less than two weeks. Israel says it aims to drive the militant group away from its border so that tens of thousands of Israeli citizens can return to their homes

Iranian-backed Hezbollah, the strongest armed force in after Hamas' Oct. 7 attack, calling it a show of support for the Palestinians. Hezbollah and Israel's military have traded fire almost daily.

Last week. Israel launched what it said was a limited ground operation into southern Lebanon after a series of attacks killed longtime Hezbollah leader Hassan Nasrallah and most of his top command. The fighting is the worst since Israel and Hezbollah fought a monthlong war in 2006. Nine Israeli soldiers have been killed in ground clashes that Israel says have killed 440 Hezbollah fighters.

It is not possible to verify battlefield reports from either side.

Iran's foreign minister, Abbas Araghchi, told reporters in Damascus that "we are trying to reach a cease-fire in Gaza and in Lebanon." The minister said Middle Eastern and other countries had put forward initiatives, without elaborating.

Araghchi spoke a day after the supreme leader of Iran praised its recent missile strikes on Israel and said it was ready to do it again if necessary.

On Saturday evening, Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanvahu said "Israel has the duty and the right to defend itself and respond to these attacks, and it will do so." On Lebanon, he some 1,200 people in the Oct 7 Lebanon, began firing rockets said "we are not done yet." (AP)

### **Imran Khan's party** vows to continue its protest against govt



**ISLAMABAD, Oct 6:** The situation remained tense in Pakistan's capital on Sunday as jailed former prime minister Imran Khan's party vowed to continue its protest against the government, a day after violent clashes between security forces and his supporters that left one policeman dead and several others injured.

Pakistan Tehreek-i-Insaf (PTI) party, in an overnight meeting, decided that the demonstration would go on until the release of Khan, who has been in jail since August last year.

The situation in Islamabad and neighbouring Rawalpindi, which witnessed the violent clashes on Saturday remained tense. However, there were no reports of violence in the twin cities on Sunday, indicating that the situation was improving gradually.

The mobile phone services have also been restored in the two cities which had been suspended on Friday. Meanwhile, the whereabouts of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Chief Minister Ali Amin Gandapur. who is also the protest leader, remained unknown.

The party and family members were unable to make any contact with him from Saturday evening, said his government spokesman Muhammad Ali Saif. Saif on Saturday first claimed that Gandapur was 'arrested", but later in a post on X said that the "KP

CM has not been formally arrested". The political committee of PTI decided that if Gandapur was arrested, senior party leader Azam Swati would lead the protest. If Swati is arrested, a new leader will be chosen to take command, accord-

ing to the Dawn newspaper. The political committee also criticised the disappearance of Gandapur. The committee warned that there would be 'serious repercussions' if he was arrested. Former National Assembly speaker and senior PTI leader Asad Oaiser told the Dawn newspaper that PTI's political committee decided to continue the protest as long as it gets a clear directive from Khan

"It was also decided that Azam Swati will lead the protest if Gandapur is arrested."

However, he warned, arresting a sitting chief minister would be disastrous for the country and there

would be serious repercussions. Meanwhile, Interior Minister Mohsin Naqvi said Gandapur was not in police custody, deepening the mystery behind his disappearance.

"I confirm that he is not in the custody of the government or any other institution of the government," he said. The minister said that the police were looking for Gandapur who had been hiding at some unknown place.

"Police have also raided a few places but could not find him," he said, adding that he received pictures of Gandapur escaping from the KP House before the arrival of police and other law enforcement agencies. The Khyber-Pakhtunkhwa provincial assembly

announced that it will convene its session on Sunday to discuss the issue of his disappearance. Naqvi also announced that 564 protestors, includ-

ing 11 plainclothes personnel from the Khyber-Pakhtunkhwa police, have been arrested during the He said it was the first instance when police have

been used in such demonstrations. He also said that among those arrested were 120 Afghan nationals. Naqvi said he had ordered a high-level inquiry into

how a provincial police force was involved in the protests and "attacked [other] police officers"

He said 31 Islamabad police and 75 Punjab police personnel were injured in Saturday's clashes.

In Lahore, around 30 supporters of Khan's party, including lawyers, were arrested after they managed to reach historic Minar-e-Pakistan premises demanding the release of their leader, police said on Sunday. More than 200 PTI workers, including Khan, have

been booked under terrorism charges, they added. Earlier, in an embarrassment to the government, a large number of PTI protesters managed to reach Islamabad by overcoming multiple barriers.

Naqvi claimed that the PTI had a plan to stage a sit-in until the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation

### Lebanese worldwide fear for their homeland, loved ones as violence escalates

**BEIRUT, Oct 6:** It was a year ago when Jomana Siddiqui visited Lebanon, where her father was born — and is now buried. She planned to return there soon; this time, she thought, she would take her two teenage daughters.

Instead, Siddiqui, who lives in California, now worries about relatives there. As she watches from afar the violence and the recent escalation in Israel's military campaign against Hezbollah in Lebanon, Siddiqui thinks about the people she met during her visit, the kindness and generosity she encountered.

She thinks about her father's grave — when, or if, she will get to visit it again. Her voice cracks with emotions. It's been gut-wrenching, she said.

"It's like the universal story of the Lebanese people," she said. "They have to keep leaving and not knowing when they can come back."

From the United States to South Africa, Cyprus, Brazil and beyond, many members of Lebanon's far-flung and large diaspora are contending with the ripples of the violence — grieving, gripped by fear for loved ones and for their homeland, trying to find ways to help.

Some 1,400 Lebanese, including civilians and fighters of the militant group Hezbollah, have been killed and some 1.2 million driven from their homes since Israel escalated its strikes in late September, saving it aims to push Hezbollah away from the countries' shared border.

For Lina Kayat, who moved to South Africa almost 36 years ago but still has a big family in Lebanon, the violence and tensions there have echoes of earlier turbulent

"We lived through a civil war for a long time; I was like seven years old," she said. "It feels like history repeating itself. ... It's the unknown of who is going to get killed next." Kayat, who lives in South Africa's coastal city of Durban, speaks daily to her family, including her mother and her sister. "They are very scared and very worried about what is going to happen," she said.

Generations of Lebanese have grappled with whether to leave to seek better opportunities or escape various times of tumult — from a 15-year-old civil war to military occupations, bombings and political assassinations — or stay in a Lebanon that despite its numerous scars retains

its allure for many. Lebanon — home to multiple religious groups, including Christians and Sunni and Shiite Muslims — takes pride in its large emigrant communities, which include successful businessmen and celebrities of Lebanese her-

The current military escalation unfolds amid fears that fighting could spread in the region and comes as the Israel-Hamas war in Gaza nears the grim one-year mark.

"It happening on top of Gaza is almost too much to bear," said James Zogby, president of the Washington DCbased Arab American Institute

"It almost makes you physically ill just trying to fathom the extent of the trauma," added Zogby, whose father was

Already, Lebanon had been on edge and struggling under the weight of an economic meltdown, the fallout from a massive 2020 port explosion and other crises. It's

been without a president for two years. Against such a sombre backdrop, Zogby wonders what will become of the displaced.

"Who's going to care for them? Where do the health services come from ... when the country is already as overstretched as it is and on the verge of collapse?" he said. "At what point does it finally collapse? And who will care?" Fuelling the pain, he said, is his anger at the US response to the devastation in Gaza and now the escalation in Lebanon.

"There's a sense of powerlessness, a sense of almost despair that, you know, it can get out of control. And as long as nothing here happens to restrain it, it will get worse.' Akram Khater, director of the Khayrallah Center for

Lebanese Diaspora Studies at North Carolina State Uni versity, said that since the earliest diaspora, Lebanese who left have been contributing heavily to the economic wellbeing of Lebanon, sending large amounts of remittances. Watching the escalation in Lebanon, where he was born

and raised, has been re-traumatising, he said. "I find myself amidst a swirl of emotions that are unresolved and that derive from this recurring nightmare," he said. "Yet, even amidst this our community comes together

to create solidarity and provide solace and comfort for Recently, hundreds of Lebanese flags filled the night sky in Dearborn, Michigan, as some attended a rally to

support Lebanon and protest the Israeli offensive there. At Sao Paulo's international airport, two Lebanese brothers who've been living in Brazil, recently had a solemn reunion. They said, eight of their loved ones their sister, brother-in-law, four of their nephews and two of their nephews' children — were killed in Lebanon in

### Trump, Musk, address thousands in Butler

WASHINGTON, Oct 6: Former US president Donald Trump on Saturday returned to Butler, a city in Pennsylvania where he narrowly escaped an assassination bid 12 weeks ago, and addressed thousands of his supporters in this key battleground state, urging them to elect him as the next president of the United States.

Joined by high-profile figures like Tesla owner Elon Musk and his running mate, Senator J D Vance, Trump (78) made a passionate plea to "defeat" Vice President Kamala Harris, the Democratic candidate in the November 5 presidential poll. "We must stop her country-destroying regime, radical-left agenda once and for all. We cannot have it happen. So you must get out and you must vote," Trump said in Pennsylvania, which in this election cycle has emerged as a mustwin situation for both candidates.

Trump launched a scathing attack on Harris and accused her of being a failure on multiple fronts, including border security and economy. "She imposed a natural gas export ban on Pennsylvania, which is killing your energy workers and your pricing," he said.

"Kamala Harris is a radical-left Marxist. She is a woman that is not respected in Congress. She was laughed at Congress. Nobody thought she of the country. (PTI)

could win. They did a coup of Biden. Whether you like him or not, I am not a particularly big fan. We had a debate, and the debate ended. And all of a sudden, they come to him, and they say, we want you out. You are not going to win the election. And he said, 'I do not want to get out'," Trump said.

"He (Biden) got 14 million (1.4 crore) votes. If you believe in democracy or a system, he got 14 million votes. And she (Harris) got none. She was the first one out, 22 candidates, and she never made it to Iowa. She quit before Iowa, and now she is running. And that is okay. But, you know, we spent USD 150 million beating Biden, and as soon as he was down and out for the count, they said, let us take him out. We will give somebody else to run. Never happened before," he said.

"She is a person that rated even worse in every statistic than any other senator. She was rated at the bottom of the US Senate. She has destroyed everything she touched," Trump said.

The former president said if elected, on the first day of his presidency, he would seal the border and stop the migrant invasion into the country. "We will begin the largest deportation operation in the history of the United States," he said, adding that 2024 is the most important election in the history

# Sri Lanka parties busy forming alliances to face November parl poll

COLOMBO, Oct 6: All major political parties in Sri Lanka are shortlisting candidates and attempting to forge new alliances as the country prepares for the November 14 parliamentary election.

No major party has yet submitted their nominations to contest any of the 22 electoral districts despite the opening of the nomina-

tions last Friday. The nominations for the election will close on October 11. The ruling National People's Power (NPP) party, which won

the September 21 presidential election, said it is in the process of finalising its candidates list.

"We have already changed the

political culture with our governance so far during the last two weeks, we will continue the good work after the parliamentary election with new faces," Samantha Vidyaratne, an NPP leader said.

Former president Ranil Wickremesinghe's United National Party (UNP), the grand old party in the country, had unsuccessfully tried to merge with its offshoot Samagi Jana Balawegaya (SJB) party to face the election.

Wickremesinghe finished third behind the SJB leader Sajith Premadasa in the presidential elec-

The split votes between Premadasa and Wickremesinghe, who together polled 50.03 per cent, helped incumbent Anura Dissanayake to win the presiden-

The UNP is in the process of finalising an election pact with groups which had broken away from the Rajapaksa family-dominated Sri Lanka Podujana Peramuna (SLPP) party to contest under the cooking gas cylinder symbol which Wickremesinghe used during his presidential bid.

"We will contest most districts under the gas cylinder symbol with one or two districts under UNP's elephant symbol," the party chair Vajira Abeywardena

# Int'I rescue teams arrive in Bosnia after devastating floods, landslides



SARAJEVO, Oct 6: Rescue teams from Bosnia's neighbours and European Union countries on Sunday were joining efforts to clear the rubble and find people still missing from floods and landslides that dev-

Bosnia sought EU help after a heavy rainstorm overnight on Friday left entire areas under water and debris destroyed roads and bridges, killing at least 18 people and wounding dozens.

Officials said that at least 10 people are still unaccounted for, many of them in the village of Donja Jablanica, in southern Bosnia, which was almost completely buried in rocks and rubble from a

quarry on a hill above. Residents there have said they heard a thundering rumble and saw

Luigi Soreca, who heads the EU mission in Bosnia, said on X that the EU stands with Bosnia and that teams are arriving to help. Bosnia is a candidate country for membership in the 27-nation bloc. Authorities said Croatian res-

cuers have already arrived while a team from Serbia is expected to be deployed in the afternoon, followed by a Slovenian team with dogs. Montenegro, North Macedonia, Poland, Czechia and Turkiye have also offered help, a government statement said.

Sunday is the date of a local election in Bosnia. Election authorities have postponed voting in the floodhit regions, but the flooding has overshadowed the vote across the

Ismeta Bucalovic, a resident of Sarajevo, Bosnia's capital, said "we are all overwhelmed by these flooding events. We all think only about

Impoverished and ethnically divided, Bosnia has struggled to recover after the brutal war in 1992-95. The country is plagued by political bickering and corruption, stalling its EU bid. (AP)

#### HURRICANE HELENE

# Death toll rises to 227 as grim task of recovering bodies continues

FRANKFORT (US), Oct 6: The death toll from Hurricane Helene inched up to 227 on Saturday as the grim task of recovering bodies continued more than a week after the monster storm ravaged the Southeast and killed people in six US

Helene came ashore on September 26 as a Cat-

egory-4 hurricane and carved a wide swath of de-

struction as it moved northward from Florida, washing away homes, destroying roads and knocking out electricity and cellphone service for millions. The number of deaths stood at 225 on Friday; two more were recorded in South Carolina the following day. It was still unclear how many peo-

could rise even higher. Helene is the deadliest hurricane to hit the mainland US since Katrina in 2005. About half the victims were in North Carolina, while dozens

ple were unaccounted for or missing, and the toll

more were killed in Georgia and South Carolina. The city of Asheville, in the western mountains of North Carolina, was particularly battered. A week later, workers used brooms and heavy machinery to clean mud and dirt outside of New Belgium Brewing Company, which lies next to the French Broad river and is among thousands of city businesses and households affected.

