

6 WORLD Federal Reserve is set to cut interest rates again 50 European leaders assess how Trump will affect their fortune 8 NATION J&K Assembly adjourned for the day amid ruckus BJP's graph diving, INDIA bloc to form govts in Maharashtra, Jharkhand: Pilot

Himanta castigates Cong's dynasty politics

NAGAON, Nov 7: Targeting Congress MP Rakibul Hussain over his son Tanzil getting the nomination for the bypoll to the Samaguri assembly seat, Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma on Thursday said "dynasty politics" of the opposition party was preventing talented youths from coming into politics. Addressing an election rally, Sarma said the BJP was working hard to attract around 1.5 lakh youths into politics to shape the country's political landscape in coming years. "In Samaguri assembly seat, we are not just fighting Congress, we are up against an entrenched and corrupt family-led club. We are grateful to the people who have decided to join us in this fight," the CM said. Hussain won the recent Lok Sabha polls from Dhubri by a margin of more than 10 lakh votes and he could have given the Samaguri ticket to any hard-working Con-



gress worker, but they don't believe anyone else other than their wards, Sarma said. "Will anyone be able to tell who the MLA in Samaguri will be after Tanzil? It will obviously be his son. Only their children and grandchildren will be the next leaders... Others will sip Amul milk from the sidelines and Tanzil will become the MLA," he added. Sarma said Samaguri has seen only dynasty politicians as first it was Nurul Hussain, former Congress minister, then his son Rakibul Hussain, who was also a minister, and now it is Tanzil. The CM wondered if anyone from the crowd knew the name of the father of Diplu Ranjan Sarma, the BJP candidate for the bypoll, or any of the nearly 10 MLAs sitting on the dais. "Dynasty politics is never beneficial for us. A few days ago, PM Narendra Modi told me that Congress started (CONTD. ON PAGE-2)

First ICP along India-Bhutan opened in Assam

DARRANGA, Nov 7: The first Integrated Check Post (ICP) along the India-Bhutan border was inaugurated at Darranga on Thursday. Assam Governor Lakshman Prasad Acharya inaugurated the ICP in presence of Prime Minister of Bhutan Dasho Tshering Tobgay. ICP Darranga, sprawling across 14.5 acres and located about 700 metres from the India-Bhutan border, is equipped with state-of-the-art facilities including an office complex, parking areas, loading and unloading zones, a weigh-bridge, a warehouse, and residential quarters for officials. Developed by the Land Ports Authority of India, it also features inspection spaces, plant quarantine systems and parking facilities to ensure efficient operations. The strategic location of Darranga is further boosted by its connectivity. On the Indian side, it is well-connected to National Highway 27 near Rangia, while on the Bhutanese side, a robust customs infrastructure at Samdrup Jongkhar ensures efficient trade. Ongoing improvements to the highway (CONTD. ON PAGE-2)

NESAC identifies 271 wetlands, final survey soon Centre asks Assam to prepare feasibility report on wetlands for flood control

GUWAHATI, Nov 7: Union Home Secretary Govind Mohan has asked the Assam government to prepare a detailed feasibility report on 271 wetlands for flood water diversion within December, a senior official said on Thursday. The project to rejuvenate the wetlands and connect them for flood water storage may cost the state exchequer to the tune of ₹ 500 crore, although the final estimate on how many wetlands to be covered will be known after a survey is done, the official stated. In his two-day visit to Assam, Mohan held a series of review meetings on varied topics such as law and order, border management among Assam, Meghalaya, and Arunachal Pradesh, flood control measures and the status of various tribal councils. "During the second day of his visit yesterday, the Union home



secretary reviewed the implementation of the decisions with respect to the depleted wetlands for diversion of flood water in Assam," Assam chief secretary Ravi Kota told PTI here. The North Eastern Space Appli-

cations Centre (NESAC) had identified the wetlands and Mohan was apprised of the various steps taken in this regard, he added. "The Water Resources Department (WRD) highlighted the importance of rejuvenating the depleted wetlands and facilitating the diversion of floodwaters for storage. In the meeting, the action taken by the department with respect to the study done by NESAC was discussed," Kota said. The WRD identified nine wetlands in seven districts in the first phase, having potential for flood water diversion. The state prepared a plan for these nine projects worth ₹ 380.60 crore but sought additional funding from the Centre in this regard, he added. The chief secretary said, "The Union home secretary directed the WRD to carry out a detailed survey to assess the feasibility of all the 271 wetlands identified by NESAC. He asked us to prepare a concept paper on the feasibility of the wetlands by December 2024." "The total project cost may go up to a maximum of ₹ 500 crore. It has to be (CONTD. ON PAGE-2)

HT BRIEFS Language course

GUWAHATI: In a move to strengthen global cultural education, Dibrugarh University launched a Korean language course in collaboration with the World Fragrant Cooperation (WFC) from South Korea, Education Minister Ranog Pegu announced on Thursday. Taking to the micro-blogging site X, Pegu highlighted the university's commitment to expand linguistic and cultural education to meet growing student interest in Korean language and culture. He wrote, "Dibrugarh University recently welcomed a six-member delegation from the World Fragrant Cooperation (WFC) in South Korea, which played a key role in launching a Korean language course at the university."

