

WORLD

- Israel-Hezbollah ceasefire appears to hold
- Imran's party suspends protest in Islamabad

NATION

- Will back PM Modi, Shah's Maharashtra CM pick: Shinde
- 'PM, Shah to decide on Maha CM in 2-3 days'



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Govt in touch with envoys on 'restricted' travel advisories for NE: CM

KAZIRANGA, Nov 27: Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma on Wednesday said that his government is in touch with envoys of various countries to change the perception about the Northeast as many nations issue travel advisories putting the region under the "restricted" category.

He also asserted that the ongoing ethnic violence in Manipur has not impacted the tourism sector in the other seven states of the Northeast.

Supporting him, Union tourism minister Gajendra Singh Shekhawat, in a joint press meet after

inaugurating the 12th International Tourism Mart (ITM) here, urged the media to break the "false narrative created with bad intent".

Sarma claimed that barring a few incidents, most of the northeastern states have been free from any militancy or law and order issues.

"Assam has not witnessed any violence for the last 4-5 years. But many countries issue advisories putting the Northeast under the restricted category. We are in constant touch with the embassies because perception is very important. Management

of perception is an important issue for bringing foreign tourists," he told reporters. He said the state government keeps inviting ambassadors of various countries to change their perception and the Centre is also helping a lot in this process.

"I guess it will take some more time to change the perception... Countries like the US and Japan have put some kind of question mark for their citizens visiting the Northeast. So, perception management is a big issue before we can get foreign tourist footfall in the state and the region," he added.

The CM said that Assam witnessed 10 lakh tourist inflow in the last one year, including 27,700 foreigners.

Shekhawat said, "That is another reason to hold the 12th ITM here. I have a strong belief that people coming here will write positive things after having witnessed the beauty and peace, and development work. I wish and request all the bloggers to showcase this event and write down in your platform what you have experienced here. This will help change the perception."

Sarma, when asked if unabated violence in Manipur since May 2023 is a setback for tourism in the Northeast, said, "Manipur is 800 km away from here. It will take two days to reach the exact violence site. Now, is an event in Rajasthan a setback for Haryana? Media at times do injustice to us." He said it is important to understand the geography of the Northeast.

"We are culturally one, but are different states. People of Northeast are frustrated when you (media) try to interlink (CONTD. ON PAGE-2)

Tender for Kaziranga elevated corridor to be floated soon

Rhino horn smuggling has almost stopped, claims CM Himanta

KAZIRANGA, Nov 27: Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma on Wednesday said the tender for the much-talked-about 38 km elevated corridor in Kaziranga National Park is likely to be issued within the next 4-5 months.

Addressing a joint press conference with Union tourism minister Gajendra Singh Shekhawat on the occasion of the 12th International Tourism Mart (ITM) here, Sarma said the Union road, transport and highways ministry has nearly com-

pleted all the preliminary work for the project.

"I think in the next 4-5 months, the tender will be issued. Alignment has been sanctioned and I think it will now go to (Union) cabinet for final approval," the CM said.

Union minister of road transport and highways Nitin Gadkari in November 2022 had approved a four-lane 38-km long elevated corridor on the NH-715 in Kaziranga National Park for Rs 6,000 crore.

"Elevated corridor in Kaziranga is a very important project. During floods, animals migrate from one side of the forest to another and in the process, a lot of lives are lost," Sarma said. The proposed elevated road, which (CONTD. ON PAGE-2)

Maharashtra CM falls in line, decks clear for BJP CM Devendra Fadnavis likely successor of Shinde



ference at his home in Thane, Shinde (60) said he will "fully support" BJP leadership's decision to name the next CM, and won't be a

hurdle in the process. "I called PM Modi and Amit Shah yesterday and told them to decide (on who will be the CM

post), and assured them that I will abide by whatever decision they take," Shinde said.

"Our Shiv Sena will fully support the BJP's decision to name the next Maharashtra CM. There is no speed breaker from our side," Shinde said, showing no trace on his face of having to swallow the bitter pill.

Deputy CM Ajit Pawar told reporters that the new CM is likely to be sworn in either on November 30 or December 1. There will be two deputy chief ministers in the new government, he added.

Shinde rubbished reports that he was disappointed for not getting a second term as CM despite the ruling Mahayuti alliance winning a

thumping victory under his leadership.

"Nobody is annoyed. We have worked as Mahayuti," he said.

Asked if he was dismayed that he was not getting a second term, Shinde said, "There is no such thing. You must remember that BJP supported my tenure as CM."

"There is a meeting in Delhi tomorrow with Amit bhai (Shah) and all related decisions will be taken there," Shinde said, adding the modalities of forming the new government will be finalised in meeting at Delhi. "I thank the people and voters of Maharashtra once again for this landslide victory in the recent assembly elections," he said. (CONTD. ON PAGE-2)

HT BRIEFS

Border talks

SHILLONG: Meghalaya Chief Minister Conrad K Sangma said that the second phase of border talks with Assam will resume very soon. Speaking to media persons today, Sangma said, "We hope that the border talks with Assam will be able to resume soon but not possible for me to give you a time right now until I have a word with my counterpart." He added, "We have been communicating but in between we had elections, by-elections and other things so it has been quite complicated because of those aspects not because of any other factor, but because we have been also tied up with so many other issues like today's oath-taking has taken place." "So now we'll see, will be communicating. I think the Maharashtra government is still being formed, so elections just got over in Jharkhand and therefore, these things have come up, which have delayed the overall talks," he further added.

Foundation laid

GUWAHATI: Pramod Boro, Chief Executive Member (CEM) of the Bodoland Territorial Council (BTC), laid the foundation stone for a new approach road connecting NH-127E to the Eklavya Model Residential School (EMRS) in Dalbari, Baksa, the CEM announced on Wednesday. This project is set to enhance connectivity and open up new opportunities for the local community. Taking to the micro-blogging site X, Boro stated, "Today, we laid the foundation stone for the construction of the approach road from NH-127E to EMRS, Dalbari, Baksa. This vital project aims to enhance connectivity and create new opportunities for the people of Baksa." Joining the ceremony were BTCLA Speaker Kati Ram Baro and MLA Bhupen Boro, who emphasized the significance of the project in improving infrastructure and access to education in the Bodoland Territorial Region (BTR).

Kukis who fled Manipur will be sent back, talks to begin soon: KAAC

DIPHU, Nov 27: The Karbi Anglong Autonomous Council (KAAC) in Assam said it will facilitate the return of around 1,000 Kuki-Zo people who took shelter in the Singhasan hills since the outbreak of violence in Manipur last year.

Meetings will be held with different stakeholders on the issue to facilitate the return of the Kuki-Zos who have come here, KAAC Chief Executive Member (CEM) Tuliram Ronghang said.

"We are not going to forcefully evict them but will facilitate their return after discussions with various social and political organisations, including those from the Kuki community," he said.

Ronghang said land rights would be given only to people who have lived in



the Karbi Anglong district since its establishment or have been longstanding permanent residents.

"Individuals migrating from outside the district, particularly those from Manipur, would not be granted land rights through our initiative of distributing land documents," he said on the sidelines of a land rights distribution programme in

the Japrajan area of Bokajan on Tuesday.

A meeting has been convened on November 28 to discuss the matter and "we are hopeful of resolving the issue amicably," he added.

Karbi Anglong and West Karbi Anglong districts are governed by the autonomous council under the Sixth Schedule of the Constitution. The two districts are home to the Karbis, which has the largest population among the hill tribes, Kukis, Hmars and Thadous.

The hills have witnessed widespread ethnic conflict between the Karbis and Kukis in the past. In the late '90s and early '00s, the conflict escalated into frequent clashes between militant groups claiming to (CONTD. ON PAGE-2)

Army intensifies search for missing man; drones, tracker dogs deployed

IMPHAL, Nov 27: A massive search operation was underway by the Army for the man who went missing from the fringe areas of the Imphal Valley two days ago, a defence spokesperson said.

Laishram Kamalbabu Singh, a native of Assam's Cachar district who lived in Khukrul in Imphal West, left home on Monday afternoon to report for work at the Leimakhong Military Station in Kangpokpi. He has been missing since then, officials said. He was a works supervisor for a contractor working with the Military Engineering Services (MES) in Leimakhong Military Station, the defence spokesperson said.

After his family reported that Singh did not return home on the evening of November 25, the Army sprung into action, immediately activating all its resources, he said.



"CCTV feeds are being carefully scanned, his co-workers are being spoken to and intense search operation, including the tracker dogs, has been launched. Despite a thorough search of the areas, neither the individual nor his two-wheeler has been located," the Kohima-based spokesperson said. "The combing operation has been further intensified, spreading across the military station and (CONTD. ON PAGE-2)

MLA writes to PM seeking intervention in B'desh

GUWAHATI, Nov 27: Assam MLA Kamalakhya Dey Purkayastha wrote to Prime Minister Narendra Modi, seeking India's intervention on alleged atrocities on minorities in Bangladesh and ensuring the release of Hindu leader Chinmoy Krishna Das.

Purkayastha, who represents Karimganj (North) bordering Bangladesh, urged the PM for immediate diplomatic intervention to hold the perpetrators of the attacks on minorities accountable.

Das, the spokesperson for Bangladesh Sammilita Sanatani Jagran Jote, was arrested from the Hazrat Shahjalal International Airport in Dhaka on Monday in a sedition case.

"His arrest under flimsy charges has raised serious concern about the targeting of religious figures who speak out against the injustice and oppression faced by Hindus and other minorities in the neighbouring country. The charges



against him appear to be politically motivated and designed to suppress his voice and the cause he represents," Purkayastha said.

The MLA urged the PM to ensure that Bangladesh allows minorities to practice their faith freely and without fear of violence or persecution in alignment with international human rights standards.

"I trust that the Government of India, under your leadership, will stand firmly (CONTD. ON PAGE-2)

Cong voices concern over safety of minorities in B'desh

NEW DELHI, Nov 27: The Congress on Wednesday expressed deep concern over the "atmosphere of insecurity" being faced by religious minorities in Bangladesh and the arrest of Hindu leader Chinmoy Krishna Das.

In a statement, chairman of the party's media and publicity department Pawan Khera said, "The Indian National Congress expects the government of India to prevail upon the Bangladesh government to take necessary steps and ensure the security of life and property of minorities in the country".

"The Indian National Congress expresses its deep concern at the atmosphere of insecurity being faced by religious minorities in Bangladesh. The arrest of the IS-CKON monk (CONTD. ON PAGE-2)

India, EU take stock of FTA negotiations; underscored lasting peace in Ukraine



NEW DELHI, Nov 27: India and the European Union held three key meetings during which they assessed the full spectrum of bilateral cooperation, took stock of the ongoing FTA negotiations and underscored the need for a comprehensive, just, and lasting peace in Ukraine.

They reiterated their shared commitment to promoting a free, open, inclusive, peaceful and prosperous Indo-Pacific, and India welcomed the EU's "increasing engagement" in the Indo-Pacific region, the min-

istry of external affairs said.

India and the EU held the 5th Strategic Partnership Review Meeting on November 22 in Brussels. The Indian side was led by secretary (West) in the MEA, Tanmaya Lal, and the EU side was led by Simon Mordue, deputy secretary general for economic and global issues, European External Action Service (EEAS).

The 10th India-EU Foreign Policy and Security Consultations and the 10th India-EU Energy Panel were also convened on November 21. Lal also met Stefano Sannino, secretary general, EEAS. The meetings were held during the 20th anniversary year of the India-EU Strategic Partnership and in the backdrop of intensification of engagement between India and the EU and its member states, the MEA said in a statement.

"The meetings assessed the full spectrum of the bilateral cooperation between India and the EU and the implementation of the detailed commitments set out in the 'India-EU Strategic Partnership: A Roadmap to 2025' agreed during the 15th India-EU Summit in 2020. The exchanges also focused on future priorities for India-EU ties and the new impetus in relations," it said. (CONTD. ON PAGE-2)

Houses adjourned due to govt's 'stubborn unwillingness' to discuss Adani issue: Cong



NEW DELHI, Nov 27: The Congress on Wednesday alleged that both Houses of Parliament got adjourned because of the government's "stubborn unwillingness" to

agree to an immediate discussion on the latest revelations regarding the Adani Group.

Congress general secretary in-charge communications Jairam

Ramesh said the Opposition continues to demand a joint parliamentary committee investigation into the entire "Modani scam".

Lok Sabha and Rajya Sabha proceedings were adjourned for the day amid opposition protests on various issues, including bribery charges related to the Adani Group.

"Today also both Houses of Parliament got adjourned because of the Govt's stubborn unwillingness to agree to an immediate discussion on the latest revelations regarding the Adani Group," Ramesh said in a post on X. "The Opposition continues to demand a JPC investigation into the entire Modani scam - which has (CONTD. ON PAGE-2)

NEW DELHI, Nov 27: Assam Day was celebrated at the 43rd India International Trade Fair (IITF) here during which various cultural dance forms like Satriya, Bihu, Karbi and Tiwa folk were performed showcasing the rich cultural heritage and diversity of the state.

This year's trade fair comes to an end on Wednesday and Assam Day was celebrated during the weekend.

Attending the event, Assam's minister for industries and commerce and cultural affairs Bimal Borah said the state has seen significant strides on the development front under chief minister Himanta Biswa Sarma and his predecessor Sarbananda Sonowal, according to a state government release.



"The state has attracted investments to the tune of several lakh crore rupees, including the ₹

27,000 crore semiconductor unit at Jagiroad while MoUs worth ₹ 13,000 crore were signed with re-

spected companies. This includes ₹ 7,000 crore greenfield project," he said. The minister said an international investors summit will be held in Guwahati in February next year.

Besides the cultural dances, Assamese singing sensation Madhab Ranjan Gogoi regaled the audience with his renditions, the release said. Dilip Saikia, an MP from Assam, while attending the function said that the state is making progress at a rapid pace and will soon join the league of five developed states in the country.

Saikia said in sync with Prime Minister Narendra Modi's vision of a 'Viksit Bharat@2047', Assam is also marching triumphantly towards a 'Viksit Assam'. "No Prime Minister ever (CONTD. ON PAGE-2)

Sensex rises by 230 pts on gains in Adani stocks, select blue-chips

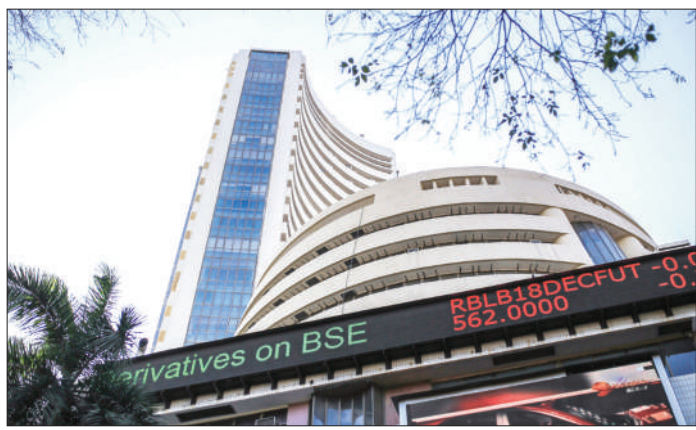
MUMBAI, Nov 27: Benchmark BSE Sensex climbed 230 points in a volatile session on Wednesday following gains in Adani group stocks and foreign fund inflows.

The 30-share index rose by 230.02 points or 0.29 per cent to settle at 80,234.08 as 18 of its shares closed in green and 12 in red. During the day, it surged 507.09 points or 0.63 per cent to 80,511.15.

In a see-saw trade, the NSE Nifty rose by 80.40 points or 0.33 per cent to 24,274.90. The index moved between a high of 24,354.55 and a low of 24,145.65.

Utilities, power, services and capital goods shares advanced while realty and healthcare stocks were the laggards.

Adani group shares led the recovery rising up to nearly 20 per cent after the group clarified that chairman Gautam Adani and his aides have not been charged under the US Foreign Corrupt Practices Act. They faced three other charges, including securities and wire fraud that are punishable with



monetary fines, the group stated.

Adani Ports & SEZ was the biggest gainer among Sensex stocks, rising by 6 per cent. HDFC Bank rose by 1.43 per cent contributing over 167 points to total Sensex gains.

NTPC, Bajaj Finance, Maruti and Axis Bank were among the other gainers.

In contrast, Titan, State Bank of India, Asian Paints, Tata Consultancy Services, HCL Tech, Sun

Pharma, IndusInd Bank and ICICI Bank were among the laggards.

Foreign institutional investors were net buyers in equity markets on Tuesday which also bought strengthened the sentiment. FIIs bought equities worth ₹ 1,157.70 crore on Tuesday, according to exchange data.

"In Asia, market sentiment was mixed due to the potential tariff impositions by the US. Meanwhile, the Chinese market re-

bounded on expectations of additional stimulus measures," Vinod Nair, Head of Research, Geojit Financial Services, said.

In Asian markets, Shanghai and Hong Kong settled in the green, while Seoul and Tokyo ended lower. European markets were trading mostly lower. The US markets ended in positive territory on Tuesday. Global oil benchmark Brent crude climbed 0.63 per cent to USD 73.23 a barrel.

The BSE smallcap gauge climbed 1.18 per cent and midcap index went up by 0.34 per cent.

Among sectoral indices, BSE utilities soared the most by 3.11 per cent, followed by power (2.74 per cent), services (2.53 per cent), industrials (1.35 per cent), telecommunication (1.17 per cent), capital goods (1.13 per cent) and commodities (1.05 per cent).

Realty and BSE Focused IT were the laggards.

As many as 2,593 stocks advanced while 1,335 declined and 112 remained unchanged on the BSE. (PTI)

Contd. from Page 1...

Tender for Kaziranga elevated

will include tunnels in certain areas, is considered crucial to ensure a safe passage for wild animals crossing from Kaziranga National Park to Karbi Anglong district across NH-715, especially during the monsoon when the forest is inundated by Brahmaputra floodwaters. The project has garnered significant attention over the years, with the chief minister raising the issue with the Centre shortly after assuming office in 2021.

Every year, numerous animals are killed by speeding vehicles while attempting to cross the highway, highlighting the urgent need for a safer passage.

Talking about rhino poaching in Kaziranga, the CM said, "Rhino horn smuggling has almost stopped. Before 2014, we faced numerous rhino poaching incidents. However, we have reduced it to zero or sometimes just one. People have been martyred while trying to conserve wildlife in Assam. It is never seen anywhere in India." (PTI)

Govt in touch with envoys on 'restricted'

Manipur with Kaziranga," Sarma said. He asserted that a lot of people in Assam have never travelled to Manipur in their entire lifetime. "Linking Manipur incidents with Kaziranga and Manas National Park is an injustice to us. Incidents have taken place in Manipur. Out of eight states in the Northeast, ethnic violence has happened in one. But it has no impact on tourism of the other seven states at all," the CM stressed.

He alleged that such a negative perception is usually created by media from outside the region. "We are completely different states although we are emotionally, geographically one. But the distance between the two states is very much," Sarma said. On the same lines, Shekhawat said it might take more than four days to reach Manipur from some places in Arunachal Pradesh.

"We need to break the false perception. Do you see any impact of Manipur here? If not, then you should strongly show that through your media. Bring the truth before the people to break the false narrative created with bad intent," he added. Shekhawat said that Prime Minister Narendra Modi announced visa relaxations for people coming to India for tourism. "We have also announced e-visa facilities for people coming for various types of tourism. With these initiatives, I hope tourism will get a boost all across the country, especially in the Northeast," he added. He also said that infrastructure plays an important role in the growth of the tourism sector and the NDA government in the last 10 years has given focus on developing the road network.

"Northeast is the most beautiful part of our country, yet it is under-explored. It is a hidden gem of India. Both international and domestic tourists get a beautiful platter of diversity in the region," Shekhawat said. Sarma, however, said infrastructure remains a big challenge despite many projects going on. "We have airports, but the frequency of flights is very less. We need to focus on that. In the Northeast, roads are being built to difficult destinations. It may take another 4-5 years to complete the ongoing road projects, then we will get a boost," he added.

"All eight states are collaborating very closely. Infrastructure is being developed across the region," he added. Sarma claimed that prior to 2014, the region was politically unstable with various agitations and uncontrolled militant movements. "Since 2014, a number of peace accords have been signed, militants have laid down arms and peace has become the primary conviction for development of tourism. If there is no peace, you can't think of tourism. All peace agreements are paying rich dividends now," he stressed.

Sarma also proposed a central tourism museum in New Delhi or Guwahati, which will play a crucial role in promoting Northeast India as a distinct tourism circuit. "In the next 10 years, we hope to ramp up the tourism sector in Assam, and take it to the level immediately after the service and agriculture sectors," he added. (PTI)

Devendra Fadnavis likely successor

"I am a worker forever; for me, CM is not Chief Minister but Common Man," he said. Shinde thanked PM Modi and Home minister Amit Shah for supporting him during his two-and-a-half year tenure as chief minister. "I am not disappointed. We fight and don't cry," Shinde said, referring to media reports that he was unhappy over being asked to step down despite leading the Mahayuti to a massive poll victory. "I worked as the CM not to become popular but for the welfare of people of Maharashtra," Shinde said. Maharashtra BJP chief Chandrashekhar Bawankule thanked Shinde for stating that he will abide by the decision of the top BJP leadership on the next chief minister of the state.

Speaking to reporters in Nagpur soon after Shinde, at present a caretaker chief minister, made clear his stand, Bawankule slammed the opposition for trying to spread rumours and cast aspersions on Shinde's character. "I want to thank Shinde. He today made clear his stand on the chief minister's post. He has taken an important stand. I am proud of him," the BJP leader said. Maharashtra Congress president Nana Patole claimed that the BJP's central leadership pressured Shinde to give up his claim on the chief minister's post.

Patole said it was suspicious that so much time was being taken to form the next government despite the Mahayuti alliance getting a brute majority. "The BJP's central leadership pressured Shinde to give up his claim on the CM post," he said. Senior Congress leader Balasaheb Thorat said Shinde must be confused and bewildered because of the mandate which was not expected. Union minister and RPI (A) leader Ramdas Athawale voiced support for Devendra Fadnavis as the next chief minister, but stressed that he would abide by the BJP "high command's" decision on the matter. (PTI)

Kukis who fled Manipur will

represent the two communities -- United People's Democratic Solidarity (UPDS) and the Kuki Revolutionary Army (KRA), resulting in the killing of over 100 people. The Karbi militant outfits signed a peace agreement with the government in 2021, ending the violence.

The conflict between the Karbis and Kukis has its roots in disputes over land, resources and political representations. Over 250 people have been killed in the ethnic clashes between Kuki-Zos and the Meitei community in Manipur since May last year. Thousands of people have been displaced by the violence, which broke out over the Meitei community's demand for tribal status and the tribal Kuki-Zo people's opposition to it. (PTI)

Army intensifies search for missing

adjointing villages. Drones and other aerial platforms have also been integrated," he said. Army authorities have also interacted with the region's CSOs (civil society organisations) to trace the missing individuals, he said, adding that the family has been assured of all efforts being undertaken for an early and safe return of Singh. The state police have also started an investigation, the spokesperson said. The incident led to tensions in the fringe areas of the Imphal Valley on Tuesday with hundreds of people from the Meitei community beginning a march to the military station to know Singh's whereabouts. However, they were stopped midway near Kanto Sabal to prevent an escalation of the situation. After being stopped, the mob blocked the road with rocks. "Army has requested the Meitei CSOs to remove blockades for a free and swift movement of the armed forces and police," the defence official said. (PTI)

MLA writes to PM Modi

for the protection of religious freedom and the rights of minorities, both within India and in neighbouring countries, especially in times of such grave injustice," he said. Purkayastha, a Congress MLA who has extended support to the BJP government without giving up his assembly membership, also sent a copy of the letter to chief minister Himanta Biswa Sarma. (PTI)

Cong voices concern over

is the latest example," he said. A lawyer was killed on Tuesday during clashes between security personnel and followers of Das, who was denied bail and sent to jail by a court in the port city of Chattogram in Bangladesh in a sedition case. Das, the spokesperson for Bangladesh Sammilita Sanatani Jagran Jote, was arrested from the Hazrat Shahjalal International Airport in Dhaka a day earlier. India on Tuesday noted with "deep concern" the arrest and denial of bail to the Hindu leader and urged authorities in the neighbouring country to ensure the safety and security of Hindus and all other minority groups.

Bangladesh reacted sharply to the ministry of external affairs statement, saying it was unfounded and stood contrary to the spirit of friendship between the two countries. In its statement, Dhaka said it does not interfere with the country's judiciary, which is fully independent. (PTI)

India, EU take stock of FTA

"The commitment by President von der Leyen in the Political Guidelines for 2024-2029 to develop a new India-EU strategic agenda was welcomed," the statement said. The discussions focused on a broad range of topics, including economic security, green transition, defence and security cooperation, migration, mobility, India-EU Connectivity Partnership, Global Gateway, and IMEC (India-Middle East-Europe Economic Corridor), the MEA said. "Both sides also discussed furthering cooperation in the sphere of innovation, science and technology, including positive developments in the context of the India-EU Trade and Technology Council (TTC), and the opportunities to increase people-to-people contacts in education and research," it added.

They also took stock of the ongoing negotiations for a Free Trade Agreement (FTA), Investment Protection Agreement and Agreement on Geographical Indications and agreed on their importance. The two sides also underscored the "need for a comprehensive, just, and lasting peace in Ukraine in accordance with international law and consistent with the purposes and principles of the United Nations Charter", the statement said. (PTI)

Houses adjourned due to govt's

global ramifications and has been born out of the cozy relationship between the PM and Gautam Adani," he said. Gautam Adani, founder chairman of the ports-to-energy conglomerate, his nephew Sagar, and another key executive have been charged by the US Department of Justice of being part of an alleged scheme to pay USD 265 million bribes to Indian officials to win contracts for the supply of solar electricity that would yield USD 2 billion profit over a 20-year period. Rajya Sabha proceedings were adjourned for the day on Wednesday as opposition members insisted on a discussion on various issues, including bribery charges related to the Adani Group. In the Lok Sabha, proceedings were adjourned for the day amid opposition protests over the Adani controversy and violence in Uttar Pradesh's Sambhal. (PTI)

Folk artistes showcase rich

has given so much importance to Assam and the Northeast region than Modi," he said. State's secretary, industries & commerce, Indira Kalita delivered the welcome address. Assam Industrial Development Corporation (AIDC) MD Manabendra Pratap Singh, vice chairman Navadeep Kalita and OSD, Assam Bhawan, New Delhi, Vaishali Nayak besides pavilion director Debajit Phukan were present on the occasion.