So far, North Carolinians have received more than USD 27 million in individual assistance approved by the Federal Emergency Management Agency, said MaryAnn Tierney, a regional administrator for the agency. More than 83,000 people have registered for individual assistance, according to the office of Governor Roy Cooper.



In Buncombe County, where Asheville is located, FEMA-approved assistance has surpassed USD 12 million for survivors, Tierney said on

one of the attacks. (AP)

Saturday during a news briefing. "This is critical assistance that will help people with their immediate needs, as well as displacement assistance that helps them if they cannot

stay in their homes," she said. She encouraged residents impacted by the storm to register for disaster assistance.

"It is the first step in the recovery process," she said. "We can provide immediate relief in terms of serious needs assistance to replace food, water, medicines, other life safety, critical items, as well as displacement assistance if you cannot stay in your home.

Helene's raging floodwaters shocked mountain towns hundreds of miles inland and far from where the storm made landfall on Florida's Gulf Coast, including in the Tennessee mountains that

Dolly Parton calls home The country music star has announced a USD 1 million donation to the Mountain Ways Foundation, a nonprofit dedicated to providing immediate assistance to Hurricane Helene flood

In addition, her East Tennessee businesses as well as the Dollywood Foundation are combining efforts, pledging to match her donation to Mountain Ways with a USD 1 million contribution.

#### Parton said she feels a close connection to the storm victims because so many of them "grew up in the mountains just like I did". "I cannot stand to see anyone hurting, so I

wanted to do what I could to help after these ter-

rible floods," she said. "I hope we can all be a lit-

tle bit of light in the world for our friends, our neighbours -- even strangers -- during this dark time they are experiencing.' Walmart US president and CEO John Furner said the company, including Sam's Club and the Walmart Foundation, would increase its commit-

ment and donate a total of USD 10 million to hur-

ricane relief efforts.

In Newport, an eastern Tennessee town of about 7,000, residents continued cleaning up on Saturday from the destruction caused by Helene's floodwaters. Mud still clung to the basement walls of one Main Street funeral home. The ground-floor chapel of another nearby was being dried out, a painting of Jesus still hanging on the

wall in an otherwise barren room. Newport City Hall and its police department also took on water from the swollen Pigeon river. Some of the modest, one-story homes along its banks were destroyed, their walls crumbled and rooms exposed.

Farther east in unincorporated Del Rio, along a bend in the French Broad river, residents and volunteers toiled to clean up. The smell of wood hung in the air as people used chainsaws to cut through downed trees, and Bobcats beeped as they moved mangled sheet metal and other debris. Many homes sustained damage, including one that slid off its foundation. (AP)

# houses disappear before their eyes.



astated parts of the Balkan country.

NORTHEAST

### **Protest against hefty** monetary demands in Manipur

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IMPHAL, Oct 6: Shopkeepers of the Wangjing Lamding Keithel in Thoubal district of Manipur on Sunday staged a sit-in protest in front of the market, condemning exorbitant monetary demands made by various groups.

During the protest, the shopkeepers, including pharmacists in and around the market shut their businesses and held banners and placards which reads as "Don't make hefty monetary demand by taking advantage of the Manipur crisis", "No to individual monetary demands" and "Recognize the hardships faced by the shopkeepers during the ongoing con-

Wangjing Lamding Shopkeepers Development Association advisor Kh Guanamani said that the ongoing crisis has taken a devastating toll on the local people, including shopkeepers, who are struggling to make ends meet.

He said that the shopkeepers have been contributing donations for the social cause despite experiencing low sales and financial distress

Gunamani then appealed to all to know the plights of the shopkeepers and stop demanding hefty monetary demands to

# 10 die in flashfloods triggered by heavy rain in Meghalaya

people died, including seven of a family, in rain-induced flashfloods that ravaged Meghalaya's South Garo Hills district in the past 24 hours, officials said.

Incessant rainfall has triggered landslides in Gasuapara region of the district, they said on Saturday.

The family of seven were inside their home in the remote village of Hatiasia Songma when a landslide struck on Saturday, a senior official said. The deceased include three

Chief minister Conrad K Sangma held a review meeting on the situation across the five districts of Garo Hills.

He expressed deep sorrow over the loss of lives, as three persons from Dalu and seven people from Hatiasia Songma were confirmed dead, the officials said.

Sangma has also ordered immediate ex gratia payment to the next of kin of the deceased. Personnel of the National Disas-



ter Response Force (NDRF) and suggested the use of bailey bridge SDRF have been deployed to carry technology for rebuilding efforts, which will allow for rapid assemout search and rescue operations in the worst-affected areas, they said. bly and transportation, the officials During the meeting, Sangma

# 80 per cent of firearms looted during Ukhrul violence recovered

UKHRUL, Oct 6: Sixteen firearms looted by a mob from the Ukhrul police station in Manipur were recovered, police said.

Addressing a press conference, Inspector General (Operations) IK Muivah on Saturday said during the clash between two villages on October 2, an agitated mob stormed into the police station and looted 20

With the cooperation of the security forces, Civil Society Organisations, and community leaders, 80 per cent of the weapons have now been recovered," he

Efforts are underway to retrieve the remaining weapons, he said.

Among the arms recovered were 9mm pistols, INSAS rifles and AK-47 rifles, he added.

Muivah said the situation in the district was under control, and security forces, including the Manipur Rifles, Assam Rifles and BSF, were keeping a close watch with the cooperation of leaders of the two vil-

This is something unprecedented, noteworthy and praiseworthy for all those who have played a very positive role in restoring normalcy," he said.

Assam Rifles' officer Sanjeev Singh said the situation has been brought under control with "minimal use of force or no use of force"

"Jointly Assam Rifles, BSF and the police have ensured that no more violent incident takes place. CSOs have played a great role. We want to appeal that we



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are in a de-escalation phase and we should keep deescalating the situation," he said.

Four people were killed and 20 others injured in a gunfight that broke out between two groups, both beonging to the Naga community but two different villages, on October 2 over cleaning a disputed land in the town as part of 'Swachhata Abhiyan'.

Prohibitory orders were imposed and mobile internet services were suspended in the town after the

#### Petition to Supreme Court seeking SDRF locates bodies of father removal of Kuku-Zo from ST list

HT Bureau
GUWAHATI, Oct 6: The Meetei (Meitei) Tribe Union (MMTU) has announced plans to file a petition with the Supreme Court seeking the removal of the Kuki-Zo communities of

Manipur from the Scheduled Tribes

(ST) list.

In a statement, the MMTU alleged that the Kuki-Zo communities, who migrated from Myanmar, unlawfully settled in Manipur and were erroneously granted ŜT status.

The union argued that this violates the Constitution of India, as foreigners

the electoral roll and granted ST status. Furthermore, the MMTU accused the Government of India of openly violating the Foreigners' Act 1948 in Manipur and implementing covert and overt policies aimed at annihilating in-

digenous communities. The union cited historical documents as evidence, pointing out that Kuki refugees who arrived in Manipur before 1973 repeatedly sought financial packages for relief and rehabilitation from the State Government.

The MMTU asserted that the Kuki-Zo communities were wrongly included in the ST list in 1950. The term

"Kuki-Zo" was subsequently changed to "any Kuki-Zo tribe" in 1956, which allegedly facilitated a significant influx of Kuki-Zo immigrants from Myan-

The union highlighted that in certain Indian states, communities who were mistakenly included in the ST list have been removed.

However, in Manipur, the influx of illegal immigrants continues unabated, and these communities are now allegedly engaged in a conflict against indigenous communities, aiming to disintegrate Manipur and seize a substantial portion of the state's territory.

# and son from flood waters



SHILLONG, Oct 6: Meghalaya's State Disaster Response Force (SDRF) on Sunday located two bodies believed to be the occupants of the car they had retrieved on Saturday from flood water at Dalu Sonagre junction under

The body of an adult male and that of a minor boy was located by the SDRF today in the morning following a search operation which had commenced since Saturday following the retrieval of the vehicle bearing West Bengal registration plates (WB 06 7718,

The SDRF had first located the body of the adult male identified as Bijoy S Sangma, 44 Years old, at 10:19 am from the paddy fields and the body of the minor identified as 13 years old Wian Chigado R Marak was recovered at approximately 10:48 am, a few meters away from where the body of the father was recovered. Both were residents of Rongkhon Song-

The SDRF team has been stationed in flood hit Dalu area since Friday following flash floods due to heavy rainfall. (NNN)

### Flights between Aizawl and New Delhi doubled



HT Bureau

GUWAHATI, Oct 6: Mizoram chief minister Lalduhoma on Saturday flagged off the doubling of IndiGo Airlines flights between state capital Aizawl and New Delhi at the Lengpui Airport.

This expansion in air service marks a significant step forward in enhancing Mizoram's link with the rest of the country, the Directorate of Information and Public Relations (DIPR), Mizoram, said in a press statement.

In his address during the flag-off ceremony, CM Lalduhoma expressed sincere gratitude to the Ministry of Civil Aviation and IndiGo Airlines for their support in responding to his request for increased flight frequency, it

He emphasised that the additional flights will not only improve air transportation but will also strengthen Mizoram's ties with the rest of India across various sectors fostering economic, cultural and social integration, it said.

Special Director of IndiGo Airlines RK Singh said the decision to increase flight services was made with the goal of boosting both economic growth and socio-cultural connections between Mizoram and the rest of the country, IndiGo Airlines will now double its flights from five

to 10 between Aizawl and New Delhi per week, it said. There will be a daily flight with additional services on Wednesday, Friday and Sunday, it added.

The DIPR statement further said that this increased frequency is expected to create new opportunities for trade, tourism and improved connectivity for the people

# VPP calls for revision of job reservation policy

HT Bureau
GUWAHATI, Oct 6: The Voice of the People Party (VPP) in Shillong has reiterated its call for revising Meghalaya's job reservation policy, advocating for a more scientifically and logically

grounded approach. Party spokesperson Batskhem Myrboh raised concerns about the existing policy formulated in 1972. Myrboh emphasized that the policy lacks consistency with population data, particularly the quantum of reservation allotted to different

The VPP believes the 1971 census data should be the basis for any reservation policy, as it accurately reflects the state's population structure

The party also pointed out discrepancies, such as the combining of Scheduled Castes (SCs) and Scheduled Tribes (STs) under a unified 85% job reservation, despite these communities being

Myrboh argued that SCs and other STs should

be treated separately for reservation purposes. The debate also touched on national reservation policies. Myrboh noted that although the Supreme Court has not reduced reservations for SCs and STs, it has capped reservations for Other Backward Classes (OBCs) at 50%.

Myrboh highlighted that despite STs being more disadvantaged than OBCs, they receive only 7.5% reservation at the national level, while OBCs are allotted 27%.

Various political figures, including BJP leaders AL Hek and Sanbor Shullai, as well as UDP and VPP leaders Adelbert Nongrum and Mayralborn Syiem, also presented their views to the expert committee reviewing the policy.

Their suggestions ranged from prioritizing vulnerable sections within the Khasi, Jaintia, and Garo communities to proposing different distribution models of job reservation within these



2nd edition of Shillong Book Fair, organised by the National Book Trust, India (under the Ministry of education, Government of India) being inaugurated by the Governor of Meghalaya, CH Vijayashankar. -UB Photos

### HSPDP bats for combined 80 pc reservation for Khasis, Jaintias and Garos



SHILLONG, Oct 6: The Hill State People's Democratic Party (HSPDP) has stressed the need for a combined 80% job reservation among the three tribes - Khasi, Jaintia and Garo to bring healthy competition and efficiency based on merit.

After submitting suggestions of the party to the Expert Committee on the State Reservation Policy, HSPDP president KP Pangniang said, 'We have stressed the need to review the reservation policy dated Shillong January 12, 1972 for overall growth in terms of employment taking into account the different categories of the

"The party is of the opinion of combining the 40 per cent + 40 per cent total of 80 per cent for Khasi-Jaintia and Garo so as to bring the healthy competition and efficiency in order of merit amongst the members of the Scheduled Tribes of the state - the Khasis-Jaintias and Garos, which will also prevent deprivation or discrimination on ethnic identity," he said. Pangniang said that with reference to the

Office Memorandum dated December 18, 1972...subject to reservation of vacancies at the district level post, the party has suggested that 90 per cent preference should be given to local candidates of any particular district of Meghalaya, keeping in mind that recruitment in Khasi, Jaintia Hills district should only meant for these two tribes i,e the Khasis, Jaintias, whereas recruitments in Garo Hills district should only be meant for the Garos.

He said the party has also suggested the need to do away with the process of carried forward while referring to Para 2 of the Resolution which states that "if there is a deficiency in the number of Scheduled Tribes and Scheduled Castes shall be carried forward to the next recruitment year and made good in the recruitment of that year or not more than one

Further, Pangniang said, "Since the inception of the state of Meghalaya, the state reservation policy dated January 12, 1972, percentage has also been implemented for allocation of seats in different field of academics career for the Khasis, Jaintias and Garos without proper section or clause which is not clearly indicated in the reservation policy. Hence, the party feels it is the need of the hour to relook into the matter.'

Meanwhile, the HSPDP has urged the government to ensure reviewing of the state reservation policy does not disturb the peace and tranquillity in the state.

"Since the subject is complex and fragile, the government should tread carefully and take serious measures so that the issue does not disturb the peace and tranquillity within the society and the state as a whole.

Despite the few suggestions stated above, the party is looking forward to a positive outcome from the recommendation of the committee constituted by the government of Meghalaya," Pangniang stated further. (NNN)

# NMC grants approval to USTM with 150 MBBS seats intake

HT Bureau
GUWAHATI, Oct 6: The University of Science and Technology Meghalaya (USTM), a NAAC accredited A grade university, proudly announces a significant milestone in its educational journey with the nod from the Ministry of health and family welfare, Government of India and National Medical Commission (NMC) approving the PA Sangma International Medical College (PIMC), a joint venture of USTM and the Government of Meghalaya.

In this context, a press conference was addressed here on Sunday by Mahbubul Hoque, founder chancellor USTM; GD Sharma, vice chancellor USTM; Padma Shri Dr Sarbeswar Sahariah, Pro VC USTM RK Sharma, advisor USTM; Biraj Kumar Das, principal, PIMC; and Rashna Dass Hazarika, medical superintendent

Addressing the media, Hoque said, "This is a historic achievement for USTM and a crucial step in our journey to contribute meaningfully to the healthcare sector of the region and the nation. From now onwards patients and students need not go outside the region for healthcare services.'