Smuggler apprehended

GUWAHATI: In a swift action against narcotics in the city, a team from Jalukbari Police Station, in collaboration with the Crime Branch of Guwahati Police, successfully apprehended an alleged drug peddler in the Maligaon area, officials informed on Thursday. The accused, identified as 27-year-old Md Nasiruddin from Bilasipara, was caught in possession of 78 grams of suspected heroin, stored in two soap cases. Additionally, alongside the heroin, the police seized a mobile phone, a scooter used for transportation, and cash amounting to ₹ 8,900. Taking to the micro-blogging site X, the Guwahati Police stated, "A WGPCD team from Jalukbari PS & Crime Branch arrested one peddler - Md Nasiruddin (27) of Bilasipara - from Maligaon area. 2 soap cases of suspected Heroin - weighing 78 gms, 1 mobile phone, 1 scooter & ₹ 8900 in cash were seized. Legal action initiated."

PM Modi, Trump commit to strengthening bilateral ties

NEW DELHI, Nov 7: Prime Minister Narendra Modi and US President-elect Donald Trump have "reaffirmed their commitment" to working together to further strengthen bilateral ties across a range of sectors, the MEA said on Thursday. In a statement on the phone conversation Modi had with Trump a day ago, the ministry of external affairs (MEA) said the Prime Minister highlighted that the US leader's "spectacular and resounding victory" in the election reflected the "deep trust" of the American people in his leadership and vision. Modi warmly congratulated him on his "re-election as the president of the United States of America as well as the Republican Party's success in the Congressional elec-



tions", it said. "They reaffirmed their commitment to working together to further strengthen bilateral ties across technology, defence, energy, space and several other sectors," the statement said. PM Modi had on Wednesday

night posted on X that he had a "great conversation" with his "friend" Trump. The MEA, in its statement, shared some of the broader points of their telephonic conversation. Both leaders (CONTD. ON PAGE-2)

Govt to bring national counter-terrorism policy soon: Shah

NEW DELHI, Nov 7: The government will soon bring a national counter-terrorism policy and strategy to fight terrorism, terrorists and their ecosystem, Union Home Minister Amit Shah said on Thursday. Addressing an anti-terrorism conference here, Shah also said that while law and order is a state subject and states have geographical boundaries and constitutional limitations, terrorism doesn't and hence all security agencies -- central and states -- must work in close coordination, chalk out joint strategies and share intelligence. He said the government has come up with a vision on model anti-terrorism squad (ATS) and model special task force (STF) for the states and Union territories, which, if adopted, will work as a

common structure and platform to deal with the menace of terrorism. "We need to work together to fight terrorism, terrorists and their ecosystem. And that's why, we will soon bring a new national counter-terrorism policy and strategy in which you all will play a key role," he said at the conference being attended by chiefs of state police forces and other top security officials of states and the Centre. The home minister said the new policy will help states and central agencies to work in close coordination to deal with terrorism. On the model ATS and STF, he said the standard operating procedures (SOPs) are being shared with the states and they can tweak according to their respective requirements. Shah (CONTD. ON PAGE-2)

Day 2 of students' protest in NEHU

SHILLONG, Nov 7: Normal functioning of the North Eastern Hill University (NEHU) here was affected for the second consecutive day on Thursday as students protested demanding the removal of the registrar and deputy registrar, an official said. The students continued their protests by camping outside the vice-chancellor's office. Vice-Chancellor Prabha Shankar Shukla on Thursday said he will initiate an inquiry into the student's demand to sack "incompetent" registrar and deputy registrar. "I am going to call a meeting of the Executive Council to form an inquiry committee within November 11. Based on the finding of the inquiry report, appropriate actions will be taken," Shukla said in a letter addressed to the agitating students. The VC urged the students to call off their agitation. The vice chancellor also said that he agreed in principle that Pro-VC for Tura and Shillong Campus will be appointed as per the University (CONTD. ON PAGE-2)

PDP, Peoples' Conference MLAs submit fresh resolution



SRINAGAR, Nov 7: A group of MLAs, including from the PDP and the Peoples' Conference, on Thursday submitted a fresh resolution in the Jammu and Kashmir assembly demanding immediate restoration of Articles 370 and 35A in their original form. They also called for the reversal of all changes introduced in the Union territory after the erstwhile state was stripped of its special status in 2019. The Modi government abrogated Article 370, which gave special status to Jammu and Kash-

mir in 2019, and bifurcated the erstwhile state into two Union Territories of Jammu and Kashmir and Ladakh. Article 35A gave special rights to the permanent residents of the erstwhile state of Jammu and Kashmir. The resolution comes a day after the assembly passed a resolution, brought by the ruling National Conference (NC), asking the Centre to work out a constitutional mechanism for restoring special status of the erstwhile state and hold dialogue with the elected representatives over the issue. The fresh resolution on Thursday was submitted to speaker Abdul Rahim Rather amidst din in the House. The resolution was submitted by PDP members Waheed Para (MLA Pulwama) and Fayaz Mir (MLA Kupwara), Peoples' Conference MLA from (CONTD. ON PAGE-2)

Govt constitutes high-quality cancer care at affordable cost

HT Bureau GUWAHATI, Nov 7: Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma on Thursday said that the government has constituted high-quality cancer care centres to offer treatment at an affordable cost in the state. Taking to X, Sarma wrote, "Today is National Cancer Awareness Day; a day to spread awareness about the disease and dispel rumours surrounding it. With advancement in medical science, cancer treatment has evolved and there are high chances of recovery for patients." "In Assam, through the ACCF, we have set up high quality centres to diagnose, treat and manage cancer patients and give them the joy of life at an affordable cost," he added. The state government is spending at least ₹ 135 crores to Assam Cancer Care Foundation (ACCF) for

the construction of four cancer hospitals across the state. A total of 10 cancer hospitals will be built in phase-wise manner with three cancer hospitals coming up in the first phase and the rest in the second phase. In the first phase of hospitals being built in Silchar, Guwahati, and Diphu; seven cancer hospitals will open in Dhubri, Nalbari, Goalpara, Golaghat, Nagaon, Sivasagar, and Tinsukia during the second phase. The chief minister said that the cancer care model of Assam has been followed by other states in the country. He said, "The entire nation is attempting to emulate Assam. In order to make Assam a nodal state for cancer care, we are considering improving this project." Meanwhile, Sarma earlier inau-