As many as seven Assam government departments and PSUs including the Directorate of Information and Public Relations, Tourism, Directorate of Tea, Guwahati Tea Auction Centre, 37 MSME units and start-ups participated in the fair.

One of the highlights of the Assam Pavilion was a stall on 'Agar' (perfume) and its derivatives by MJI Perfumes - Assam's first licensed manufacturing cum retail unit for perfume and agar. Under the Assam Agarwood Promotion Policy 2020, the state government supports Agar cultivation and its downstream industries from perfumes to critical chemical ingredients used in medicines, etc. (PTI)

Kotak Transportation & Logistics Fund launched

HT Bureau

GUWAHATI, Nov 27: Kotak Mahindra Asset Management Company Ltd ("KMAMC"/"Kotak Mutual Fund") has launched the Kotak Transportation & Logistics Fund, an open-ended equity scheme focused on the Transportation & Logistics theme. The New Fund Offer (NFO) opens for subscription on Nov 25, 2024, and closes on December 9.

The Kotak Transportation & Logistics Fund aims to generate long-term capital growth by investing predominantly in equity and equity-related securities of companies engaged in transportation, logistics, and related activities. This theme encompasses businesses involved in transportation infrastructure, logistics services, innovative solutions for efficient and sustainable transportation, and financial companies supporting these sectors.

Nilesh Shah, managing director, KMAMC, stated, "With the launch of the Kotak Transportation & Logistics Fund, we provide investors an opportunity to participate in India's rapidly transforming transportation and logistics theme. This growth is fuelled by rising vehicle ownership, the shift from fossil fuel engines to electric vehicles, and increasing per capita GDP. Major government initiatives like Bharatmala and GatiShakti will enhance efficiency and expand business opportunities in the logistics industries. With India's expanding manufacturing industry, the transportation and logistics industry is set for significant expansion."

Harsha Upadhyaya, chief investment officer - Equity & Fund Manager, KMAMC, added, "The transportation and logistics theme stands to benefit from multiple tailwinds, including growing consumption, increasing per capita GDP, and the growth of e-commerce, auto, and auto-ancillary businesses. The government's focus on reducing transportation costs by creating an efficient logistics network will not only aid sector growth but also attract new players. Over the last five years, there has been a 44% increase in the number of listed companies in this space. Demand for transportation and logistics services is expected to grow significantly as the India Story unfolds in the coming years."

Akasa Air redefines travel experience with industry-first offerings

HT Bureau

GUWAHATI, Nov 27: Akasa Air on Wednesday claimed that it has redefined travel experience through its suite of unique, industry-first offerings that put passengers at the heart of their service, setting new benchmarks for comfort, convenience, and customer satisfaction, said an official statement.

The statement further said that Akasa Air has several initiatives, from gourmet in-flight dining to pet-friendly travel, all driven by a commitment to inclusivity and service excellence. Commenting on the same, Belson Coutinho, co-founder and chief marketing & experience officer, Akasa Air opined that service excellence is a key culture pillar and a part of our DNA here at Akasa.

"At Akasa Air, service excellence is a key culture pillar and a part of our DNA. Two years ago, we had set out with a promise to offer a dependable experience, and we are pleased that team Akasa has delivered on the promise through our warm and efficient flying experience," the statement quoted him saying.

Coutinho also said that their customers are at the heart of everything we do at Akasa Air, and they continue to use customer feedback to build on the strong foundation of the Akasa experience. "We are now an international airline, and we are proud to take the Akasa experience and Indian hospitality to the world," he concluded.

It is worth mentioning that Akasa Air's empathetic and youthful personality, employee-friendly culture, customer-service philosophy, and tech-led approach have made it the airline of choice for millions of customers. Since its inception, Akasa Air has redefined flying in India with its multiple industry-first and customer-friendly offerings.

India-Russia trade hits USD 66bn in 2024; target of USD 100bn by 2030 on track: Russian envoy

KOLKATA, Nov 27: A senior Russian diplomat on Wednesday said bilateral trade between the two countries has reached a record USD 66 billion in 2024, marking a fivefold increase over the past five years, with a 9 per cent rise in the first eight months of this year.

The envoy said Russia and India are on track to achieve the ambitious USD 100 billion trade target by 2030, bolstered by expanding collaborations and diversified trade opportunities.

"The recent dialogues between leaders of both countries on the possibilities of diversifying the trade basket and increasing the volume of investments in multiple sectors make the target of USD 100 billion by 2030 an achievable one," said Maxim V. Kozlov, Russian Consul General in Kolkata, at an interactive session with members



of the Bharat Chamber of Commerce (BCC). "India and Russia are more than strategic partners; we are all-weather friends. Our bond is built on mutual trust and shared interests, making the growth of our economic ties both natural and enduring," Kozlov added.

Key sectors identified for enhanced cooperation include railways, pharmaceuticals, information technology, aviation, and cybersecurity.

Officials also highlighted emerging opportunities for Indian businesses in Russia, particularly after

the withdrawal of Western brands following the Ukraine conflict.

BCC, in a statement, said Kozlov also emphasised the need to deepen collaboration in critical areas such as Artificial Intelligence (AI), robotics, urban development, and critical metals like lithium, cobalt, and nickel, which are essential for next-generation industries.

"The goal is to move beyond raw material trade and emerge as global leaders in technology-driven sectors," he added.

BCC senior vice-president Naresh Pachisia requested Kozlov to initiate the setting up of a trade desk at the Russian Federation in Kolkata, given the emerging trade and investment developments. "This will play a pivotal role in facilitating business networks between Indian businesses and their Russian counterparts," he added. (PTI)

NFR achieves over 66 percent electrification milestone



HT Bureau

GUWAHATI, Nov 27: Northeast Frontier Railway (NFR) continues to make significant strides in its electrification mission as part of Indian Railways' ambitious goal to achieve 100 percent electrification and net-zero carbon emissions. As of November 2024, NFR has successfully electrified a total of 2,827.74 Route Kilometres (RKM), which is above 66.00 percent of the total target of 4,260.52 RKM, reflecting rapid yearly progress in modernising its rail network.

Electrification has been completed across various divisions of NFR, with Lumding (986.76 RKM), Katihar (747.12 RKM), Alipurduar (618.75 RKM), Rangiya (433.8 RKM), and Tinsukia (41.31 RKM) contributing to the total. Among the states under the NFR jurisdiction, Assam leads with 1,401.46 RKM of electrified

tracks, followed by West Bengal (935.94 RKM), Bihar (318.87 RKM), and Tripura (151.58 RKM). Electrification in states like Meghalaya, Mizoram, Nagaland, and Manipur has also been initiated, showcasing NFR's commitment to inclusive infrastructure development in the North-eastern region.

During the last fiscal year, electrification of 921.62 RKM was achieved, with an additional 244.6 RKM electrified up to November 2024. Targeting a greener and more efficient network, NFR aims to electrify 1,573 RKM during the financial year 2024-25, significantly advancing its total electrification plan of 4,260.52 RKM.

This large-scale electrification project is being executed by premier agencies, including Indian Railway Construction International Limited (IRCON), Rail India Technical and Economic Service (RITES), and NFR/Construction. The completion of these electrification projects is expected to bring about multiple benefits, including eco-friendly and energy-efficient rail operations. It will reduce dependence on crude oil while enhancing train punctuality and speeds due to seamless traction. NFR remains steadfast in its mission to provide a modern, efficient, and green transportation network for the region, supporting the broader goals of economic growth, environmental sustainability, and improved connectivity in the far-flung areas of the North-eastern states with the rest of the nation.

Malaria outbreak sparks health crisis in Kokrajhar

Over 2,000 cases reported this year as authorities ramp up efforts to combat the surge

HT Correspondent

KOKRAJHAR, Nov 27: The surge of malaria in Kokrajhar district and its adjoining areas has been creating chaos among the citizens over the past few days.

Notably, five people have succumbed to the disease in recent days—including a 4-year-old girl—raising significant public health concerns in the region.

According to official data, 2,096 malaria-positive cases have been recorded in 2024 so far, compared to just 256 cases in 2023.

A review meeting on the malaria outbreak was held at Chandrapara in Kokrajhar with officials from the medical department, the district malaria officer, and other stakeholders. The meeting, chaired by Bodoland Territorial Region (BTR) Executive Member Arup Kumar Dey, the district commissioner, and CEM Pramod Boro, focused on strategies to curb the spread of the disease in the region.

Pramod Boro, chief executive



member of the Bodoland Territorial Region, chaired the meeting and discussed preventive measures and strategic initiatives to eradicate malaria.

CEM Boro stated that malaria cases are rising in Kokrajhar district and other parts of BTR, with 2,096 cases reported (Plasmodium Vivax: 1,674, Plasmodium Falciparum: 422) and five fatalities. He said that the BTR government and the Health Department are taking stern steps to eradicate malaria through strategic measures. He informed that the concerned authorities have initiated necessary actions such as organising medical camps, active monitoring, bolstering health teams, and deploying ambulance

services in the affected areas. He urged everyone to take precautions to prevent the spread of the disease and to avail the medical facilities being provided by the Health and Family Welfare Department.

"Our government remains committed to achieving a 'Malaria-Free BTR'. Reaffirming this commitment, I chaired a meeting on Tuesday evening with officials from the medical department to discuss strategies to curb the spread of this dreaded disease in the region," Boro added.

Meanwhile, Dr P Ashok Babu, commissioner & secretary to the government of Assam, Health & Family Welfare Department, is scheduled to arrive in Kokrajhar on Thursday morning to assess the prevailing malaria situation. He will visit the malaria-endemic Lungtung area to evaluate the situation and hold a review meeting with officials from the Health Department and district administration.

Bodoland showcases its tourism potential at International Tourism Mart

HT Bureau

GUWAHATI, Nov 27: Nestled in the heart of the state, Bodoland is a land of enchanting natural beauty, vibrant culture, and diverse wildlife. This untapped paradise was the centerpiece of Bodoland Tourism's participation in the 12th International Tourism Mart held in Kaziranga.

Led by BTC Executive Member for Tourism, Dr Dharma Narayan Das, and BTR CHD for Tourism, Jayanta Sharma, the Bodoland delegation showcased the region's tourism potential through an exhibition stall. The stall highlighted the pristine landscapes of Manas and Raimona National Parks, the cultural richness of indigenous communities, and initiatives in eco-tourism and adventure tourism.

Union minister of Culture and Tourism Gajendra Singh Shekhawat, along with state chief minister Himanta Biswa Sarma, Arunachal Pradesh chief minister

Pema Khandu, and state ministers Atul Bora, Keshab Mahanta, and Jayanta Malla Barua, visited the Bodoland Tourism stall and applauded its efforts in promoting the region's heritage and natural treasures.

Interacting with the tourists, BTC EM Dr Dharma Narayan Das remarked, "Bodoland is a hidden jewel of India, offering unparalleled natural beauty, cultural diversity, and unique tourism experiences."

It is noteworthy that Prime Minister Narendra Modi, during the Bodoland Mohatsav held in New Delhi on November 15, 2024, praised Assam's tourism sector, saying, "Assam is a great strength of India's tourism sector, while Bodoland is the strength of Assam's tourism." Inspired by this recognition, the BTR government, under BTC chief Pramod Boro, has been implementing innovative strategies to unlock the full tourism potential of Bodoland.

BTC chief launches key infrastructure & agriculture initiatives

HT Bureau

GUWAHATI, Nov 27: In a major step towards enhancing connectivity and driving development in the Bodoland Territorial Region, BTC chief Pramod Boro laid the foundation stone for the construction of an approach road linking NH-127E to the Eklavya Model Residential School (EMRS) at Dolbari, Baksa on Wednesday. This project aims to enhance infrastructure, improve accessibility, and create new opportunities for the people of Baksa district.

Addressing the gathering, BTC chief Boro highlighted the transformative potential of the project, stating, "This initiative reflects our commitment to building robust infrastructure and ensuring that development reaches every corner of Baksa. By improving connectivity, we are paving the way for a prosperous and progressive future for the BTR."

Once completed, the road will provide seamless access to EMRS Dolbari and strengthen regional growth by connecting key transportation routes.

The programme was attended by several dignitaries, including the Speaker of the Bodoland Territorial Council Legislative Assembly (BTCLA) Kati Ram Boro, MLA Bhupen Boro, and other officials.

During his visit, Pramod Boro participated in a ceremonial distribution of potato seed tubers at Dolbari village.

This initiative connects local farmers with Barama Cold Storage, enhancing the agricultural supply chain and ensuring efficient storage and distribution.

Modern farming equipment, including tractors and other implements, was also distributed under the Bodoland Pig Mission, a flagship program aimed at promoting sustainable agriculture and improving productivity in both crop and livestock sectors.

Speaking on the occasion, BTC chief Boro remarked, "Our farmers are the backbone of our economy. By equipping them with high-quality potato seeds and advanced machinery, we aim to empower them with the resources needed for success. These initiatives will not only boost productivity but also establish a robust supply chain that benefits farmers and consumers alike."

The Speaker of BTCLA, Kati Ram Boro, and BTC Executive Member Rakesh Brahma accompanied BTC CEM at Dolbari village.

Earlier in the day, BTC chief Boro visited the Barama Cold Storage Facility at Kadamtol to inspect its readiness to serve the farming community. Built with a capacity of 7,500 MT, the cold storage was constructed by the Agriculture Engineering Wing of BTC, Kokrajhar, and completed on June 30, 2021. The facility is currently undergoing repairs to ensure optimal functionality.

Nowgong College hosts workshop

HT Correspondent

NAGAON, Nov 27: Aligning research with sustainable development goals and focusing on societal benefits rather than personal or institutional recognition were emphasised by Prof Sashindra Kr Kakoty, former deputy director of IIT-Guwahati, at the two-day national workshop on Intellectual Property Rights (IPR) in Innovation and Academia, held at Nowgong College (Autonomous).

He also highlighted the importance of interdisciplinary approaches to innovation, encouraging researchers to look beyond traditional academic boundaries.

Kenny Basumatary's first Boro film 'Bibo Binanao' premieres at IFFI Goa

HT Correspondent

KOKRAJHAR, Nov 27: Film-maker Kenny Basumatary's first Boro film – 'Bibo Binanao' (My Three Sisters) – was showcased at the International Film Festival of India (IFFI) in Goa. Produced by the National Film Development Corporation of India (NFDC), 'Bibo Binanao' is a dramedy that tells the story of four sisters in rural Bodoland.

Pansy Brahma plays the youngest sister, Mizi, who stands by her sisters as they try to raise chickens, deal with deaths in the family, an abusive husband, life-threatening health scares, and other hurdles life throws at them. The other three sisters are played by Sangeena Brahma, Helina Daimary, and Mithinga Narzary.

"It was an absolute pleasure to

work with all these actresses. They were always prepared with their dialogues, so we could happily shoot long takes without having to frequently cut. All of them have fabulous scenes that they've performed exactly as I envisioned," Kenny said.

Rubul Boro, the Boro film industry's most regular supervillain, who also played Dog Da in 'Local Kung Fu 3' recently, takes on his first gentlemanly role in 'Bibo Binanao'.

At IFFI, Kenny walked the red carpet along with National Award-winning director Kulanandini Mahanta, who worked as the production designer on 'Bibo Binanao', and Alex Leo Pou, executive producer from NFDC. In fact, Kenny walked the red carpet a second time as part of team 'Swaragarath', which is in the Panorama

section of the festival.

Speaking about the first screening of 'Bibo Binanao', Kenny said: "We were actually apprehensive. Who on earth would come to watch a Boro film, and that too by me – I'm not exactly a festival-famous director. But to our pleasant surprise, around 70 people turned up. While the film isn't an out-and-out comedy, it was good to hear the audience laugh at the right places. Many of them came up to us afterward and said that they really liked it." People in Guwahati can watch 'Bibo Binanao' at the upcoming Brahmputra Valley Film Festival (BVFF), where it will have its Assam premiere in the competition section. A theatrical release isn't on the cards yet. "NFDC will hopefully send the film to more festivals," said Kenny.

Assamese poet shines at International Writers' Meet

HT Bureau

GUWAHATI, Nov 27: Sahitya Akademi Young Authors Travel Grant recipient poet Abhijeet Gogoi recently represented Assam and the Assamese language as a guest young poet at the International Writers' Meet organised by Byatikram, held at the conference hall of Cotton University. He said, "Since Assamese language has been recognised as a classical language, such links are relevant and important for Assamese literature and poetry, along with various subjects and experiences, as well as the field of translation." The poetry session was attended by Tendo Tajin from Japan, Kieu Bich Hau, Cao Thi Hong from Vietnam, Alexandra Nicod from Switzerland, Jorge Contreras Herrera, Jorge Antonio Garcia Pérez from Mexico, Hussein Habasch from Germany, Ahmad Al Shahawy, Dr Sara Hamid Hawass from Egypt, Miodrag Jaksic from Serbia, and other state delegates. It is to be noted that Abhijeet Gogoi's poetry has been selected for publication in the famous journal 'Indian Literature'.

Demise of Demow businessman

HT Correspondent

DEMOW, Nov 27: A seriously injured youth named Nipu Dey met with an accident in Demow Santipur on NH-37 on Monday night. According to information received, Nipu Dey, a businessman from Demow, was undergoing treatment at Assam Medical College and Hospital (AMCH) in Dibrugarh. On Tuesday evening, he succumbed to his injuries at the hospital. His demise has been widely condoled in the area. He is survived by his parents, wife, son, brothers, sisters, and a host of relatives.

APHLC urges KAAC to provide shelter for Kuki refugees, criticises CEM's stance

HT Bureau

DIPHU, Nov 27: President of All Party Hills Leaders Conference (APHLC), JI Kathar in a press conference at the party's office here on Wednesday said that if any number of Kuki refugees has come to Karbi Anglong for shelter and protection, it is the duty of the Assam government and Karbi Anglong Autonomous Council (KAAC) to give shelter and protection to the Kuki refugees.

Reading from a prepared press statement President of APHLC further said, "The statement made by Tuliram Ronghang, Chief Executive Member (CEM), Karbi Anglong Autonomous Council at Centre Bazar, Karbi Anglong during a function of distribution of land pattas on 25-11-2024 regarding influx of 1000 Kuki refugees from Manipur is drawn to the notice of the All Party Hills Leaders' Conference (APHLC). The CEM stated that he would not allow the Kuki refugees to stay in Karbi Anglong."

The statement further said, "In this connection the APHLC states that now is not the time for a responsible person holding the post of CEM to say that he will allow or not allow the Kuki refugees from Manipur to remain in Karbi Anglong. If any number of Kuki refugees has come to Karbi Anglong for shelter and protection, it is the duty of the Assam government and the KAAC to give shelter and protection to the Kuki refugees. While giving protection and shelter, the CEM should have condemned the Manipur State government for engineering continuation of ethnic killings among the Kuki-Zo and Meitei communities. After ensuring protection and shelter to the Kuki Zo victims, the CEM should demand of the Manipur government to restore peace and safety and take back the displaced Kuki-Zo refugees, if any in Karbi Anglong.

Right now giving of relief to the Kuki-Zo refugees from Manipur, if any, in Karbi Anglong who must go in distress, is needed as per rule."

"According to media, the government has stated that a large number of Hindu Bengalis have entered India because of anti-Hindu clashes in Bangladesh recently. But it is surprising that the CEM has not said a word against the large number of Bangladeshi Hindu refugees who have entered Karbi Anglong. The CEM also Families has not uttered a word against the entry of 450 Bengali Hindu refugees into Uter Borbil, Hawraghat, Karbi Anglong and encroached Professional Grazing Reserve / Village Grazing Reserve land since 1953. The CEM has not spoken against the encroachers from Bihar on the 371 bighas of land of Irrigation Department at Bokoliaghat. Over and above, according to NRC report there are one and a half lakh Bangladeshis in Karbi Anglong and West Karbi Anglong districts who are illegal immigrants and whose name are not in NRC. The government promised to deport them."

"We whole-heartedly support the demands of Uripok Apunba Lup and Uripok Nupi Apunba Lup in Manipur. We oppose the re-imposition of AFSPA in Manipur. We condemn the killings of our innocent brothers, sisters and children in Jiribam and other places in Manipur. Ostensibly, the riot in Manipur is against Kuki-Zo, but it seems that agents provocateurs have ignited it to inflict heavy destruction on both the Kuki-Zo and Meitei people because both are Indigenous Indian Mongolians. The Centre Government manned mostly by Iranian Aryan people have shown themselves to be allergic towards the people of North-East India because the people of North East India are mostly Indigenous Indian Mongolians by race."

Chinese pangolin photographed in Raimona National Park

Groundbreaking discovery by conservationists resolves distribution confusion & boosts conservation efforts for the critically endangered species

HT Bureau

GUWAHATI, Nov 27: An exciting discovery has been made in Raimona National Park by conservationists and forest officials, who have recorded the first photographic evidence of the Chinese pangolin.

As part of a study published in the 'Journal of Threatened Taxa', an internationally recognised scientific, peer-reviewed open-access journal, a team led by the Kachugaon Forest Division, Assam Forest Department, conservationists from the region's foremost biodiversity conservation organisation Aaranyak, and other organisations have confirmed the finding.

"The paper also clarified confusion regarding the occurrence of the Indian Pangolin in Assam and Northeast India, which will potentially rectify the distribution map of the IUCN Red List," says the lead author of the paper, Dr Dipankar Lahkar, a senior conservation biologist with Aaranyak.

Aaranyak's senior scientist Dr M Firoz Ahmed, along with Bhanu Sinha, Pranjal Talukdar, Biswajit Basumatary, Tunu Basumatary, Ramie H Begum, Nibir Medhi, Nitul Kalita, and Abishek Harihar, also contributed to the paper.

The Chinese Pangolin (Manis pentadactyla) is a highly trafficked, elusive, solitary, nocturnal, burrowing mammal, with scarce information available about its distribution and current occurrence across its range.

"This interesting finding of the occurrence of the Chinese pangolin in Raimona National Park was recorded as part of continuous research aimed at improving conservation efforts in the park. This will, in my opinion, strengthen the spirit of conservation in Raimona and help ensure that more elusive findings will soon be recorded," said Bhanu Sinha, divisional forest officer of Raimona National Park. There are two species of pangolins in India—the Indian pangolin (Manis crassicaudata) and the Chinese pangolin—according to the report.

"Considering the high extinction risks due to low population levels and extensive hunting and poaching for illegal trafficking, the Chinese pangolin was listed in Appendix-I of CITES, classified as 'Critically Endangered' in the IUCN Red List, and included in Schedule I of the Indian Wildlife (Protection) Act, 1972. Despite stringent legal protections in

India, pangolins are continuously hunted for their meat, body parts, and traditional medicinal purposes," says the report.

The Chinese pangolin currently occurs in eastern, northern, and southeastern Asian countries, spanning India, Bhutan, Bangladesh, Nepal, Myanmar, Thailand, China, Hong Kong, Taiwan, Laos, and Vietnam, at elevations ranging from 0 to 3,000 meters. In India, the Chinese pangolin is restricted to the foothills of the Himalayas, in the northern and northeastern regions.

Raimona National Park (RNP) is located along the foothills of the Himalayas and is contiguous with the Phibsoo Wildlife Sanctuary of Bhutan, the westernmost protected area within the India-Bhutan Transboundary Manas Conservation Area.

RNP is considered an important protected area in the complex that connects the forested areas of northern West Bengal, Bhutan, and the Manas Tiger Reserve to the west, north, and east, respectively.

RNP is a newly protected area, established in 2021, with a total area of 422 km², under the administration of the Kachugaon Division, Bodoland Territorial Region, Assam. The area

has a long history of ethnopollitical conflicts, which have potentially affected conservation mechanisms.

"Since 2019, the RNP authority, in collaboration with Aaranyak, has been conducting systematic annual camera-trapping surveys to assess and monitor species assemblages and populations of terrestrial mammals. During the systematic surveys, with camera-trapping efforts of 1,470 trap-days in 2022, three independent photo-captures of the Chinese Pangolin were obtained from the semi-evergreen forest on January 30, 2022, at 12:13 pm and 2:39 am, and one more on February 28, 2022, at 4:12 am from the Ranganadi area under the western range (Raimona) of the RNP," says Dr M Firoz Ahmed, a senior scientist with Aaranyak.

The photograph was captured in a dry stream that joins the Ranganadi River, covered with semi-deciduous forest dominated by sal trees (Shorea robusta). The surface around the camera station was primarily blanketed by small to medium stones covered with dry leaf litter. This marks the first confirmed photographic evidence of the Chinese Pangolin in RNP.

QUOTE OF THE DAY

Power tends to corrupt and absolute power corrupts absolutely -Lord Acton

Charges against Adani group and Modi govt

The commitment to Constitution has been a key theme of the moment. Rahul Gandhi has alleged that Prime Minister Modi has never read the Constitution as testified by some of his actions. That has been a common thread in Rahul Gandhi's campaign all through. But Modi has declared that he has always worked within the limits set by the Constitution and has not encroached the space of the other wings of governance. That is as far as the written Constitution goes. But the actions of the Modi government over the years make one wonder whether there is an unwritten constitution in which there is reference to Adani, just as the written constitution refers to socialism and secularism, which the Supreme Court has upheld. Apparently, in the unwritten constitution, Adani occupies a position that is equal to or even higher than national sovereignty. It appears that Adani even has a certain significant weightage in determining the country's foreign policy, particularly economic relations. As such, Adani has been a regular feature of Prime Minister Modi's foreign trips and is believed to have played a key role in some of the major deals signed during these visits. Adani's name has surfaced repeatedly in discussions about the dynamics of power in India, in which corporate interests, epitomised by Adani, play an outsized role. Adani's proximity to the government has fuelled speculation that his business interests have been prioritised, sometimes at the expense of national sovereignty and public welfare. As such, Adani's centrality to India's economic narrative has been mirrored in its global engagements. From infrastructure deals to energy collaborations, his ventures have frequently been showcased during Modi's foreign visits, projecting India's economic ambitions on a global stage.