Speaking to the media, Sahariah said, "PA Šangma International Med-



ical College and Hospital is also planning a super speciality hospital within the premise of USTM. This would be a 1000 beded hospital which would

cater to the need of the patients from the entire North East and other parts of the country who need super speciality care like cardiology, cardiac surgery, neurology, neurosurgery, nephrology, urology, joint replacement and cancer care. We are planning to invite super specialist doctors from different countries to collaborate with us to develop the PIMC to a world class facility". GD Sharma stated, "This landmark

development allows the medical col-

lege an intake of 150 students for its inaugural MBBS program, marking a new chapter in USTM's commitment to providing top-tier education in the field of medicine"

Dr Biraj Kumar Das said that PIMC has set milestones in three verticals: namely quality medical education, outstanding healthcare facility, and cutting-edge research facility. To achieve excellence, competent healthcare professionals have been engaged from all over the country.

Rashna Dass Hazarika said that the Academic Session will start from the last week of October 2024 inviting ap-

plications from aspiring doctors from across the country. PIMC will offer various attractive facilities for the MBBS students, he added.

Named in honor of the late PA Sangma, a visionary leader and former Speaker of the Lok Sabha, PIMC is set to become a premier institution for medical education in Northeast India. The college will offer a competencybased curriculum designed to foster the development of medical professionals who are equipped to meet the healthcare needs of society. 40 seats are allotted as state government seats out of which 25 seats are as per the government fees structure and 15 seats will be in half of the university fees structure. In terms of healthcare facilities, 50% concession facilities for superspeciality shall be offered to the patients from Meghalaya with free general treatment facilities.

The state-of-the-art medical collegeaims to attract talented students from across the country and beyond With the first batch of 150 students. PIMC is poised to set new standards in medical education and healthcare services. One of its major objectives is to attract ASEAN countries to avail healthcare facilities of PIMC in the near future.

#### No. SLRC-G-III/91/Advertisement/2023/74

This is for information of all the candidates who had appeared in the Assam Direct Recruitment Examinations held on 29 September, 2024, for Class-III posts [Bachelor Degree Level and HSLC Level (Driver)] that an Online Portal will be made live from 9 October, 2024 at 11.30 A.M to 18 October, 2024, the link of which will be available in the website of Assam State School Education Board (erstwhile SEBA) i.e www.site.sebaonline.org and website of Govt. of Assam (www.assam.gov.in). This Portal will facilitate the interested candidates to raise their objection against the Answer Key of any question on payment of Rs. 500/-(Rupees Five Hundred only) per question. Objection must be supplemented with proper justification and any objection without justification will be treated as null and void. If the justification for challenging a particular Answer key is found valid by the expert Committee constituted to examine the challenges, then the amount of Rs. 500/- will be refunded to the source from where the amount was paid. All the Objections shall be placed before a Committee of Academic Experts and the decision of this Committee shall be final and no further communication shall be entertained. The login credentials will be-

> User name - His/Her Application ID Password - His/Her own Password

Further this is to inform that the softcopies of all 6 sets of Question paper are already available on the website of Assam State School Education Board (erstwhile SEBA) i.e www.site.sebaonline.org. The answer keys of these 6 sets will also be made available in the same website on 9 October, 2024 at 6.00 A.M.

Secretary,

State Level Recruitment Commission for Class-III Posts, Assam Administrative Staff College, Jawahar Nagar, Khanapara, Guwahati -22

Janasanyog/D/7127/24/07 October 2024

# Bombastic claims on economy conceal choke points that will strangulate growth: Cong

that the last 10 years have seen "highly detrimental economic trends", the Congress on Sunday said the monsoon has receded but at least "three dark clouds" of languishing private sector investment, stagnating manufacturing and decline in real wages and productivity for labourers, still loom over the Indian economy.

Congress general secretary incharge communications Jairam Ramesh said bombastic claims on the economy are being made by Prime Minister Narendra Modi and his drumbeaters but what these claims conceal are the choke points that will strangulate growth in the years to come if not taken seriously now, in a spirit of humility. "The monsoon has receded. But new evidence has shown that at least three dark clouds still loom over the Indian economy," Ramesh said in a statement.

"First, after a brief surge in private sector investment during 2022-23 on the back of the COVID-19 recovery, investment has returned to an unsteady path,'

New project announcements by the private sector fell by 21 per cent between FY23 and FY24, he pointed out.

"This reflects a lack of investor confidence in India's consumer markets, and the uncertain investment climate generated by the Government's inconsistent policy

#### BJP forming govt for 3<sup>rd</sup> time, Cong will blame EVMs: Haryana CM Saini

CHANDIGARH, Oct 6: Rejecting exit poll predictions, Haryana Chief Minister Nayab Singh Saini on Sunday claimed his party BJP will form the government in the state with full majority for a third time when the results are announced on October 8.

The Congress will blame the Electronic Voting Machines (EVMs) for their defeat, he said, attacking the opposition party, which is ahead in the race, according to most exit polls.

Replying to a question about the exit polls predicting a Congress win, Saini said, "On October 8, we are going to form the government."

He said, "8 tareekh ko janata degi jawab, aur yeh (Congress) kahenge EVM hai kharab (People will have have their say on October 8, and they -- Congress -- will blame the

Asked how many seats the BJP will win in the 90-strong assembly, Saini said, "I have said we will form the government with full majority."

The BJP will form the government on the basis of works done in the state, he added.

The BJP worked for every section without any discrimination and on the basis of this work, the party will form the government with full majority, he further said.

Commenting further on the exit poll predictions for Haryana, he said they forecast a Congress victory in Chhattisgarh and showed the party ahead in Uttarakhand as well.

"The exit polls have their own theory and they have their own system, but we work on ground. Our leaders are directly connected with people. The people of Haryana want the BJP to come to power for a third time. We are forming the government for a third time," he

The Haryana assembly elections on Saturday saw a turnout of nearly 67 per cent, with several exit polls predicting a clear majority for the Congress, which is eyeing a comeback after a decade. (PTI)



making and Raid Raj," he said. In this context, rather than grow their businesses, companies are using profits to reduce debt burdens, he claimed.

"We are witnessing a growing financialisation of the Indian economy, with India Inc - perhaps taking its cue from the government focusing on stock market valuations rather than top-line revenue growth," Ramesh said.

This bodes poorly for the medium- and long-term future of the Indian economy, as the growth engine of the economy -? private sector investment - continues to languish, he said.

"Second, ten years after the Government's flagship Make in India scheme was launched, India's manufacturing is stagnating. As share of GDP, manufactur-

ing is the same as it was ten years ago," the Congress leader said. Ramesh pointed out that as a share of total employment, manufacturing has marginally declined.

India's share in global merchandise exports has also largely stagnated, and exports are falling as a share of India's GDP, he said.

"In fact, growth in India's share of global exports grew much faster in the 2005-15 period, largely corresponding to Dr. Manmohan Singh's tenure as Prime Minister. In labour-intensive sectors like garments, exports have fallen from USD 15 billion in 2013-14 to USD 14.5 billion in 2023-2024," he

This shrinking of manufacturing is largely attributable to the PM's inexplicable trade policy - where it disincentivizes participation in through high tariffs while silently permitting Chinese dumping of mass imports, Ramesh alleged.

"Third, the latest Annual Survey of Industries (ASI) for 2022-2023 has revealed a decline in real wages and productivity for India's labourers.

The growth in GVA per worker (a measure of labour productivity) slowed from 6.6% in 2014-15 to 0.6% by 2018-19," he said.

After Covid era statistical irregularity, worker productivity contracted in FY23 again, Ramesh said, adding that this decrease in labour productivity has impacted real wage growth, especially amidst rising inflation.

As real wages stagnate, consumption will remain weak - resulting in the low investment that has been a consistent restraint on India's growth, he said.

"These are merely the issues that have surfaced in the past few weeks but the last ten years have seen other highly detrimental economic trends, including rising oligopolisation, mass unemployment, and high inflation," he said.

"Bombastic claims on the economy are being made by the non-biological PM and his drumbeaters. But what these claims conceal are the choke points that will strangulate growth in the years to come if not taken seriously now, in a spirit of humility," Ramesh said in his statement. (PTI)

# Priyanka slams govt over IMPCL 'privatisation' bid

NEW DELHI, Oct 6: Congress leader Priyanka Gandhi Vadra on Sunday slammed the Modi government over the reported plans to privatise the Indian Medicines Pharmaceutical Corporation Limited, and wondered what could be its motive other than "filling the coffers of selected friends".

The Congress general secretary's remarks come amid reports that the government's plan to divest the pharmaceutical company has sparked concern among sev-

leader H D Kumaraswamy on Sun-

day hit out at Karnataka Chief

Minister Siddaramaiah for accus-

ing the opposition of dragging his

wife in the MUDA case and

blamed the latter's 'wrongs' for the

lenged Siddaramaiah for a debate

on the Congress government's

activities so far.

The Union Minister also chal-

"Time and again you (Siddara-

maiah) say the opposition is jealous

and you are accusing the opposition

of dragging your wife (into the

MUDA case). You have brought

your wife, who was respectfully at

home, out (in this case). It is not

done by us, the opposition. You

have brought her out because of

wrongs you have committed (in her

Addressing reporters here, he

said, "repeatedly you (Siddarama-

iah) speak about AHINDA, what

have you done for AHINDA (Kan-

nada acronym for minorities, back-

ward classes and Dalits)? Haven't

we seen what has happened in

Valmiki Corporation (scam), the

Pointing to CM's emotional ap-

peal to people if they would forgive

the opposition for targeting his wife

over the MUDA 'scam', Ku-

maraswamy said, "Whether people

will forgive or accept us, they will

decide later. Let him ask the people

what they will do to him (Siddara-

loot that has happened.

name)," Kumaraswamy said.

eral local residents, whose livelihoods are likely to get affected.

What is the government's intention behind selling the profitmaking Mini Ratna pharmaceutical Priyanka Gandhi asked.

"Indian Medicines Pharmaceu-Corporation Limited (IMPCL) located in Mohaan, Almora, Uttarakhand was established in 1978 by the Central and state governments together," she

Siddaramaiah had on Saturday

come down heavily on the opposi-

tion BJP and the JD(S) for dragging

his wife Parvathi B M in the

MUDA case, who had never

stepped into public life and was

He also charged the opposition

with targeting him because they

backward community in the Chief

Lokayukta and ED probes into al-

leged irregularities in allotment of

14 sites to his wife by the Mysuru

Urban Development Authority

His wife Parvathi, brother-in-law

Mallikarjuna Swamy, Devaraju --

from whom Mallikarjuna Swamy

purchased land and gifted it to Par-

vathi -- and others are named as

Alleging that the Congress gov-

ernment is entangled in scams, Kumaraswamy said, "No ministers

including the Chief Minister have

any concern for the troubles faced

by the people... they speak about

development, only god should save

He challenged Siddaramaiah for

a discussion on achievements and

development work of the current

Congress government led by him,

with that of his (Kumaraswamy) 14

months JD(S)-Congress coalition

other accused in the case.

Siddaramaiah is facing the

confined to her house.

Minister's post.

Kumaraswamy slams Siddaramaiah for

nance...

It is a major factory of Ayurveda and Unani medicines which supplies medicines across the country and abroad, Priyanka Gandhi pointed out. Last year it made a profit of 18

crore and is preparing to give a dividend of 6 crore to the government, she said. This unit has more than 500

employees and thousands of small farmers supply their small produce and raw materials to it, she

### Bypolls to 10 assembly seats INDIA bloc's first major test in UP since LS gains

LUCKNOW, Oct 6: Bypolls to 10 assembly seats in Uttar Pradesh will be a litmus test for the INDIA bloc's unity after the group's success in the recent Lok Sabha polls when they won more than 40 seats, significantly contributing to the BJP's failure to win a simple majority in parliament.

However, the two INDIA bloc allies in Uttar Pradesh -- Samajwadi Party and Congress -- have not been able to firm-up a seatsharing pact for the bypolls even though the Congress has staked claims to contest five of the 10 seats, a proposition the SP may not agree with.

Leaders from both the parties say their aim is to defeat the BJP. and they are confident they would contest the bypolls together.

Uttar Pradesh Congress chief Ajay Rai told PTI, "The party is holding 'Samvidhan Bachao Sammelan' (save Constitution conferences) on all 10 assembly seats that are going to polls. Two such conferences have already been held. We have appointed incharges and observers on all the 10 seats and ground work is on."

The assembly seats where bypolls are due are: Katehari (Ambedkar Nagar), Karhal (Mainpuri), Milkipur (Ayodhya), Meerapur (Muzaffarnagar), Ghaziabad, Majhawan (Mirzapur), Sishamau (Kanpur city), Khair (Aligarh), Phulpur (Prayagraj) and Kundarki (Moradabad).

Nine of these seats fell vacant after their MLAs were elected as MPs in the Lok Sabha polls, while bypolls are being held on the Sishamau seat due to the disqualification of SP MLA Irfan Solanki, who was convicted in a criminal

Asked if he hopes the alliance will continue in these bypolls, Rai said, "Yes. We will contest in alliance. The aim of both the Congress and the SP is to defeat the

"We have given a proposal to contest five assembly seats -- Majhwa (Mirzapur), Phulpur (Allahabad), Ghaziabad, Khair (Aligarh) and Meerapur (Muzaffarnagar) to our leadership. These



seats are those, where BJP candidates had won," Rai said.

In the 2022 assembly polls, Sisamau, Katehari, Karhal, Milkipur and Kundarki seats were won by the SP; while Phulpur, Ghaziabad, Majhawan and Kahir elected BJP MLAs. The Meerapur seat was held by the RLD.

When asked whether his party had any talks with the SP in this regard, Rai said, "A meeting was held in which it was discussed. We have told the leadership and our UP incharge Avinash Pande about

Asked specifically whether he sees the alliance continuing in the bypolls, Rai said, "Yes, 100 per cent. Ummid nahi, pucca hai (it's just a hope, but a certainty)."

In the Lok Sabha polls held in April-May, INDIA bloc partners Samaiwadi Party won 37 seats the while Congress got six. The BJP had won 33 seats (down from 62 in 2019) while its ally Rashtriya Lok Dal (RLD) and Apna Dal (Sonelal) got two and one seat respectively. The Azad Samaj Party had won

When PTI asked about the bypolls, SP chief spokesperson and National Secretary Rajendra Chowdhury said, "We are fully prepared for the polls. The INDIA loc will win all the 10 seats."