gurated a cancer care unit at Silchar Medical College and Hospital (SMCH). Three categories of cancer care units—of which the one at SMCH is in category 2 and will offer patients comprehensive care—are being established in government-run hospitals across the state, Sarma explained. "The apex cancer care hospital, a lone category 1 facility, is opening at Guwahati," Sarma added. The project will cost ₹ 2,460 crore from the state government, ₹ 1,180 crore from Tata Trusts, ₹ 180 crore from the Indian government, and more than ₹ 80 crore from contributions. The facilities will be run by the Assam Cancer Care Foundation, which has been established to oversee them. The chief minister stated that should (CONTD. ON PAGE-2)

Bhutan PM invites Indian investors for ventures

DARRANGA, Nov 7: Bhutan Prime Minister Dasho Tshering Tobgay on Thursday invited Indian investors to his country for individual as well as collaborative ventures, especially in the eastern part of the Himalayan kingdom. He also stressed on showcasing eastern Bhutan and northeastern India together to the outside world to attract tourists. Speaking at the opening of the first Integrated Check Post (ICP) along the India-Bhutan border at Darranga in Assam, Tobgay said, "We (Bhutanese) didn't need a passport to enter through Assam, but tourists from other countries needed it." He narrated his own experience of (CONTD. ON PAGE-2)

Reduction around 4 billion tonnes by 2030 India's climate policies expected to reduce CO2 emissions: Report

NEW DELHI, Nov 7: India's current climate policies are projected to reduce carbon dioxide emissions by around four billion tonnes between 2020 and 2030, and drive a 24 per cent reduction in coal-based power generation, according to a new report. This is significant considering the fast-developing South Asian country, now the fifth-largest economy in the world, had committed to reducing emissions by one billion tonnes by 2030 at COP26 in Glasgow. The study by Delhi-based independent think tank Council on Energy, Environment and Water (CEEW) said policies for India's power, residential and transport sectors have already saved 440 million tonnes of carbon dioxide (MtCO2) between 2015 and 2020. According to the report, in the power sector alone, policies pro-



moting renewable energy are expected to drive a 24-per cent decline in coal-based electricity generation by 2030, relative to a no-policy scenario. This is equivalent to avoiding 80 GW of coal-based power plants that would have otherwise been installed

to meet India's burgeoning power demand, CEEW said. At present, India generates around 71 per cent of its electricity using coal. Further, with strategic support and competitive tenders, the share of combined solar and wind power in India's energy mix is projected

to rise to 26 per cent by 2030 and 43 per cent by 2050, up from only around 3 per cent in 2015. This shift will decisively reduce reliance on coal, which is currently the source of nearly half of the country's total carbon dioxide emissions. This transition is crucial for bending India's emissions curve downward, but achieving net zero by 2070 will require even more ambitious action. India has been pushing for a higher share of renewables in its energy mix, increased adoption of electric vehicles and improved energy efficiency in domestic air-conditioning and lighting. It has also launched programmes like the National Solar Mission, the FAME I and II schemes, the Standards and Labelling scheme and the UJALA programme, which will continue to affect future energy demand and supply. (CONTD. ON PAGE-2)

Learning to earning: UN to help marginalised Indian youths

NEW DELHI, Nov 7: Three UN agencies have prepared guidelines to help youths from marginalised communities transition from "learning to earning," and would introduce a framework to address both practical and systemic barriers impacting their progress, said Cynthia McCaffrey, the UNICEF India Representative, on Thursday. UNICEF India, in partnership with the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) and United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), is preparing to release the Technical Guidelines for the Most Marginalised in the next few days. Speaking to PTI about the guidelines, McCaffrey said it aims to reshape youth programs by focusing on the marginalised communities and introducing the RAISE-TM framework -- Rele-



vance, Accessibility, Inclusivity, Safeguarding, Enabling, Transformative, and Measurement. The guidelines address both practical and systemic barriers, ensuring that programmes are inclusive, adaptable and impactful. By emphasising the development

of 21st-century skills, the guidelines help youth transition from "learning to earning," McCaffrey said while underlining that the youth want to be productive citizens and they need skills to transition from learning to earning. According to the draft guidelines, (CONTD. ON PAGE-2)

ED searches 19 premises of Amazon, Flipkart vendors in FEMA probe

NEW DELHI, Nov 7: The Enforcement Directorate Thursday conducted searches against some "main vendors" operating on e-commerce platforms of giants like Amazon and Flipkart as part of a foreign investment "violation" investigation, official sources said.

A total of 19 premises of these "preferred" vendors located in Delhi, Gurugram and Panchkula (Haryana), Hyderabad (Telangana) and Bengaluru (Karnataka) were covered as part of the action, they said.

The sources said the probe was initiated by the federal agency under the provisions of the Foreign Exchange Management Act (FEMA) acting on several complaints against the two large e-commerce companies where it is alleged that they are "violating India's FDI (foreign direct investment) rules by directly or indirectly influencing the sale price of goods or services and not providing level playing field for all the vendors".

Emami Q2 net climbs 19 pc to ₹213 crore

KOLKATA, Nov 7: FMCG major Emami Ltd on Thursday reported a 19 per cent year-on-year increase in its net profit for the second quarter ended September 2024 reaching ₹213 crore, driven by improved margins and steady growth in both domestic and international markets.