The stakes have been further heightened by recent allegations against the Adani Group in the United States. The group has been accused of engaging in corrupt practices to secure lucrative deals in India and other countries. These allegations, if proven, could have far-reaching implications, not only for the Adani Group but also for the Modi government, given the close association between the two. This has added a layer of complexity, with the probes straining the group's international operations, potentially reshaping India's economic diplomacy. Already countries like Kenya and Bangladesh have reneged on deals with Adani. The ruling party has already been compelled to adopt a cautious stance, publicly distancing itself from Adani amid mounting scrutiny. This shift in posture reflects the political sensitivity of the issue, as well as the potential repercussions for the government's image both domestically and internationally. Some of the state governments involved in the questionable deals, of course, belonged to parties other than the BJP, which shows the complete stranglehold of the group over India's economic activities.

Now, with Adani facing trouble in the US, all eyes are on whether Modi will play his Trump card. Although the ruling party is seeking to adopt a public posturing distancing from Adani, the Modi-Trump camaraderie is expected to play out in how the US case will take its course down the road. In fact, reports coming from the US suggest that the new Trump administration might even drop the charges against the Adani group once the new President assumes office. The two sides could justify this by citing potential benefits to bilateral relations or economic cooperation.

US fossil fuel giants eye permanent control of Europe's energy supply

While much of the world has long recognized that the US has been fighting a proxy war against Russia by arming Ukraine to the teeth, proof of a new twist in that story emerged recently from no other source than the savagely pro-business Wall Street Journal.

The Journal reported last Friday that at least one billionaire American investor has his eyes squarely set on buying Nord Stream 2, one of the pipelines built to bring cheap natural gas to Europe from Russia. The company which owns the pipeline is in the middle of bankruptcy proceedings in Switzerland, with its assets likely to be put up for auction.

Nord Stream 2, and its predecessor Nord Stream 1, run under the Baltic Sea, connecting Russia and Germany. They were sabotaged in September 2022, blown up in massive explosions that produced the world's largest natural gas leak and released 478,000 tons of methane into the atmosphere.

While the Russian-owned Nord Stream 1 was rendered completely useless, Nord Stream 2 was only partially damaged and could be made operational again – which is why US fossil fuel companies are eyeing it.

Europe, particularly Germany, had long been meeting a huge chunk of its energy needs by purchasing gas from Russia at affordable prices. The Russian-built pipelines, which cost \$23 billion to construct, were supposed to make the deals even more affordable for Europe and more lucrative for Russia, helping to guarantee peace in the region at the same time.

For Ukraine, the pipelines would have meant lower transit fees collected from transporting Russian gas in overland pipelines that passed through its territory. For US energy companies, the commercial success of the Nord Stream pipelines would have meant trouble of a different kind.

Companies like Chevron, ExxonMobil, and Shell, along

with the hundreds of drilling and shipping contractors that work with them, have long sought to massively step up their exports to a Europe starving for gas, but standing in the way was Russia and its state-owned Gazprom company – builder of the pipelines.

Before the invasion of Ukraine, Russian natural gas accounted for over 30% of all energy imports into the European Union. Leading EU powers Germany and France got 40% of their gas from Russia, while some other countries, like the Czech Republic and Romania, used only Russian gas.

In order to dislodge the competition and grab market share, the Western multinationals needed to control the flow of gas from the east. So, when it comes to incentives to permanently separate Russia and Europe, the US energy giants have plenty.

The pipelines have thus played a key role in the Ukraine-Russia conflict since long before Russian troops crossed the border in February 2022 and have occupied a central place in keeping the war going since then.

Western sabotage of peace agreements between Ukraine and Russia included promises from President Joe Biden that the U.S. would "bring an end" to Nord Stream, saying in February 2022, "we'll be able to do it." That was his answer when Biden was asked how he expected Europeans to join in the war against Russia when the pipelines were delivering their gas from that country.

The Biden promises later materialized when the pipelines were blown up and Nord Stream 2 was seized by Swiss bankruptcy courts. The US absurdly claimed at the time that Russia blew up its own pipeline, but a Wall Street Journal investigation discovered that a team of Ukrainians was behind the sabotage.

A general acting under Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelen-



sky ordered the operation, with the CIA having advance knowledge.

Now, at least one US billionaire, Stephen Lynch, has asked the US to allow him to bid on the sabotaged Nord Stream 2, according to the Wall Street Journal.

Lynch previously made a name for himself in the world of high finance

previously by buying up Russian assets on the cheap, including a distressed Russian bank that was a victim of US sanctions.

The American billionaire's argument is that by stealing the Russian pipeline at a bargain basement price, in addition to lining his own pockets, he will be doing a patriotic duty – giving the US leverage in any peace negotiations with Russia aimed at ending the war in Ukraine.

Don't look at Lynch or others like him then as just some greedy billionaires; all he's really doing is serving the long-term interests of the US while making some money along the way. Never mind that serving those interests have required expansion of NATO, sabotaging peace talks between Ukraine and Russia, supporting a long war between the two countries, causing the deaths of hundreds of thousands of Ukrainians and Russians, and siphoning off money from the U.S. people that could have been used to meet human needs instead of war.

What about saving democracy

in Ukraine? The Zelensky government there has, of course, banned all opposition political parties, with banning of the Communist Party there being only the first. It has shut down all except government-controlled newspapers, banned speeches against the war, outlawed the use of the Russian language spoken by half the population, banned trade unions, and the list goes on.

Forget all that freedom and democracy garbage; Lynch actually tells it like it is. "The bottom line is this: This is a once in a generation opportunity for American and European control over European energy supply for the rest of the fossil fuel era," Lynch told the Wall Street Journal.

He was a big contributor to the Donald Trump campaign, giving over \$300,000 to the president-elect and his affiliated front groups. According to the Journal, Lynch has told many people he "wants to be the richest man in the world you've never heard about." Elon Musk, apparently, had better move over.

A cheap purchase of the Nord Stream 2 pipeline would be a great steal for the U.S. and its fossil fuel billionaires. For now, it enables US companies to conduct the forceful sale of their fracked gas to Europe.

Should they achieve their long-term dream of taking over Russia and privatizing all its energy and mineral wealth, they will be in even better shape.

Europe is already paying a

heavy price for the pipeline fiasco. Prices of energy in Europe have gone up by almost 50%, and the once powerful German economy is on its knees. In addition, the peaceful cooperation between the EU and Russia has been replaced with distrust and a pro-war footing.

As the German economy shrinks, it could get even worse because of the policies of the incoming Trump administration, which threatens all kinds of tariffs that could further damage European economies.

Lynch, in order to bid on the pipeline, would need a license from the Treasury Department, an exemption to US sanctions against Russian companies and assets. If he does not get that license now from the Biden administration, he's hoping that his record of funding the Trump campaign will help him secure it in January.

Support for the destructive proxy war in Ukraine against Russia extends across both political parties. Biden is rushing additional military aid to the Zelensky government in the last months of his administration. Republican Sen. Lindsey Graham, a sycophantic Trump backer, has also said the U.S. should continue and even step up military aid to Ukraine now.

Graham said in late September that Ukraine was the source of some of the world's most valuable minerals, including titanium and others coveted by big business in the US and other Western countries.

"We can benefit from this mineral wealth," Graham said brazenly, "so we should be continuing to provide them with military support." He bragged that at a recent meeting with Zelensky he had been assured that if Ukraine wins the war, he would gladly funnel these minerals into the U.S. Not a word was said at the meeting about freedom, democracy, or the hundreds of thousands killed for those minerals. (IPA Service)

New climate deal at COP29 pledging \$300 billion annually till 2035 is a positive development

By: Asad Mirza

Finally, it seems the developed world has realised its omissions and at COP29 meeting in Baku, most western nations agreed to a new Climate Fund to save the planet from catastrophic climate changes due to harmful emissions. However, India, Malawi, Bolivia, and Nigeria have rejected the deal, terming it as insufficient.

Last week, history was made when 200 countries, most of them from the Global South were able to coerce the Global North for paying its due to Mother Earth, by agreeing to allot funds for their past omissions in the Global South, as a result of which most countries in the Global South face enormous burden on how to mitigate the negative impact of fast paced climate changes to their economies and citizens.

The world agreed to a new climate deal at COP29 in Baku, Azerbaijan, last Saturday, with wealthy countries pledging to provide \$300 billion annually by 2035 to poorer countries to help them cope with the increasingly catastrophic impacts of the climate crisis - a figure many developing countries criticised as vastly insufficient.

The agreement came after more than two weeks of bitter divisions and fractious negotiations, thrown into chaos by boycotts, political spats, and open celebrations of fossil fuels.

At times there was fear the talks would implode, as groups representing vulnerable small island states and the least-developed countries walked out of negotiations Saturday. But on Sunday, more than 30 hours after the deadline, the gavel finally went down on the agreement between nearly 200 countries.

The agreement would provide \$300 billion annually by 2035, boosting rich countries' previous commitment to provide \$100 billion per year in climate finance by 2020. That earlier goal was met two years late, in 2022, and expires in 2025. The deal also lays the groundwork for next year's climate summit, to be held in the Amazon rainforests of Brazil, where countries are meant to map out the next decade of climate action.

The summit cut to the heart of the debate over the financial responsibility of

industrialised countries - whose historic use of fossil fuels has caused the bulk of greenhouse gas emissions - to compensate others for worsening damage from climate change.

It also laid bare divisions between wealthy governments constrained by tight domestic budgets and developing nations reeling from the costs of storms, floods, and droughts.

United Nations climate Chief Simon Stiell acknowledged the difficult negotiations that led to the agreement but hailed the outcome as an insurance policy for humanity against global warming. "It has been a difficult journey, but we've delivered a deal...This deal will keep the clean energy boom growing and protect billions of lives," Stiell said.

Collectively, nations have been so slow to curtail their use of fossil fuels that many scientists regard the 1.5-degree Celsius goal as practically unattainable.

Countries are expected to submit updated emissions-reduction pledges in the coming months, before a February 2025 deadline. All eyes are on China and the United States, the world's top two greenhouse gas emitters, though for different reasons.

China is responsible for 30 percent of global emissions and for nearly all of the world's growth in emissions over the past decade. The US pledge will signal the extent to which President Biden's administration thinks its signature climate legislation, the Inflation Reduction Act, can withstand environmental rollbacks promised by President-elect Donald Trump.

Saudi Arabia also played a highly obstructive role at the conference, according to many insiders. Reportedly, a Saudi official attempted to alter one key text without full consultation. The petro-state also tried repeatedly to remove references to the "transition away from fossil fuels" which was agreed at last year's COP28 summit.

"It was clear from day one that Saudi Arabia and other fossil fuel-producing countries were going to do everything in their power to weaken the landmark COP28 agreement on fossil fuels. At COP29 they have deployed obstructionist tactics to dilute action on the energy transition," said Romain

Loualalen, of the pressure group Oil Change International.

At last year's climate summit in Dubai, United Arab Emirates, nations acknowledged for the first time the link between fossil fuels and global warming, and agreed to "transition away" from fossil fuels by mid-century.

The agreement on finance ultimately affirmed a commitment to last year's consensus on transitioning away from fossil fuels. But delegates rejected a separate document that, in theory, focused on the transition away from fossil fuels, but that after many rounds of editing ended up not even mentioning them.

Many negotiators and diplomats said, however, that Trump's election had also created a sense of urgency around the need to speed the transformation of increasingly interconnected economies around the world, many of which are still largely dependent on fossil fuels like coal, oil, and gas.

"I think when we came in here the question was, 'Does the US have no juice?'" said John Podesta, President Biden's climate envoy. He said his team had been "extremely active in the negotiations" and that, "notwithstanding the president-elect's rhetoric around calling climate change a hoax," the United States would continue reducing its emissions over Trump's term in office.

The agreement, which is not legally binding and functions largely through diplomatic peer pressure, came after two weeks of divisive debate over who should pay and how much.

India, on its part has rejected the new \$300 billion climate finance deal for the Global South. India raised the objection after the financial package had been adopted, saying that it was too little and too late. The Head of the Indian delegation, Chandni Raina, expressed her disappointment over the outcome and said, "We are disappointed in the outcome which clearly brings out the unwillingness of the developed country parties to fulfill their responsibilities."

"I regret to say that this document is nothing more than an optical illusion. This, in our opinion, will not address the enormity of the challenge we all face. Therefore, we oppose the adoption of this document," she further said. "\$300 billion does not address the needs and priorities of developing countries. It is incompatible with the principle of CBDR (Common but Differentiated Responsibilities) and equity, regardless of the battle with the impact of climate change," Raina added.

Supporting India, Nigeria said the \$300 billion climate finance package was a "joke". Malawi and Bolivia also lent support to India. (IPA Service)

Bangladesh media turns against Dr. Muhammad Yunus for his confused views

By: Ashis Biswas

It is not often that an interview given by a country's leader to a foreign media creates a major political controversy at home. But a recent interview given by Dr. Muhammad Yunus, Chief Adviser to the caretaker Bangladesh administration, has done just that, generating a fresh domestic debate questioning his motives.

Dr Yunus has only himself to blame. In each interaction with the media, his uneasiness in dealing with any question or issue relating to India becomes more and more apparent.

This time, during a question and answer session with interviewers from a prominent English daily published from India, Yunus called upon Delhi to ensure the return of former Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina Wazed to Bangladesh.

The Chief Adviser added that she must face a trial in Bangladesh in view of the many charges of corruption, murders and other assaults made during her party's (Awami League) long rule. Many arrests had already been made including prominent AL leaders, as the present administration started an official inquiry into the many allegations the caretaker government received from aggrieved opposition leaders and common people.

She had fled to India on Aug 5 to escape from an angry armed mob attack and had been sheltering there. But she had continued to issue statements from her exile and continued her political statements. Dr Yunus warned, according to Bangladeshi commentators, that Indo-Bangla relations might be impacted in the event of India ignoring Dhaka's demand for her repatriation.

The Bangladeshi commentariat alert as ever, lost no time in seizing this opportunity to question Yunus publicly, both in the print and electronic media. One analyst questioned his motives.

He pointed out that already there were reports (which Dhaka authorities had not denied) that the new rulers would complain to Interpol authorities against Sheikh Hasina, if she did not return to Dhaka.

Therefore Dr Yunus should immediately answer the following questions: (1) Had Bangladesh officially requested Government of India to send back Mrs Wazed? If the answer was yes, what were the specific details of India's response?

The fact was, Dhaka had not made any request to India yet on the matter. In which case (2) Why were Bangladeshi officials talking about taking the issue to Interpol authorities, without having bothered to talk to India first?

From this, it was apparent that Dr Yunus had once again sought to create



controversies with India at every turn. The talk about Interpol was nothing but a crude attempt to pressurise India and a case of Bangladesh jumping the gun on a most sensitive issue.

Said a senior commentator: Dr Yunus at his very first reference to India after he became Chief Adviser had stated that the new Bangladesh looked forward to good relations with its neighbour.

In case there were problems, Delhi must appreciate Indian interests in South Asia could suffer.

Yunus had added that India could face new problems in its NE region, in Bangladesh itself or even in Myanmar, if Indo-Bangla relations suffered... the implication was that the new non-AL authorities could resume sheltering secession-minded insurgent organisations within Bangladeshi territory and aid them in their anti-India operations as before among other things.

As for India, Delhi's main anxiety in the present situation was the repeated attacks against the unprotected Hindu minority population. There were reports and shocking videos depicting such attacks in various districts of Bangladesh in the last three months.

Many of these showing arson and assaults against the Hindus and the looting of their property etc had gone viral. These had been condemned by organisations like the Amnesty International and US President elect Mr Donald Trump. The attacks had been also condemned worldwide, but Dhaka-based rulers had remained silent.

Yet Dr Yunus, instead of addressing these concerns, had impatiently dismissed all reports of atrocities against the Hindus as 'baseless and exaggerated', which had only encouraged Islamist extremists to become more aggressive in their approach to the minorities. In fact, he denied such charges in his latest interview with the Indian paper, as usual!

Senior politicians including leaders of the strongest opposition force, the Bangladesh Nationalist Party (BNP) have pointedly reminded Yunus about the need to maintain good relations with countries like India.

They protested against the stand taken by the new administration about totally

denying the role played by the late Sheikh Mujibur Rahman or the AL in the 1970-71 struggle for Bangladeshi independence.

Where was Yunus in 1970-71 when thousands of innocent Bengalis had been butchered by Pakistanis and hundreds of freedom fighters had laid down their lives? Some, he had asked.

More than any desire to help the currently banned AL to recover lost political ground, all opposition forces led by the BNP now want Yunus to announce how soon can next elections be held, ending the tenure of the caretaker regime. They even want the AL to contest the elections, to ensure a fair poll.

Judging by the tone of most TV panel discussions or newspaper commentaries in recent days, they are beginning to distrust Yunus, whom they do not see as a political being.

As one commentator pointed out that immediately after August 5 and onwards, the Nobel laureate chief adviser was welcomed by the people, all opposition parties, Western democratic parties including the powerful Democrats led by former US President Bill Clinton and his wife Hilary, not to mention EU leaders, NGOs, HR groups and Think Tanks. They had been promised early elections and major administrative reforms, even as an energetic drive to marginalise the AL was vigorously launched.

As of now, after the first 100 days of the new government, all political parties have distanced themselves from Yunus. They are protesting his ill-concealed moves to destroy the AL its mass support and past contributions. They have already condemned his efforts to rewrite recent Bangladeshi history and provoke an unnecessary confrontation with Bangladesh's friendliest neighbour, India.

And even within the US, Yunus has lost the crucial support of Democrats who have been ousted by Trump. In this situation, said one observer, Yunus must not do anything recklessly to damage Indo-Bangla bilateral relations. Such a move would only prolong the agonies of Bangladesh and millions of people struggling for their survival at a time of torment. (IPA Service)



Pisciculture and mustard cultivation: Leveraging Assam's agricultural and aquatic potential

By: Dipak Kurmi

Assam, a land blessed with abundant natural resources, rich cultural heritage, and fertile plains, holds great promise for enhancing its agricultural and pisciculture practices. From the golden stretches of mustard fields to the vibrant floodplains teeming with fish, both sectors are integral to the food culture and economy of the state. However, despite the inherent advantages, these sectors face numerous challenges that have hindered their full potential. This article delves into the issues surrounding mustard cultivation and fish farming in Assam, offering potential solutions and strategies for boosting production in both fields.

Mustard Cultivation in Assam: Meeting the Rising Demand for Edible Oil

In Assam, mustard cultivation is not just an agricultural practice; it is deeply embedded in the state's traditional food culture. Mustard oil, a staple in Assamese cuisine, has long been cherished for its distinctive flavor and health benefits. The vast expanses of yellow mustard fields that stretch across the landscape are a testament to this deep-rooted agricultural practice. Yet, despite its rich history, mustard oil production in Assam has not kept pace with the growing demand, leading to heavy reliance on imports from other states.

The Rising Demand and Gaps in Production

With Assam's population steadily increasing, the demand for edible oils, particularly mustard oil, has surged in recent decades. However, the state's mustard production currently meets only about 20% of the total demand, with the remaining 80% being sourced from other states, especially from neighboring Bihar and Uttar Pradesh.

This supply-demand gap often results in price shocks, affecting local consumers. The productivity of mustard cultivation in Assam remains alarmingly low, less than half of the national average. This suggests significant potential for boosting production, provided the right measures are taken. Increasing productivity is the key to reducing the state's dependence on external markets.

Strategies for Boosting Mustard Production

To enhance mustard oil production, two critical strategies need to be pursued: increasing productivity and expanding the area under mustard cultivation.

1. Increasing Productivity through High-Yielding Varieties: One of the key approaches to boosting mustard production in Assam is the introduction of high-yielding seed varieties. By focusing on modern, disease-resistant seeds that are tailored for local conditions, Assam can significantly increase its mustard yields. For instance, the use of hybrid varieties, which are resistant to common pests and diseases, could help increase overall pro-

ductivity.

2. Expanding Cultivation in Rice Fallow Areas: Assam has over 10 lakh hectares of rice fallow areas, which are currently underutilized. These areas can be transformed into productive mustard fields. While efforts to encourage farmers to cultivate mustard in these fallow lands have faced challenges, targeted interventions could help overcome these barriers. Providing adequate irrigation and ensuring the commercial viability of growing mustard on these lands could motivate farmers to adopt mustard farming.

3. Government Intervention and Policy Clarity: The Assam government must play a proactive role in facilitating the transition from rice cultivation to mustard and other crops on fallow lands. Clear policies, support systems, and targeted incentives, including access to quality seeds and fertilizers, are essential to motivating farmers. Additionally, policies aimed at increasing the cropping intensity of fallow lands can provide farmers with viable alternatives to growing rice.

4. Improving Seed Availability: Access to quality mustard seeds at affordable prices is another priority for farmers. Public-private partnerships could be explored to ensure that high-quality seeds are made available in rural areas, alongside government schemes for subsidized agricultural inputs.

5. Value Addition and Entrepreneurial Opportunities:

To make mustard oil production more commercially viable, encouraging local youth to establish mustard oil mills is a promising avenue. By focusing on hygienic production practices and ensuring food safety certification, local mustard oil brands can compete with national players. Additionally, the byproducts of mustard cultivation, such as oil cake, have market potential as fish feed, which can further boost the economic viability of mustard farming.

Pisciculture in Assam: Enhancing Fish Production to Meet Growing Demand

In addition to agriculture, Assam has a rich tradition of pisciculture. Fishing is not only an important part of the state's food culture but also a major livelihood source for rural populations. With fish being an integral part of the daily diet for around 90% of the state's population, the demand for fresh, local fish has been steadily rising, particularly in urban centers like Guwahati.

The Shortfall in Fish Production

Despite significant growth in fish production in Assam over the years, a shortfall of approximately 25,000 metric tons (MT) persists, with around 10,000 MT being sourced from neighboring states like Andhra Pradesh and West Bengal. While the state's fish production has increased from 2.94 lakh MT to 4.43 lakh MT between 2015-16 and 2022-23, the demand still outstrips supply.

The expansion of commercial fish farming, especially in indigenous fish species, could play a pivotal role in filling this gap. However, much of the fish farming in Assam focuses on breeding carp varieties, which limits the availability of diverse indigenous fish species in urban markets.

Challenges and Strategies for Improving Fish Farming

1. Indigenous Fish Species Conservation: The conservation of indigenous fish species is critical to maintaining biodiversity and ensuring sustainable fish production. The state's floodplain wetlands, which serve as breeding grounds for a variety of fish species, are increasingly under threat due to unregulated sand mining, construction, and environmental degradation. Strengthening conservation efforts and improving water quality in these wetlands will directly benefit fish farming.

2. Expanding Fish Seed Production: While the state has made significant strides in increasing fish seed production, especially for carp species, there is a need to focus on a wider variety of indigenous fish species. Successful seed production of varieties like Chitol fish at the Jungal Balahu Fish Farm has opened new avenues for their commercial cultivation. These varieties are highly prized in Assamese cuisine, particularly during the Bhogali Bihu festival, and can fetch high prices in local and regional markets.

3. Sustainable Aquaculture Practices

Sustainable practices in aquaculture, such as maintaining optimal water quality and preventing over-fishing, are essential for ensuring the long-term viability of the industry. The Fisheries Department's efforts to promote sustainable fish farming techniques need to be expanded, especially among small-scale farmers.

4. The Market for Ornamental Fish: Assam's rich aquatic biodiversity also includes ornamental fish species, which have untapped potential in both domestic and international markets. Developing a formalized market for ornamental fish could provide an alternative income source for rural communities. Supporting fish farmers with the necessary training, technology, and market linkages could unlock this niche market.

5. Promoting Fish Farming in Urban Areas: As the urban population grows, the demand for fresh fish in cities like Guwahati has increased substantially. Supporting urban fish farming and ensuring that these fish are sustainably sourced will be key to meeting this demand. Urban aquaculture can also create new livelihood opportunities along the fish value chain, from fish seed production to retail sales.

6. Addressing Illegal Trade and Promoting Ethical Fishing: Assam also faces issues with the illegal trafficking of ornamental fish species, which

are often harvested unsustainably. Law enforcement agencies need to coordinate with fisheries departments to curb this illegal trade. Public awareness campaigns can also help in educating consumers and traders about the importance of supporting ethical and sustainable fish farming practices.

A Combined Approach: Boosting Mustard Cultivation and Pisciculture

The combined efforts to enhance mustard cultivation and fish farming in Assam hold immense promise for the state's agricultural and economic future. Both sectors are closely intertwined with local food culture and offer significant opportunities for rural development. By focusing on increasing productivity, expanding cultivation areas, and improving the commercial viability of both mustard and fish farming, Assam can reduce its reliance on external markets, enhance food security, and generate sustainable income for farmers and fishermen alike.

The state's agricultural and piscicultural policies should be designed to address the specific needs of farmers and fishers, providing them with the tools, knowledge, and resources necessary to thrive. In this way, Assam can harness its agricultural and aquatic potential, ensuring that its natural resources are preserved and its food culture is strengthened for generations to come. *(The writer can be reached at dipakkurmipltd@gmail.com)*

The rise of green businesses

By: Satyabrata Borah

In recent years, there has been a noticeable shift towards the rise of green businesses. This change is happening as people and companies are becoming increasingly aware of the environmental challenges the world faces. From pollution to climate change, the impacts of human activity on the planet are becoming impossible to ignore. As a result, more and more businesses are adopting sustainable practices and focusing on reducing their carbon footprint. These green businesses are not just concerned with profits but are also dedicated to preserving the environment, and in doing so, they are helping to create a more sustainable future for all.

The concept of green businesses is not entirely new, but it has gained much more attention in recent years. With growing concerns about global warming, deforestation, and waste accumulation, there is a clear need for businesses to change the way they operate. Traditional businesses often prioritize profit over sustainability, which can lead to practices that harm the environment. However, green businesses are built on the idea that it is possible to make money while still being environmentally responsible. These companies focus on sustainability by using renewable resources, reducing waste, and minimizing their carbon emissions. Their goal is to create products and services that are not only beneficial to consumers but also to the planet.

One of the key factors behind the rise of green businesses is the increasing consumer demand for environmentally friendly products and services. People today are more aware of the impact their purchasing decisions have on the planet, and many are choosing to support companies that share their values. Consumers are becoming more conscious of the environmental footprint of the products they buy, whether it's the materials used, the energy required for production, or the waste generated during the process. As a result, businesses are responding by shifting towards greener, more sustainable practices. This shift is not just happening in the consumer goods sector; it is also occurring in industries such as transportation, energy, and construction, where businesses are seeking ways to reduce their environmental impact.