On seat-sharing and the Congress' demand of five seats, Chowdhury said, "Baith ke tay hoga' (We will sit together and decide). He did not elaborate further. just saying that the party leadership

will decide.

This time BJP will not be able to do anything unwanted at polling booths, he said. "We are doing our preparations upto the booth level and emphasising on making our party strong at booth level," Chowdhury said.

The dates of by-elections have not been announced yet.

While Karhal seat fell vacant due to SP chief Akhilesh Yadav getting elected from Kannaui as MP. Katehari has been vacated by the party's Lalji Verma after he was elected as MP from the Ambedkar Nagar Lok Sabha seat.

SP leader Awadhesh Prasad's election to Lok Sabha from Ayodhya led to his resignation from Milkipur seat, while SP leader Ziaur Rahman Barq's Kundarki assembly seat in Moradabad has fallen vacant following his election to the Sambhal Lok Sabha seat.

Chandan Chauhan of the Rashtriya Lok Dal resigned from his Meerapur assembly seat of Muzaffarnagar following his election to Lok Sabha from Bijnor. The Ghaziabad seat fell vacant after the BJP's Atul Garg was elected to the Ghaziabad LS seat.

The BJP's Vinod Kumar Bind resigned from his Majhawan assembly seat of Mirzapur following his election to Lok Sabha from Bhadohi, while party leader Anoop Singh alias Anoop Pradhan Balmiki resigned from his Khair assembly seat of Aligarh following his election from Hathras Lok

#### PM Modi's 'stale lectures' cannot gloss over accusing Oppn of targeting his wife in MUDA case 'failures' affecting every aspect of economy: Kharge BENGALURU, Oct 6: JD(S) maiah) for this kind of gover-

**NEW DELHI, Oct 6:** Congress president Mallikarjun Kharge on Sunday attacked Prime Minister Narendra Modi over the state of the economy, saying his "stale lectures" repeating the same old spins cannot gloss over his "outright failures" affecting every aspect of the country's economy.

"Modinomics is a curse to India's economy, ' he said on X. raising issues like household indebtedness, price rise and the manufacturing sector's woes, and claimed that "Make in India has spectacularly failed"

"Narendra Modi ji, your stale lectures repeating the same old spins cannot gloss over your outright failures affecting every aspect of India's economy!" he said. Kharge said household liabili-

ties/indebtedness has grown by a whopping 241 per cent from 2013-14 to 2022-23 in actual terms. Household debt as a percentage

of GDP is at an all-time high of 40 per cent, he said. Kharge pointed out that house-

hold savings are at a 50-year low and that since the COVID-19 pandemic, the consumption of Indian families is more than their income. "The cost of home-cooked Veg

Thali increased by 11 per cent in September 2024 compared to last year. BJP imposed price rise and destruction of unorganised sector is responsible for this mess!" he



"In 10 years, 'Make in India' has spectacularly failed as the gains of India's rising exports during Congress-UPA have been discarded by your policies," Kharge said. "India's Export Growth' - Con-

gress-UPA: 2004 to 2009 -186.59 per cent, 2009 to 2014 -94.39 per cent; BJP-NDA: 2014-2019 -21.14 per cent, 2019-2023 - 56.8

"No wonder, the average growth rate of the manufacturing sector between 2014-15 and 2023-24 is just 3.1 per cent (BJP-NDA) whereas between 2004-05 and 2013-14, the average growth rate was 7.85 per cent(Congress-UPA)," he said.

This "disastrous policy" has reduced the share of workers employed in manufacturing to 11.4 per cent (2023-24) from 15.85 per cent (2017-18), Kharge said.

Diamond workers in Surat are facing challenges as their salaries have been reduced up to 30 per cent and major diamond units are forced to operate only four days a week, the Congress president said.

60 diamond artisans have committed suicide, he claimed "In your propaganda to corner the Congress party on MGN-

In the last six months, more than

REGA, you have deliberately failed to allocate more funds to this demand-driven scheme. 'Your government has artifi-

cially reduced demand by delaying wages and not funding Opposition (ruled) states on time," Kharge

The demand for work under MGNREGA has decreased to just 1.6 crore in August 2024, the lowest monthly demand since October

### **BJP stoking** communal tensions in Goa

NEW DELHI, Oct 6: Leader of Opposition in the Lok Sabha Rahul Gandhi on Sunday accused the BJP of deliberately stoking communal tensions in Goa and asserted that the ruling party's attempts will not go unchallenged as the people of the state and the whole of India "see through this divisive agenda"

In a post on X, Gandhi said Goa's appeal lies in its natural beauty and the warmth and hospitality of its diverse and harmonious "Unfortunately, under BJP rule,

this harmony is under attack. The BJP is deliberately stoking communal tensions, with a former RSS leader provoking Christians and Sangh organisations calling for an economic boycott of Muslims," the former Congress chief said.

Across India, similar actions by the Sangh Parivar continue with impunity, backed by support from the highest levels, he alleged.

"In Goa, the BJP's strategy is clear: divide the people while exploiting ecologically sensitive areas by illegally converting green land and bypassing environmental regulations - an assault on Goa's natural and social heritage,' Gandhi said.

"BJP's attempts will not go unchallenged. The people of Goa and the whole of India see through this divisive agenda and are standing united," he said. (PTI)

# Feeling guilty about deserting Sharad Pawar, but did so to protect supporters: Nimbalkar

the Ajit Pawar-led NCP Ramraje Naik Nimbalkar on Sunday said he feels guilty about deserting Sharad Pawar but did so to protect his workers. Nimbalkar's statement has come amid growing buzz about him returning to the parent fold of the party ahead of the state assembly elections.

Speaking at a function in Phaltan to mark his 75th birthday, Nimbalkar said he decided to break ranks with Sharad Pawar and go with the party headed by Deputy Chief Minister Ajit Pawar for the

safety and security of his workers. "However, that didn't happen," the former chairperson of the state legislative council said.

Ajit Pawar, along with several other MLAs, joined the Shiv Sena-BJP government in July 2023,



leading to a split in the Nationalist Congress Party (NCP) founded by his uncle Sharad Pawar. Referring to speculations that he will join the NCP (SP), the senior leader said, "How can I face (Sharad) Pawar saheb, who made me a minister in 2009 though I was not even a legislator? I feel guilty about deserting him. But I did so to ensure the security of my workers. But that doesn't seem to be happening. He said he had informed Ajit

Pawar and Devendra Fadnavis that he would not campaign for BJP MP Ranjit Nimbalkar during the recent Lok Sabha elections. The senior leader said he would

decide about his political future after discussing it with his workers. He said that in the delimitation, the focus will be increasing the number of seats in urban areas. 'Mumbai, Pune, Nashik and

nearby areas will account for about 125 seats. You need 144 for a simple majority," he said.

Nimbalkar is the father-in-law of state assembly Speaker Rahul Narwekar. (PTI)

#### Sena (UBT) not anti-devpt, Modi should also talk about drugs seized in Gujarat: Raut

MUMBAI, Oct 6: Shiv Sena (UBT) leader Sanjay Raut on Sunday countered Prime Minister Narendra Modi's accusation that the MVA government stalled the Mumbai Metro 3 line work, saying they were not against development but wanted to save the Aarey for-

Raut also hit back at the PM for claiming that the Congress, a partner in the Maha Vikas Aghadi (MVA), wants to contest polls from the money it gets by pushing the vouth towards drugs. PM Modi should also talk about drug busts in Gujarat, he said.

During his visit to Maharashtra on Saturday, Modi said the Uddhav Thackeray-led MVA government only knew to stall work. "The Mumbai Metro 3 line work was stopped due to ego and taxpayers' money was wasted as the cost of the project escalated by Rs 14,000 crore," he said

The MVA, which comprises the Congress, Sena (UBT) and NCP (SP), also put hurdles in the Mumbai-Ahmedabad bullet train and Atal Setu projects and stopped water supply and irrigation schemes in the state, Modi said.

Responding to a question about Modi's remarks, Raut said, "Sena (UBT) wanted to save the forest cover in the Aarey area of Mumbai. We never opposed to any development work.

The MVA government had objected to the Metro-3 car shed at Aarey on the ground that it would damage the green patch.

On the allegations against Congress over drugs, the Sena (UBT) leader said, "Modi has been in power for ten years. How can he even level such allegations against Congress? Was he sitting idle (and not taking action) for ten years?" (PTI)

#### Name Correction

l, Abdul Sattar, father of

Sohail Tanbir do hereby affirm and declare that I am a permanent resident of the below mentioned address and citizen of India by birth. That my son's actual name is Sohail Tanbir. That his name has wrongly been recorded in his school documents as Md Sohail Tanbir. That both Sohail Tanbir and Md Sohail Tanbir are the same and one per-

> Abdul Sattar SO- Bakkar Ali RO- Nadirkash PO- Lalpool, Dist- Darrang

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# Delhi HC to hear Umar Khalid's bail plea in UAPA case today

NEW DELHI, Oct 6: The Delhi High Court will on Monday hear the bail plea of former JNU student Umar Khalid in a UAPA case related to the alleged larger conspiracy behind the communal riots here in February 2020.

**MONDAY, OCTOBER 7, 2024** 

The bail pleas by other co-accused in the case -- student activist Sharjeel Imam and Gulfisha Fatima, 'United Against Hate' founder Khalid Saifi and others -are also listed for fresh hearing before a bench of Justices Navin Chawla and Shalinder Kaur.

The cases were earlier before a bench headed by Justice Suresh Kumar Kait but the judge was recently transferred to the Madhya Pradesh High Court as its Chief

Umar Khalid, Sharjeel Imam and several others have been booked under the anti-terror law Unlawful Activities (Prevention) Act (UAPA) and provisions of the



Indian Penal Code for allegedly being the "masterminds" of the February 2020 riots, which had left 53 people dead and over 700 in-

jured. The violence had erupted during the protests against the CAA and NRC.

Umar Khalid, who was arrested

by the Delhi Police in September 2020, has assailed a trial court order of May 28, which refused to grant him bail in the case. Notice on his appeal was issued by the high court in July. The pleas of Imam, Saifi and other accused were filed in 2022 and have been listed before different benches from time to time

Sharjeel Imam, in his appeal filed in 2022, has assailed a trial court order of April 11, 2022 which refused to grant him bail. The police had arrested Imam in the present case on August 25, Khalid are prima facie true. 2020. On May 28, the trial court The high court had said that adhad rejected Umar Khalid's plea

time, saying its previous order dismissing his first bail application had attained finality. "When the Delhi High Court has already dismissed the criminal appeal of the applicant (Khalid) vide

thereafter, the applicant approached the Supreme Court and withdrew his petition, the order of this court as passed on March 24, 2022 (on the first bail plea), has attained finality and now, in no stretch of imagination this court can make analysis of the facts of the case as desired by the applicant and consider the relief as prayed by him," the trial court had said.

On October 18, 2022, the high court had upheld the dismissal of the first bail plea and said the city police's allegations against Umar

mittedly, the anti-CAA protests "metamorphosed into violent riots", which "prima facie seemed to be orchestrated at the conspiratorial meetings" and the statements of the witnesses indicate Khalid's "active involvement" in the protests. (PTI)

### Sonam Wangchuk sits on fast at Ladakh Bhawan



NEW DELHI, Oct 6: Climate activist Sonam Wangchuk on Sunday sat on a fast at the Ladakh Bhawan where he was staying, after the protesters were denied permission to stage the stir for Ladakh's Sixth Schedule status at Jantar Mantar.

Wangchuk, in a brief interaction with media before starting the fast, said they were forced to stage the protest at the Ladakh Bhawan after failing to find any venue for their

Around 18 people, including Wangchuk, sat close to the gate of the Ladakh Bhawan, singing the Hindi version of 'We Shall Overcome', and raised slogans such as 'Bharat Mata Ki Jai", "Jai Ladakh " and "Save Ladakh, Save Himalaya". On Sunday morning, Wangchuk took to 'X' to say that they have been denied permission

to sit on a fast at Jantar Mantar.

"Another rejection, another frustration. Finally this morning we got this rejection letter for the officially designated place for protests," Wangchuk said.

The climate activist led the 'Delhi Chalo Padayatra', which began in Leh a month ago. The march was organised by Leh Apex Body, which along with the Kargil Democratic Alliance, has been spearheading an agitation for the last four years seeking statehood for Ladakh, its inclusion in the Sixth Schedule of the Constitution, public service commission for Ladakh, and separate Lok Sabha seats for Leh and Kargil districts.

On Saturday, a majority of the protesters returned to Ladakh while the remaining stayed back to

### Junior doctors continue indefinite hunger strike demanding justice, workplace safety

KOLKATA, Oct 6: Agitating junior doctors demanding justice for the deceased woman medic of the Kar Medical College and Hospital and workplace safety continued their hunger strike until death on Sunday in the central part of the city's Dharmatala area.

Several senior doctors, who have been at the protest site since Saturday night, are also planning to join their junior counterparts in the hunger strike.

"The support of these people gives us the courage, the enthusiasm to continue our protest against the gruesome murder of our sister. We are happy to see that people have not forgotten that justice is yet not given and attacks on doctors are still on and the state government has no serious note of our demands," Debasish Halder, one of the agitating doctors, told PTI. The junior medics started their hunger strike untill

death on Saturday night after the state government missed the 24-hour deadline of fulfilling their demands by 8.30 pm on Saturday. They had on Friday begun a sit-in demonstration at

the Dorina crossing in Dharmtatala area following an alleged assault by Kolkata Police personnel.

To maintain transparency, the junior medics have installed CCTV cameras at the dais where their colleagues are holding the strike.

The six doctors who were sitting on the fast were identified as Snigdha Hazra, Tanaya Panja and Anustup Mukhopadhyay of Kolkata Medical College and Hospital, SSKM Hospital's Arnab Mukhopadhyay, Pulastha Acharya of NRS Medical College and Hospital, and Sayantani Ghosh Hazra of KPC Medical

The state would be held responsible if any doctor

fell ill during the fast, the junior doctor said. A large number of common people gathered at the protest site and a few celebrities also joined them at the protest site since Saturday night.