Revenue from operations during the quarter rose by 3 per cent to ₹891 crore, with the domestic segment advancing by 2.6 per cent and international business growing 6 per cent, excluding a 12 per cent rise outside of Bangladesh, the company said in a statement.

Gross margins for the quarter improved by 60 basis points to 70.7 per cent, reflecting strategic cost management. Earnings before interest, depreciation, tax, and amortisation (EBITDA) reached ₹250 crore, up 7 per cent year-on-year, while EBITDA margins rose by 110 basis points to 28.1 per cent. The company during the quarter raised its stake in Helios Lifestyle, the maker of The Man Company brand, from 50.4 per cent to 98.3 per cent, reinforcing its focus on expanding its men's grooming portfolio.

The board declared an interim dividend of 400 per cent, or ₹4 per share, for FY25.

Emami informed that continued demand challenges in India, with high food inflation impacting mass consumer spending. Internationally, political unrest in key markets, including Bangladesh, posed temporary disruptions.

Despite these pressures, Emami continued to expand its innovation pipeline, launching 11 new products during the quarter.

"Organised channels like modern trade, e-commerce, and institutional sales now contribute 26.6 per cent to our domestic business, a 190-basis point increase in the first half. We remain committed to achieving high single-digit revenue growth and double-digit EBITDA growth for FY'25," Mohan Goenka, vice chairman and whole-time director of Emami said. (PTI)

In a win for Elon Musk, Scindia says no to spectrum auction pitch from Ambani, Mittal

NEW DELHI, Nov 7: In a boost to Elon Musk's Starlink, Communications Minister Jyotiraditya Scindia has said the spectrum for satellite broadband will be allocated and not auctioned as sought by Indian billionaires Mukesh Ambani and Sunil Mittal.

The satellite broadband spectrum will however be not given free and sector regulator Trai will fix a price for the resource, he told PTI in a text and video interview.

"Every country has to follow the International Telecommunications Union (ITU), which is the organisation that lays out the policy for spectrum in space or satellites, and the ITU has been very clear in terms of the spectrum being given out on an assignment basis. In addition, if you look across the world today, I cannot think of a single country that auctions spectrum for satellite," Scindia said.

India is a member of the International Telecommunication Union (ITU), a UN agency for digital technology.

Musk's Starlink and global peers like Amazon's Project Kuiper back an administrative allocation.

While Ambani's Reliance Jio has been vocal about the need to allocate such spectrum through an auction to provide a level playing field to legacy operators who buy airwaves and set up infrastructure like



It has been reported in the past that the Competition Commission of India (CCI), which works to ensure fair business practices across sectors in the marketplace, is already looking into alleged anti-competitive ways of e-commerce companies.

The Confederation of All India Traders (CAIT) and mainline mobile retailers' association AIMRA

had also petitioned the CCI sometime back seeking immediate suspension of operations of Flipkart and Amazon as they alleged that the companies were engaged in predatory pricing and burning cash to offer heavy discounts on products.

These practices, in turn, are creating a grey market of mobile phones, causing losses to the ex-

chequer "as players in the grey market evade taxes", they had said.

Commerce and Industry Minister Piyush Goyal had recently flagged the same concerns as he had questioned Amazon's announcement of USD 1 billion investment in India, saying the US retailer was not doing any great service to the Indian economy but filling up for the losses it had suffered in the country.

He had said in August that their huge losses in India "smells of predatory pricing", which is not good for the country as it impacts crores of small retailers.

Goyal said e-commerce companies were eating into the small retailers' high-value, high-margin products that are the only items through which the mom-and-pop stores survive.

The minister had said that with the fast-growing online retailing in the country, "are we going to cause huge social disruption with this massive growth of e-commerce". (PTI)

Rupee falls 6 paise to fresh all-time low of 84.37 against US dollar



MUMBAI, Nov 7: The rupee declined 6 paise to close at a fresh lifetime low of 84.37 (provisional) against the US dollar on Thursday, as weak domestic equities and sustained foreign fund outflows dented market sentiment.

Forex traders said investors were also cautious ahead of the US Fed meeting outcome. Moreover, overnight gains in crude oil prices also weighed on the local unit.

However, a correction in the dollar index against major currencies helped the rupee and restrained the slide, they added.

At the interbank foreign exchange, the rupee opened at 84.26 against the US dollar. During the session, the local currency touched a high of 84.26 and a low of 84.38. It finally settled at 84.37 (provisional), a loss of 6 paise against its previous close.

On Wednesday, the rupee depreciated 22 paise to close at an all-time low of 84.31 against the US dollar.

KFC unveils 'TASTE THE EPIC' campaign, celebrates fan-favourite signature menu items

HT Bureau

GUAHATI, Nov 7: KFC is ramping up its excitement this November with the launch of its latest campaign, "TASTE THE EPIC", bringing together an irresistible selection of the brand's iconic, fan-favourite menu items. Celebrating nearly three decades of serving up "finger lickin' goo" chicken, KFC is showcasing a wide range of signature offerings in three categories—Chicken on Bone, Boneless Chicken, and Burgers & more.

This new campaign invites chicken lovers across India to in-

duge in KFC's legendary flavours, renowned for their crispy, flavorful crunch and unmatched taste. Whether you're a fan of juicy, tender chicken on the bone, crave a boneless snack, or want a hearty burger, the brand promises an epic dining experience for every type of chicken lover.

"We've always been committed to delivering epic taste to our customers, and "TASTE THE EPIC" is our way of celebrating the much-loved, unbeatable flavour of our signature menu items," said a KFC spokesperson. "With something for

everyone, from our crunchy chicken on the bone to our innovative burgers and boneless snacks, there's no better time to indulge in the epic experience that only KFC can offer."