In the transportation industry, for example, the rise of electric vehicles (EVs) is a clear sign of the growing demand for green businesses. Companies like Tesla have played a major role in popularizing EVs, and now traditional automakers like Ford and General Motors are following suit by investing heavily in electric cars. These vehicles are seen as an alternative to traditional gasoline-powered cars, which contribute to air pollution and greenhouse gas emissions. The shift to electric vehicles is not just about providing consumers with a greener option; it is also about creating a sustainable future for transportation. Electric vehicles produce fewer emissions and can be powered by renewable energy sources, making them an essential part of the solution to climate change. In the energy sec-

tor, green businesses are focused on renewable energy sources such as solar, wind, and hydroelectric power. As concerns about the environmental impact of fossil fuels continue to grow, there is an increasing demand for cleaner, more sustainable energy options. Many companies are investing in renewable energy projects to reduce their reliance on coal, oil, and natural gas. Solar energy companies, for example, are helping homeowners and businesses reduce their energy consumption and lower their carbon footprint by providing affordable and efficient solar panels. Wind energy companies are harnessing the power of the wind to generate electricity, and hydroelectric power is being used to create clean energy from water. The rise of green energy businesses is transforming the way the world produces and consumes energy, and it is a critical part of the fight against climate change.

Another industry where green businesses are making an impact is construction. Traditional construction practices often involve the use of harmful materials, high energy consumption, and wasteful processes. However, green construction businesses are changing the way buildings are designed, constructed, and operated. These companies focus on using sustainable materials, reducing energy usage, and minimizing waste. Green building practices often include the use of energy-efficient technologies, such as solar panels, energy-efficient appliances, and smart building systems that optimize energy usage. Additionally, sustainable construction methods such as using recycled materials, reducing water consumption, and reducing carbon emissions during the construction process are becoming more common. This focus on sustainability not only helps protect the environment but also reduces long-term costs for building owners and occupants.

The rise of green businesses is also being fueled by government policies and regulations that promote sustainability. Many governments around the world are implementing policies that encourage companies to adopt environmentally friendly practices. These policies include financial incentives such as tax breaks or grants for businesses that invest in renewable energy or reduce their carbon emissions. In some countries, governments are introducing regulations that require businesses to meet specific sustainability standards, such as reducing waste or using environmentally friendly materials. These policies create a supportive environment for green businesses to thrive and encourage more companies to adopt sustainable practices. As governments continue to prioritize environmental protection, green businesses will continue to play an important role in driving positive change. For entrepreneurs and small business owners, starting a green business is becoming more accessible than ever before. With the rise of online platforms and the growing demand for sustainable products, entrepreneurs can easily reach a global audience. Additionally, there are now more resources and support systems in place to help green startups succeed. Many organizations and

networks are dedicated to supporting green businesses by providing advice, funding, and resources. This has led to a growing number of innovative green startups that are developing new technologies, products, and services to address environmental challenges. From sustainable fashion brands to eco-friendly packaging companies, green businesses are emerging across a wide range of industries.

One of the key benefits of green businesses is that they often have a positive impact on local communities. By focusing on sustainability, green businesses create jobs that support both the economy and the environment. For example, renewable energy companies often hire workers to install solar panels or maintain wind farms, which creates local employment opportunities. Green construction companies also create jobs in areas such as building design, project management, and construction labor. Additionally, many green businesses are committed to supporting local communities by sourcing materials locally, reducing transportation emissions, and supporting local economies.

Despite the many benefits of green businesses, there are also challenges that these companies face. One of the biggest challenges is the initial cost of implementing sustainable practices. For some businesses, transitioning to greener practices may require significant upfront investment in renewable energy, sustainable materials, or eco-friendly technologies. While these investments can lead to long-term cost savings, the initial financial burden can be a barrier for some companies. However, as the demand for sustainable products and services continues to grow, the cost of implementing green practices is expected to decrease, making it more accessible for businesses of all sizes.

Another challenge is the need for innovation and constant adaptation. The field of sustainability is rapidly evolving, and businesses must stay up to date with the latest technologies and practices in order to remain competitive. This requires ongoing investment in research and development, as well as a commitment to continuous improvement. However, the pace of innovation in the green business sector is accelerating, and companies that stay ahead of the curve will be well-positioned to succeed in the future. The rise of green businesses is a positive trend that shows how companies are increasingly recognizing the importance of sustainability. As consumers become more environmentally conscious, businesses are responding by adopting green practices that reduce their environmental impact and contribute to a more sustainable future. Green businesses are not only helping to protect the environment but also creating new opportunities for innovation, economic growth, and job creation. While there are challenges to overcome, the future of green businesses looks bright, and they will undoubtedly play a key role in shaping the future of the global economy. As the world continues to face environmental challenges, the rise of green businesses will be crucial in driving the change needed to create a more sustainable and prosperous future for all.

Drying lifelines: Assam's rivers

By: Himangshu Ranjan Bhuyan

In the lush, verdant landscape of Assam, the rivers have long stood as vital arteries, flowing with life and sustenance for the region's inhabitants. The Brahmaputra, one of the world's largest and most significant rivers, alongside its sister river, the Barak, has historically nourished the land, supported biodiversity, and shaped the cultural and economic fabric of Assam. However, the increasing threats posed by climate change, deforestation, sedimentation, and unregulated human activities have begun to strip these majestic rivers of their vitality. The phenomenon of drying rivers in Assam is not merely a matter of dwindling water levels; it encapsulates a broader environmental crisis that carries profound implications for the ecosystem, the economy, and the identity of the Assamese people.

The Brahmaputra River, which originates from the Tibetan Plateau, stretches about 2,900 kilometers before joining the Ganges in Bangladesh. As it winds through Assam, it provides an essential lifeline to the state's agriculture, supporting crops such as rice and tea that form the backbone of the local economy. The river is also a crucial resource for fisheries, serving as a habitat for numerous aquatic species. The Barak River, flowing through the southern region of Assam, complements the Brahmaputra by sustaining agricultural practices and fostering a rich ecosystem. The intertwining of these rivers with the lives of the people creates a deep cultural bond, reflected in festivals, folklore, and rituals that celebrate the rivers' abundance. However, the steady decline of these rivers is alarming. One of the primary culprits behind this deterioration is climate change, which is reshaping hydrological patterns across the globe. Assam's rivers are particularly vulnerable to the effects of changing weather patterns, with unpredictable monsoons and erratic rainfall becoming increasingly common. Glacial melting in the Himalayas initially increases the river's flow, but as glaciers continue to retreat due to rising global temperatures, the long-term consequences are dire. With glaciers diminishing, the summer months become critical; river flows drop drastically during the dry season, leading to significant shortages in water supply for both agriculture and drinking. The people of Assam, who have relied on the consistent rhythms of nature, now find themselves grappling with uncertainty as their lifeline falters.

Deforestation exacerbates the situation, further contributing to the drying up of Assam's rivers. The surrounding forests play a crucial role in maintaining the ecological balance of the region. They help to regulate water flow by facilitating groundwater recharge, reducing runoff, and preventing soil erosion. However, extensive deforestation driven by agriculture, urbanization, and commercial exploitation has drastically reduced forest cover in Assam. As trees are felled, the soil becomes less stable, leading to increased sedimentation in the rivers. This sediment not only raises riverbeds, reducing their capacity to carry water but also disrupts aquatic ecosystems, diminishing biodiversity. Fish species that thrive in the Brahmaputra and Barak are adversely affected as their habitats become compromised, threatening the livelihoods of fishing communities that depend on these waters.

The consequences of sedimentation are far-reaching. The Brahmaputra, once a formidable river with deep, flowing channels, is becoming increasingly shallow due to silt accumulation. This transformation alters the hydrological dynamics of the river, leading to decreased water flow during crucial periods. During the dry months, the once-abundant channels may expose vast stretches of riverbed, impacting fishing, irrigation, and transport. The situation is dire for local farmers who rely on the rivers for irrigation; with diminishing water levels, crop yields decline, leading to economic hardships that ripple through communities dependent on agriculture.

Human interventions, particularly large-scale infrastructure projects, have further aggravated the crisis facing Assam's rivers. The construction of dams, while often justified in the name of flood control and energy generation, disrupts the natural flow of rivers. These projects lead to the alteration of river ecosystems and can have severe implications for downstream communities. Dams can hold back essential sediment, resulting in deeper river channels upstream but shallower beds downstream. This not only affects the availability of water for agriculture but also contributes to ecological imbalances.

Moreover, the sudden release of water from dams can lead to downstream flooding, wreaking havoc on communities that have historically lived in harmony with the

river's natural rhythms.

The drying rivers of Assam do not merely present an environmental challenge; they also signify a broader socio-economic crisis. Agriculture, which forms the backbone of Assam's economy, is under severe threat. As water availability dwindles, farmers are faced with reduced crop yields, escalating production costs, and ultimately, the loss of livelihoods. This economic strain forces many farmers to abandon their land and seek opportunities in urban areas, leading to increased migration and urban overcrowding. Cities like Guwahati, already grappling with infrastructure challenges, find themselves strained under the weight of an influx of displaced individuals, exacerbating social tensions and resource competition.

The cultural implications of drying rivers are equally significant. The Brahmaputra and Barak are not just physical entities; they are deeply woven into the identity and spiritual life of the Assamese people. The river has been revered in folklore, literature, and art, symbolizing not only physical sustenance but also cultural heritage. As the rivers dry, the traditional practices that revolve around them - fishing, boating, and seasonal celebrations - face decline. The cultural dislocation that accompanies the loss of the river's vitality is palpable, as communities find themselves adrift, disconnected from the natural rhythms that have sustained them for generations.

Furthermore, the geopolitical dimension of Assam's rivers adds another layer of complexity to the drying crisis. The Brahmaputra is a transboundary river, and its flow is influenced by activities upstream in Tibet and Arunachal Pradesh. The construction of dams and water diversion projects in these regions raises concerns about water security in Assam. Disputes over water-sharing agreements with neighboring countries and states can exacerbate tensions, as competing demands for water intensify amidst dwindling resources. These geopolitical considerations underscore the need for collaborative water management approaches that prioritize both ecological health and human needs. Addressing the drying of Assam's rivers requires a multi-faceted approach that encompasses environmental restoration, sustainable management practices, and community engagement. Reforestation initiatives can help restore the balance of ecosystems, improving groundwater recharge and reducing sedimentation in rivers. Sustainable agricultural practices that emphasize soil health and water conservation can mitigate the impact of climate change on crop yields. Moreover, rigorous environmental assessments should accompany any infrastructure projects to ensure that they do not further jeopardize the health of the river systems.

Transboundary cooperation is critical in managing the Brahmaputra effectively. Engaging in dialogue with neighboring countries like China and Bangladesh is essential for creating water-sharing agreements that balance ecological needs with human demands. Furthermore, local communities should be empowered to participate in water management decisions, drawing on their traditional knowledge and practices. This participatory approach can foster a sense of ownership and stewardship over the rivers, encouraging local populations to engage in conservation efforts.

Education and awareness campaigns can also play a crucial role in safeguarding Assam's rivers. Raising public awareness about the importance of healthy river systems and the threats they face can galvanize communities to advocate for sustainable practices and policies. Such initiatives can foster a collective sense of responsibility toward the rivers, encouraging citizens to participate actively in conservation efforts and demand accountability from policymakers. In conclusion, the drying of Assam's rivers signifies a multifaceted crisis that extends beyond mere water scarcity. The Brahmaputra and Barak rivers, once vibrant lifelines, now face unprecedented challenges from climate change, deforestation, sedimentation, and human intervention.

The ramifications of this crisis ripple through the ecosystem, economy, and cultural identity of the Assamese people. Immediate and sustained action is essential to address the causes of drying rivers and to revive these vital lifelines. A holistic approach that integrates environmental restoration, community engagement, and transboundary cooperation is crucial to safeguarding the future of Assam's rivers. Without such concerted efforts, the region risks losing not only its natural resources but also its cultural heritage and the very essence of what it means to be Assamese. *(The writer is Editor in Chief of the Assamese E-Magazine SAMPROTAK. He can be reached at himangshur1989@gmail.com)*

Israel has said it will attack if Hezbollah breaks the ceasefire agreement

Israel-Hezbollah ceasefire appears to hold, Lebanese begin streaming south to their homes

BEIRUT, Nov 27: A ceasefire between Israel and the Lebanese militant group Hezbollah appeared to be holding on Wednesday, as residents in cars heaped with belongings streamed back toward southern Lebanon despite warnings from the Israeli and Lebanese military that they stay away from certain areas.

If it holds, the ceasefire would bring an end to nearly 14 months of fighting between Israel and Hezbollah, which escalated in mid-September into all-out war and threatened to pull Hezbollah's patron Iran and Israel into a broader conflagration. It could give some reprieve to the 1.2 million Lebanese displaced by the fighting and the tens of thousands of Israelis who fled their homes along the border with Lebanon.

The US- and France-brokered deal, approved by Israel late Tuesday, calls for an initial two-month halt to fighting and requires Hezbollah to end its armed presence in southern Lebanon, while Israeli troops are to return to their side of the border.

Thousands of additional Lebanese troops and UN peacekeepers would deploy in the south, and an international panel headed

by the United States would monitor compliance.

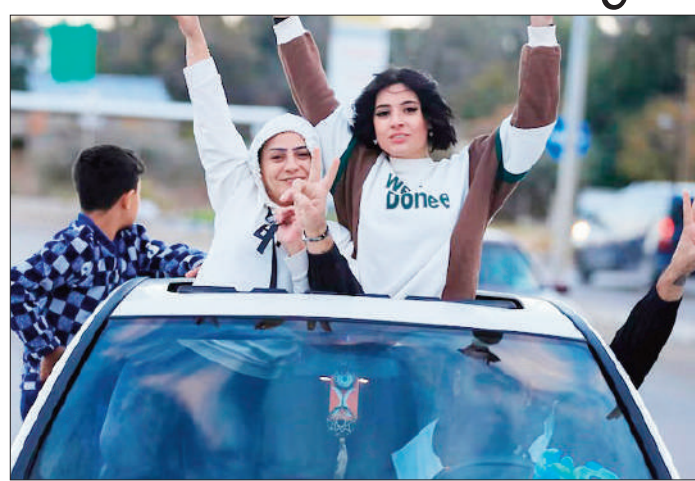
Israel says it reserves the right to strike Hezbollah should it violate the terms of the deal.

The deal would not address the ongoing war in the Gaza Strip, where Israel is still fighting Hamas militants in response to the group's cross-border raid into southern Israel in Oct 2023. But President Joe Biden on Tuesday said his administration would make another push in the coming days to try to renew efforts for a deal there.

Hours before the ceasefire between Israel and Lebanon took effect, Israel launched broad strikes that shook the Lebanese capital Beirut and a volley of rockets from Hezbollah set off air raid sirens across a large swath of northern Israel.

But after the ceasefire took effect early Wednesday, quiet appeared to take hold, prompting waves of Lebanese to head home.

Israel's Arabic military spokesperson Avichay Adraee warned displaced Lebanese not to return to their villages in southern Lebanon. The Lebanese military asked displaced returning to southern Lebanon to avoid frontline villages and towns near the border



where Israeli troops are still present until they withdraw.

But some videos circulating on social media show displaced Lebanese defying these calls and returning to villages in the south near the coastal city of Tyre. Israeli troops were still present in parts of southern Lebanon after Israel launched a ground invasion in October.

On the highway linking Beirut with south Lebanon, thousands of people drove south with their belongings and mattresses tied on top of their cars. Traffic was grid-

locked at the northern entrance of the port city of Sidon.

Residents will return to vast destruction wrought by the Israeli military during its campaign, which flattened villages where the military said it found vast weapons caches and infrastructure it says was meant to launch an Oct 7-style attack on northern Israel.

More than 3,760 people have been killed by Israeli fire in Lebanon the past 13 months, many of them civilians, according to Lebanese health officials.

Hezbollah emerges from the war

Four dead, several missing as Sri Lanka faces massive rains, floods



COLOMBO, Nov 27: Four persons, including two children, have died and several others remained missing while over 2.30 lakh individuals were affected across Sri Lanka due to inclement weather following a massive rain system in southwest Bay of Bengal, authorities said on Wednesday.

At least six Colombo-bound flights were diverted to other airports on Wednesday morning due to heavy rain - 75 mm in 24 hours ending at 8:00 am - and high winds experienced in most parts of the island due to the Deep Depression (heavy rain bearing system) over the southwest Bay of Bengal.

The Deep Depression is likely to move north-northwest wards closer to the east coast of Sri Lanka and intensify further into a cyclonic storm later in the day, the meteorological department said.

Army and navy troops were deployed to rescue victims and provide food and other essentials to those affected.

News portal NewsFirst.lk said six flights scheduled to arrive at the Bandaranaike International Airport (BIA) here were diverted to other airports, including to Indian airports.

Sri Lankan Airlines flight from Tokyo, Emirates flights arriving from Male, and IndiGo flight from Chennai, all destined for Colombo, were diverted to the Thiruvananthapuram International Airport while Air Arabia flight from Sharjah was diverted to Kozhikode International Airport.

Sri Lankan Airlines flight from Male and Ethihad Airways flight from Abu Dhabi to Colombo, both were diverted to Mattala International Airport, NewsFirst.lk said. (PTI)

30 detained over killing of lawyer in clash between Bangladesh police, followers of jailed Hindu leader

DHAKA, Nov 27: At least 30 suspects were detained in Bangladesh's Chattogram city for their alleged involvement in the killing of a lawyer and attacking security personnel over the arrest of a prominent Hindu community leader, police said on Wednesday.

Assistant public prosecutor Saiful Islam, who was in his early 30s, was killed on Tuesday during clashes between security personnel and followers of Chinmoy Krishna Das Brahmachari, spokesperson for Bangladesh Sammilita Sanatani Jagran Jote. The violence erupted after Das was denied bail and sent to jail by the Chattogram's Sixth Metropolitan Magistrate court in a seditious case. Police said Islam was critically wounded in the clashes and rushed to a hospital where he was declared dead.

According to a police spokesman, 30 people were detained in the port city of Chattogram for their alleged involvement in Islam's killing and attacking law enforcement agency personnel.

"We are examining their role in the killing of Advocate Saiful Islam and attacking personnel of the law enforcement agencies yesterday (Tuesday) during and following the production of Chinmoy Krishna Das Brahmachari in the court," he said.

The spokesperson said the detained individuals would be arrested for trial after initial investigations and more suspects could be arrested if their involvement was found.

Chattogram Metropolitan Police's additional commissioner Kazi Mohammad Tarek Aziz said the suspects were detained in joint raids overnight by army and paramilitary Border Guard Bangladesh (BGB) troops and police.

Interim government Chief Adviser Muhammad Yunus on Tuesday condemned the murder of the lawyer, urging people to keep calm and stay away from participating in any untoward activities.

He directed the authorities to conduct an investigation into the killing and take appropriate legal

battered and bloodied, with the reputation it built by fighting Israel to a stalemate in the 2006 war tarnished. Yet its fighters still managed to put up heavy resistance on the ground, slowing Israel's advance while continuing to fire scores of rockets, missiles and drones across the border each day.

"This is a moment of victory, pride and honor for us, the Shia sect, and for all of Lebanon," said Hussein Sweidan, a resident returning to Tyre in southern Lebanon, who said he saw the ceasefire as a victory for Hezbollah.

Sporadic celebratory gunfire was heard at a main roundabout in the city, as people returning honked the horns of cars and residents cheered.

In Israel, the mood was far more subdued, with displaced Israelis concerned that the deal did not go far enough to rein in Hezbollah and that it did not address Gaza and the hostages still held there.

"I think it is still not safe to return to our homes because Hezbollah is still close to us," said Eliyahu Maman, an Israeli displaced from the northern Israeli city of Kyriat Shmona, which is not far from the border with Lebanon and was hit

hard by the months of fighting.

The fighting killed more than 70 people in Israel, more than half civilians, as well as dozens of Israeli soldiers fighting in southern Lebanon.

A significant return of the displaced to their communities, many of which have suffered extensive damage from rocket fire, could take months.

But Israel can claim major victories in the war, including the killing of Hezbollah's top leader Hassan Nasrallah and most of its senior commanders, as well as the destruction of extensive militant infrastructure. A complex attack involving exploding pagers and walkie-talkies, widely attributed to Israel, appeared to show a remarkable degree of penetration of the secretive militant group.

The kinds of massive, long-range rocket barrages that many Israelis had feared before the war never fully materialised, either because they were destroyed by Israeli strikes or Hezbollah held them in reserve. Hezbollah also failed to launch any ground attacks across the border, despite evidence presented by the Israeli military that it had invested heavily in preparing for such operations. (AP)

ICC prosecutor requests arrest warrants for head of Myanmar's military regime



THE HAGUE, Nov 27: The International Criminal Court's chief prosecutor asked judges on Wednesday to issue an arrest warrant for the head of Myanmar's military regime for crimes committed against the country's Rohingya Muslim minority.

Senior Gen Min Aung Hlaing, who took power from elected leader Aung San Suu Kyi in a coup in 2021, is accused of crimes against humanity for the deportation and persecution of the Rohingya.

Nearly a million people were forced into neighbouring Bangladesh to escape what has been called an ethnic cleansing campaign involving mass rapes, killings and the torching of homes.

From a refugee camp in Bangladesh, the court's top prosecutor, Karim Khan, said in a statement that he intends to request more warrants for Myanmar's leaders soon.

"In doing so, we will be demonstrating, together with all of our partners, that the Rohingyas have not been forgotten. That they, like all people around the world, are entitled to the protection of the law," the British barrister said.

The allegations stem from a counterinsurgency campaign that Myanmar's military began in August 2017 in response to an insurgent attack. Hlaing, who heads the Myanmar Defence Services, is said to have directed the armed forces of Myanmar, known as the Tatmadaw, as well as national police to attack Rohingya civilians.

Khan was in Bangladesh where he met with members of the displaced Rohingya population. About 1 million of the predominantly Muslim Rohingyas live in Bangladesh as refugees from Myanmar, including about 740,000 who fled in 2017.

Rohingyas face widespread discrimination in Buddhist-majority Myanmar, with most denied citizenship. Myanmar's government refuses to recognise the Rohingyas as one of the country's 135 lawful ethnic minorities, instead calling them Bengalis, with the implication that their native land is in Bangladesh and they are illegally settled in Myanmar.

Human rights groups applauded the decision to seek a warrant. The dire situation of the Rohingyas has received less attention as the conflicts in Ukraine and Gaza have grabbed headlines.

"The ICC prosecutor's decision to seek a warrant against Sr Gen Min Aung Hlaing comes amid renewed atrocities against Rohingyas civilians that echo those suffered seven years ago. The ICC's action is an important step toward breaking the cycle of abuses and impunity," said Maria Elena Vignoli, senior international justice counsel at Human Rights Watch.

Zin Mar Aung, foreign minister for Myanmar's opposition National Unity Government, established by elected lawmakers barred from taking their seats in 2021, said on X that ICC judges should "swiftly issue the warrant" and that governments should "act and enforce this warrant to uphold justice and international law". She posted that the ICC action "represents a critical moment in Myanmar history". Thet Swe, a spokesperson for the military regime, did not immediately respond to requests for comment. (AP)

Imran Khan's party suspends protest in Islamabad; at least four dead in overnight crackdown

ISLAMABAD, Nov 27: Jailed former prime minister Imran Khan's party on Wednesday formally suspended for the time being its protest here blaming the midnight crackdown by the authorities that left at least four dead and over 50 injured even as the PTI earlier claimed "hundreds" were killed in the violent clashes with security personnel.

Amid concerns about the whereabouts of Khan's wife Bushra Bibi and K h y b e r P a k h t u n k h w a Chief Minister Ali Amin Gandapur - who were leading the march to Islamabad - the party said they were at Mansehra town, near Abbottabad, of the north-western province.

Authorities began reopening roads and cleaning all major thoroughfares vandalised during the three-day protest by Khan's Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) party.

The midnight crackdown forced Khan's supporters to evacuate the D-Chowk and its adjacent main business district of the capital ending their protest, which his party described as a "massacre" under the "fascist military regime" even as police sources said about 450 protesters were arrested in the crackdown.

"In view of the government's brutality and the government's plan to turn the capital into a slaughterhouse for unarmed citizens, (we) announce the suspension of the peaceful protest for the time being," Khan's PTI said in a press release shared on its official X account.

Future protests would be announced "in light of directions" from Khan after the party's political and core committees presented their "analyses of the state brutality" to him.

The party statement also condemned the alleged "killing" and

"terror and brutality against peaceful protesters in the name of an operation".

The PTI urged the chief justice to take suo motu notice of the alleged "brutal murder of martyred (party) workers" and order legal action against the prime minister, interior minister and police chiefs of Islamabad and Punjab for "attempt to murder".

Earlier on Tuesday evening, PTI supporters battled law enforcing agencies and succeeded in reaching the D-Chowk for a sit-in as part of their protest march that started on Sunday. The supporters' clash with police killed at least six security personnel and injured dozens since Monday night.

Bushra Bibi and Gandapur had announced that the protesters would not go away until Khan, who had given the 'final call' for protest, was released from jail even as security personnel continued their efforts to move them from the D-Chowk, which is located close to several important government buildings: the Presidency, the PM Office, the Parliament, and the Supreme Court.

In the wee hours of Wednesday, police and Rangers launched an operation to clear the Blue Area business area, forcing the protesters to move away along with Bibi and Gandapur.

Senior PTI leader Taimur Saleem Khan told the media that Bibi and Gandapur were accompanied by the party's National Assembly opposition leader Omar Ayub Khan and that they were staying at the residence of the province's Assembly Speaker Babar Saleem Swati's residence in the Mansehra town of Khyber-Pakhtunkhwa. (PTI)



Australia's House of Representatives passes bill that would ban young children from social media

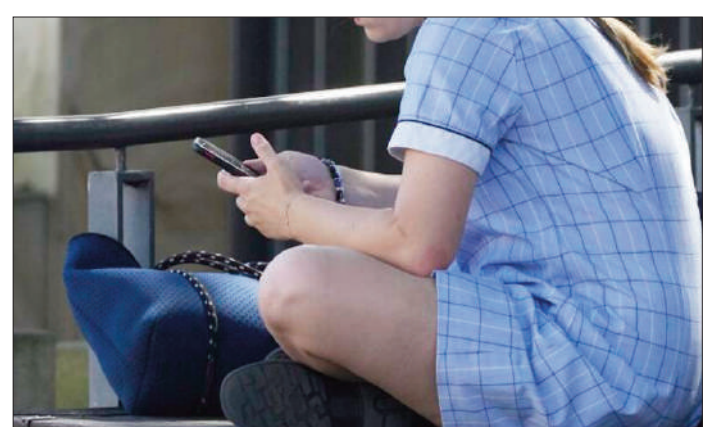
MELBOURNE, Nov 27: Australia's House of Representatives on Wednesday passed a bill that would ban children younger than 16 years old from social media, leaving it to the Senate to finalise the world-first law.