On Friday, the junior doctors had called off their 'total cease work', which had crippled healthcare serv-

ices at state-run medical colleges and hospitals. The protesting doctors emphasised that securing justice for the deceased woman medic remains their

foremost priority. Among the other nine demands, they called for the immediate removal of Health Secretary NS Nigam, as well as accountability for the alleged administrative incompetence and corruption in the Health depart-

Other demands include the establishment of a centralised referral system for all hospitals and medical colleges in the state, implementation of a bed vacancy monitoring system, and formation of task forces to ensure essential provisions for CCTV, on-call rooms, and washrooms at their workplaces.

They are also demanding increased police protection in hospitals, recruitment of permanent women police personnel, and swift filling of vacant positions for doctors, nurses, and other healthcare workers.

The junior doctors went on "cease work" following the rape-murder of a fellow medic at Kar Medical College and Hospital on August 9. They ended their stir after 42 days on September 21 following assurances from the state government to look into their demands.

#### CBI, ED, police don't arrest people through video calls: ICCCC

seeking regular bail for the second



NEW DELHI, Oct 6: The CBI, police, customs, ED or judges do not arrest people through video calls, the Indian Cyber Crime Coordination Centre (I4C) said in a public advisory issued in view of the rising cases of 'digital arrest' crimes in the

Terming it a scam, the federal cyber security agency cautioned people against falling victim to such crimes committed using the Internet. "Don't Panic, Stay Alert. CBI/Po-

lice/Custom/ED/Judges DO NOT arrest you on video call," stated the advisory issued on Saturday. The advisory depicted the logos of

social media platforms like WhatsApp and Skype to showcase that calls for such scams are made using such platforms. These social media platforms

have said in the past that they are coordinating with cyber security agencies of the government to provide users enhanced safety against such

The I4C urged people to report such crimes at the central helpline number 1930 or the website -www.cvbercrime.gov.in.

Digital arrest is the name given to a cyber crime technique where fraudsters send an SMS or make video calls to a person posing as law enforcement agency officials fraudulently claiming that the individual or his close family members have been caught by a government investigative agency in a criminal activity like drugs trafficking or money laundering. The cyber criminal subsequently confines the person to their premises by asking them to keep their mobile phone cameras on as part of a 'digital arrest' and then seek money through online transfer to bail the victim out of this situation.

A good number of these new-age cyber crimes are virtually reported every day from various parts of the

#### **Academics hail Centre's decision to confer** classical language status to Bengali

ised to immediately follow up on

Pokkho, the outfit advocating the

identity of Bengalis and promoting

their language and culture, Garga

Chatterjee said "We are happy

with the recognition but this was

aware of the preeminence of Ben-

gali language, only the Centre

seemed to be unaware of it in all

Chatterjee thanked CM Baner-

jee, senior Congress leader and

former MP Adhir Chowdhury for

highlighting the demand at the na-

ful when the use of Bengali lan-

guage at all India level will be

institutionalized. Already we have

secured the right to conduct tests

for recruitment in central forces in

Bengali. As per the eighth sched-

ule, every language should have

same equal rights. We now look

forward to effective implementa-

Expressing hope the Centre will

show the real intent to give Ben-

gali the due recognition in the

coming days, he said "Otherwise

we will launch a fierce movement

Expert Amitava Das, one of the

researchers from the 'Institute of

Language Studies', said the crite-

ria for the honour is to prove a lan-

guage is 1500-2000 years and

heir researchers had been at work

on this for years. The state educa-

tion department had entrusted ILS

Aniana Bhadra a senior profes-

sor at K K Das College in the city

expressed hope after this honour

tion of that," he added.

in coming days."

with the work.

"However our fight will be fruit-

"While the entire world was

The general secretary of Bangla



the issue.

long overdue.

these days," he said.

KOLKATA, Oct 6: Academics and Bengali identity advocacy groups have hailed the decision of the Centre to accord classical language status to Bengali language expressing hope that it will facilitate in greater use of the language in official communication and examinations.

Eminent indologist and linguist Nrisingo Prasad Bhaduri said he hoped that after the honour, at all India level, there will be greater use of the language in competitive examinations, more use of synonyms of familiar English terms in science and economics and present day students will feel encouraged to use these Bengali synonyms in their exams.

Thanking West Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee, Bhaduri said after he and other academics drew her attention to the fact that Bengali was not accorded classical language status despite having thousands of years of history from the day of its origin and evolution. "The state government submitted voluminous documents in this regard very promptly and the recognition came in 6-7 months period," he told PTI.

"Bengali language has an ancient past having originated such a long time back and it is ironical that a language in which Rabindranath Tagore wrote his poems, songs, short stories and novels and penned his articles did not get its due recognition earlier,"

Bhaduri said they drew the attention of Banerjee about Bengali not getting recognition as a classical language during the International Language Day on February

pave the way for setting up chairs, pursuing research in Bengali language and institute awards for researchers and scholars in the coming days," Bhadra said.

there will be a centre for excellence at the initiative of the centre

to continue research and studies in

"We hope the recognition will

Bengali language.

West Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee earlier expressed happiness over the Centre according classical language status to Bengali and said her government had been actively working over the past few years in submitting documents to back the

Bengali, Assamese, Marathi, Pali and Prakrit were declared classical languages on October 3 by the Union Cabinet during a meeting chaired by Prime Minister Narendra Modi

Immediately after the Centre's announcement on Thursday, the CM had posted on her X handle. "Most happy to share that Bengali/Bangla has been finally accorded the status of a classical language by Government of India. We had been trying to snatch this recognition from Ministry of Culture, GOI and we had submitted three volumes of research findings in favour of our contention."

"The Union government has accepted our well-researched claim and we finally reach the cultural apex in the body of languages in India," she said.

Classical languages serve as a custodian of Bharat's profound and ancient cultural heritage, embodying the essence of each community's historical and cultural milestone, the central government

In a statement, the Centre said the inclusion of Marathi, Pali, Prakrit, Assamese and Bengali in the classical language category will create significant employment opportunities, particularly in academic and research fields.

Additionally, the preservation, documentation and digitisation of ancient texts of these languages will generate jobs in archiving, translation, publishing and digital media, the government said. (PTI)

# Protests against ex-Goa RSS chief: Church body calls for peace

PANAJI, Oct 6: The Goa church authorities have called for peace and restraint in the coastal state amid protests against former Goa RSS chief Subhash Velingkar for his comments on St Francis

Police cane-charged a group of protesters and detained five of them in Margao city of South Goa late Saturday night after they blocked a national highway demanding Velingkar's arrest, an official earlier said.

Protesters have appealed to likeminded people to gather in Margao as well as in Old Goa in North Goa district for an agitation on Sunday.

The sacred relics of St Francis Xavier, the patron saint of Goa, are kept at the Basilica Dom Jesus in Old Goa.

In a statement issued on Saturday evening, the Council for Social

Justice and Peace (CSJP) executive secretary Fr Savio Fernandes said the Goan Catholic Community condemns Velingkar's "insulting and derogatory" statements.

The CSJP, which is a wing of the Goa Church, has urged the protesters to exercise restraint for the sake of peace and communal harmony.

Velingkar's statements deeply hurt the religious sentiments not only of Catholics but also of so many people belonging to other faith communities who also revere the saint for having received numerous favours in their lives after praying to him," it said in the state-

The CSJP has appealed to the government authorities concerned to take necessary strict action as per the prevalent law against Velingkar for "trying to disrupt the communal harmony in Goa by de-

liberately and mischievously putting one community against the

Fr Fernandes said there are burning issues threatening the environment, the demography and future of Goa which demand the immediate attention of authorities and which the people of Goa have been unanimously raising these

"We appeal to the citizens not to distract their attention from the major issues plaguing our state," he added.

More than a dozen cases have been filed against Velingkar for allegedly "hurting religious sentithrough his media statements against St Francis

The Bicholim police in North Goa on Friday registered an FIR against Velingkar in the matter. (PTI)

#### Breathtaking display dominate Marina sky IAF's dazzling aerobatic

prowess in Chennai steals hearts

CHENNAI, Oct 6: A spectacular aerial display showcasing the prowess and manoeuvrability of the Indian Air Force (IAF) aircraft over the iconic Marina sky captivated the hearts of Chennaiites who turned up in thousands on a sultry Sunday and witnessed the IAF's range of new aircraft includ-

ing Rafale, roar in action. Enthusiastic families gathered on the sands of the Marina beach, many holding umbrellas to shield themselves from the blazing sun. ahead of 11 am when the air show commenced with the Special Garud Force commandos of the IAF displaying their daring skills in a simulated rescue operation and in freeing the hostage.

Para jump instructors making an accurate landing on the target area and the commandos slithering in to reach the target area held the spectators spellbound.

The 92nd IAF Day celebration on the Marina, between the Lighthouse and Chennai Port, was witnessed among others by Chief of Air Staff Air Chief Marshal Amar Preet Singh, Tamil Nadu Chief Minister M K Stalin, Deputy CM Udhayanidhi Stalin, state Ministers, Chennai Mayor R Priya and a

host of other dignitaries. Though the clear skies provided a good view of the fascinating air

show by the IAF aircraft, people gathered on the sandy beach flashed their umbrellas for an aerial photography from the IAF aircraft towards the end of the mega show at 1 pm.

Nearly 72 aircraft took part in the air display which is set to enter the Limca Book of World Records.

About 50 aircraft including the supersonic fighter jets Rafale indulged in a formation showering flares. Heritage aircraft Dakota and Harvard, Teias, SU-30, and Sarang, also, participated in the aerial salute.

The Sukhoi Su-30 fighter jet performed the "Loop-tumble-yaw" manoeuvrability and dispensed flares. The Suryakiiran, too, took to the skies to enthrall the crowd.

The nation's pride, and our own indigenously manufactured stateof-the-art Light Combat Aircraft Tejas, and Light Combat Helicopter Prachand, too take part in the flypast and aerial display held in Chennai after a gap of 21 years with the theme: "Saksham, Sashakta, Amtanirbhar."

It is the third time such one outside the national capital. The last spectacle was carried out over the Sangam area in Prayagraj, Uttar Pradesh, on October 8, 2023, and in Chandigarh in the previous year. (PTI)

# Ahmedabad to Australia: Chef Helly Raichura on reinventing Indian cuisine with Aussie ingredients

NEW DELHI, Oct 6: Helly Raichura, a self-taught chef who grew up in the humble lanes of Ahmedabad, moved to Australia in 2007 and soon found a calling in cooking that was different from the many versions of Indian cuisine already available in the country.

A crafty Raichura switched to native Australian herbs in reinvented Indian dishes and started inviting guests to her home, the entry for which was through the laundry. The idea flourished into her restaurant Entry Via Laundry

"I started by cooking from my home while I already had the job. Initially I cooked everything, I cooked dumplings, puff pastries and donuts, ice creams and things like that. "But then I made khandvi once.

Then I realised after hosting peo-

ple at home for a couple of months

that I want to do regional Indian cuisine," Raichura, a former HR professional, told PTI. The Melbourne-based chef was in India recently as part of a delegation of Visit Victoria, the official tourism body for the State of Vic-

toria in Australia.



In her distinct style, Raichura gave the humble Indian vada pav an innovative Aussie makeover. Result: a flaky puff pastry with native herbs and ingredients including Davidson plum, myrtle and Geraldton wax.

It was a mix of nostalgia and love for Indian food that led Raichura to experiment with ingredients that were alien to her thus

"For me it became a very beautiful exercise because I was connecting to my home language. Everyone misses when they leave the country, of course, there is the glitz and glam of Melbourne, but then also there is always the dissatisfaction that you're away from your motherland," she said.

From switching tamarind with Davidson plum in the vada pav, potatoes with Jerusalem artichoke

in 'Bengali bhorta' and cardamom with strawberry gum, the opportunities were endless for her.

"So I started discovering different cuisines from different regions that gave me that connect. But also I wanted to connect with Australia so I started using native ingredients from there. It was very natural for me to bring those two things together and create this cuisine and no one was doing that," the 35year-old added.

At the lunch hosted by Visit Victoria, Raichura conjured up some Indian delicacies with distinct Australian touch, including 'Lemon myrtle and honey dew cold rasam', 'Kashmiri bun with Australian mountain pepper', 'Victorian lamb with Australian native limes, mountain pepper, paperbark smokey carrot, and lemon gum dress salad'

The meal ended on a sweet and tangy note with a 'Gift of Apple' a preparation made with strawberry gum basundi, and dessert lime lace cookie.

Raichura is also known for her intricate 'pasta, not pasta' khandvi dish which she prepared as a guest judge on MasterChef Australia in

added.

Her restaurant in Melbourne focuses on blending native and indigenous Australian ingredients with ancient regional Indian cui-It is a common sight at Entry Via

Laundry, she said, to see women

wearing traditional sarees for the occasion because "they feel like "It's a fine-dine setting and they wear their beautiful sarees because they feel like home. And when they are leaving they always say,

'Helly, thank you for representing

this rightly. We have never had

patra poda in Melbourne or Macher Jhol in Melbourne or a shukto. A lot of Kashmiri dishes for that matter," Raichura said. It is this sense of homeliness and celebration that is satisfying, she

Visit Victoria, during the event, presented an 'Every bit different' showcase of major events and experiences, including the Boxing Day Test against India, Melbourne Food and Wine Festival, the Australian Open, Yayoi Kusama at NGV and the Formula 1 Australian

Grand Prix. (PTI)

#### 10 THE HILLS TIMES

# 'There will be many more stories going forward exploring effects of social media'

**NEW DELHI, Oct 6:** Whether romance or thriller, social media is going to be a prevalent character in movies going forward, says actor Ananya Panday who has emerged as the go-to actor to tell stories rooted in modern technology with "CTRL", "Call Me Bae" and "Kho Gaye Hum Kahan'

In the Vikramaditya Motwane-directed "CTRL", where a story unfolds entirely through various screens, Panday plays Nella, a social media influencer whose life comes crashing down when she enlists the help of an AI to erase her cheating ex from her digital life.

The actor said the timing of the release of her three projects, where her characters' digital life play a key role in the narrative, makes it seem like they have a connection but she didn't think about it while signing them.

"I feel like it is the time that we're living in. It is the generation that we're living in where technology is such a big part of all of our lives. Being a part of Gen Z, these stories are relatable for me. It's something that is just starting to happen. "In the romantic genre or in the thriller genre, it will be a prevalent character. I feel like it is something that exists. It'll be hard to tell a story where there isn't some effect or some social media. It will be in many more stories going forward," she told PTI in an

Asked whether working on "CTRL" made her cautious about the perils of hyper-connectivity, Panday said some habits are hard to

The film, however, has made her more aware about her online activity. "Even in the smallest of things, like just agreeing to terms and conditions, allowing your iPad and your laptops access to your camera and microphone, accepting cookies every time you go onto a new website... We're not aware of the repercussions. The film made me aware of those small things, but it's still back to that toxic behavior. I know it, but I'm still doing it," she admitted. Panday, who is the daughter of actor Chunky Panday and entrepreneur Bhavana Pandey, said her first social media account was on Facebook which she made secretly.