The "TASTE THE EPIC" campaign invites fans to enjoy these signature menu items across over 1,200 KFC restaurants nationwide, whether dining in or taking out. Orders can also be placed online via the KFC app or website (https://online.kfc.co.in/), making it easier than ever to satisfy your chicken cravings.



telecom towers, Mittal last month at an industry event where Prime Minister Narendra Modi was also present articulated the need to use bidding for such allocation.

Jio and Mittal's Bharti Airtel - India's largest and second-largest operators, respectively - feel that giving away the satellite broadband airwaves at a pre-decided price by the government will create an uneven playing field since they had to compete in an auction to get spectrum for their terrestrial wireless phone networks.

The two are vying for a piece of the satellite broadband segment as well.

Musk-led Starlink is demanding administrative allotment of licences

in line with the global trend as it looks to tap into the world's fastest-growing mobile telephony and internet market.

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

Such an allocation will be at a government-decided price, and allow foreign firms like Starlink to offer voice and data services. If the spectrum were to be auctioned, it would have made it costlier for Starlink to roll out services.

Starlink has applied for a licence to start operations in the country.

Scindia, however, offered no clues on the fate of his application.

The minister said that the regulatory process is very clear and transparent. The new Telecom Act has been passed, and the Satellite spectrum is very clearly a part of that in schedule one, he pointed out.

"...and therefore, we are open to looking at the application of any entity that wants to invest in India at this point in time. I think only one or two licenses have been given out. And whoever else wants to participate, India is surely going to welcome that," the minister said.

Last month, Musk, in a post on X, termed the demand made by Jio for shunning sector regulator Trai's consultation paper on satellite broadband being allocated and not auctioned as "unprecedented", and when Mittal made the pitch in the presence of the Prime Minister, he asked if it was "too much trouble" to allow Starlink to provide internet services in India.

This was perhaps the first time that Musk, whose networth of USD 241 billion is more than the combined wealth of Ambani, Mittal and Gautam Adani, had spoken directly against demands for a level playing field made by the Indian firms.

Musk, the mind behind PayPal, founder of Tesla and SpaceX and owner of X (formerly Twitter), uses his social media platform on a daily basis to make his views known on a vast array of topics. (PTI)

Contd. from Page 1..

NESAC identifies 271

seen how many wetlands could be covered within this figure," he said. Kota said that Mohan was appraised of the fact that through this ambitious project of connecting wetlands, the water level of Brahmaputra will not be managed but its tributaries will be taken into account.

"The Brahmaputra per se will not be controlled through this project, it is not possible. We will try to control the water levels of the tributaries which flow through various villages and towns across the state. The feasibility study will check if some important tributaries can be connected with some large wetlands for this purpose," he added. The Union home secretary told the state government officials that he would explore the possibility of engaging the National Disaster Management Authority (NDMA) in this project, and ask them whether the entire work could be carried out under the supervision of the central agency.

Kota also said that the fishery department during the meeting informed Mohan about the Sustainable Wetland and Integrated Fisheries Transformation (SWIFT) project to be implemented under the Asian Development Bank (ADB). "Various components planned under the project, including the component for flood water storage, were discussed," he added.

The Union home secretary on Wednesday held a series of meetings with senior officials of Assam, Meghalaya and Arunachal Pradesh to review the progress of border row settlement talks. After a detailed discussion, it was decided that Assam and Meghalaya will extend their cooperation so that the entire survey works of six remaining areas of difference along the inter-state border at Tarabari, Gizang, Hahim, Baklapara, Khanapara-Pilangkata and Ratacherra will be completed within the next six months. Likewise, surveys on 38 agreed villages on the Assam-Arunachal Pradesh Border area to be completed in the next six months. It was also emphasised that the regional committees of the two states should be activated urgently to complete the boundary finalisation of 49 villages within six months. (PTI)

First ICP along India

from Samdrup-Jongkhar to Tashigang are expected to further enhance connectivity and trade prospects.

Governor Acharya, terming it a historic moment, said, "The ICP will strengthen the deep ties between the two nations. It will help not only trade but also cultural exchange." Stressing the age-old relations between India and Bhutan, he said, "These ties have only deepened over the years. The King of Bhutan visiting Assam last year has further boosted our ties."

"Religion and culture are important for both our countries and these are among the main common ties binding us," he added. Acharya also maintained that India has been performing its duties towards its neighbouring countries by cooperating and collaborating with them in various spheres.

Bhutan Prime Minister Tobgay, in his speech, invited Indian investors to his country for individual as well as collaborative ventures, especially in the eastern part of the country. "We want to prosper together with India. We export boulders to Bangladesh, but we are also exporting some manufactured goods and we want to boost it further," Tobgay said, adding that Bhutan is getting both goods and services from India, which can be increased further. "We must build on our friendship and what better way than through people-to-people contact. This ICP will help in tourist as well as business exchanges," he said.

"I also want to commit to a special programme to market eastern Bhutan and northeastern India together to the world," Tobgay added, referring to the shared heritage with the region. (PTI)

Himanta castigates Cong's

bad politics. After the father, the son will come and then the grandchildren. If this continues, then brilliant youths willing to work for society will never join politics." "He told me that we should work in such a way that 1.5 lakh youths from villages and towns who do not identify with their father's identity can join politics. That is what we are trying now," he said. Sarma also alleged that the Congress' only intention was to put hurdles in the state's development and likened the opposition party to a "male cow" that cannot produce milk (development). "If the MLA is from the BJP with BJP governments at Dispur and Delhi, they will work together. But if the Congress candidate wins, he will later say that he cannot get things done as the BJP is in power in the state and at the Centre," he said.