The major parties backed the bill that would make platforms including TikTok, Facebook, Snapchat, Reddit, X and Instagram liable for fines of up to 50 million Australian dollars (USD 33 million) for systemic failures to prevent young children from holding accounts.

The legislation was passed with 102 votes in favour to 13 against.

If the bill becomes law this week, the platforms would have one year to work out how to implement the age restrictions before the penalties are enforced.

Opposition lawmaker Dan Tehan told Parliament the government had agreed to accept amendments in the Senate that would bolster privacy protections. Platforms would not be allowed to compel users to provide government-issued identity documents including passports or driver's licenses. The platforms also



could not demand digital identification through a government system.

"Will it be perfect? No. But is any law perfect? No, it's not. But if it helps, even if it helps in just the smallest of ways, it will make a huge difference to people's lives," Tehan told Parliament. Communications Minister Michelle Rowland said the Senate would debate the bill later Wednesday.

The major parties' support all guarantees the legislation will be passed by the Senate where no

party holds a majority of seats.

Lawmakers who were not aligned with either the government or the opposition were most critical of the legislation during debate on Tuesday and Wednesday.

Criticisms included that the legislation had been rushed through Parliament without adequate scrutiny, would not work, would create privacy risks for users of all ages and would take away parents' authority to decide what's best for their children.

Critics also argue the ban would isolate children, deprive them of positive aspects of social media, drive children to the dark web, make children too young for social media reluctant to report harms they encountered and take away incentives for platforms to make online spaces safer.

Independent lawmaker Zoe Daniel said the legislation would "make zero difference to the harms that are inherent to social media."

"The true object of this legislation is not to make social media safe by design, but to make parents and voters feel like the government is doing something about it," Daniel told Parliament.

"There is a reason why the government parades this legislation as world-leading, that's because no other country wants to do it," she added.

The platforms had asked for the vote on legislation to be delayed until at least June next year when a government-commissioned evaluation of age assurance technologies made its report on how the ban could be enforced. (AP)

Philippine police file criminal complaints against VP Sara Duterte, her security aides

MANILA, Nov 27: Philippine police officials on Wednesday filed criminal complaints against Vice President Sara Duterte and her security staff for allegedly assaulting and disobeying orders from authorities in a recent altercation in Congress. The criminal complaints filed by the Quezon City police were separate from any legal action may arise after she publicly threatened to have President Ferdinand Marcos Jr., his wife and the House of Representatives speaker assassinated if she were killed herself in an unspecified plot. She has not provided details of that plot.

The Marcos administration's legal offensive against Duterte, her father and their allies is a critical juncture in a conflict that has seethed in the last two years between the two most powerful families in the Philippines. The Department of Justice said it was also looking into potentially seditious remarks by Marcos's successor and the vice president's father, Rodrigo Duterte, who said in a news conference that the civilian government would only listen if the military would voice concerns about corruption and irregularities under the Marcos administration.

"There is a fractured governance... It is only the military who can correct it," the former president told a news conference Monday night. He said he was not agitating the military to rise against Marcos but only reaffirming the real situation in the Philippines.

Still, justice officials said an investigation into the former president's remarks would proceed.

The criminal complaints for assaulting, disobeying and grave coercion against police authorities were filed against the vice president and her security and other



aides before state prosecutors, a police statement said. Such crimes are punishable by a jail term and a fine.

The complaints were set off by a chaotic scuffle over the weekend in the House of Representatives where the vice president's chief of staff, Zuleika Lopez, has been temporarily detained. Lopez has been accused by legislators of obstructing and not cooperating with a congressional inquiry into alleged misuse of confidential and intelligence funds by the offices of the vice president and education secretary when Sara Duterte headed it under the Marcos administration.

At one point, authorities were ordered to transfer Lopez to a women's prison outside Congress, causing her to become agitated. The vice president and her staff intervened to oppose the order and Lopez was eventually moved to a government hospital, where she remains confined. (AP)

NHPC team to visit Tripura for Dombur hydroelectric plant revival

AGARTALA, Nov 27: An expert team of National Hydro-electric Power Corporation (NHPC) is set to visit Tripura to undertake a study for renovation and modernisation of the state's lone hydroelectric project in Gomati district, an official said recently.

The Dombur hydroelectric plant, which used to generate around 5 MW of power, was closed after a devastating flood hit the facility in September.

"We have requested the NHPC to send an expert team to push the renovation and modernisation of Dombur hydroelectric project. It is expected the NHPC team will arrive soon to do the job," managing director of Tripura State Electricity Corporation (TSECL), Biswajit Bose, told PTI.

He said the recent flood has caused extensive damage to the facilities at Dombur hydroelectric project prompting the TSECL to shut it down.

"For undertaking a renovation and modernisation plan, the NHPC will prepare a Detailed Project Report (DPR) on the hydroelectric project. They will also carry out power potential study of the facility," the official said.

Bose said Dombur hydroelectric plant is important keeping in mind the low production cost compared to the gas-based power plants.

"While per unit cost stands at ₹ 3.86 at Dombur hydroelectric project, it comes around ₹ 5.90 per unit produced in any gas-based power project in the northeastern state," he said. (PTI)

Nagaland CM launches several economic empowerment initiatives

KOHHIMA, Nov 27: Nagaland Chief Minister Neiphiu Rio on Wednesday launched several economic empowerment initiatives here to improve the state's tourism, transport, agriculture and entrepreneurial sectors. The CM launched Ura Cabs, a homegrown taxi aggregation platform designed to offer seamless travel experiences for tourists and stable income opportunities for local taxi operators.

He also flagged off the Nagaland Tourism Connect – Hornbill Edition, an initiative that introduces newly branded tourism vehicles.

"Launched Economic Empowerment Initiatives. Pleased to unveil UraCab, Nagaland Tourism Connect (Hornbill Edition), & Digital Piggy Insurance. These milestones reflect Govt's commitment to empowering local entrepreneurs and enhancing tourism infrastructure," Rio said in a post on X.

"Proud to see citizens being empowered through capacity-building programs, for homestays, tour guides, taxis & heritage interpreters. Also, handed over financial aid under CM's Life Insurance Scheme. These are significant steps in our journey towards growth, innovation & inclusivity," he said in the post.

Rio emphasised the importance of the Chief Minister's Micro Finance Initiative (CMMFI) which offers up to 42 per cent in subsidies for vehicles procured for commercial use in Nagaland, helping local

entrepreneurs and creating more job opportunities.

He also launched the Digital Piggy Insurance Scheme, an innovative solution tailored to the unique challenges of livestock insurance in remote regions.

This app-based initiative, developed with the support of the Insurance Regulatory and Development Authority of India (IRDAI) and Tata AIG, ensures efficient, cost-effective insurance processing, particularly for remote farmers.

Rio expressed pride in the strides Nagaland is making towards development, highlighting the state's commitment to growth, innovation, and inclusivity. He urged students and youth leaders to actively participate in the implementation of these programmes, ensuring that every household in Nagaland benefits from these life-changing initiatives.

As the Hornbill Festival approaches, Rio called on all stakeholders to work together to showcase Nagaland's rich heritage and warm hospitality, ensuring that visitors leave with unforgettable memories and a desire to return.

Advisor to the Chief Minister and Chairman of the Investment and Development Authority of Nagaland (IDAN), Abu Metha, highlighted the government's ongoing efforts to fill developmental gaps and foster sustainable growth in the state. He emphasized the importance of research and analysis in

Woman arrested in connection to ransacking lawmakers houses in Manipur

Over 30 people have been arrested so far

IMPHAL, Nov 27: A 46-year-old woman was arrested for her alleged involvement in the vandalism at residences of MLAs and ministers in Imphal Valley on November 16, police said on Wednesday.

Mobs set fire to the residences of three BJP legislators, one of whom is a senior minister, and a Congress MLA in various districts of Imphal Valley following the violence in Jiribam.

The violence had escalated after three women and three children belonging to the Meitei community had gone missing from a relief camp in Jiribam after a gunfight between security forces and suspected Kuki-Zo militants resulted in the deaths of 10 insurgents on November 11. Later, the bodies of these six persons were found.

Over 30 people have been arrested so far in connection with the



mob attacks on the residences of the lawmakers.

The woman, Thingbaijam Sushila Devi, was arrested on Tuesday, police said.

Meanwhile, an active cadre of the proscribed Kangleipak Communist Party (People's War Group)

was arrested on charges of extortion in the Nambol area in the Bishnupur district, officials said.

Wairokpan Naoba Meitei was accused of extorting shop owners and local businesses. A two-wheeler was seized from him, police said. (PTI)

'Govt order curtailing tenure of Mizoram Village Council undemocratic'

AIZAWL, Nov 27: All Mizoram Village Council Association (AMVCA) has termed the state government's decision to curtail the current term of village councils (VC) as "undemocratic" and said they would challenge the order in high court.

A notification issued by the local administration department last week said that the current term of the village councils in Mizoram barring those within three autonomous district council areas in the southern part of the state, has been curtailed by six months and shall end on February 19 next year.

AMVCA president K Lalgaizuala said that members of village councils during a conference held in Aizawl on Tuesday unanimously adopted a resolution to approach the Gauhati High Court to protect the prestige of village councils.

The reduction of village councils term has drawn flak from different quarters, including opposition parties.

Congress alleged that the village councils tenure was shortened as the Zoram People's Movement (ZPM) led state government found it difficult to cooperate with those VCs dominated by opposition parties. Earlier, Mizoram Local Administration (LAD) minister C Lalsawivunga had claimed that the tenure of the existing village councils (VCs) was reduced to ensure effective management and use of state funds as well as to adjust the extension necessitated by the outbreak of COVID-19 in 2020. According to the minister, the state government received a post-devolution revenue deficit (PDRD) grant amounting to ₹ 122.83 crore during the fiscal 2023-2024 and ₹ 89.91 crore per month during the current fiscal. As per the 15th Finance Commission's recommendation, Mizoram will receive a PDRD grant of ₹ 48.83 crore per month in the next 2025-2026 fiscal, he said. (PTI)

Mizoram govt will remove non-performing employees: CM

AIZAWL, Nov 27: Mizoram Chief Minister Lalduhoma said his government has decided to remove non-performing employees from service.

During a meeting to review the initiatives of the education department held in Aizawl, Lalduhoma on Tuesday said that committees are being formed in departments to review the services of employees under the state government.

He said that initiatives were taken to ensure a qualified and efficient workforce. "We feel that it is better we relieve all unqualified employees, who are no longer worth to be employed, to exit from their services as per norms. We are committed to having efficient employees, who maintain good quality of services," the chief minister told the meeting.

Lalduhoma said that his government is taking steps to ensure that all projects are executed properly and effectively.

"Projects are being closely monitored by the state project monitoring committee, which has inspected about 40 ongoing projects so far. We will be stringent in implementing and monitoring projects in the state," he said.

The chief minister also said that the government is taking measures to streamline the use of Corporate Social Respon-



sibility (CSR), which was earlier availed and used by departments on their own.

He said that the government has decided to centralise CSR from the Chief Minister's Office (CMO) and all departments will seek CSR with the knowledge of a CSR cell.

Lalduhoma further said that his government is desirous of avoiding Central funding, which has a high percentage of state matching share.

All departments must submit their proposal for projects to the Centre through the state planning department to avoid overlapping project proposals, he said. (PTI)

Nagaland Guv urges corporates to build rehab centre in Kohima



HT Correspondent

DIMAPUR, Nov 27: Nagaland Governor La Ganesan urged stakeholders, particularly corporate organisations through their Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) programmes, to partner with the Indian Red Cross Society (IRCS), Nagaland state branch, to build a rehabilitation centre for alcoholics and drug addicts in Kohima.

Delivering his presidential address at the 37th annual general meeting of IRCS Nagaland at Raj Bhavan in Kohima, Ganesan said this initiative is a key priority of the society and underscores its commitment to addressing critical social issues that plague our society.

He said this annual gathering is not merely a meeting but a celebration of the relentless efforts and dedication of our members, volunteers, and supporters who work tirelessly to make a difference in our communities. He said the Red Cross is a symbol of neutrality and impartiality,

transcending all barriers of race, religion, and politics, adding it is its duty to uphold these principles as we serve humanity with empathy and determination.

"As we are faced with new opportunities and challenges, let us also focus on strengthening our disaster preparedness and response mechanisms, building capacity in our branches, and encouraging youth engagement in our activities to ensure the sustainability of our mission," he said.

Ganesan said despite the numerous challenges, including natural calamities and conflicts, the IRCS, Nagaland state branch, has stood resilient, providing humanitarian aid and support where it was needed most.

During the programme, the governor gave decoration to the patrons and vice patrons and awards to Voluntary Blood Donors Association and others. A blood app, developed by Rishav Sethi, was launched on the occasion.

Earth collapse in Arunachal claims 2 workers from Assam

ITANAGAR, Nov 27: Two construction workers from Assam were killed and two others injured in Itanagar's Doni Colony on Wednesday as a mound of earth collapsed on them while they were digging to construct a retaining wall, police said.

The deceased were identified as Jahan Hemran (45) and Vijay Bag (46) of Dhekiajuli in Assam. The two survivors were rescued after a five-hour operation led by police officer RK Jha in coordination with the State Disaster Response Force, police said.

The injured, Ganesh Oran and Joseph Dopnu, were admitted to the Ramakrishna



Mission Hospital, they said.

A case of unnatural death was registered at the Itanagar police station to investigate

the circumstances leading to the collapse, an official said. Itanagar Capital Region's deputy commissioner Talo Potom expressed concern over violations of state laws governing earth-cutting activities. He noted that despite multiple meetings with stakeholders, including elected representatives, illegal excavation and disregard for permissions from the Planning Authority persist.

"Such violations frequently lead to the loss of life and property. I hope citizens cooperate with authorities in the future and approach the Planning Authority to prevent such incidents," Potom said. (PTI)

Sikkim to allow tourists in Mangan district from Dec 1

GANGTOK, Nov 27: Tourists will be allowed in various Himalayan destinations of the Mangan district, including Yumthang, Dikchu, Lachung and the Guru Dongmar Lake, in a staggered manner from December 1, a senior official of the Sikkim government said on Wednesday.

Tourism activities were suspended in the district five months ago after heavy rainfall caused severe landslides, damaging various roads and bridges along the North Sikkim Highway.

"After examining the current situation and road conditions in Mangan district, it has been decided to allow tourists in a staggered manner," Tourism and Civil Aviation Department Principal Secretary CS Rao said.

He said the district administration will work out the modalities for facilitating the movement of the tourists from December 1.

The Border Roads Organization (BRO) has been restoring roads in the district on war footing, officials said. (PTI)

Meiteis' body to observe 'shutdown' of govt offices

IMPHAL, Nov 27: An apex body of Imphal Valley-based civil society organisations representing Meiteis in Manipur on Tuesday said it has decided to observe a "shutdown" of central and state government offices for two days from November 27, demanding removal of AFSPA and an operation against suspected Kuki militants.

Addressing a press conference, Coordinating Committee on Manipur Integrity (COCOMI) coordinator Thokchom Somorendro alleged that the state government has "failed" to act on a resolution adopted during the November 18 meeting of legislators to initiate an operation against suspected Kuki militants.

"The state government, in a meeting of NDA legislators on November 18, had adopted a resolution for removal of AFSPA and to conduct a 'mass operation' against Kuki militants within seven days. However, the government has failed

to act on its resolution within the stipulated time frame," he alleged. The meeting, held on November 18 night, was attended by 27 MLAs.

"To register our protests over the government's failure to act on the resolution, all offices of the state and central governments will be locked and shut down for two days from Wednesday," Somorendro said.

Officials linked to essential services and educational institutions will be "exempted from the shutdown," he said.

During the meeting of MLAs of the ruling BJP-led NDA in Manipur, a resolution calling for a 'mass operation' against the suspected Kuki militants responsible for killing three women and three children in Jiribam district within seven days was adopted, a statement had said.

According to it, the Centre would "review the imposition of AFSPA as per the order dated November 14 with immediate effect". (PTI)

Arunachal inks tripartite pact for haemodialysis machines under PMNDP

Bid to help local communities in Arunachal having no viable options for this life-saving service until now

ITANAGAR, Nov 27: To enhance healthcare accessibility in North East, Indian Oil Corporation Limited has joined hands with a charitable organisation and government of Arunachal Pradesh to provide 10 haemodialysis machines under Pradhan Mantra National Dialysis Programme (PMNDP), a senior health department official said on Wednesday.

The tripartite pact was inked by National Health Mission (NHM) mission director Marge Sora, who represented the government of Arunachal Pradesh, with representatives of Indian Oil and Fairfax India Charitable Foundation under CSR for Arunachal Pradesh at Guwahati recently, PMNDP state nodal officer Dr Lobsang Jampa said.

Speaking after signing the pact, Indian Oil chief general manager (HRD & ER), Udit Jain said, "This partnership exemplifies the power of public-private collaboration in tackling critical healthcare issues. By decentralising haemodialysis services, we are committed to bringing life-saving care to underserved communities across the region."

Indian Oil- Assam Oil Division executive director and state head Rajesh Nambiar emphasized, "Our goal is to bridge the healthcare gap in the Northeast. This initiative is a testament to Indian Oil's dedication to delivering equitable healthcare services, even in the



remotest areas."

Fairfax India Charitable Foundation Trustee Vishal Suri said, "We are very grateful to Indian Oil for partnering with us at the Fairfax India Charitable Foundation contributing 10 haemodialysis machines, thus enabling much-needed dialysis infrastructure across Arunachal Pradesh. This will help the local communities in Arunachal Pradesh, who had no viable options for this life-saving service until now."

Dr Jampa said many Arunachal Pradesh districts lack adequate haemodialysis facilities while existing

centres face overwhelming demand.

For rural populations, the high cost of haemodialysis (₹ 2.4 lakh annually), combined with the added burden of travel and accommodation expenses, makes access to this life-saving treatment a significant challenge, Dr Jampa said.

He said the initiative will directly benefit patients in districts such as Namsai, Lower Dibang, Upper Subansiri, and Leparada. It aims to reduce patient drop-offs caused by logistical challenges, lower mortality rates, and create employment opportunities in healthcare within these regions. (PTI)

No.EE (Agri.)/Koj/BTC/e-Tender/2024-25/2132
TENDER NO. 05 OF 2024-25.
PRESS NOTICE/IFB
 The Executive Engineer (Agriculture), Kokrajhar Division, BTC, Kokrajhar invites bids for the work "Construction of covered threshing floor in BTAD area under RKVY-RAFTAAR for the year, 2024-25" against the administrative approval no. BTC/Agri/CSS/74/2024-Agriculture & Welfare Dept.-BTC/61, dtd. 12/11/2024 an amounting to **Rs. 1,50,00,000.00** (unit cost 25.00Lakh) (Rupees one crore fifty lakh) only from the registered contractors of **class-I, II & III** category of Agriculture Deptt. of BTC.
 Details may be seen at website <http://assamtenders.gov.in> and also at the office of the undersigned during office hours.
Sd/- (R. Kakati)
 Executive Engineer (Agriculture.),
 Kokrajhar Division, BTC, Kokrajhar
IPR(BTC)/C/2024-25/958

No.BDB/15th FC-125/2020-21/1818
SHORT NOTICE INVITING TENDER
 Dtd.25/11/2024
 Sealed tender affixing a non-refundable Court fee stamp of Rs. 8.25 (Rupees eight & twenty five) only with a validity period of 180 days, which will subsequently to be converted and drawn up in the printed of F-2 form are invited from the registered Contractors of Class-II and Class-I (A.B & C) Category of Assam PWD (Road) and BTC, according to their eligibility for submitting tenders for the following works under 15th finance Commission (Tied Grant) for FY 2023-24 during the year 2024-25 as stated below. The tenders will be received by the undersigned up to 12.00 Noon on 09/12/2024 and will be opened on the same date & place at 2.00 P.M.

Sl. No.	Name of Works	Tender Amount (Approx)	Cost of Tender Paper	Time of Complication
1	Const. of Community Toilet at Athiabari Chowk under 15th finance Commission (Tied Grant) for FY 2022-23 during the year 2024-25.	11,00,000/-	500.00	6(six)Months from the date of issue of F.W.O.

 Detail N.I.T. may be seen in all working days during office hours in the office of the undersigned. Tender papers will be issued to the contractors or their authorized agents from 27/11/2024 & 06/12/2024 in the office of the undersigned on payment in the from of Demand draft /Banker's Cheque from any Nationalized Bank, duly pledged in favour of the B.D.O. Baska Development Block Mushalpur, payable at S.B.I. Mushalpur.
Sd/-Block Dev. Officer
 Baska Dev. Block Mushalpur
IPR(BTC)/C/2024-25/955

Will back PM Modi, Shah's Maharashtra CM pick: Shinde

All eyes on BJP, Fadnavis

MUMBAI, Nov 27: Caretaker Chief Minister Eknath Shinde on Wednesday announced the Shiv Sena would support the decisions of Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Union Home Minister Amit Shah to name the next Maharashtra CM, paving the way for the BJP to head the new government.

With Shinde declaring the Shiv Sena would not be a "hurdle" in the formation of new government, two-time BJP chief minister Devendra Fadnavis, one of the architects of the ruling Mahayuti's grand win in the just-held state assembly polls, is emerging as a front-runner for the top post.

The caretaker CM's declaration at a press conference in his political turf Thane marks a significant step toward a smooth transition of power after the BJP-led ruling alliance achieved a stunning victory in the November 20 polls.

As discussions about the new government intensify, political observers are closely watching the developments that may soon lead to Fadnavis being appointed as the new chief minister with two deputy CMs.

Shinde (60), alongside his outgoing deputies Fadnavis and Ajit Pawar of the Nationalist Congress Party (NCP), is expected to meet with Shah in New Delhi on Thurs-



day to further discuss modalities of the government formation.

Maharashtra NDA leaders are also likely to meet the top BJP brass here on Thursday, BJP sources said, indicating the formula of one chief minister and two deputy CMs representing the all three major 'Mahayuti' constituents (BJP, Shiv Sena, NCP) will be followed in the new government. Shinde, who heads the Shiv Sena, may swap his position with Fadnavis, while Pawar will continue as one of the two deputy CMs, the sources said.

However, the details of the new government are likely to be given a concrete shape in the meeting of the state's ruling alliance leaders

with the BJP's national leadership. Talking to reporters at his Thane residence, five days after the resounding victory of the Mahayuti alliance, Shinde said "I spoke to the Prime Minister and the Home Minister and assured them that there will be no hindrance from our side."

"Our Shiv Sena will fully support the BJP's decision to name the next Maharashtra CM. There is no speed breaker from our side," Shinde said, showing no trace on his face of having to swallow the bitter pill.

Ajit Pawar told reporters the new CM is likely to be sworn-in either on November 30 or December 1. There will be two deputy

chief ministers in the incoming government, added the NCP leader.

Shinde rubbished reports he was disappointed for not getting a second term as CM despite the ruling alliance winning a thumping victory under his leadership.

"Nobody is annoyed. We have worked as Mahayuti," the Shiv Sena leader, who assumed the top office in June 2022, asserted.

Asked if he was dismayed that he was not getting a second term, Shinde said, "There is no such thing. You must remember that BJP supported my tenure as CM."

"There is a meeting in Delhi tomorrow with Amit bhai (Shah) and all related decisions will be taken there," Shinde said.

"I thank the people and voters of Maharashtra for this landslide victory in the assembly elections. I am a worker forever; for me, CM is not Chief Minister but Common Man," he noted.

Shinde thanked PM Modi and Home Minister Shah for supporting him during his two-and-a-half year tenure as chief minister.

"I am not disappointed. We fight and don't cry," Shinde said, referring to media reports that he was unhappy over being asked to step down despite leading the Mahayuti to poll victory. (PTI)

Opposition protests rock Rajya Sabha

NEW DELHI, Nov 27: Protests by opposition members who were pressing for discussions on allegations of irregularities against the Adani Group, Sambhal violence and other issues rocked Rajya Sabha on Wednesday with the House adjourned for the day without transacting any substantial business.

The trouble started after Chairman Jagdeep Dhankhar rejected 18 notices under a rule of the House to suspend scheduled business to take up issues including the demand for a joint parliamentary committee (JPC) probe into the Adani issue.

The proceedings were briefly adjourned due to opposition protest and when the House re-assembled at 11.30 AM, there were identical scenes. This prompted Chairman Jagdeep Dhankhar to adjourn the proceedings for the day, saying the "House is not in order".

The notices related to the demand for the "constitution of a JPC to investigate the alleged misconduct, including corruption, bribery, financial irregularities of the Adani Group in connivance with other authorities", violence in Sambhal in Uttar Pradesh and "rising" incidents of crime in the national capital.

"Upper House needs to reflect and follow well-established tradi-



Revoke Suspension of 12 Rajya Sabha MPs!

tions that ruling of the Chair requires reference and not cause differences. I have, in detail, given reasons why, in these situations, notices are not being accepted," Dhankhar said while rejecting the notices under Rule 267 of the House.

The Chairman also said that for the last 30 years, the House has reflected a consensual approach with reference to Rule 267 every time.

"As I have reiterated on several occasions, I thought it wise to bestow focused attention given the situation that we are entering the last quarter of the century of adoption of the Constitution of India," he said.

He emphasised that the House needs to reflect and follow well-es-

tablished traditions that a ruling of the Chair requires "deference and not (be a) cause of differences".

While rejecting the notices, Dhankhar also stressed that there will be occasions to raise these issues in accordance with rules.

Earlier, the Chairman extended birthday greetings to Bikash Ranjan Bhattacharyya, Wanweiry Kharlukhi and Dharmshila Gupta, all Members of Rajya Sabha.