"My mom found out and really got angry at me. She deactivated my Facebook account for a few years. I could get it only when I was the legal age," she recalled.
"CTRL" started streaming on

Netflix from October 4 and Panday has used her Instagram account, where she has over 25 million followers, to promote the film. Before that came her web series debut "Call Me Bae" on Prime Video.

The key to being on social media is to not take it "too seriously", she said. "I had my Instagram account before I became an actor and that time it was more private. I've always had a lot of fun with it. I kind of have maintained the same thing. I keep it as real as possible. I post whatever I want. I don't take it too



seriously. That's the key bu my relationship with social media also keeps changing. "Like now I've been promoting, so I've been posting a lot because obviously I want people to watch the movie but I think I'm going to be taking that much needed digital detox because it does affect your mental health." The 25-year-old

said she could partly connect with her 'CTRL" character when it came to "just her life being so public and people having opinions and stuff on her life". "But the part that I kind of had to dive

a little deeper into was her family life because she's someone who comes from Delhi and her parents run a bakery and they always wanted her to work there, but she always saw more for herself... Also, figuring out all he influencer stuff... Being an actor, I find all the reel making

and stuff very tough. It's a proper job." (PTI)

# **Tillotama Shome** criticises Al after almost 9-hr delay, airline says regret inconvenience caused

NEW DELHI, Oct 6: Actor Tillotama Shome on Sunday complained that Air India didn't inform passengers that its Mumbai-London flight was late by 8.5 hours, with the airline saying it sent out a notification about the delay on the registered phone number and regretted inconvenience caused.

The actor was travelling with a patient, set to receive treatment at a London hospital, who was at the airport from 2 am for the 5.15 am flight.

Shome, who was last seen in "Tribhuvan Mishra CA Topper", accused the airline of "zero accountability" and offering "no solutions"

"AI 129. @airindia flight to Heathrow. Delayed as of now from 5.15 am to 10am. No message, no calls from the airlines to notify passengers of the delay. Upon contacting AI, all they can say is sorry..." she

"@airindia WHY do you NOT inform your customers that your flight is delayed and that too by 8.5 hours!! Not one message, not one call," she added. In response, the airline said the staff was doing

"everything to minimize the inconvenience". "For any real time assistance, the passengers are requested to reach out to them.'

After the check-in, Shome said the passengers were informed that the flight was further delayed by 3.5 hours. The total delay was 8.5 hours

"Ma'am, the notification about the delay was sent out on the registered phone number. Also, our team on the ground has been actively communicating with the passengers to offer assistance and provide realtime updates about the situation. We regret the inconvenience caused to you," the airline said.

In another post, Shome tagged Air India and Directorate General of Civil Aviation India, alleging that the passengers were provided no hotel to sleep, no alternative flight options, with luggage checked in.

She also asked the airline to suspend operations "until you get your act together".

"@DGCAIndia what is the way forward? How are we being compensated for this delay? Awaiting your response. Sincerely, A concerned and exhausted citizen," she wrote. (PTI)

# **Shraddha Kapoor stuns** as showstopper for Swapna Anumolu's 'Resonance **2024/25' showcase**

NEW DELHI, Oct 6: "Stree 2" star Shraddha Kapoor became the muse for designer

Swapna Anumolu's latest showcase at the Belgian Embassy Anumolu, the founder of the Hyderabad-based label Mishru, presented "Resonance 2024/25", a couture and bridal collection for women and men, on Saturday evening.

Located in the heart of Chanakyapuri, the Belgian Embassy, known for its architectural brilliance and seamlessly blending manmade structures with nature, served as the perfect backdrop for the designer's fashion show. The event explored the theme of nature reclaiming urban spaces, balanced innovation and tradition. Each outfit featured a mix of 3D embroidery, vintage-inspired Parsi-Sujini techniques, and intricate jaals. The women's collection included a variety of ensembles such as traditional lehengas, bridal saris, coordinated sets, and fishtail dresses. For men, the clothing line offered Indo-western outfits, sherwanis, and classic kurta-pajamas. "Resonance 2024/25" featured a dynamic colour palette, ranging from deep sapphires and rubies to pastel ombres and earthy blacks.

Kapoor, currently basking in the success of "Stree 2", walked the ramp in a hand-embroidered lehenga with colour-shifting duo-tone embroidery, delicately adorned with French knots and hand-embellished floral motifs. (PTI)

## **Choreographer Jani Master's National Award** suspended

**NEW DELHI, Oct 6:** The National Film Awards Cell of the Ministry of Information and Broadcasting has suspended the National Film Award to be presented to choreographer Jani Master citing allegations of sexual assault.

The authorities also withdrew the invitation to the choreographer to attend the 70th National Film Awards in New Delhi on

Jani Master, whose real name is Shaik Jani Basha, would have been felicitated at the ceremony for his work on the song "Megham Karukkatha" from 2022's Tamil movie "Thiruchitrambalam".

In the note, dated October 4 (Friday), the National Film Awards Cell said the letter to attend the National Film Awards was extended to the choreographer "before the allegations of crime under POCSO Act came

"In view of the seriousness of the allegation and the matter being subjudice, the Competent Authority has decided to suspend the National Film Award of the Best Choreography for the Year 2022 to Shri Shaik Jani Basha for the film Thiruchitrambalam until further orders.

"Hence, the invitation extended to Shri Shaik Jani Basha for the 70th National Film Awards Function to be held at Vigyan Bhavan, New Delhi on 8.10.24 is hereby withdrawn," read the note, signed by deputy director Indrani Bose.

A city court on Thursday granted interim bail to Jani Master after he filed the bail application to attend the National Film Awards. (PTI)

# Shriya Pilgaonkar says she's focusing more on films now, wants to work with Sanjay Leela Bhansali

MUMBAI, Oct 6: She has web series such as "Mirzapur", "Guilty Minds", "The Broken News" and "Taaza Khabar" to her credit and Shriya Pilgaonkar says she's now gunning for the big screen, hoping to star in a Sanjay Leela Bhansali period drama.

One of the most recognisable faces on OTT, Shriya started her career with the 2013 Marathi film "Ekulti Ek", directed by her father Sachin Pilgaonkar. The actor, also known for movies across languages "Un plus une", "Fan", and "House Arrest", has two feature films in the pipeline which will be announced soon.

"Ideally, I want to keep a balance, which is why today, I'm focusing more on films now. That's perhaps a medium that I've not done enough of or it's not come too much my

way... I've been wanting to dance on screen.

"I want to do that one big cinematic period drama, outan-out all guns blazing, Sanjay Leela Bhansali film because a lot of my work has been rooted in reality. I want to experience Bollywood masala larger-thanlife films... That is every actor's dream," she told PTI in an interview.

It is an exciting time for her, said the 35-year-old, who is ready to get out of her comfort zone. "You have to take risks and fight for yourself for growth. It's not like things are laid down on a plate. I'm also working with people to build ideas to develop stories for

"Recently, I was on the jury of the Indian Film Festival of Los Angeles. I met young writers, aspiring filmmakers, and

wonderful actors and it made me realise that you have to take creative control and create the path for yourself."

Shriya currently stars in the second season of "Taaza Khabar", in which she reprised her role of the sex worker Madhu, whom she described as a dignified and spunky woman. She credited the Disney Hotstar show, fronted by YouTuber-actor Bhuvan Bam. for letting her try her hand at comedy years after "Ekulti Ek". "Earlier comedians were stereotyped, but today, the definition of comedy has expanded. Maybe it's subtle, sometimes it's conversational. It may not be slapstick every single time, but I enjoy comedy. I want to do more genres like dark comedies, which are exciting.

For Shriya, daughter of actor

couple Sachin and Supriya Pilgaonkar, acting happened or-

While she was always confident both in front of the camera and on stage, it was only when she started training as a Kathak dancer that she felt closely connected to the performing art. She is also a pro-

fessional swimmer. "I'm lucky that I didn't come into the industry just because my parents were there. I honed and trained myself, and that is something I value. I didn't take it for granted, it was an organic way of coming "Her journey has been different

from other star kids, she aded. "I was not on the cover of magazines before my work. My journey has been such that my work has spoken for itself

outside Maharashtra. "I realised after 'Mirzapur', there were a lot of people who didn't put two and two together that 'I'm Sachin and Supriya's daughter'. For me, that was the compliment that my work reached sooner than my identity," said Shriya, who started off making short films, and documentaries.

The actor said family can't always be a safety blanket for the next generation.

"You're going to have to fall or learn from your own thing. People will say whatever they want to, but we all know what individual journeys have been like. "Eventually at the end of one's career to sustain in showbiz is not easy, so the only way you're going to sustain yourself is if you create your own path. I've always believed that the best way to be different is to be yourself, and focus on your work." (PTI)



MONDAY, OCTOBER 7, 2024

# Underdogs strike as Bayern rivals Leverkusen and Dortmund drop points in Bundesliga



BERLIN, Oct 6: Bayern Munich won without playing on Saturday as Bundesliga rivals Bayer Leverkusen and Borussia Dortmund dropped points to modest

Dortmund slumped at Union Berlin to a 2-1 defeat without injured forward Karim Adeyemi, who starred in the team's 7-1 rout of Celtic in the Champions

Defending champion Leverkusen squandered an early twogoal lead over promoted Holstein Kiel and drew 2-2. It was only Kiel's second point in its debut top-flight season.

Leverkusen played in a special black jersey with red trim to commemorate the club's 120th anniversary, and for Xabi Alonso it was also a special occasion – the two years before.

Leverkusen fans didn't have to wait long to celebrate after Victor Boniface opened the scoring in the fourth minute and Jonas Hofmann made it 2-0 four minutes after that. Leverkusen looked set for a rout. But the home team failed to make more of its dominance — Boniface had another goal ruled out for offside — and

break when Max Geschwil scored after a corner. Fiete Arp scored an unlikely equalizer from the penalty spot in the 69th.

"I wouldn't say arrogance, but I'd say there's a bit a complacency. We need to stay concentrated, because we want to be a better team," Alonso said. "We could win a few games, and not win a few games, up and down,

didn't have the best competitive mindset.'

Dortmund disappoints Union illustrated early on against Dortmund why it's the club with one of the most ineffective forward lines in the league. The Köpenick-based team had only four goals from its opening five games. Former Union player Nico Schlotterbeck offered assistance by conceding a penalty with a foul on the lively Benedict Hollerbach, and Kevin Vogt duly scored the opener from the spot in the 25th.

The home team kept pushing and got its due reward before the break when Yorbe Vertessen let fly through a host of players for 2-0. Early in the second half, masked Union ultras displayed an array of Dortmund scarves and banners presumably confiscated from their rivals before the game. They hung the tattered flags on the railings behind one of the goals and raised their fists, goading the Dortmund fans far away on the other side.

Former Union player Julien Ryerson responded on the field in the 62nd by firing inside the far post for 2-1, set up by Julian Brandt after a period of pressure from the visitors – but it wasn't

Also, Freiburg won at Werder Bremen 1-0, and Wolfsburg enjoyed a 3-1 win in Wolfsburg.

St. Pauli was playing Mainz later. League leader Bayern visits second-placed Eintracht Frank-

# Gauff rallies to reach China Open final and Sinner, Alcaraz and Djokovic win in Shanghai

rallied from a set down for the third consecutive match as she beat Paula Badosa 4-6, 6-4, 6-2 to reach the China Open final on

The sixth-ranked Gauff will play Karolina Muchova of the Czech Republic in Sunday's

Muchova defeated Olympic gold medalist Zheng Qinwen 6-6-4 in the other semifinal.

Gauff, who has a 7-1 record in tour finals, has made a habit of slow starts in Beijing this week and the script played out again as the No. 19-ranked Badosa took a tight opening set, saving 10 of 11 break points.

The Spaniard then built a 3-1 lead in the second set before 2023 U.S. Open champion Gauff shifted the momentum by saving four break points and then breaking back to level at 4-4. Gauff held for 5-4 and broke Badosa again to force a decid-

"I felt like I was playing the right way the whole time, just a couple of unforced errors, she was playing well too," Gauff said on court. "I was trying to stay focused. Mentally, I just tried to reset. I got down a couple of times, and I tried to bounce back.'

With all the momentum, Gauff broke Badosa three more times — for the loss of one of her own — as she clinched the match in 2 hours, 20 minutes.

Gauff also lost the first set to Naomi Osaka in the fourth round before winning by walkover and against No. 115ranked Yuliia Starodubtseva in the quarterfinals.

"I've had tough opponents the whole tournament," Gauff said. Shanghai MastersCarlos Alcaraz and top-ranked Jannik Sinner showed no signs of fatigue from their China Open final this week as they advanced in Shanghai with comfortable straight-set victories in their

who beat the Italian in Beijing on Wednesday for his fourth title of the year, recorded his 10th consecutive win against 19-year-old Shang Juncheng of China 6-2, 6-2.

The Spaniard won the first nine points of the match and four of seven break points as he rushed into a third-round meeting with another Chinese player, Wu Yibing.

"I'm not used to playing against players younger than me," Alcaraz said. "He has been playing good tennis lately, lifting his first ATP (title in Chengdu), so I'm pretty sure he's going to climb the rankings. I'm just happy to to be able to win these kinds of matches."

Sinner, who is dealing with a doping case, had a comfortable 6-1, 6-4 outing against Taro Daniel of Japan for his 250th career win.

Sinner, who won the U.S Open last month for his second major of the year, fired 12 aces and 38 winners.

"I felt quite comfortable today," said Sinner, who next plays Tomas Martin Etcheverry of Argentina. "I feel in good shape, which is very important for me. I was serving really, really well, especially in important moments, and was moving well." Third-ranked Alexander Zverev began with a 6-4, 6-2 win over Italian qualifier Mattia Bellucci, while fourth-ranked Novak Djokovic had a tougher task prevailing 7-6 (3), 7-6 (9) over Alex Michelsen of the United States.