"The Congress is like a male cow, you can feed it as much as you want but it cannot give you milk. You can vote for the Congress, but it cannot give you development," he said. Sarma claimed that the BJP would be in power in Assam for at least 50 years, and was the "milching cow", giving 16 litres of milk every day.

"Seeing your enthusiasm, I can sense that Diplu will win by 30,000 votes. If you people work well, the margin will increase to 50,000 votes," he said. The polling for the by-election will take place on November 13, and the votes will be counted on November 23. (PTI)

Day 2 of students'

Ordinance by month end. Earlier in the day, the students burnt the VC's effigy and locked all entrances to the central university as part of their protests. "We are not happy with the clarification of the VC with regard to our demands. We want the VC to also step down gracefully while also demanding that all officials appointed by the VC be terminated," general secretary of NEHU students union Toniho S Kharsati said.

Kharsati said they will continue with their agitation until and unless their demands are met. He said that while NEHU's national rankings have gone down, the VC was "indifferent" to the issues plaguing the university. (PTI)

Govt to bring national

said to make India develop by 2047 as envisioned by Prime Minister Narendra Modi, everyone has to deal with all security challenges and have a unified terror-fighting ecosystem. "This (adopting model ATS and STF) doesn't reduce the rights of states," he said. The home minister said the Modi government is committed to eradicating terrorism in the country and moving forward with a solid strategy against it. Security forces have to well equip young officers and use technology to combat terrorism, he said. (PTI)

PM Modi, Trump commit

reiterated the importance of the India-US Comprehensive Global Strategic Partnership for the "benefit of the people of the two countries as well as for global peace and stability", it said.

The MEA statement added, "Reflecting on the positive momentum of the India-US partnership during President Trump's first term, PM recalled their memorable interactions, including the 'Howdy Modi' event in Houston in September 2019 and the 'Namaste Trump' event in Ahmedabad during President Trump's visit to India in February 2020." In a remarkable political comeback, Trump, 78, won the race to the White House to become the 47th President of the US, trouncing his Democratic rival Kamala Harris. Trump had earlier served as the 45th President of the US, after his first victory in the election in 2016. (PTI)

Bhutan PM invites Indian

accompanying English tourists in 1986 from Bhutan to Darranga and the problems faced by his companions to enter India. The ICP will ensure that tourists from other countries can now seamlessly enter into India, he emphasised. Terming it a "momentous occasion", the Prime Minister pointed out that not only top officials of the Royal Bhutan government were in attendance at the inauguration but the leader of the opposition of the country was also present. "We want to prosper together with India. We export boulders to Bangladesh, but we are also exporting some manufactured goods and we want to boost it further," Tobgay said, adding that Bhutan is getting both goods and services from India, which can be increased further. Stressing his government's initiatives in eastern Bhutan, along which the newly-opened ICP is located, the PM said, "I invite investors from Bhutan to invest more meaningfully in the eastern part of our country. I also invite investors from India to invest in ventures of their own as well as in collaborative ventures." Highlighting the age-old relations between the two countries, he said, "We must build on our friendship and what better way than through people-to-people contact. This ICP will help in tourist as well as business exchanges."

"I also want to commit to a special programme to market eastern Bhutan and northeastern India together to the world," Tobgay added, referring to the shared heritage with the region. (PTI)

Govt constitutes high-quality

there be an income shortfall at the end of the year, the state government will step in to cover it. He said, "There are currently ten such cancer care centres in operation, and over 2.15 lakh patients have received treatment there."

PDP, Peoples' Conference

Handwara Sajad Lone, Awami Ittehad Party MLA from Langate Sheikh Khursheed (brother of MP Sheikh Abdul Rashid alias Engineer Rashid), and independent MLA from Shopian Shabir Kullay.

"This House strongly condemns the unconstitutional and unilateral abrogation of Article 370 and Article 35A, along with the enactment of the Jammu and Kashmir Reorganisation Act, 2019, by the Government of India," the resolution read. (PTI)

Learning to earning

the RAISE-TM framework's adaptability enables accessibility for youth across diverse contexts -- urban, rural, tribal, and differently-abled backgrounds -- addressing barriers like limited Internet access, socio-cultural norms and geographical isolation.

"The agility of this framework lets us adapt it to various communities, whether rural, tribal, or differently abled so that all young people can benefit," McCaffrey said. Developed with insights from consultations with youth in five states, the guidelines prioritise what young people demand most -- digital literacy, entrepreneurship skills and financial independence. "These guidelines give a common approach but were crafted from what young people are actually saying they need. We're listening to youth voices and aiming to meet their demands for skills that foster independence," she said. (PTI)

India's climate policies

Arunabha Ghosh, CEO, CEEW, said, "India has demonstrated formidable climate leadership over the past decade, from scaling renewables to advancing energy efficiency and electric mobility through policies. This has not only diversified our energy mix and doubled down on energy security, but also created new markets and significantly cut carbon dioxide emissions."

"The road to net zero needs bolder action and the foot cannot be taken off the pedal now. To enable the Global South's efforts, COP29 must ensure climate finance flows to developing countries like India, without riders. This would deepen renewable markets and a sustainable future for all."

In the transport sector, the CEEW study has found that policies, such as the FAME (2015-2022) schemes, have set the stage for significant growth in the electric-vehicle market. Projections show that by 2030, electric two-wheeler and four-wheeler sales could account for 19 per cent and 11 per cent of their respective segments. This could lead to a 13-per cent reduction in oil and gas demand in this decade. (PTI)

CM promises development projects and criticises Congress as campaigns intensify ahead of Nov 13 polls Himanta rallies support for BJP in Behali and Samaguri by-elections

HT Correspondent
BISWANATH CHARIALI, Nov 7: Chief minister Himanta Biswa Sarma attended an election rally at Behali on Thursday. Addressing the rally, CM Sarma asserted that the Congress party will not return to power for the next fifty years. He cited several examples of scams during the long-term Congress regime in Assam, including the APSC scam as a major one.