On Monday also, the first day of the Winter Session, the Rajya Sabha proceedings were adjourned for the day during the morning session itself as the opposition insisted on raising the issues related to the Adani Group.

There was no sitting of the House on Tuesday. (PTI)

Hundreds of people arrested on 'tiny' charges, why is Adani not in jail, asks Rahul

NEW DELHI, Nov 27: The Congress on Wednesday said the "Modani ecosystem" was attempting to dilute the seriousness of the bribery allegations against billionaire Gautam Adani in the US, with Rahul Gandhi accusing the government of protecting the businessman.

The opposition party also dismissed the remarks of lawyers Mahesh Jethmalani and Mukul Rohatgi on the bribery allegations and said there was an attempt to damage control through denial. The Congress demanded that the allegations against Adani be discussed in detail in Parliament and investigative agencies, as well as SEBI, impartially probe these charges.

Speaking to reporters outside Parliament, Gandhi, the leader of opposition in the Lok Sabha, asked why Adani was not in jail when hundreds of people were arrested in the country on "tiny" charges.

"You think the Adanis are going to accept the charges? Which world are you living in? Obviously, he is going to deny the charges," he said when asked about the Adani Group denying the charges.

"The point is he has to be arrested. As we have said, hundreds of people are being arrested on tiny charges and the gentleman has been indicted in the US for thousands of crores. He

should be in jail... The government is protecting him," the former Congress chief said. Congress general secretary in-charge communications Jai Ram Ramesh said, "Not surprisingly, the Modani ecosystem has let loose big legal cannons this morning. Now, faced with serious action in other countries whose systems it cannot intimidate or erode, the Modani ecosystem is attempting damage control through denial."

This laughable attempt cannot dilute the seriousness of the charges levelled by US agencies, he asserted.

"There is no escaping the fact that the (US) Department of Justice indictment clearly says that Gautam S Adani, Sagar R Adani, and others 'devised a scheme to offer, authorise, make and promise to make bribe payments to Indian government officials in exchange for the government officials causing state electricity distribution companies to enter into PSAs with SECI' (para 47)," Ramesh said in a post on X.

"It also says that they 'offered and promised to Indian government officials approximately ₹ 2,029 crore (approximately USD 265 million) in bribes in exchange for Indian government officials causing the state electricity distribution companies to execute PSAs' (para 49)," he pointed out. (PTI)

MVA candidates to seek verification of EVM-VVPAT units

MUMBAI, Nov 27: The Maha Vikas Aghadi candidates who faced defeat in the recent Maharashtra assembly polls have decided to seek verification of the EVM-Voter Verifiable Paper Audit Trails (VVPATs) units in their segments, a leader of the opposition alliance said.

Many losing candidates of the opposition Shiv Sena (UBT) pointed fingers at the functioning of the Electronic Voting Machines (EVMs) during their interaction with party head Uddhav Thackeray on Tuesday.

Thackeray took stock of the lacklustre performance of his party at a meeting held at his residence in Mumbai.

The poll verdict last week saw the Mahayuti coalition, comprising the Shiv Sena, BJP, and NCP, retaining power with a massive mandate, pushing the Maha Vikas Aghadi (MVA) to margins.

The Mahayuti won 230 seats and MVA only 46 in the 288-member House.

The Thackeray-led Sena (UBT) emerged as the largest party in the opposition camp by winning 20 seats, followed by Congress which bagged 16 constituencies, while the NCP (Sharadchandra Pawar) sits at the bottom with a tally of 10 seats. Talking to PTI on Tuesday, Congress leader Arif Naseem Khan, who lost the election from Chandivali assembly constituency in Mumbai, said he held a discussion with Thackeray, who also said he has got complaints from his party workers that EVMs could have been tampered.

"We are getting complaints from different parts of the state expressing doubts over the results. In a democracy, complaints need to be verified and many of us, including myself, (who faced defeat) are in the process of applying for the verification," Khan said.

As per the Supreme Court's judgement on April 26 this year, the burnt memory/microcontroller in 5 per cent of the EVMs - the control unit, ballot unit and VVPAT - per assembly constituency shall be checked and verified by a team of engineers from manufacturers of the EVMs, after the announcement of results, for any tampering or modification, he said. (PTI)

Arrest of Hindu leader in Bangladesh: Union minister seeks intervention of UN

NEW DELHI, Nov 27: Union minister Giriraj Singh on Wednesday said the attack on Hindus in Bangladesh reflects that the interim government of that country is in the "clutches of fundamentalists" and sought the intervention of the United Nations in the matter.

Condemning the arrest of a Hindu leader in Bangladesh, he said such attacks are against humanity.

"The caretaker 'prime minister' of Bangladesh is in the clutches of fundamentalists. The way Hindus are being attacked is against humanity. United Nations should intervene in this matter," Singh told reporters in Parliament complex.

The Bangladesh interim government is headed by Chief Adviser Muhammad Yunus. Singh said the targeting of Hindus and arrest of religious leaders shows that fundamentalists are dominating the Bangladesh interim government like in the case of Pakistan.

The minister was asked about the arrest of Hindu leader Chinmoy Krishna Das Brahmachari in Bangladesh and the prevailing situation there.

Bangladesh police had on Monday arrested the International Society for Krishna Consciousness (ISKCON) monk from the Hazrat Shahjalal International Airport area in Dhaka while travelling to Chattogram.

India on Tuesday noted with "deep concern" the arrest and denial of bail to the Hindu leader, and urged authorities in the neighbouring country to ensure the safety and security of Hindus and all other minority groups.

Singh also attacked the opposition, saying while it is raising the issue of Sambhal violence, they are not concerned about the situation faced by Hindus in Bangladesh.



"People are talking about going to Sambhal, but Rahul Gandhi, Akhilesh Yadav are not able to see Bangladesh, where atrocities are being committed against the Hindus. All Hindus should protest against the atrocities in Bangladesh," Singh said.

He also stressed on the need for a law to stop conversions in India.

"The law made by Assam on conversion should be welcomed. All states should have similar laws against religious conversion through enticements. Conversions are rising in the country and it is unfortunate. Democracy is safe only as long as the majority is 'Sanatani'," he said.

Several other MPs also condemned the attack on minorities in Bangladesh and sought the government's intervention.

TMC MP Saugata Roy also condemned the incident and said it is a matter of concern that Hindus are being subjected to atrocities. "It should not happen. I con-

demn. The government should actively intervene in the matter," he said.

Congress leader Gaurav Gogoi said his party was worried over the situation in Bangladesh.

"We are worried over what is happening in Bangladesh. Few days back, an ISKCON monk was arrested, his supporters were attacked. Where is Vishwaguru, PM Modi?" he asked.

"Why is there such a situation in a neighbouring country despite PM Modi's presence? He goes to meditate between Ukraine and Russia, Israel and Palestine... but ever since he has taken charge, India's influence in its neighbourhood is declining. He is silent today, and no concrete steps are being taken to resolve the situation," he said.

BJP leader Samik Bhattacharya said it is unfortunate that the country is silent over atrocities being committed against minorities in Bangladesh. (PTI)

E-AUCTION FOR CATERING STALLS ASSETS OVER LUMDING DIVISION

E-auction for 77 Nos. Assets of Catering stalls over Lumding Division for a period of 05 (five) years. Details are as under. Auction Catalogue No.: CATER-LMG-07-24; Auction Start Date & Time (All Lots): 10:00 hrs. on 09-12-2024; Auction Close Date & Time: 15:30 hrs. on 10-12-2024; Rate Unit: Annual Licensing Fee; Trips/Days: AA/1 to AA/53 : 1826, AB/1 to AB/10 : 1826, AB/11 : 1827, AB/12 to AB/24 : 1826.					
Seq No.	Lot No./Category	Stations	Seq No.	Lot No./Category	Stations
AA/1	Catg-LMG-JGLP-GMU-29-23-3 (Catering - General Minor Unit (GMU))	Jatinga Lampur	AA/40	Catg-LMG-DMU-GMU-110-23-1 (Catering - General Minor Unit (GMU))	Dharamtul
AA/2	Catg-LMG-JGLP-GMU-28-23-2 (Catering - General Minor Unit (GMU))	Jatinga Lampur	AA/41	Catg-LMG-DBZ-GMU-121-23-1 (Catering - General Minor Unit (GMU))	Dhingbazar
AA/3	Catg-LMG-LGT-GMU-24-23-2 (Catering - General Minor Unit (GMU))	Langting	AA/42	Catg-LMG-BRGM-GMU-50-23-1 (Catering - General Minor Unit (GMU))	Baraigram
AA/4	Catg-LMG-TTLA-GMU-56-23-1 (Catering - General Minor Unit (GMU))	Tetelia	AA/43	Catg-LMG-JGLP-GMU-27-23-2 (Catering - General Minor Unit (GMU))	Jatinga Lampur
AA/5	Catg-LMG-BXK-GMU-44-23-1 (Catering - General Minor Unit (GMU))	Bandarkhal	AA/44	Catg-LMG-NHLG-GMU-12-23-1 (Catering - General Minor Unit (GMU))	New Haflong
AA/6	Catg-LMG-KKGT-GMU-67-23-1 (Catering - General Minor Unit (GMU))	Kalkalighat	AA/45	Catg-LMG-DMR-GMU-19-23-1 (Catering - General Minor Unit (GMU))	Dharmanagar
AA/7	Catg-LMG-MSSN-GMU-77-23-1 (Catering - General Minor Unit (GMU))	Maishashan	AA/46	Catg-LMG-HKD-GMU-15-23-1 (Catering - General Minor Unit (GMU))	Hailakandi
AA/8	Catg-LMG-NGAN-GMU-81-23-1 (Catering - General Minor Unit (GMU))	Nagaon	AA/47	Catg-LMG-JGUN-GMU-114-23-1 (Catering - General Minor Unit (GMU))	Jugijan
AA/9	Catg-LMG-PEC-GMU-94-23-1 (Catering - General Minor Unit (GMU))	Pencharthal	AA/48	Catg-LMG-DJA-GMU-109-23-1 (Catering - General Minor Unit (GMU))	Dautuhaja
AA/10	Catg-LMG-KKET-GMU-64-23-1 (Catering - General Minor Unit (GMU))	Kamrup Khetri	AA/49	Catg-LMG-RAHA-GMU-51-23-1 (Catering - General Minor Unit (GMU))	Raha
AA/11	Catg-LMG-TTLA-GMU-54-23-1 (Catering - General Minor Unit (GMU))	Tetelia	AA/50	Catg-LMG-CNE-GMU-105-23-1 (Catering - General Minor Unit (GMU))	Chandranathpur
AA/12	Catg-LMG-DHRY-GMU-108-23-1 (Catering - General Minor Unit (GMU))	Dhalpukhuri	AA/51	Catg-LMG-BHRB-GMU-119-23-1 (Catering - General Minor Unit (GMU))	Bhairabi
AA/13	Catg-LMG-PHI-GMU-96-23-1 (Catering - General Minor Unit (GMU))	Panikhaiti	AA/52	Catg-LMG-JGUN-GMU-113-23-1 (Catering - General Minor Unit (GMU))	Jugijan
AA/14	Catg-LMG-NNGE-GMU-85-23-1 (Catering - General Minor Unit (GMU))	Narangi	AA/53	Catg-LMG-MGE-GMU-74-23-1 (Catering - General Minor Unit (GMU))	Migrendisa
AA/15	Catg-LMG-BHZ-GMU-23-23-3 (Catering - General Minor Unit (GMU))	Behara	AB/1	Catg-LMG-JMK-SMU-131-23-1 (Catering - Special Minor Unit (SMU))	Jamunamukh
AA/16	Catg-LMG-MBG-GMU-26-23-2 (Catering - General Minor Unit (GMU))	Maibang	AB/2	Catg-LMG-SHTT-SMU-138-23-1 (Catering - Special Minor Unit (SMU))	Silghat Town
AA/17	Catg-LMG-NHLG-GMU-11-23-1 (Catering - General Minor Unit (GMU))	New Haflong	AB/3	Catg-LMG-SZR-SMU-45-23-1 (Catering - Special Minor Unit (SMU))	Sarupathar
AA/18	Catg-LMG-HLK-GMU-112-23-1 (Catering - General Minor Unit (GMU))	Hilari	AB/4	Catg-LMG-BXP-SMU-129-23-1 (Catering - Special Minor Unit (SMU))	Barpathar
AA/19	Catg-LMG-KBG-GMU-57-23-1 (Catering - General Minor Unit (GMU))	Jakhalabandha	AB/5	Catg-LMG-KUGT-SMU-97-24-2 (Catering - Special Minor Unit (SMU))	Kumarghat
AA/20	Catg-LMG-MXR-GMU-79-23-1 (Catering - General Minor Unit (GMU))	Mahur	AB/6	Catg-LMG-MBG-SMU-32-23-1 (Catering - Special Minor Unit (SMU))	Maibang
AA/21	Catg-LMG-SHTT-GMU-52-23-1 (Catering - General Minor Unit (GMU))	Silghat Town	AB/7	Catg-LMG-CPK-SMU-63-24-2 (Catering - Special Minor Unit (SMU))	Chaparmukh
AA/22	Catg-LMG-SHTT-GMU-53-23-1 (Catering - General Minor Unit (GMU))	Silghat Town	AB/8	Catg-LMG-LKA-SMU-60-23-1 (Catering - Special Minor Unit (SMU))	Lanka
AA/23	Catg-LMG-AONI-GMU-47-23-1 (Catering - General Minor Unit (GMU))	Amoni	AB/9	Catg-LMG-HKD-SMU-91-23-1 (Catering - Special Minor Unit (SMU))	Hailakandi
AA/24	Catg-LMG-PKGM-GMU-98-23-1 (Catering - General Minor Unit (GMU))	Phakhoagram	AB/10	Catg-LMG-DMR-SMU-95-23-1 (Catering - Special Minor Unit (SMU))	Dharmanagar
AA/25	Catg-LMG-NHLG-GMU-10-23-1 (Catering - General Minor Unit (GMU))	New Haflong	AB/11	Catg-LMG-LKG-SMU-135-23-1 (Catering - Special Minor Unit (SMU))	Lamsakhang
AA/26	Catg-LMG-LKA-GMU-3-23-1 (Catering - General Minor Unit (GMU))	Lanka	AB/12	Catg-LMG-MYD-SMU-34-23-1 (Catering - Special Minor Unit (SMU))	Manderdisa
AA/27	Catg-LMG-AJRE-GMU-43-23-1 (Catering - General Minor Unit (GMU))	Aujari	AB/13	Catg-LMG-NHLG-SMU-82-23-1 (Catering - Special Minor Unit (SMU))	New Haflong
AA/28	Catg-LMG-KLCR-GMU-70-23-1 (Catering - General Minor Unit (GMU))	Katlicherra	AB/14	Catg-LMG-KKET-SMU-133-23-1 (Catering - Special Minor Unit (SMU))	Kamrup Khetri
AA/29	Catg-LMG-LGI-GMU-71-23-1 (Catering - General Minor Unit (GMU))	Langai	AB/15	Catg-LMG-BXP-SMU-130-23-1 (Catering - Special Minor Unit (SMU))	Barpathar
AA/30	Catg-LMG-KKET-GMU-61-23-1 (Catering - General Minor Unit (GMU))	Kamrup Khetri	AB/16	Catg-LMG-CPK-SMU-66-24-1 (Catering - Special Minor Unit (SMU))	Chaparmukh
AA/31	Catg-LMG-NNGE-GMU-87-23-1 (Catering - General Minor Unit (GMU))	Narangi	AB/17	Catg-LMG-CPK-SMU-65-24-1 (Catering - Special Minor Unit (SMU))	Chaparmukh
AA/32	Catg-LMG-DCA-GMU-107-23-1 (Catering - General Minor Unit (GMU))	Damcherra	AB/18	Catg-LMG-LKA-SMU-55-23-1 (Catering - Special Minor Unit (SMU))	Lanka
AA/33	Catg-LMG-MBO-GMU-76-23-1 (Catering - General Minor Unit (GMU))	Mairabari	AB/19	Catg-LMG-LKA-SMU-46-23-1 (Catering - Special Minor Unit (SMU))	Lanka
AA/34	Catg-LMG-JRNA-GMU-58-23-1 (Catering - General Minor Unit (GMU))	Jirania	AB/20	Catg-LMG-LKG-SMU-137-23-1 (Catering - Special Minor Unit (SMU))	Lamsakhang
AA/35	Catg-LMG-NJN-GMU-83-23-1 (Catering - General Minor Unit (GMU))	Naojan	AB/21	Catg-LMG-KKET-SMU-134-23-1 (Catering - Special Minor Unit (SMU))	Kamrup Khetri
AA/36	Catg-LMG-UDPU-GMU-115-23-1 (Catering - General Minor Unit (GMU))	Udaipur	AB/22	Catg-LMG-KWM-SMU-62-23-1 (Catering - Special Minor Unit (SMU))	Kampur
AA/37	Catg-LMG-PDJ-GMU-92-23-1 (Catering - General Minor Unit (GMU))	Phiding	AB/23	Catg-LMG-JMK-SMU-132-23-1 (Catering - Special Minor Unit (SMU))	Jamunamukh
AA/38	Catg-LMG-PNB-GMU-100-23-1 (Catering - General Minor Unit (GMU))	Panbari	AB/24	Catg-LMG-MBG-SMU-33-23-2 (Catering - Special Minor Unit (SMU))	Maibang
AA/39	Catg-LMG-CBZ-GMU-104-23-1 (Catering - General Minor Unit (GMU))	Churaibari	Prospective bidders are requested to visit e-Auction leasing module of IREPS website www.ireps.gov.in .		

Sr. Divisional Commercial Manager, Lumding



NORTHEAST FRONTIER RAILWAY

"SERVING CUSTOMERS WITH A SMILE"

Rains continue in Tamil Nadu, standing crops hit in Cauvery delta areas

CHENNAI, Nov 27: Rains continued on Wednesday in Tamil Nadu's Cauvery delta areas affecting standing paddy crops, and leader of the opposition Edappadi K Palaniswami urged the state government to provide appropriate relief to farmers.

Crops were submerged partially and completely at several places, including those in and around Tiruvallur, Thiruthurai, Thiruvannamalai, Mayiladuthurai, and Vedaranyam, and according to farmers' rough estimates, crops on at least 2,000 acres were affected.

Also, huge acreage of salt pans in the districts of Nagapattinam (Vedaranyam) and Villupuram (Marakkanman) came under water.

AIADMK general secretary Edappadi K Palaniswami expressed shock over reports that 1,500 acres of paddy crop have been affected in Thiruthurai (Thiruvannamalai district) and demanded that officials inspect rain-hit areas and urged the DMK regime to provide appropriate relief to farmers.

Farmers leader P R Pandian alleged that canals and rivers were not properly desilted in the delta areas.

Minister TRB Rajaa inspected relief camps at Thiruthurai and also the submerged crops in that region. District officials inspected the affected localities and senior state officials coordinated rain-related relief work.

Rain-related incidents, including the collapse of an old house at Tarangampadi and the wall of a Dharga's tank at Jambuvandai in Tiruvallur district have been reported. Trees were uprooted and some fell on nearby electricity poles causing power failure and many localities were inundated.

According to an IMD's rainfall update, very heavy rainfall was recorded in several areas, including Nagapattinam (19 cm) and Chennai (13 cm), from 8.30 am on November 26 until 8.30 am the following day.

Also, there was widespread heavy rainfall, including in the delta areas, and the rest of the state experienced mild to moderate showers. NDRF and state teams have been deployed in delta districts and Chennai as well. Given the rains, November 27 has been declared a holiday for schools and colleges, including Tiruvallur, Cuddalore, Nagapattinam, and Mayiladuthurai districts. A holiday has been declared only for schools in Chennai, Chengelpet, Ariyalur, and Kanchipuram. (PTI)

'Survey of Sambhal mosque not done in haste but on orders of advocate commissioner'

SAMBHAL (UP), Nov 27: The second survey of Sambhal's Jama Masjid was not conducted in haste but on the orders of the advocate commissioner, the lawyer of the Hindu side claimed on Wednesday.

He was responding to the allegation of the mosque's management committee that the second survey of the mosque was not conducted under court orders but solely on the directions of the district magistrate.

"The decision on the second survey was not done in haste. It was done on order of the advocate commissioner," lawyer Gopal Sharma claimed.

Addressing a press conference on Monday, president of the Shahi Jama Masjid management committee Zafar Ali had alleged that the recent survey of the mosque was carried out "unlawfully".

Sharma claimed he was also an eyewitness to the incident on Sunday.

"I feel that it was pre-planned. At that time, three advocates from the other side, committee members, the head of the mosque and the Imam were also present at the mosque. They also appealed for peace from the mosque. Photography was being done from the top," he said.

Sharma said the protesters also threw stones at them but



as the mosque was at some height, they could reach there.

"The police chased them away many times but they kept throwing bricks and stones at the police. They also fired at the police. Many policemen were hit by pellets. All those people had their faces covered," Sharma claimed.

He said now the matter will be heard in the court on November 29 and the advocate commissioner will submit his report in presence of both the sides.

On charges that draining water from the ablation tank (wazukhana) led to a confusion among those gathered outside as they believed excavation was taking place and it provoked the crowd, Sharma said it was emptied every week. "Had it not been emp-

ty, how its videography would have been done," he asked.

Sharma said till 1978, the Hindu side also used to go there (mosque premises) for worship but after the riots in 1978, the Hindu side stopped going there.

He said an ASI board has also been installed here and it is an ASI protected area.

"ASI also conducts a survey twice every year. Since it is an ASI protected area, it is not appropriate to offer namaz there," he said.

Ali had on Monday blamed the local authorities and the police for the violence in the district's Kot area that claimed four lives. "The culpable officials in this incident are Sambhal's

Sub-Divisional Magistrate Vandana Mishra and Circle Officer Anuj

Kumar," he had added.

Ali also alleged that the SDM insisted on draining water from the ablation tank (wazukhana), even though the district magistrate and superintendent of police suggested measuring the depth with a stick.

"Draining the water led to a confusion among those gathered outside, who believed excavation was taking place and it provoked the crowd," he had said.

Chaos reigned in Sambhal city's Kot Garvi area on Sunday as people opposing the court-ordered survey of the Jama Masjid clashed with police, resulting in the death of four persons.

The clashes, which involved gunfire and stone-pelting, also left 20 people injured, including Sub-Divisional Magistrate Ramesh Chandra. Seven FIRs have been filed so far, and 25 individuals have been arrested in connection with the incident.

Tensions in Sambhal had been simmering since a local court ordered a survey of the mosque on November 19. The survey team revisited the mosque on Sunday for further investigations.

The survey followed a petition in a local court, claiming that the site of the mosque was previously a Harihar temple. (PTI)

Inaugural round of key India-Japan dialogue held in Tokyo



NEW DELHI, Nov 27: The first round of the India-Japan Dialogue on Economic Security, including Strategic Trade and Technology, was held in Tokyo on Wednesday during which the two sides underscored the need for "closer collaboration" to protect economic interests and build resilient supply chains and critical infrastructure in identified sectors.

Both sides also agreed to bring "concrete results" through enhanced holistic collaboration in focus areas, the Ministry of External Affairs (MEA) said.

Foreign Secretary Vikram Misri co-chaired the 1st round of India-Japan Dialogue on Economic Security, including Strategic Trade and Technology, in Tokyo on November 27, 2024 along with Vice Minister, Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Japan, Masataka Okano," the MEA said in a statement.

The dialogue, attended by stakeholder ministries, departments and agencies from both the governments, was announced during the India-Japan 2+2 ministerial meet-

ing held in New Delhi on August 20.

The meeting in Tokyo provided an "opportunity to exchange views on respective economic security policies, strengthen partnership for building industrial and technological resilience and promote collaboration in research and application of key technologies", the MEA said.

Both sides underscored the need for closer collaboration to "protect economic interests, and build resilient supply chains and critical infrastructure in identified sectors, by way of policy facilitation" for business and academic partnerships between relevant actors in India and Japan, the statement added.

"They also explored ways to facilitate talent exchange and upskilling in fields of common interest," it said.

The two sides recognised the dialogue as a significant and timely step to bring contemporary relevance to the India-Japan Special Strategic and Global Partnership. (PTI)

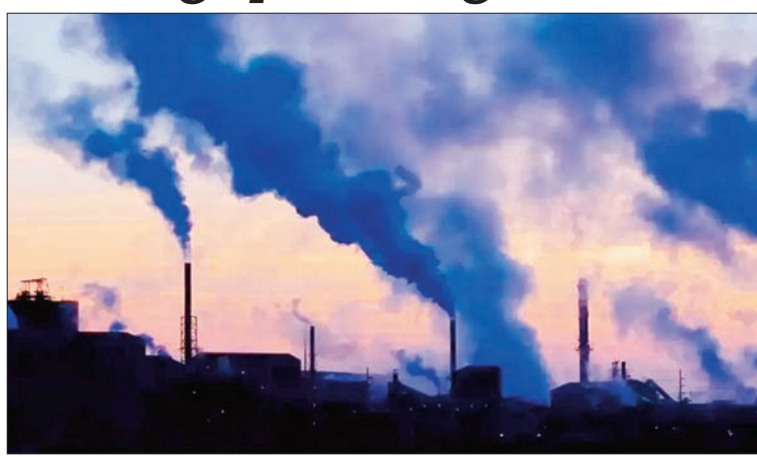
Study traces 60 pc PM2.5 pollution in India to residential cooking, power generation, industries

NEW DELHI, Nov 27: Emissions from residential cooking and heating, power generation, and industries together contribute up to 60 per cent of India's PM2.5 pollution, with about 80 per cent of this coming from fossil fuel combustion, a new study has found.

The peer-reviewed study, published in MDPI's "Air" journal, suggests dividing India into 15 airsheds based on regional climate and pollution sources.

An airshed is a geographic area where air quality is influenced by common factors such as wind patterns and pollution sources. Since pollution can spread across regions, the airshed approach promotes coordinated action among states.

"Residential cooking and heating, power generation, and all other industries together are responsible for 40-60 per cent of the PM2.5 pollution in all the airsheds, and approximately 80 per cent of the pollution comes from fossil fuel burning sources," said



Sarath Guttikunda, lead author of the study and founder of UrbanEmissions.info.