No. 65-ranked Jakub Mensik of the Czech Republic broke sixth-ranked Andrey Rublev seven times on his way to an upset 6-7 (7), 6-4, 6-3 victory.

Yosuke Watanuki also surprised by beating No. 35-ranked Brendan Nakashima 7-6 (4), 6-3. The Japanese qualifier next plays seventh-ranked Taylor Fritz of the U.S. or qualifier Ter-

# Amir Ali to lead Indian Jr hockey team in Sreejesh's coaching debut at Sultan of Johor Cup

BENGALURU, Oct 6: Amir Ali has been named captain, with Rohit as his deputy, in the 18-member junior hockey squad for the Sultan of Johor Cup that will mark the first assignment for head coach PR Sreejesh in Malaysia from October 19. India will begin their campaign against Japan on October 19, followed by matches against Great Britain (October 20), hosts Malaysia (Oct 22), Australia (Oct 23) and New Zealand (Oct 25). The top two teams will make the

final slated for October 26.

Defender Amir Ali and forward Gurjot Singh were part of the senior team that defended their title at the Asian Champions Trophy in Moqi, China.

Amir seamlessly filled in for the injured defender Sanjay during the tournament, while Gurjot led the forward line, showcasing immense potential.

"The Sultan of Johor Cup is an important tournament in our calendar as always. The tournament will serve as a

litmus test for the team ahead of the Men's Junior Asia Cup Muscat 2024 in November this year," captain Ali stated in a Hockey India release.

"All the players are excited to play some intense hockey matches in Malaysia." Vice -captain Rohit expressed Toppo, Chandan Yaday, (PTI)

# 2-0 in La Liga but lose Carvajal to leg injury

MADRID, Oct 6: Real Madrid in Madrid's youth squads and rebounded from its first loss in nearly 10 months by beating Villarreal 2-0 at the possible cost of injured right back Dani Carvajal in La Liga on Saturday.

Federico Valverde and Vinícius Júnior scored for the defending champions four days after they lost at Lille 1-0 in the Champions League to halt a 36game unbeaten streak in all com-

Madrid remains unbeaten in 41 consecutive Spanish league games. Beating third-placed Villarreal gave Madrid the same 21 points as Barcelona which visits Alaves

on Sunday. Carvajal was hurt in second-half stoppage time at Santiago Berna b e u Stadium, going down in pain after kicking the leg of an opponent. He appeared to make a gesture show-

ing something snapped in his leg. The Spain international was crying when he was carried off the field on a stretcher.

"It looks like it's a very serious knee injury," Madrid coach Carlo Ancelotti said. "Everyone is sad and worried. It's something that happens very often because of the calendar and it has happened to a very important player in out squad.

Ancelotti said Carvajal will undergo tests. Madrid's reserve right back is Lucas Vázquez.

"Carvajal is a key player for us because of his experience and his attitude," Ancelotti said of the 32-year-old defender who started

joined the main team in 2013-14. Villarreal, which was coming off two straight wins, had only one attempt on target. Madrid had two, scoring on both of

Valverde scored in the 14th minute with a long-range shot that deflected in off a defender. Vinícius struck from outside the area in the 72nd into the top cor-

Celta Vigo striker Iago Aspas was sent off in a 1-0 win at lastplaced Las Palmas after being issued consecutive yellow cards

> He complained about the referee's decision to show a red card to teammate Ilaix Moriba and received the first yellow in the 54th minute. Aspas' second came in the 56th. The striker was seen briefly asking his teammates

to leave the field after he was sent off. Celta held on despite playing two men down to the end of the match. Borja Iglesia scored a 28th-minute winner in the visitor's only attempt on goal. The result ended a threegame winless streak for Celta. Las Palmas, the only team yet

to win in the league, hasn't won in 23 straight league matches going back to last season, when it barely avoided relegation. Jorge de Frutos scored a pair

of second-half goals for Rayo Vallecano to win at Valladolid 2-1, while Espanyol defeated Mallorca 2-1 at home and Osasuna drew at Getafe 1-1. (AP)

#### enthusiasm at being coached by Sreejesh, saying, "We have an Indian hockey legend taking charge of the team, the whole team is raring to go. PR Sreejesh is one of the most experienced players to

play for India, and we look forward to making him proud in our first tournament. "The mood in the camp has been excellent and we want to capitalise on this by showcasing our potential at the Sultan of Johor Cup." Squad: Goalkeepers: Bikramjit Singh, Ali Khan Defenders: Amir Ali (C), Talem Priyobarta, Shardanand Tiwari, Sukhvinder, Anmol Ekka, Rohit (VC) Midfielders: Ankit Pal, Manmeet Singh, Rosan Kujur, Mukesh

# Real Madrid beat Villarreal Thuram and Retegui hat tricks help Inter and Atalanta to Serie A wins

MILAN, Oct 6: Marcus Thuram and Mateo Retegui scored hat tricks to help their clubs to significant wins in Serie A on Saturday. Thuram netted all three of Inter Milan's goals in the defending champion's 3-2 win over 10-man Torino while Retegui helped Atalanta beat his former club Genoa 5-1.

Inter moved to second on the table, two points behind Napoli after Antonio Conte's team beat Como 3-1 on Friday.

Just one point separated Inter and Torino coming into the match but the visitor's chances of getting something at San Siro diminished in the 20th minute defender Guillermo



red card for a dangerous tackle on Thuram. Inter led five minutes later when Thuram headed Alessandro Bastoni's cross in off the inside of the left post.

Thuram doubled his and Inter's tally in the 35th with another towering header, this time from a cross by Francesco Acerbi, but Duván Zapata reduced the deficit almost immediately. Thuram completed his first hat trick for Inter on the hour mark. Torino goalkeeper Vanja Milinkovic-Savic could only parry a header from Lautaro Martínez and Thuram managed to bundle home the rebound despite being off bal-

standing ovation when he was substituted off eight minutes later. However, there was a nervy finale for Inter after Nikola Vlasic netted a penalty for Torino with three minutes remaining following a foul from Hakan Çalhanoglu on Adam Masina. Retegui didn't celebrate his three goals in respect for Genoa. Genoa was the first Italian team Retegui played for after joining from Argentine outfit Boca Juniors in 2023.

The Argentina-born Italy forward spent a season at Genoa before moving to Atalanta in the offseason.

After each of his goals against

Maripán was shown a straight ance. Thuram was given a his former club, Retegui just held up his hand almost in apology before he was embraced by his Atalanta teammates.

Retegui opened the scoring in the 24th and doubled his tally early in the second half when he fired home a rebound after Genoa goalkeeper Pierluigi Gollini — who is on loan from Atalanta — parried Ederson's effort. Ederson got on the scoresheet 10 minutes later, and Retugui completed his hat trick by converting a penalty following an Alessandro Vogliacco handball. Marten de Roon netted a stunning volley before Jeff Ekhator scored a consolation for

# Keith Mitchell with late birdie surge takes the lead in Sanderson Farms Championship

Mitchell finished with a pair of birdies for a 7-under 65 and avoided some of the blunders that tripped up other contenders, giving him a one-shot lead going into the final round of the Sanderson Farms Championship.

At stake for Mitchell, whose lone PGA Tour victory was more than five years ago, is a chance to earn a spot in four premium events on the PGA Tour next year. He holed a birdie putt from just inside 40 feet on the 17th hole, then finished by correctly judging his lie in the rough with an approach to 6 feet for his last birdie. Mitchell, who was at 20under 196, had a one-shot lead over Beau Hossler.

"The putt on 17 was just a huge bonus," Mitchell said. 'Then I got an accident lie on 18 and hit a great shot. All in all, it started kind of slow and the last 10 holes I was just able to capitalize a little bit more.

Eight other players were within five of the lead.

were tied at 17 under as they approached the turn at the Country Club of Jackson, and it didn't take much to make this tournament feel wide open.

Hossler birdied the ninth and suddenly found himself ahead by two shots when Berger made his first bogey of the tournament with a three-putt from 30 feet on the 10th, and then hit into the water on the par-5 11th for another bogey.

Berger, who bogeyed four of the first five holes on the back nine — including both par 5s – salvaged a 71 and was five shots behind.

Hossler appeared to be in complete control until missing the green long at the par-4 12th, leaving himself a 4-foot par and then shockingly three-putting from there for double bogey that dropped him out of the lead.

He responded with two tough par saves and three birdies over his last six holes for a 68 to at least get into the final group with



Mitchell

Asked to assess his play, Hossler replied, "Very, very good, minus about four minutes."

Kevin Yu made a late move with two birdies for this third straight 66 and was alone in third, two shots behind as he goes for his first PGA Tour victory. Of the leading six players, only Mitchell and former U.S. Open champion Lucas Glover (68) have won on

tour. Mitchell missed out on the FedEx Cup playoffs and is planning to play the fall to see if he can finish in the top 60 to get into the first two \$20 million signature events at Pebble Beach and

Riviera. A victory would get him

in The Sentry at Kapalua, another

\$20 million purse, along with the

"Only won once and trying to close the door a second time,

which has been clearly very difficult for me," said Mitchell, whose lone victory was the Honda Classic in 2019.

Glover doesn't put a lot of stock into experience winning on

"Everybody out here is so good and so seasoned to win," Glover said. "All the young guys coming up, it's like the program is different than 20 years ago. But coming down the stretch tomorrow nerves are nerves, and knowing how to handle it is difference.

'The depth of talent is so deep that there will be a lot of guys who probably aren't worried about nerves.

Glover, who won in consecutive weeks last August, had a 68. He was at 16-under 200 with Bud Cauley (67) and Jacob Bridgeman, a rookie who held it together at the end. Coming off a bogey, Bridgeman hit a marvelous 6-iron under the trees and onto the green to avoid another bogey, and closed by making a 7foot par putt. (AP)

India dismiss B'desh for 127

Varun Chakaravarthy an impres-

sive comeback as India limited

Bangladesh to 127 in the opening

T20 of the three-match series here

A full house at the newly built

Shrimant Madhavrao Scindia

Cricket Stadium witnessed high

quality bowling from India and

largely ordinary batting from their

All eyes were on Mayank (1/21)

ver since he marked his run up

before toss and the 22-year-old

from Delhi did not disappoint in

his first competitive game in more

Having attracted global eyeballs

for consistently bowling in the

150kmph range during the IPL,

Mayank was able to generate seri-

ous pace in his opening spell of 2-

Having suffered a side strain

shortly after a sensational IPL

debut, there were question marks

over his fitness in the long term but

he dispelled some of those doubts

on Sunday. Mayank was able to hit

145.7 kmph only in his second ball

of the evening before hitting 148.7

kmph with the first ball of his sec-

Veteran batter Mahmudullah

was among the batters who were

wary of his extra pace and ended

national wicket. The 38-year-old

tried to improvise by charging

up becoming the pacer's first inter-

than five months.

ond over.

on Sunday.

#### Indian women barely scrape through against Varun makes stellar comeback, Mayank promising debut as Pakistan to keep semi-final hopes alive

preet Kaur's years of experience saved India from blushes as they huffed and puffed to a six wicket win over arch rivals Pakistan, keeping their semi-final hopes alive in the Women's T20 World Cup, here Sunday.

12 THE HILLS TIMES

Indian batters made a heavy weather of a paltry 106-run target as it required a 24-ball-29 from their experienced skipper to eke out the crucial win.

Harmanpreet retired hurt when two runs were required for victory. Sajana Sajeevan, playing her first game, finished it off with a boundary.

The defensive approach by opener Shafali Verma (32 off 35 balls) and new No. 3 Jemimah Rodrigues (23 off 28 balls) meant that India could not boost their Net Run Rate which could prove very costly in the larger context of making it to the last-four stage.

Despite the victory, India's NRR is currently -1.217 and they remain below Pakistan, who are in third place with NRR of -0.555.

India would need to beat both Australia and Sri Lanka by comfortable margins to harbour any hopes of a semi-final berth.

The entire Indian innings had only five boundaries and none of the top three looked like getting a

The chase was not exactly a cakewalk as Smriti Mandhana (7 off 16 balls) was out early while



Shafali and Jemimah concentrated on taking singles.

The running between the wickets wasn't impressive as some easy doubles and a sure triple was not even tried, probably due to sapping heat. Even as Jemimah showed some interest in pushing fielders, Shafali's poor fitness came in the way.

Despite a negative net run-rate

of -2.90, there was no intent shown by the Indian batters to surpass the paltry target in a good

Shafali could hit only three shots to the fence in her 35-ball knock and she increased the pressure on the batting unit with the below-par effort.

As far as Jemimah was concerned, power isn't diminutive

Mumbaikar's forte as she is more of a batter who relies on timing and ability to find gaps.

Once Fatima removed both Jemimah and Richa Ghosh (0) off successive deliveries, the onus was on Harmanpreet to take the team past home.

Earlier, the Indian bowling unit fired in unison against a clueless Pakistan, restricting the arch-ri-

Having conceded 160 against New Zealand on a slow track under lights in their opener, the Indian bowlers read the pitch well, and more importantly, took the pace off deliveries to make stroke-making all the more diffi-

Such was their control that Indian bowlers were able to deliver 58 dot balls

Seamers Renuka Singh Thakur (1/23) and Arundhati Reddy (3/19) neither erred in line nor in length while off-spinners Deepti Sharma (1/24) and Shreyanka Patil (2/12) got enough grip and bounce to keep the Pakistani batters on tenterhooks.

Leg-spinner Asha Sobhana (1/24) went for a few boundaries but got rival skipper Fatima with a big leg-break after the batter was brilliantly snapped by Richa Ghosh behind the stumps.

Renuka bowled a tight first over and her inswinger had Gull Feroza (0) bowled through the gate.

Deepti, who gave a much better account of herself, albeit against an inferior batting lineup, decreased the pace of her deliveries and also flighted a few.

Pakistan managed only 29 for 2 in the powerplay and the Indian bowlers increased their stranglehold on the opposition batters with only Nida Dar's 28 providing some resistance to take the team past 100-run mark. (PTI)

GWALIOR, Oct 6: Pace sensadown the wicket but ended up slicing a regulation catch to Washingtion Mayank Yadav made a promising debut and mystery spinner ton Sundar at deep point.

Varun (3/31), brought back into the team after nearly three years, troubled the Bangladesh batters who failed to read him. Among them was middle-order batter Jaker Ali who had stumps his castled with a ball that turned back in.

Like Mayank, Varun too was brought inside the powerplay. The mystery spinner bounced back after conceding 15 runs in his opening over by dismissing Towhid Hridoy (12).