The BJP government has been appointing people based on merit, he noted, with over 150,000 jobs provided to aspirants, and an additional 40,000 to 50,000 appointments expected within the next one and a half years.

CM Sarma also declared plans to establish a high school at Batiamari, a hospital at Tinisuti, a hostel for tea garden students at Behali Degree College, and a statue of Chhabal Upadhyaya in Guwahati. He also mentioned ₹ 10,000 for SHGs and a tunnel road connecting Golaghat and Gohpur, among other developments. Criticising the Congress party, he urged voters of the Behali LAC to support BJP candidate Diganta Goharwar.

Our Nagaon correspondent adds: On Thursday, chief minister



Himanta Biswa Sarma participated in an election rally organised at Samaguri Higher Secondary School playground and conducted a campaign in support of BJP candidate Diplu Ranjan Sarma for the by-election of the Samaguri assembly constituency, scheduled to be held on November 13.

While addressing the rally, CM Sarma asserted that BJP candidate Diplu Ranjan Sarma will win this time with a margin of 25,000 to 30,000 votes. "No one can push Diplu Ranjan Sarma back in Samaguri this time," CM Sarma said, adding that he felt assured of this after seeing Rakibul Hussain on

television.

Referring to the family-centric politics of Congress, CM Sarma criticised Rakibul Hussain and stated that instead of promoting other Congress leaders from the Samaguri assembly constituency, Hussain chose to project his own son, indicating a lack of trust in others. "But the BJP is quite different, as the party does not provide tickets based on familial connections," CM Sarma added.

Regarding the ongoing appointments of unemployed youth in the state, CM Sarma noted that his government has already provided jobs to over one lakh individuals.

By May 10 next year, his government aims to ensure employment for an additional fifty thousand youth. Furthermore, he stated that over the next one and a half years, the government plans to provide opportunities for more than five lakh young people across various sectors in the state. The chief minister also mentioned that his government would include 15,000 new women beneficiaries under the flagship scheme Orunodoi in the Samaguri assembly constituency in the near future.

During the rally, BJP candidate Diplu Ranjan Sarma also addressed the gathering, appealing for their votes. The event was attended by MP Kamakhya Prasad Tasa, Rajya Sabha MP Rameswar Teli, Minister Keshab Mahanta, MLA Taranga Gogoi, MLA Ramakanta Deori, MLA Rupak Sarma, BJP Prabhari Harish Trivedi, MLA Hemanga Thakuria, AGP district president Moni Madhab Mahanta, Nagaon BJP president Abhijit Nath, and other party leaders.

The rally was organised under the guidance of MLA Jitu Goswami, Babul Bora, president of Kaliabor Zila BJP, and Partha Pratim Hazarika, vice president of Kaliabor Zila BJP.

AASU stages protest in Jorhat



HT Correspondent
JORHAT, Nov 7: The All Assam Students' Union (AASU), Jorhat unit, held a protest in front of the Jorhat District Commissioner's Office on Thursday against the cut-

ting down of trees for various government development projects. Protesters shouted slogans and displayed placards, calling for an end to the felling of trees. "We want development, but not at the cost of

nature's destruction. We, the people, live when trees are with us," said Pretom Jyoti Saikia, president of the AASU Jorhat unit. "We will continue our protest until the government takes necessary action to stop chopping down trees."

It is notable that thousands of trees have been felled in Jorhat for government development projects. Eminent citizens, various organisations, and individuals have expressed their grievances and protested against these government actions, which continue unabated. After the protest, the organisation submitted a memorandum to the chief minister through the district commissioner of Jorhat. Sankalpajit Gogoi, an executive member of AASU's central committee, was also present at the event.

Tezpur University hosts workshop

HT Correspondent
TEZPUR, Nov 7: The department of Electrical Engineering, Tezpur University (TU), organised a five-day intensive workshop on 'Bridging the Gap Between Industry and Academia in Electrical Engineering', starting from November 4, 2024. Prabhat Kamal Bezboruah, former chairman of the Tea Board of India, was present on the occasion as the guest of honour. Speaking on the occasion, he emphasised the need to bridge the gap between academia and industry. He stressed that the current ecosystem requires transformation to facilitate research that directly contributes to quality output. Bezboruah further highlighted the importance of aligning academic curricula with industry demands to ensure graduates are well-prepared for real-world challenges.

Senior journalist and retired teacher Nalini Ranjan Bhuyan also captivated the participants with his inspiring speech, citing examples of great writers and their early journeys to becoming sincere authors.

The workshop, attended by more than a hundred participants, including students and faculty from the school, was chaired by Ajay Kumar Sharma, director of the school. Teacher Pranjal Sarma offered the vote of thanks.

Creative writing workshop conducted

HT Correspondent

TEZPUR, Nov 7: One of the leading educational institutions in the greater Behali area, Sankardeva Jatiya Vidyalaya, Rajgarh, organised a workshop on creative writing on Thursday under the banner of 'Digdarshan', a special initiative to educate students in multifaceted dimensions. Upcoming author and columnist Himangshu Ranjan Bhuyan from Jamgurihat attended the workshop as a resource person, insightfully discussing techniques for outlining short stories and articles on various themes and subjects.