The study said biomass burning, including post-harvest crop residue burning, contributed less than 3 per cent to annual PM2.5 levels while transport accounted for 5-10 per cent in all airsheds.

PM2.5 are fine particles with a diameter of 2.5 micrometres or less, about the width of a human hair. These are so small that these can penetrate deep into the lungs and even enter the bloodstream, posing significant health risks.

An analysis of PM2.5 trends from 1998 to 2020, along with state-level

data on fuel consumption, energy demand and emissions, revealed that 11 of the 15 airsheds were critical for India's air quality management and required coordinated interventions.

The Indo-Gangetic Plains remain the most polluted region, with significant emissions from residential cooking and heating (especially in winter), power plants, brick kilns (driven by construction demand), waste burning, dust and vehicular movement for passengers and freight.

The plateau region between the Eastern and Western Ghats, India's second most populated area, has seen the highest rise in annual PM2.5 pollution during this period, the study said.

"This is an indication of the growing urbanisation and demand for transport, industrial, and commercial amenities," it said.

Coastal areas, vital to India's industrial economy, have also experienced rising pollution despite the moderating effects of land-sea breezes. (PTI)

'Viksit Bharat' dream hinges on quality education in schools: UN resident coordinator in India

NEW DELHI, Nov 27: Highlighting the immense potential of India's students as catalysts for change, UN's resident coordinator in the country Shomvi Sharp has said the dream of 'Viksit Bharat' hinges on ensuring that children in school receive not only quality education but are also sensitised to becoming "responsible model citizens of tomorrow".

United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) on Wednesday released a statement on its 'RiseUp4Peace' educational initiative that is focused on engaging and empowering young people to "resist negative influences, emerging vulnerabilities and risky behaviours". The UN Resident Coordinator for India highlighted the immense potential of "India's 265.2 million students as catalysts for change", emphasising the importance of quality and values-driven education in shaping inclusive and peaceful societies, it said. "The dream of 'Viksit Bharat', as articulated by the Hon'ble Prime Minister of India, hinges on ensuring that children in school receive not only quality education but are also sensitised to become responsible model citizens of tomorrow," he was quoted as saying in the statement.

India's National Education Policy (NEP) 2020 and the National Curriculum Framework (NCF) 2023 both recognise the need to nurture responsible citizens who can contribute to peace and harmony in an increasingly complex world. But this ambition goes beyond the traditional scope of education -- it requires "reimagining educational interventions in classrooms, schools and communities", the UNODC said.

In several bustling classrooms across India, there is a "powerful movement" quietly taking shape -- one that champions peace, lawfulness and inclusion through education. (PTI)

NAME CORRECTION

My name is Surendra Chauhan, son of Hridayanand Chauhan, Vill. - Jampathar, PO & PS Kheroni, Dist. West Karbi Anglong, Assam. In some documents my name has been recorded as Surendra Chauhan and Surendra Kumar Chauhan and that of my father has been recorded as Hridayanand Chauhan and Hridya Nand Chauhan but my actual name is Surendra Chauhan and the actual name of my father is Hridayanand Chauhan.

Henceforth for all intent and purposes I will be known only as Surendra Chauhan and that my father will be known as Hridayanand Chauhan.

E-AUCTION FOR MULTIPURPOSE STALL ASSETS OVER LUMDING DIVISION		
E-Auction for 30 nos. Multipurpose Stall (MPS) Assets over Lumding Division. Rate Unit: Annual Licensing Fee, Trips/Days. 1826.		
Auction Catalogue No. MPS-LMG-03-24		
Seq No.	Lot No./Category	Description
AA/1	MPS-LMG-SCL-MPS-10-23-1 (MPS - Multi Purpose Stalls)	PF-2 of Silchar Railway Station
AA/2	MPS-LMG-ABSA-MPS-44-23-1 (MPS - Multi Purpose Stalls)	PF-1 of Ambasa Railway Station
AA/3	MPS-LMG-SCL-MPS-7-23-1 (MPS - Multi Purpose Stalls)	PF-1 of Silchar Railway Station
AA/4	MPS-LMG-KWM-MPS-14-23-1 (MPS - Multi Purpose Stalls)	PF-2 of Kamrup Railway Station
AA/5	MPS-LMG-JMK-MPS-15-23-1 (MPS - Multi Purpose Stalls)	PF-1 of Jamunamukh Railway Station.
AA/6	MPS-LMG-MBG-MPS-35-23-1 (MPS - Multi Purpose Stalls)	PF-1 of Maibang Railway Station.
AA/7	MPS-LMG-SCL-MPS-6-23-1 (MPS - Multi Purpose Stalls)	PF-1 of Silchar Railway Station.
AA/8	MPS-LMG-SCL-MPS-8-23-1 (MPS - Multi Purpose Stalls)	PF-1 of Silchar Railway Station.
AA/9	MPS-LMG-SCL-MPS-9-23-1 (MPS - Multi Purpose Stalls)	PF-2 of Silchar Railway Station
AA/10	MPS-LMG-KWM-MPS-12-23-1 (MPS - Multi Purpose Stalls)	PF-1 of Kamrup Railway Station
AA/11	MPS-LMG-JGJN-MPS-21-23-1 (MPS - Multi Purpose Stalls)	PF-2 of Jughjan Railway Station
AA/12	MPS-LMG-HKD-MPS-31-23-1 (MPS - Multi Purpose Stalls)	PF-1 of Hailakandi Railway Station
AA/13	MPS-LMG-NGAN-MPS-33-23-1 (MPS - Multi Purpose Stalls)	PF-1 of Nagaon Railway Station
AA/14	MPS-LMG-MANU-MPS-40-23-1 (MPS - Multi Purpose Stalls)	PF-2 of Manu Railway Station
AA/15	MPS-LMG-BPB-MPS-23-23-1 (MPS - Multi Purpose Stalls)	PF-1 of Badarpur Railway Station
AA/16	MPS-LMG-JGJN-MPS-41-23-1 (MPS - Multi Purpose Stalls)	PF-1 of Jughjan Railway Station
AA/17	MPS-LMG-KWM-MPS-11-23-1 (MPS - Multi Purpose Stalls)	PF-1 of Kamrup Railway Station
AA/18	MPS-LMG-KWM-MPS-13-23-1 (MPS - Multi Purpose Stalls)	PF-2 of Kamrup Railway Station
AA/19	MPS-LMG-ABSA-MPS-30-23-1 (MPS - Multi Purpose Stalls)	PF-2 of Ambasa Railway Station
AA/20	MPS-LMG-SBRM-MPS-38-23-1 (MPS - Multi Purpose Stalls)	PF-2 of Sabroom Railway Station
AA/21	MPS-LMG-JMK-MPS-16-23-1 (MPS - Multi Purpose Stalls)	PF-1 of Jamunamukh Railway Station
AA/22	MPS-LMG-JMK-MPS-17-23-1 (MPS - Multi Purpose Stalls)	PF-2 of Jamunamukh Railway Station
AA/23	MPS-LMG-JGJN-MPS-18-23-1 (MPS - Multi Purpose Stalls)	PF-1 of Jughjan Railway Station
AA/24	MPS-LMG-JGJN-MPS-20-23-1 (MPS - Multi Purpose Stalls)	PF-2 of Jughjan Railway Station
AA/25	MPS-LMG-BPB-MPS-27-23-1 (MPS - Multi Purpose Stalls)	Circulating cum parking area of Badarpur Railway Station.
AA/26	MPS-LMG-NGAN-MPS-34-23-1 (MPS - Multi Purpose Stalls)	Circulating area of Nagaon Railway Station.
AA/27	MPS-LMG-ABSA-MPS-28-23-1 (MPS - Multi Purpose Stalls)	PF-1 of Ambasa Railway Station
AA/28	MPS-LMG-BPB-MPS-26-23-1 (MPS - Multi Purpose Stalls)	Circulating cum parking area of Badarpur Railway Station.
AA/29	MPS-LMG-MBG-MPS-36-23-1 (MPS - Multi Purpose Stalls)	PF-1 of Maibang Railway Station.
AA/30	MPS-LMG-HKD-MPS-32-23-1 (MPS - Multi Purpose Stalls)	PF-1 of Hailakandi Railway Station
Auction Start Date & Time: 10.00 hrs. of 11-12-2024. Auction Close Date & Time: 15.20 hrs. of 11-12-2024. Prospective bidders are requested to visit E-Auction Leasing Module on IREPS website www.ireps.gov.in		
Sr. Divisional Commercial Manager, Lumding		
NORTHEAST FRONTIER RAILWAY		
Serving Customers With A Smile		

KARBI ANGLONG AUTONOMOUS COUNCIL KAAC SECRETARIAT :: DIPHU

The authority of Karbi Anglong Autonomous Council, Diphu requests your kind presence on the occasion of 70th Death Anniversary of Khorsing Terang, the 1st Chief Executive Member of the then Mikir Hills District Council and now Karbi Anglong Autonomous Council, on the 28th November, 2024 at Old (near KASA Stadium) & New Khorsing Terang Memorial Park, (near CEM Official Bungalow) at Diphu as per programme overleaf.

(Mukul Kr. Saikia, IAS)
Principal Secretary,
Karbi Anglong Autonomous Council
DIPHU

- 8:00AM : Garlanding at the statue of Khorsing Terang at Old Khorsing Terang Memorial Park, Diphu (Near KASA Stadium).
- 8:30 AM : Garlanding at the statue of the Khorsing Terang at New Khorsing Terang Memorial Park, Diphu (Near CEM Official Bungalow).
- 9:00 AM : Prayer meeting (Duration of prayer - 3 minutes each).
1. Kataram.
 2. Geeta Path.
 3. Bible Reading.
 4. Guru Granth Saheb path.
 5. Quran path.
 6. Kirtan Path.
 7. Lokhimon Prayer.
 8. Karbi Bhaktitam Trust, Diphu.
- 9:45-11:00 AM : Poem recitation on Founding leaders of Karbi Anglong District.
- 5:00 PM : Illumination of Khorsing Terang (Old & New) Memorial Park, Diphu.

More power to women turning producers, says Madhuri Dixit Nene

MUMBAI, Nov 27: With more and more women taking up different jobs in the industry and even turning producers, Bollywood star Madhuri Dixit Nene says a lot has changed in Bollywood for the better since the '80s and '90s.

Madhuri, who made her debut with "Abodh" in 1984 and went on to be a part of films like "Dil To Pagal Hai", "Tezaab", "Beta" and "Raja", recalled how movie sets would earlier have only female actors and their hairdressers.

"Women have come a long way, it's always baby steps. When I used to do work in the 80s, and 90s, the only women on the set used to be me, my co-actors who were women or the hairdressers. Today, when I walk in on a set -- from the DOP to the ADs, writers, and action masters -- there are women everywhere. I couldn't have imagined they would be in the field, which is amazing," the actor told PTI in an interview.

Lauding the gradual shift, Madhuri said women have moved from being considered as mere "eye-candies" to performing varied roles and they are now even producing the films.

"We are also seeing women in action roles, which is amazing. Like in 'L.Gulaab Gang', I did my action role, and that film was a very women-centric kind of

movie. But we need to make more commercial kinds of movies, which are women-centric, it will happen slowly. There are a lot of actors, like women, who are turning producers if they want to make their kind of movies, which is also amazing, and more power to them," she added.

In recent years, Alia Bhatt, Kriti Sanon and Kangana Ranaut have turned to production.

Despite the shift, Madhuri said the change won't happen overnight.

"Even if it's here or abroad or anywhere, to a certain extent, it's a man's world. It will take some time to change that and we are getting there," Madhuri was most recently seen in "Bhool Bhulaiyaa 3", which also features Kartik Aaryan, Triptii Dimri and Vidya Balan in lead roles.

Directed by Aneez Bazmee, the film is the third installment in the "Bhool Bhulaiyaa" franchise and had its theatrical release on November 1. The actor, 57, said she is actively seeking new and exciting roles that challenge her. "Bhool Bhulaiyaa 3" appealed to her because of the horror-comedy genre.

"Being a ghost (in 'Bhool Bhulaiyaa 3') was very different. I'm still looking at very different roles, and something exciting is going to happen very soon," she said.

Madhuri considers "Tezaab" her first big turning point in cinema. In the film, she played Mohini, a woman who dances to support her father. Her dance number 'Ek Do Teen' from the movie is popular even today. The N Chandra-directed movie, also starring Anil Kapoor and Anupam Kher, ran in cinemas for almost 50 weeks.

"The first big turning point for me was 'Tezaab', I started getting recognised after that movie, and then other (films) followed, like 'Dil', 'LBeta', 'Raja', 'Kalnayak'. I felt, 'Oh my god, people think I'm a star'." It was a difficult role and N Chandra (director) extracted such a good performance from me." She considers the 1992 hit "Beta", directed by Indra Kumar, another turning point in her career. The movie, again co-starring Kapoor, had another hit song in 'Dhak Dhak', which became synonymous with Madhuri.

The actor said the success of 'Beta' gave her the opportunity to be part of women-centric dramas like 'Mrityudand' and 'Pukar' and others.

"There was no looking back, I got good opportunities to work with good directors and did films like 'Pukar', which were also very different from what I did on screen, whether it was 'Mrityudand', 'Prahaar' these were more realistic films." (PTI)



Mohd Rafi's son announces biopic on legendary singer, Umesh Shukla of 'OMG' attached with film

PANAJI, Nov 27: Shahid Rafi, son of music icon Mohd Rafi, has announced a biopic on his father, which will be officially announced next month.

December 24, 2024 marks the birth centenary of Rafi, regarded as one of the greatest singers in Hindi film industry.

On Tuesday, the ongoing International Film Festival of India (IFFI) paid tribute to the eminent playback singer, who has sung songs for over a 1,000 films across Indian languages as well as some foreign languages.

Shahid Rafi said he and director Umesh Shukla, known for films such as "OMG - Oh My God!" and "102 Not Out", are in negotiations for the upcoming biographical movie on Rafi.

"An announcement will be made in December. I am making a biopic on Rafi sahab. We are planning... It is going to be the life story of Rafi sahab. Songs will also be part of the biopic. We have made a contract with Umesh Shukla, director of 'OMG - Oh My God!' and '102 Not Out'. It will be a full-fledged feature film," Shahid Rafi said.

He was speaking during the session titled 'Aasmaan Se Aaya Farishta - Mohammad Rafi - The King of Melody'.

Also present at the event were veteran actor Sharmila Tagore, singers Sonu Nigam, Anuradha Paudwal, and filmmaker Subhash Ghai.

Some of Rafi's popular songs are: "Main Zindagi Ka Saath Nibhata Chala Gaya", "Kaun Hai Jo Sapnon Mein Aaya", "Aaja Aaja", "Parda Hai Parda", "Gulabi Aankhein", "Kya Se Kya Ho Gaya", "Sukh Ke Sab Saathi", among others. (PTI)



Allu Arjun, Rashmika wrap shooting on 'Pushpa: The Rule'

NEW DELHI, Nov 27: Telugu cinema stars Allu Arjun and Rashmika Mandanna have completed filming on their much anticipated movie "Pushpa: The Rule", days before its release.

Arjun is set to return as labourer-turned-sandalwood smuggler Pushpa Raj in the sequel to 2021's blockbuster film "Pushpa: The Rise".

"Pushpa 2" is set to hit the screens on December 5.

Arjun, who won the best actor National Film Award for "Pushpa: The Rise", shared the update on his official X page on Tuesday night.

"LAST DAY LAST SHOT OF PUSHPA. 5 years JOURNEY of PUSHPA completed. What a journey (sic)" he captioned a picture from the film sets.

"Pushpa 2" is directed by Sukumar and also features returning stars Rashmika Mandanna and Fahadh Faasil.

The trailer of the sequel was unveiled on November 17 at Patna's jam-packed Gandhi Maidan.

Rashmika, who shot for a "crazy amazing song" on her last day on set on Monday, teased a potential third part in the "Pushpa" franchise.

"Out of the 7/8 years, the last 5 years being on this set almost made this set my home in the industry, and finally it was my last day. Of course, there's still so much work left and apparently a part 3, but it felt different... it felt overwhelming... it felt like it was ending (sic)," she wrote on her Instagram Stories.

"Some sort of sadness that even I didn't understand, and suddenly all the emotions came together, and the days of extreme hard work came rushing back to me, and I was feeling tired and exhausted but at the same time so grateful," she added.

The actor, who plays Sri Valli in the film, said she "broke down" after a long time when she was overwhelmed with the feelings of parting from the "Pushpa" team.

"Allu Arjun sir and Sukku sir and the team are the only ones I think who know me the most as a person more than anyone else in the industry. They have literally seen me most days since the last 5 years, and Pushpa set had become my home ground, and now to see it go is something so hard. So yeah, 25th Nov 2024 had been a very hard day, but one I'll cherish. It was worth it in one day (sic)" she wrote.

"Pushpa 2" is produced by Mythri Movie Makers and Sukumar Writings with music on T-Series. (PTI)

Charlize Theron joins Christopher Nolan's next film



LOS ANGELES, Nov 27: Oscar winner Charlize Theron is the latest addition to the star cast of Christopher Nolan's upcoming untitled film.

Theron, 49, joins previously announced cast members Matt Damon, Tom Holland, Anne Hathaway, Zendaya, Lupita Nyong'o and Robert Pattinson, reported Variety.

The details of the Universal film remain under wraps and the theatrical release is slated for July 17, 2026. It will also mark the first collaboration for Theron and Nolan. Nolan wrote the script and is directing the film, which will be distributed by Universal Pictures.

The filmmaker is also backing the project alongside producing partner and wife, Emma Thomas, for their Syncopy banner.

Theron was last seen in 2023's action movie "Fast X", directed by Louis Leterrier. This would be Nolan's first feature film after he won his maiden best director Oscar trophy for "Oppenheimer" (2023), the blockbuster biographical drama on the theoretical physicist who helped develop the first nuclear weapons during World War II. (PTI)

Mamata to inaugurate Darjeeling music festival featuring rock legend Kee Marcello

KOLKATA, Nov 27: West Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee and Swedish rock star Kee Marcello are set to share a mellifluous date when the Darjeeling hills come alive with the sound of music on December 19 this year to kick off the second edition of the four-day Melo-Tea festival, a euphonic carnival in the region.

Banerjee, who has repeatedly claimed her penchant for music and arts, was learnt to have thrown her hat in the ring during her recent trip to the hills to express her willingness to be a part of the festival and flag off the extravaganza in remote mode from Calcutta during her scheduled simultaneous inauguration of the Christmas carnival at Park Street.

The 64-year-old former guitarist-cum-vocalist of hard rock bands 'Easy Nation' and 'Europe', Marcello, would be performing with his band Live at the festival's inaugural day.

Europe's all-time greatest hit, The Final Countdown, was released in 1986 and remained on top of the singles charts in 25 countries.

Organised jointly by the Gorkhaland Territorial Administration (GTA), the administrative body of Darjeeling hills, and Darjeeling Police, the Melo-Tea fest, besides nurturing local musicians and offering them the platform to showcase talent, also aims at generating youth employment and promoting tourism, stakeholders

maintained.

The effort, according to Darjeeling SP Praween Prakash, has paved the way for obfuscating "negative energies" in the region that, till recently, was riddled with political fracas over the demand for Gorkhaland, economic slowdown over tea garden wages and persisting social and law and order issues like drug abuse among a section of youth.

"The involvement of the chief minister in this festival has ensured that we would be able to make this an annual calendar event in Darjeeling, like the hornbill festival in Nagaland," Prakash told PTI, confirming that the festival has already grown twice over in expanse and popularity compared to its maiden edition last year.

Organisers, it was learnt, deferred the fest schedule by a day to enable a very keen Banerjee to adjust her dates for the inauguration. For Pragya Lama, lead member of Darjeeling's very own popular band 'Mantra' which is scheduled to perform on the inaugural day ahead of the Swedish rock legend, it's a "dream come true" opportunity.

"I idolised guitarists like Marcello ever since I was in school, trying to learn from his videos and CDs. Darjeeling has had a rich tradition of band music since the 60s when Diamonds was possibly the country's only band crooning English numbers. Bands like Forbidden Fruit and many



others followed suit."

"But then there was a dark period of violence and unrest in the hills. The bands scattered or shifted base. With the Melo-Tea festival, the good old days seem to be coming back," Lama, who recently returned from a two-month-long tour of the US with his band, reminisced. This year the festival, having a competition section where 100-odd bands would be making a beeline for cash prizes worth over ₹ 40

lakhs, would also have guest performances by Nepal's folk ensemble 'Kutumba' and a rock band from Nagaland, 'About Us', organisers informed.

The annual Darjeeling Hill Marathon, scheduled to be held on December 22 -- the final day of the festival and having an additional cash incentive of ₹ 9.8 lakhs, would diversify the otherwise musical milieu into the arena of sports. Organisers have also sprinkled in fashion shows, a

Land Rover rally, rock-climbing and paragliding events and even a short film festival offering prize money to winners to add more variety to the extravaganza, the festival website confirmed.

The rock and run fest package also offers multiple exotic trails and hikes for mountain lovers to explore the otherwise 'unseen Darjeeling' during the four-day carnival, thanks to the involvement of local youth and tour operators of the region, the website announced.

"We are merely the facilitators for this event and are simply handling funds arrangements and logistics. It's the local people, especially the youth, who would execute the show," the SP said.

Integrating music and marathon at the Darjeeling Chowrasta, the venue of the fest, is expected to not only boost winter tourism in the state's upper reaches but also hold the promise of generating widespread creative excitement among people in the neighbourhood.

"Last year we had some 40 stalls set up at the venue generating an income of around ₹ 25 lakhs in two days. This year we are expecting that to far exceed both in terms of participation and sales," Prakash said.

A local Youth for Tourism community has already completed some 200 hikes in lesser-known parts of Darjeeling with tourists and mountain enthusiasts and is invested in the festival, he informed.

"This kind of exposure to internationally renowned performers is a shot in the arm for local talents who would now look to hone their creative skills instead of getting swayed by disruptions and wasting themselves on drugs. The ball is set rolling and this is only going to get bigger from here on," Lama pitched in. (PTI)

'We are extremely grateful to the executive committee of the ASC'

India awarded hosting rights of 2026 Asian Rifle/Pistol Cup

NEW DELHI, Nov 27: India will host the 2026 Asian Rifle/Pistol Cup, the national shooting federation announced on Wednesday, continuing its drive to bring big-ticket events to the country.

The decision to give India the continental tournament was taken by the executive committee of the Asian Shooting Confederation (ASC).

In a letter to National Rifle Association of India (NRAI) secretary general K Sultan Singh from his counterpart at ASC, Eng. Duaij Alotaibi, the host federation has been asked to inform the continental body of the proposed dates for the same.

Reacting to the development, Sultan Singh said, "We are delighted to have been allotted yet



another top international Shooting competition. We are extremely grateful to the executive committee of the ASC and assure them of putting our best foot forward as always."

Also weighing in was NRAI president Kalikesh Narayan Singh Deo, who said, "It is yet another proof of the stature of Indian shooting in the international circuit and we are extremely pleased that

our top guns will get another opportunity to sharpen their aim in front of home fans against the best in the world.

"We thank the Government of India, the Ministry of Sports and the Sports Authority of India for the continuous encouragement and support that they have been providing to Indian shooting in all its endeavours."

India had previously hosted the 8th Asian Air Gun competition in 2015 followed by the Asian Olympic Qualifiers a year later.

India has also hosted a total of six top International Shooting Sport Federation (ISSF) competitions additionally, including two World Cup Finals, the most recent being the one held last month in New Delhi. (PTI)

ILT20 Season 3 to start on January 11

MI Emirate to face Dubai Capitals in opener



DUBAI, Nov 27: Defending champions MI Emirates will face runners-up Dubai Capitals in the opening match of the Season 3 of the DP World International League T20 on January 11, the organisers announced on Wednesday.

Fifteen matches will be played at the Dubai International Stadium, while Abu Dhabi's Zayed Cricket Stadium will host 11 matches.

The remaining eight matches will be staged at the iconic Sharjah Cricket Stadium.

A total of 34 matches will be played in the month-long tournament which will conclude with the final at the DIS on February 9.

The six ILT20 franchises are: MI Emirates, Dubai Capitals, Abu Dhabi Knight Riders, Desert Vipers, Gulf Giants and Sharjah Warriorz.

Some of the premier T20 talents from across the world such as Andre Russell, Sunil Narine (Abu Dhabi Knight Riders), David Warner, Nicholas Pooran, Jason Roy, Lockie Ferguson will be seen in action during the tournament.

David White, the ILT20 CEO, said: "We are set for a bigger and better edition of the DP World International League T20. Our six teams have gathered a line-up of world-class T20 stars besides the best of the UAE talent who will combine to provide rich entertainment to cricket fans during the 34-match tournament." (PTI)

Urvil Patel slams fastest T20 century in 28 balls



INDORE, Nov 27: Gujarat's wicketkeeper-batter Urvil Patel slammed the fastest T20 century by an Indian during his team's Syed Mushtaq Ali Trophy match against Tripura here on Wednesday, reaching the three-figure mark in just 28 balls.

This comes exactly a year after he smashed the second-fastest hundred by an Indian in List-A cricket.

The 26-year-old Urvil bettered Rishabh Pant's record for the fastest T20 hundred by an Indian. The India wicket-keeper had blazed away to a 32-ball century against Himachal Pradesh in the Syed Mushtaq Ali Trophy in 2018.

Urvil's ton is the second-fastest in T20 cricket, only behind Estonia's Sahil Chauhan, whose hundred against Cyprus came in 27 balls. Opening the innings, Urvil struck seven fours and 12 sixes on his way to an unbeaten 113 off a mere 35 balls, as Gujarat completed a chase of 156 in 10.2 overs.

Earlier in the week, Urvil had gone unsold in the Indian Premier League player auction.

Exactly on this day last year, after being released by Gujarat Titans, Urvil scored an unbeaten 41-ball 100 for Gujarat in their Vijay Hazare Trophy match against Arunachal Pradesh in Chandigarh.

Urvil's century was the second-fastest by an Indian batter in List A cricket. (PTI)

Head-scratcher Pep Guardiola bears scars after Man City match

MANCHESTER, Nov 27: Manchester City's staggering downturn in form is proving a real head-scratcher for Pep Guardiola.

Guardiola emerged to speak to the world's media after the 3-3 draw with Feyenoord in the Champions League — during which City conceded three goals after the 75th minute to trailing the lead — with a cut on his nose as well as some scratches across the top of his bald head.