At 64 for five in 10 overs, Bangladesh's innings was going nowhere and India were able to press on the advantage thereafter.

Mayank returned to bowl the 13th which went for 15 as Bangladesh batters used his extra pace to collect a six and four in the third man region. He ended his quota by bowling the 19th over which included a couple of york-

Left-arm pacer Arshdeep Singh (3/14) had played his part his in the powerplay by removing openers Litton Das and Parvez Hossain Emon before picking his third wicket to end Bangladesh's innings. Hardik Pandya opened the bowling alongside Arshdeep.

A sell out crowd was in attendance as international cricket returned to Gwalior after 14 years. The stadium built in the outskirts of the city made its international debut. (PTI)

#### **Indian Army team beats US** Global Chess League: Alaskan Knights stay unbeaten Military in arena polo match

SACRAMENTO (USA), Oct 6: The Indian Army arena polo team delivered a gritty performance, defeating the US Military in a thrilling test match, marking their first international engagement since 2019. The Indian team, comprising Prithvi Singh, Yatinder Kumar, Mrityunjay Singh and RK Gautam, won 13-10 at the Lakeside Polo Club near here. Mrityunjay, despite sustaining an injury during the second chukker, continued to compete until the fourth chukker, before being substituted by Gautam.

Arena polo, while quite similar to the outdoor version is played on 300 feet by 150 feet field, enclosed by a wall of four or more feet in height. The regular polo is played on a 10-acre field with just the boundary lines and no walls.

A normal game of polo consists of four chukkas of sevenand-a-half minutes each. The arena game is played on a dirt surface with the ball bouncing on the uneven surface and off

LONDON, Oct 6: PBS Alaskan Knights continued their unbeaten run, while Ganges Grandmasters secured their first win in a dramatic day three of the Tech Mahindra Global Chess League here. The PBS Alaskan Knights extended their lead with a dominant 12-3 win over the Ganges Grandmasters, maintaining a perfect record with four consecutive victories, earning them 12 match points and 49 game points.

Defending champions Triveni Continental Kings played two matches on Saturday -- winning the first 15-3 against American Gambits, where Alireza Firouzja defeated world number two Hikaru Nakamura, but narrowly losing the second to Ganges Grandmasters. Triveni remained in second place with six match points and 43 game points, just six behind the leaders. Alpine Sg Pipers also impressed, defeating upGrad Mumba Masters 12-4.

They now sit in third place with six match points, though their 27 game points from three matches leave them behind

Triveni. upGrad Mumba Masters, in fourth place, have only one win from four matches and 29 game points after losing to the Pipers. The final match saw the surprise of the day with Ganges Grandmasters, led by former World Champion Vishawanathan Anand, finally breaking their losing streak with a 10-8 win over Triveni. With one win and 24 game points from four matches, they now sit in fifth place.

Hikaru Nakamura's American Gambits are in last place, with only one match victory and 16 game points from three

matches, having been dismantled 15-3 by Triveni. Anand's team, desperate for their first victory after three crushing defeats, was under immense pressure.

Already reeling from an earlier loss in the day, Anand had to rally his team, using his authority as a former world champion to lift their spirits. But no pep talk could help on the board, where players had to prove they could outmanoeuvre

# **Sum Ronghang Memorial Inter Club Football League ends**

**HT Correspondent** 

HOWRAGHAT, Oct 6: In the final of Sum Ronghang Memorial Inter Club Football League Championship, Arnam Far Club, Ingleng village defeated Dharamtul Friends Club by 5-4.

The football championship was organised by Rajapathar Sports Association at Rajapathar playground in the memory of former Assam cabinet minister Sum Ronghang.

Vijay Ingleng of Arnam Far Club won the best player award, Mongwe Ingleng won the best goalkeeper award and Jiuma Boro of Batho Club won the top scorer award with nine goals.

#### **Indian women's team bags** silver in Asia Rugby Sevens

MUMBAI, Oct 6:Indian women's rugby team clinched a silver after going down to Philippines 5-7 in the final of the Asia Rugby Emirates Sevens Trophy in Kathmandu. The Shikha Yadav-led side reached the summit clash after thrashing Guam 24-7 in the semifinal to top

In the league round, India had stamped their authority, outclassing Sri Lanka 29–10 and Indonesia 17-10. The tournament was held over Friday and Saturday. Expressing pride in the team's silver medal performance, Indian skipper Shikha said they would strive for gold in future competitions, while also thanking their coach Waisale Serevi and the support staff. "Winning the silver again is special, but the team is eager to continue the work that each player has been putting in, to convert the colour of this medal to gold," Shikha said in a release.

"Personally, I am extremely proud of the way the team has played against formidable sides and has showcased great character at a stage as big as this.

"This is the most important event of the year for the team and we will come home knowing that we gave it our absolute best. We thank our Head Coach, Waisale Serevi and the entire supporting staff for this medal," she

#### **Badal Doshi dominates Indore leg of Indian National Rally Sprint C'ship**

INDORE, Oct 6: Mumbai's Badal Doshi shone in the fourth round of the FMSCI Indian National Rally Sprint Championship for two-wheelers, clinching victories in both the premier open and privateer classes

In the Open up to 550cc class, Doshi clocked an impressive 4:35.600 to claim victory, followed by Amarendra Sathe in second place with a time of 4:55.800, and Abhishek Pardeshi (4:59.600).

Doshi also excelled in the privateer up to 550cc class, finishing first with a time of 4:37.600 to make it a double.

The scooter (up to 210cc) category saw Syed Asif Ali emerge victorious, completing the course in 5:02.900. Muzaffir Ali (5:11.900) and Shamim Khan (5:13.800) took the second and third places respectively.

In the veterans above 50Y class, Amarendra Sathe took the top honors with a time of 4:54.600, followed by MD Saeed (5:11.100) in second and Mohan Sethiya (5:47.000) in third. The event also featured the support

sprint rally for local participants. In the 131cc up to 165cc class, Mohd Yasir Ishaq clinched first place with a time of 4:40.500, ahead of Ali Subur (4:52.000) and Arhman Mohd Khan (4:54.500).

Sheikh Altamas dominated the 166cc up to 260cc class, posting a time of 5:12.900, while Naved Khan (5:16.900) and Amir Ahmd Khan (5:19.000) rounded out the

In the ladies up to 260cc category, Anamta Khan secured first place with a time of 9:02.300, followed by Pooja Singh in second at 9:55.800. Meanwhile, in the scooter up to 210cc class, Syed Abu Bakkar won with a time of 5:47.100, with Ali Subur (5:58.000) and Subhan Khan (6:30.000) completing the podium. The next round will be in Guwahati November 24 before concluding with the finals in Pune or Bangalore on December 14-

# Kartik Singh top Indian at 18th, China's Ding wins AAC title Japan

GOTEMBA (JAPAN), Oct 6: Young golfer Kartik Singh Championship after a final-round 67, his fourth consecutive emerged as the top Indian at the 18th position at 2024 Asia-Pacific Amateur Championship here on Sunday.

The 14-year-old, who last year became the youngest ever to make the cut at the AAC, shot rounds of 71-67-72-70 for an even par 280.

The other two Indians, who made the cut, played well in the final round.

Krishnav Nikhil Chopraa (68-77-74-67) shot his best of 3under 67 and Rakshit Dahiya (75, 71, 70, 70) carded an even par 70 for the second straight round. The duo finished 6-over and were Tied-37th.

All of them came back in the morning to finish their third round – Kartik had nine holes left, while the other two had 11 and 12 holes left. Despite the long day at the heavy and rainsoaked Taiheiyo Golf Club, they had a good final day.

Kartik said, "I parred the entire back nine of the thitd round, where I began bogey-bogey and then had 16 pars. In the fourth, my driver did not work well and I was saved by my short game. Still, it was a great experience on a great golf

China's Wenyi Ding won the 2024 Asia-Pacific Amateur

67 at the par-70 Taiheiyo Club Gotemba.

But his 12-under total for a win which gives him exemption into the 2025 Masters and the 2025 Open, saw him face a major dilemma.

Before the event, he had said he would turn pro even if he won the event, but once the emotional win had been achieved he seemed to be wavering.

He said, "It is now a problem. I want to turn pro because I can get a DP World Tour card, but this is a big chance.

He will soon need to take that call, though before the event he maintained he would become a pro and even forfeit the two major exemptions.

Ding is set to get a card from the DPWT because of a newly instituted Global Amateur Pathway (GAP) by the DPWT.

This June the DPWT announced the GAP by which the highest ranked eligible male player receive the first-ever DPWT Tour Card under the programme.

The player should not be a current NCAA Division I (US) college golf player and be 20 years at the end of the ranking year. Ding at No.5 is the highest eligible player and turns 20

Diksha misses cut, team

# England aims to challenge struggling Pak with new-look attack in 1st test

MULTAN, Oct 6: England is aiming to challenge struggling Pakistan with a new-look pace attack in the opening test of a threematch series, starting in the searing heat of Multan on Mon-

Fast bowler Brydon Carse will make his test debut with Gus Atkinson set to play his first overseas test after his impressive home season against the West Indies and Sri Lanka. All-rounder Chris Woakes was penciled in to the starting XI after

Ben Stokes was ruled out for the fourth successive test match due to ongoing rehabilitation on his injured hamstring. Woakes will be playing his first match in two-anda-half years and it will be his first test in Asia since 2016. Carse's pace gave him the edge

over Olly Stone and Matthew Potts for the tour of Pakistan and England hopes the Durham pace bowler will challenge the batters by regularly clocking over 90mph. England will be led by Ollie

Pope, who guided the team to a 2-1 home series against Sri Lanka in the absence of the injured Stokes. The England captain sustained his hamstring injury during the Hundred and might return to lead the side in the second test, also in



"I was kind of just learning on the job," Pope said. "Obviously my first time captain abroad. Ben's going to be around as well... so I can listen to the voices around me but still keep doing things in my way.'

England flattened Pakistan 3-0 through its high-risk, high-reward "Bazball" approach during the 2022 tour when it played at Multan, Karachi and Rawalpindi.

They were scheduled to play at the same venues this time around, but renovation work at the National Bank Stadium in Karachi for next year's Champions Trophy forced the Pakistan Cricket Board to organize back-to-back tests at Multan with Rawalpindi set to host the third test from Oct. 24.

England also named spinners Jack Leach and Shoaib Bashir in the playing XI in anticipation of the pitch flattening out in temperatures of 40 degrees Celsius that are expected over the next week in Multan. Leach was the second highest wicket-taker in the last series in Pakistan with 15 wickets.

"Everyone's so happy to have Leach in and around the squad for this series," Pope said. "We obviously saw how well he bowled last time here on pitches that (are) al-

ways offering a great deal ... and

he's worked closely with Shoaib Bashir throughout his Somerset career and those guys go really

Pakistan has strengthened its batting line-up by including allrounder Aamer Jamal for the first test after being routed 2-0 by Bangladesh at home in the last series. Shan Masood has lost all five test matches since he was elevated to red-ball captain.

Masood lost 3-0 to Australia in his debut series as test skipper when Jamal took 18 wickets and came in handy as a batter down the order. Jamal missed the series against Bangladesh because he was undergoing rehabilitation on a back injury.

"We have got an edge with the return of Aamer Jamal," Masood said. "He also bats down the order and picked up 18 wickets. We have (leg-spinner) Abrar and (offspinner) Salman to give us spin Pakistan has a woeful record in

home test matches and hasn't won at home since beating South Africa 2-0 in early 2021, while losing to England, Australia and Bangladesh. New Zealand also came close, but Pakistan managed to draw the series 0-0. Pakistan had its moments to

beat England when both teams last

met at Multan two years ago. Legspinner Abrar Ahmed made an impressive debut by grabbing 11 wickets before Pakistan narrowly lost by 26 runs when Mark Wood, missing in this series due to injury, claimed the key wicket of Saud Shakeel.

"It was my dream debut and last time we lost quite close," Abrar said on the eve of the first test. "I hope to give a match-winning performance this time around and bring some happy moments.' Pakistan's top-order batters

have long been struggling and premier batter Babar Azam hasn't scored a half-century in his last 16 test innings. Opener Abdullah Shafique also struggled against Bangladesh while Masood couldn't convert starts into big scores with only one half-century in four innings.

But Masood insisted Pakistan needed to give its struggling batters a longer run as he searched to win key moments and find momentum in the series against aggressive England.

"We came close to winning last time, but we let the matches slip away," Masood said. "We know how they play, but at the end of the day we have to see how to tackle it. We are clear in our mind and that's why we have named the XI." (AP)

# finishes 12th at Aramco Series



SHENZHEN, Oct 6: India's Diksha Dagar endured another disappointing day with a four-over 77 to miss the cut at Aramco Team Series here. After a 76 in the first round, the Indian needed a low round to make the cut, but it just did not happen as she had only one birdie against five bogeys, four of which were on the backstretch of the course.

Diksha's team also finished 12th and her teammates were Moa Folke, Xinyu Cao and Ding.

The highlight was Folke pulling off a hole-in-one on the Par-3 eighth hole. In the Individual competition, China's Xivu Lin and France's Celine Boutier were tied at the top of the leaderboard on 12-under-par.

Defending champion Lin fired another round of 67 (-6) with seven birdies and one bogey on her scorecard to have a great chance of keeping the Individual trophy with her.

Five-time LET winner Boutier followed up her first round of 66 (-

7) with a bogey-free 68 (-5) on day two to join the Olympic bronze medallist at the top of the leader-

China's Wenbo Liu was in outright third place on nine-under-par after carding a 68 (-5) in the second round. Six players are in a share of fourth place on eight-under-par including France's Pauline Roussin-Bouchard who fired the round of the day with a 66 (-7).

Team Tamburlini secured a onestroke victory winning with a total of 37-under-par in the Team event.

The quartet of Switzerland's Chiara Tamburlini, South Africa's Lee-Anne Pace, China's Qianhui Lin and amateur Yanxuan Peng began the day in second place on -19 on the World Cup Course.

It came down to the final hole. where the captain, Tamburlini, rolled in her birdie putt to spark celebrations on the green. Pace was on a winning team in the Team event for the first time.

Team Boutier pushed the winners all the way, finishing in second place on 36-under-par after producing back-to-back rounds of -18 in China. Team Angel Yin were third on 34under. The cut fell at +2 with 65 players making it through to the final round of action at Mission Hills China. (PTI)

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