Asked about those marks, Guardiola said: "Yeah, my finger. Here," as he performed a rapid downward motion along his nose. "My nail."

Then he added with a smile: "I want to harm myself."

Guardiola appears to be bearing the scars of the worst run of his managerial career, with City — the winner of the last four Premier League titles — having lost five straight games in all competitions for the first time before the implosion against Feyenoord.

No team in the Champions League had ever lost a three-goal lead as late as the 75th minute and failed to win the game, stats supplier Opta said.

It could get worse for City, which was humiliated in a 4-0 home loss to Tottenham on Saturday.

Next up is a trip to Liverpool, the Premier League leaders, on Sunday. (AP)

English ref Coote under investigation after Yellow card row

LONDON, Nov 27: Suspended Premier League referee David Coote is the subject of another investigation by the Football Association, this time following allegations that he discussed the possibility of booking a player with a fan before a match.

Coote denies any wrongdoing, according to British newspaper The Sun, which published the allegations.

The Sun has claimed Coote discussed the prospect of booking a then-Leeds player, Ezgjan Alioski, with a supporter of the club the day before a game against West Bromwich Albion in the second-tier Championship in October 2019. The newspaper alleges that after Coote booked the player, he messaged the supporter back to say: "I hope you backed as discussed."

"These are very serious allegations," the FA said, "and we are investigating as a matter of urgency."

The Sun's story included a statement from Coote, in which he said: "Whatever issues I may have had in my personal life they have never affected my decision-making on the field."

"I have always held the integrity of the game in the highest regard, refereeing matches impartially and to the best of my ability."

Coote was suspended on November 12 by England's referees body, the Professional Game Match Officials Limited, after a video circulated of him making offensive comments to friends about former Liverpool manager Jürgen Klopp.

The PGMOL and the FA started investigations.

UEFA also launched an investigation into Coote following a video, again published by The Sun, allegedly showed him using cocaine during the European Championship this year.

Regarding the latest allegation about the yellow card in the Leeds match, the PGMOL said: "The facts need to be established in light of these very serious allegations."

"We adopt a zero-tolerance approach to any breach of our Integrity Code of Conduct, which is signed by all match officials on an annual basis. PGMOL Board is committed to taking the appropriate action should any breach of that code be proven." (AP)

Ambiguity remains over Railways' wrestlers participation in Nationals

NEW DELHI, Nov 27: Close to 100 wrestlers attached with the Indian Railways are fearing that they will miss out on competing at the National Championships, starting December 6, since their department has not yet clarified on sending entries for the crucial annual meet in Bengaluru.

The ambiguity has even forced a few wrestlers to submit affidavits to Wrestling Federation of India (WFI) that they want to represent their respective states since Railways had decided against sending teams for the nationals.

However, it will be difficult for them to represent a state team since they will require a No Objection Certificate (NOC) from the Railways, which is unlikely to hand such a favour to its employees.

Railways Sports Promotion Board (RSPB) is a crucial affiliated unit with the Wrestling Federation of India (WFI) along with Services Sports Control Board (SSCB) and state associations.

Interestingly, RSPB Secretary Prem Chand Lochab is also WFI General Secretary. He had won from the rival camp, led by wrestler Anita Sheoran.

PTI tried to reach out to Lochab for a comment but he did not return calls or responded to a text message.

WFI remains suspended by the Sports Ministry but has not been stopped from conducting the Nationals, to be hosted by Karnataka Wrestling Association at the Koramangala Indoor Stadium.

RSPB has employed several star wrestlers in the past including now --suspended Bajrang Punia, Vinesh Phogat and Sakshi Malik.

RSPB is running a training camp in Kapurthala, Punjab since November 10 but did not notify in its notice if the camp is being organised for the preparation for the Nationals, like every year.

The RSPB in its notice issued on November



6, named 81 wrestlers in freestyle and Greco Roman style and 15 coaches along with three trainers for the camp that will run until December 12.

"We have been told that 98 per cent Railways will not send its team to the Nationals. But no one is telling us why? That's why, not many women wrestlers have reported to the coaching camp," a wrestler told PTI.

"If there is no selection trials during the camp and we will not be allowed to compete at the Nationals, what's the point of having this camp," said the dejected wrestler.

Another wrestler said that "politics" is ruining their careers.

"Politics has always been there in Railways. Several times we were told to switch categories if so-called star wrestlers like Bajrang or Vinesh would compete. Trials were not held in their categories. It has been going on for long.

"Now also, what is our fault? Why are we being denied to chance to win a seat at the Na-

tional camp and be part of the national team?"

A coach associated with the Railways camp confirmed to PTI that they have received verbal communication from the authorities that the departmental side won't send entries this year as WFI remains suspended.

"There is no written communication but we have been conveyed that Railways won't send a team. What's the point of sending a team if the certificate does not hold value. It would count to nothing since WFI is suspended," said the coach on the conditions of anonymity.

Interestingly, Railways had recently cleared its coaches to travel with Indian national teams for the 2020 World Championships in Spain in September, Senior and U23 World Championships in Albania in October.

"If they are giving the excuse that wrestlers can't be sent because WFI is suspended why then the Railways cleared the names of its coaches to travel with the teams abroad. The teams were picked by WFI only. Was the WFI not suspended then?" asked a wrestler. (PTI)

Uncapped Beau Webster to be added to Australia squad

ADELAIDE, Nov 27: Uncapped all-rounder Beau Webster is set to be drafted into the Australia squad for the second Test against India as a cover for Mitchell Marsh who battled with niggles in the series opener at Perth. Fox Cricket reported that Webster has been added to the squad for the day-night Test at Adelaide, beginning December 6.

"(Marsh) He has been battling a couple of little niggles since the UK tour," Australian captain Pat Cummins said following the 295-run loss to India.

"He was a little sore towards the end of this Test match (Perth), so the next 10 days he has a chance to freshen up and try to get it right. We'll see how he goes."

If Marsh doesn't recover in time for the second Test, Webster could be handed a debut.

The 30-year-old hails from Tasmania and has been one of the star performers in the Sheffield Shield over the past two years, collecting 1788 runs including five

hundreds and nine fifties. He is also a right-arm pacer like Marsh.

Cover for Mitchell Marsh

He starred in Tasmania's Sheffield Shield match against New South Wales earlier this week, striking a 61 and 49 besides taking five wickets.

"(Webster's) a special player at the moment," Tasmanian captain Jordan Silk told reporters after the domestic game.

"Anytime I feel like we're in trouble, I feel like I can

throw him the ball and he just seems to be able to create something, or anytime we're in similar trouble with the bat then he's able to dig us out of it.

"He showed his class again this game with valuable runs, first and second innings, and then obviously to take the last two wickets."

Despite the heavy defeat, Australia are unlikely to make wholesale changes to their playing eleven and have retained the same squad for the Adelaide fixture. (PTI)

Gavaskar credits Kohli's stance adjustment for success in Perth

PERTH, Nov 27: Former India captain Sunil Gavaskar feels a subtle adjustment to his batting stance in the second innings of the Perth Test helped Virat Kohli neutralise the Australian attack and rediscover his vintage form.

Kohli arrived in Australia after a lean run of form across formats in recent months. His struggles against spin on turning tracks raised doubts about his spot in the team.

However, he silenced his detractors by scoring his 30th Test ton in the first Test at Perth. It was his first hundred after the 121 against the West Indies at Port of Spain in July 2023.

"His body was completely relaxed when he came into bat in the second innings. In the first innings, because of the fact that India had lost two wickets early, he would have also been under pressure," Gavaskar said on Star Sports.

"In that second innings, you could sense apart from changing that stance, I think he also got his legs, which were maybe just a little bit wider at the start. Just a little bit, maybe I'm thinking too much, but that little thing might have given him that height he wanted. Well, in Australia, on the bouncier pitches, you need that edge."

"I liked that mid-wicket boundary that he hit off Hazlewood. That, to me,



was not the easiest of shots. A straight drive is a little easier because your stance is like that, but just to open up a little bit and play that - that was all magic."

Having gotten out on 5 in the first innings, Kohli brought all his technical expertise into play while dealing with the vagaries of variable bounce in the second essay as Australian bowlers des-

perately tried the off-stump line, short ball tactic and even attacking the line of stump to get the veteran batter out.

Former Australian cricketer Matthew Hayden also commented on Kohli's stance adjustments in the second innings, saying the move to be more upright on a pitch where variable bounce was present worked for Kohli.

"It's a very good point because the


reverse can be said also to someone touring to India and having to lower their stance. I know I certainly did that. But being able to be a little more upright means that your head position has to stay on top of the bounce so that it starts to work in your favour.

"I said right from the start that I actually liked his move, batting in more line with the ball. I thought that was a good strategy. I think he loves to play like that, and we saw some classic cases where he just eased the ball through mid-wicket. But you can't do that from outside off stump, so getting into the line, I thought, was important."

"The other little adjustment that you mentioned, being a little more upright, so he could stay on top of the bounce, was also really important. If you're getting closer to the ball like he was -- another thing, I think, was probably playing the ball later.

"When he's not in his best form, he goes quite hard, feeling for the ball. He wants to feel the ball on the bat, particularly on the front foot. But he just seemed to give himself a little more time and be a little softer."

Gavaskar compared Kohli's recent struggles to the time when tennis legends like Roger Federer, Rafael Nadal and Novak Djokovic went without a title. (PTI)



অসম পাবলিক সেৱা আয়োগ
ASSAM PUBLIC SERVICE COMMISSION
Jawaharnagar, Khanapara, Guwahati-781022.

No.38PSC/DR-21/1/2024-2025

NOTIFICATION

This is for information to all concerned that the Assam Public Service Commission will hold the Screening Test (OMR Based) for recruitment to the post of **Electrical Inspector in the Inspectorate of Electricity, Govt. of Assam under Power (Electricity) Department** (Advt. No. 14/2024, Dated 21/06/2024) on 20-12-2024 (Friday) as per programme given below:

PROGRAMME OF SCREENING TEST			
Name of Post	Date & Day	Time	Subjects
Electrical Inspector in the Inspectorate of Electricity, Govt. of Assam under Power (Electricity) Department	20-12-2024 (Friday)	10:00 AM to 12 Noon	General Studies & Electrical Engineering

No intimation letter to the eligible candidates shall be sent separately by post. The list of candidates shall be uploaded on 09/12/2024 and e-Admission Certificate on 13/12/2024 in the Commission's official website (www.apsc.nic.in). The candidates shall have to download their own e-Admission Certificate from the aforesaid website.

The Commission would like to clarify that the Commission reserves the right to cancel the candidature of any candidate on verification of their application form at any time or stage even after the Screening Test, if it is found that they do not fulfill any of the eligibility criteria/conditions as per terms of the aforementioned advertisement.

Candidates willing to apply for scribe for the said Screening Test may inform in writing with supporting documents to the Commission or send mail to apsc-asm@nic.in on or before 16/12/2024.

Sd/-
Secretary,
Assam Public Service Commission
Jawaharnagar, Khanapara, Guwahati - 22

Janasanyog /D/9347/24/28-Nov-24

World Athletics in August invites bids for the 2028 and 2030 editions India wants to host U20 World Athletics C'ships

NEW DELHI, Nov 27: The Athletics Federation of India has submitted a letter of intent to host the 2028 Under 20 World Athletics Championships, the sport's world governing body head Sebastian Coe told PTI on Wednesday.

World Athletics (WA) had, in August this year, invited bids for the 2028 and 2030 editions of the championships and Coe said he is happy that India has joined the process.

"I'm pleased to say that I take home a declaration of intent, a letter of application to join the bidding discussions for the 2028 Under-20 World Championships," Coe revealed.

"So, look, this is moving in the right direction (for India)," said the legendary former middle-distance runner, who has already met Prime Minister Narendra Modi and sports minister Mansukh Mandaviya since arriving here.

He is currently in Mumbai and held meetings with representatives of Tata Communications, who are the broadcast rights holders of the inaugural World Athletics Ultimate Championships, featuring top-ranked athletes, to be held in 2026.

Coe, who is a contender for the International Olympic Committee's president's post



during the elections next year, added that if he is elected to the top post, athletes will be at the centre of every policy the global body formulates.

"I'm working on a manifesto at the moment. And that manifesto is going to really reflect the views of all my colleagues that I've spoken to and many of the critical stakeholders in the Olympic landscape," he said.

The stakeholders consulted by Coe include National Olympic Committees (NOCs) and, international federations, commercial partners, broadcasters and, the athletes.

"The athletes sit at the centre of the project," he said.

Coe said that one of the critical issues facing athletes was mental health and he was

keen to make a difference.

"We have athletes that are, quite rightly, more demanding around issues like welfare and mental health. All those things are important."

"So, for me, this is about enabling all those different stakeholders, particularly the membership, to be in a position that will ultimately help create the landscape where the challenges are overcome and the opportunities are capitalised upon."

One of the most contentious issues confronting the IOC is the participation of transgender athletes in women's sports events. The body has drawn flak for allowing this to happen.

WA, under Coe, has maintained a strictly-women stance, a decision criticised by trans-rights advocates. Coe indicated that despite his current position, he was someone who believed in "consensus".

"...I build teams and we work on consensus. There is not a one-size-fits-all, but I think it is incumbent, in that particular space that you talk about, for the IOC to set clear policies and frameworks that help the international federations make those judgments."

"But you do have to have clear and unambiguous policy." (PTI)

1st NE Para Sports Meet begins



HT Bureau

GUWAHATI, Nov 27: The first edition of Northeast Para Sports Meet commenced from Wednesday at Sarusajai.

The three-day event held under the aegis of Udayachal and Paralympic Association of Assam will be concluding on November 29.

Assam parliamentary affairs minister Pijush Hazarika inaugurated the event. Competitions in various categories like Athletics, Swimming, Badminton, and Table tennis have been held on the first day. As many as 575 para athletes including from Assam took part in the competition.

Moreover, the trophy and jersey of the event have been inaugurated by organizing president Riniki Bhuyan Sarma.

Prize money cricket tournament

HT Correspondent

NAGAON, Nov 27: The Kochak Club defeated Barhampur B team in the ongoing Prize Money T20 Cricket tournament at Barhampur Swahid Thogi Sut Sports Complex playground.

The tournament started from November 24.

Kochak Club set a target of 192 runs, but Barhampur B Team managed to score only 72 runs in the stipulated 20 overs, losing 8 wickets in the process.

The second round of the tournament is scheduled to be started on November 29, when Hojai Eleven will face Proking Sports Academy.

'Ban is not shocking'

If I join BJP my ban will be lifted: Bajrang

NEW DELHI, Nov 27: Suspended for four years due to his "refusal" to provide sample for dope test, Olympic medalist Indian wrestler Bajrang Punia on Wednesday said it was a vindictive move by the government which would quash the ban if he joins the BJP.

NADA said Bajrang violated the rules by refusing to give sample during selection trials for the national team on March 10.

The anti-doping body had first suspended the Tokyo Games bronze medalist wrestler on April 23 for the offence following which, the sport's world governing body UWW had also slapped him with a suspension.

"It is not shocking because this issue about trial has been going on for last one year. I have said in the past too that I have not refused to give sample to NADA. When they visited my home to conduct the dope test, they came with an expiry kit (in December, 2023). I have also posted this on social media," Bajrang told reporters.

Punia, along with fellow wrestler and Olympian Vinesh Phogat, have joined the Congress Party earlier this year.

Bajrang added in his defence, "You can't give expiry kit to any player and as far as I am concerned, my team was there, so they saw it. They came carrying expiry kits dated 2020, 2021, 2022."

"I gave my urine sample but then my team checked the kit and found out that it was expired. So we made a video of the kit and we mailed NADA, called them to inform about the mistake. But they did not accept their mistake."

The wrestler alleged that the government is looking to get back at them for their involvement in the long-drawn sit-in protest against former Wrestling Federation of India (WFI) president Brij Bhushan Sharan Singh, a BJP politician.

"I also feel that because of our protest in support of the women wrestlers, they are trying to exact revenge because all the agencies are fall under the purview of the government."

"I have been competing for the last 10-12 years and I have given sample during all tournaments, during the India camps. But the government's motive is to break us, make us bow down to them. If I join the BJP then I think all my bans will be lifted," Bajrang claimed.

The suspension means that Bajrang will not be able to return to competitive wrestling or apply for a coaching job abroad, if he aspires to, till April 22, 2028. (PTI)

Cricket not a roadblock for other sports in India: Sebastian Coe

NEW DELHI, Nov 27: World Athletics boss Sebastian Coe is quite aware that cricket is nothing short of "religion" in India but he feels it shouldn't be viewed as a "roadblock" for other sports, which can challenge its dominance by producing trailblazers like javelin thrower Neeraj Chopra to capture the public imagination.

Coe, one of the candidates for next year's International Olympic Committee (IOC) presidential elections, has been in the country for the past two days, meeting Prime Minister Narendra Modi and sports minister Mansukh Mandaviya among others to discuss the growth potential of Indian sports.

Expressing faith in the country's potential to become a powerhouse, the four-time Olympic medal-winning former middle distance runner said, "When you have an Indian athlete winning Olympic titles and world championships, then you are in good shape."

"When you have athletes of the calibre and high profile of Neeraj, then you can actually mount a very good challenge to other sports. And look, we know the national religion is cricket," he stated in a telephonic interview with PTI on Wednesday.

"It's really important that India have athletes that capture the imagination of the public, ultimately the broadcasters. And Neeraj does both," added Coe, who also headed the 2012 London Olympics bid. Chopra won an unprecedented track-and-field gold in the Tokyo Olympics before adding a silver to his kitty in Paris this year making him an all-time great in Indian sports at a mere 26 years of age.

Cricket not a roadblock for other sports
Cricket enjoys massive following in India but Coe said it is not a roadblock for others and they should find innovative and creative ways to gain popularity.

"It (cricket) shouldn't be (a roadblock), because every country has sports that are dominant. It would be like saying in the UK, well, football is an inhibitor for track and field. We have one of the best track and field teams in the UK that we've had for many years," the 68-year-old Coe said.



"You have to live with what you have to live with. And you can't just sit there saying, well, India, the cricket or football or rugby or wherever these sports are really strong. You sort of give up, you don't."

"You have to be more innovative, more creative. The sporting landscape is very competitive. Cricket is a very dominant sport in India. I watch it all the time," said the long-time administrator, whose grandfather was an Indian (hoteller Sardari Lal Malhotra).

'Dialogue with PM a private conversation'
India's Olympic performance at this year's Paris Games was underwhelming for a billion-strong country with six medals, none of them being gold.

The nation is now aiming to host the quadrennial showpiece in 2036 and has submitted a letter of intent to the IOC. The bid is being backed by PM Modi, whom Coe met on Monday.

"I'm not going to divulge a private conversation. But we talked about the importance of big events in India. He was very clear that big events promote not just better competition, but have a broader societal impact, particularly on the health, mental and physical of young people," Coe said.

"And he (PM) is obviously very keen for more events to come to India and was particularly encouraging of the Indian athletics federation (AFI) to bid for more of our events," he added.

With World Athletics Ultimate Championship (WAUC) set to outshine all global athletics events in terms of star cast and record-setting prize money of USD 10 million starting 2026, Coe said India could joint the bidding process. Budapest has been chosen as the venue for the inaugural event.

"I sincerely hope so (India can aspire to host the event). But look, we have a bidding process, which we actively encourage all our federations that love athletics and have the capacity to deliver those events, to want to bid for them."

"So, World Athletics is open for business and India is a very important market for us," he said.

Coe said the idea of giving USD 50,000 to gold-winning track and field athletes at the Paris Olympics was driven by a desire to provide them financial security.

"Look, there was nothing new in what we announced. And it's certainly been my philosophy for the best part of 45-50 years. I've always believed that the welfare of the athletes isn't just about mental and physical."

"It's also about giving them some financial security. So look, the decision we made was a decision that is in line with our prize money policies in the sport. I have to say that it's been welcomed by our athletes."

'Protecting women's sport is non-negotiable'

The participation of trans-gender athletes in women's sports events has become an increasingly contentious issue with the IOC drawing flak for allowing this to happen. WA, under Coe, has maintained a strictly-women stance, a decision criticised by trans-rights advocates.

"You know my position. It's very clear. It's very much in the public domain...for me, protecting the female category, protecting women's sport is non-negotiable."

"And at World Athletics, we have very clear cut policies that make that declaration of intent very clear." (PTI)

Digboi cricket tournament concludes



HT Correspondent

DIBRUGARH, Nov 27: the Digboi Cricket Tournament concluded with a thrilling final match on Tuesday with a grand closing ceremony. The Spear Corps of Indian Army, as part of Operation Sadbhavana organised the tournament.

The tournament, which commenced on November 21 witnessed enthusiastic participation from sixteen teams representing the local communities from Upper Assam. The matches were characterized by intense competition, sportsmanship, and a true spirit of camaraderie.

The final match was a nail-biting affair, with Eleven Fighters Pengaree facing off against Angry Boyz Digboi. After a tough match, Angry Boyz Digboi emerged vic-

torious, captivating the audience with their exceptional skills and strategic gameplay.

Suraj Dargee of Angry Boyz Digboi was adjudged Man of the Match as well as Man of the Series.

The closing ceremony was a grand event attended by a large number of cricket enthusiasts. The event was marked by Assam's traditional Bihu performance, prize distribution ceremony and a vote of thanks.

Indian Army, through Operation Sadbhavana, has been actively engaged in various initiatives to foster peace, harmony, and development in the region. The cricket tournament is one such endeavor aimed at promoting sportsmanship, unity and social cohesion among the local populace.

Women's HIL a significant milestone for hockey

NEW DELHI, Nov 27: Two-time Olympic gold medalist Dutch hockey striker Maria Verschoor believes the inaugural women's Hockey India League will be a significant milestone for the sport.

"It's amazing to see the first competition of its kind for women in India, and to be part of it is truly special. The league's format, with a mix of international players from around the world, brings together different styles and cultures, which I think is great for the growth of women's hockey."

"We will be playing some great matches, and I hope we can show the world how exciting and competitive women's hockey can be," Verschoor said in a release issued by HIL.

Verschoor is particularly keen on contributing to the development of the women's game in India. (PTI)

We can be world No 1 as we beat top players: Treesa

NEW DELHI, Nov 27: Buoyed by the World Tour Finals qualification, Indian women's doubles player Treesa Jolly now dreams of bagging a major title, and said victories over top players have reinforced her belief of achieving the world No. 1 ranking along with Gayatri Gopichand.

Treesa and Gayatri, ranked 16th in the world, are the only Indians set to compete in the prestigious event

in China next month.

"One of our dreams is to win the Super 500, 750 BWF World Tour events. We've been waiting for that title for a long time, and I believe it will happen," Treesa told PTI.

In 2022 and 2023, Treesa and Gayatri reached the semifinals of the All England Championships, a Super 1000 event, and they also made it to the semifinals of the Singapore Open Super 750 this year.

"We're taking it one step at a time. Right now, our focus is on the Syed Modi tournament. After that, we'll shift our focus to the World Tour Finals," said Treesa.

The Indians were runners-up in the Syed Modi tournament in 2022, and in the same year they also clinched the Odisha Open.

"Ultimately, our goal is to improve our ranking and move into the top 10, or even the top 5. Cur-

rently, we're ranked 16th, but the priority is to perform well in every match and every tournament."

The Commonwealth Games bronze medalists have delivered some big wins, including a crucial victory over the 2022 All England champions Nami Matsuyama and Chiharu Shida of Japan in the semifinals of the Badminton Asia Team Championships, helping India grab the title. (PTI)

Phillip Hughes remembered on 10th death anniversary

SYDNEY, Nov 27: Sean Abbott was seen wiping away tears as family and friends paid tribute to the late Australian cricketer Phillip Hughes on Wednesday to mark the 10-year anniversary of his tragic death after being struck on the neck while batting.

Abbott bowled the fatal delivery that struck Hughes during a Sheffield Shield match between New South Wales and South Australia in 2014 at the Sydney Cricket Ground.

NSW players consoled Abbott as they stood for an emotional tribute, including observing a minute's silence, before the start of play on day four of their Sheffield Shield match against Tasmania at the SCG.

Hughes, who played 26 Tests, 25 ODIs and one T20I for Australia, lost his life three days before his 26th birthday.

Players in the Sheffield Shield have been wearing black armbands in matches since Saturday as a tribute to Hughes.

"Today marks the 10-year anniversary of the passing of our treasured son and brother, Phillip Joel Hughes," the family said in its message.



"Phillip was a loving, humorous and an infectious person to be around."

According to reports in local media, Abbott was consulted in advance about whether he would be comfortable with a

match being scheduled on the anniversary of one of the most saddest moments in Australian sports.

The family further said, "He always aimed to make those around him smile and

enjoy the little things in life, where his beautiful smile would come to life. He shined bright even in the toughest times, which is a testament to who he was as a person, and we loved everything about him."

"He was the light of our lives. Phillip had a profound love for his family and lived his life with respect to everyone around him."

Cricket Australia had planned in advance a series of initiatives to mark the 10th anniversary of Hughes' death including a tribute before the start of the second Test between India and Australia at the Adelaide Oval scheduled from December 6-10.

"Phillip, the small-town country boy, became an Australian Test, One-Day and Twenty-20 cricketer, where he played on the toughest pitches around the globe, alongside the toughest of cricketers on the world stage, but never forgot where he came from and who helped along the way," the family said in the message.

"He was a unique individual that took risky and adventurous strides to conquer the dreams he set for himself to become

test baggy green number 408.

"He played cricket for all the right reasons and had the ability to take it all in his stride. He loved being a part of a team and representing Australia for the game he loved so deeply."

Cricket Australia, which has produced a special documentary on him, will broadcast it ahead of the second Test between India and Australia, as part of a two-week commemoration programme.

Batting on 63, Hughes collapsed before receiving mouth-to-mouth resuscitation and was subsequently taken to Sydney's St Vincent's Hospital, where he underwent surgery and was placed in an induced coma.

Hughes, however, could not recover from the blow and died on November 27. The left-hander was viewed as one of the promising Australian cricketers as the team went through a transitional phase.

In the Australia-India Adelaide Test that followed his death a decade ago, the south-paw was named as the home team's 13th player with 63 (the score he was batting at in his last match) seconds of applause observed ahead of the game. (PTI)