During his address, Bhuyan highlighted the pros and cons while analysing the distinctive features of short stories and articles. He encouraged students to

maintain deep study habits and make repeated efforts to establish themselves as promising writers, emphasising that achievements come only with perseverance. He further urged participants to engage in creative writing from an early stage to find success in the field.

The workshop, attended by more than a hundred participants, including students and faculty from the school, was chaired by Ajay Kumar Sharma, director of the school. Teacher Pranjal Sarma offered the vote of thanks.

Hojai and Margherita witness vibrant celebrations as thousands gather at decorated ghats

Chhath Puja celebrated with devotion across state

HT Correspondent

HOJAI, Nov 7: Celebrated on the sixth day after Diwali, the festival 'Chhath Puja' holds great religious significance among people from the eastern parts of the country. It was celebrated with religious fervour on Thursday evening across the Hojai district. Devotees thronged the ghats to pay obeisance to the Sun God, considered the source of life on earth and regarded as the deity who fulfills all wishes. Devotees from various communities, including Assamese, Manipuri, Punjabi, Bengali, Marwari, Karbi, and Nepali, gathered at the ghats to honour the Sun God.

Sun idols were placed for prayers at both the Shiv Bari Ghat and Natun Bazar Ghat. In addition, devotees in Siliguri Basti, Amtola Basti, Tali Basti, Mandoli Gaon, Lanka, and Lumding also followed all rituals to pray to the Sun God. The ghats were beautifully decorated with colourful lights, and illuminated gates were erected. Children enjoyed the day with firecrackers and delicious food.

Notably, all the Chhath Puja ghat committees were successful in organising the festivities smoothly, paying special attention to cleanliness. Police authorities made appropriate security arrangements.

It is noteworthy that the Shivbari Ghat committee paid homage to the renowned Indian folk and classical singer Sharda Sinha, who recently passed away on November 5.

Our Margherita correspondent adds: Chhath Puja, the biggest festival of the Bhojpur community worldwide, was celebrated



with great fervour and harmony at various locations in Margherita co-district on Thursday.

Chhath Puja, which is celebrated six days after Diwali, is the largest and most significant festival for the Bhojpur community

across different parts of the country, including Margherita, where it was observed with great enthusiasm.

In Margherita town, a total of nine Chhath Puja celebrations were organised, while under Margherita co-district, a total of 29

Pramod Boro leads campaign for UPPL ahead of Sidli LAC by-election

HT Correspondent

KOKRAJHAR, Nov 7: The election campaign for the Sidli LAC by-election, scheduled for November 13, has gained significant momentum, with major political parties, including the ruling United People's Party Liberal (UPPL), actively participating.

Three candidates are in the fray for the Sidli constituency, along with four other assembly constituencies in Assam. This by-election in Sidli LAC is set to witness a triangular contest between Nirmal Kumar Brahma of the UPPL, Sanjib Wary of the Congress, and Suddha Kumar Basumatary of the BPF.

Nearly 217,000 voters will cast their ballots in 273 polling stations across the Sidli constituency in Chirang district on November 13. The district administration and election authorities have made all necessary arrangements to ensure a free and fair election.

On Thursday, Pramod Boro, the chief executive member of the Bodoland Territorial Region and UPPL president, along with state cabinet minister Dr Ranaj Pegu and other UPPL and NDA alliance leaders, addressed a well-attended election campaign meeting at Malivita Bazar, Anando Betini, and Koila Moila in support of UPPL candidate Nirmal Kumar Brahma, backed by the NDA alliance.

A large crowd of party leaders, workers, and well-wishers from Nishima block participated in the meeting and pledged their support for the UPPL candidate. Hundreds of new members from various political parties, including the BPF, joined the UPPL during the campaign, showcasing a groundswell of support for the UPPL and NDA alliance. The newly joined members were warmly welcomed and felicitated by the UPPL.

CEM Pramod Boro emphasised that people from all sections of the



community have shown faith in the UPPL under the NDA alliance, expressing that Sidli LAC has chosen the UPPL+BJP+AGP alliance. He noted that the BTR and Assam governments have worked tirelessly for the welfare and upliftment of citizens since their inception, achieving significant development across the Bodoland region.

Expressing confidence, Boro stated that the UPPL candidate Nirmal Kumar Brahma, backed by the NDA alliance, is on track for a victory, thanks to the overwhelming support from the people. He added that all five NDA alliance candidates contesting across Assam are likely to emerge victorious in the by-elections.

"I addressed the election campaign for the upcoming Sidli (ST) LAC by-elections at Malivita Bazar and Anando Betini. Cabinet minister Ranaj Pegu joined us at Malivita, along with senior leaders of our alliance. During the program, I welcomed new members who joined our UPPL family. The overwhelming love and support from the people show that our alliance is on the path to a historic victory in the bypolls," Boro said.

In response to questions about remarks from the Opposition, Boro

dismissed allegations made by Hagrama Mohilar, the former chief of BTC, suggesting that Mohilar and the BPF party have lost their base among citizens and are making baseless accusations against the BTR government. Boro added that the Bodoland region has now achieved lasting peace and harmony among its citizens.

Minister Ranaj Pegu stated that the UPPL candidate, backed by the NDA alliance in Sidli LAC, is likely to secure a significant victory in the November 13 by-election. He commented that the Opposition parties, BPF and Congress, are struggling to gain traction among the public. He reiterated that the NDA government, both at the center, state, and in the BTR, is working collectively towards the welfare and development of the people.

Meanwhile, several senior Congress leaders, including Assam Pradesh Congress Committee's Bhupen Borah and Congress MLA Jakir Hussain Sikdar, campaigned in support of Congress candidate Sanjib Wary at different locations in Sidli LAC. BPF president Hagrama Mohilar and his party leaders also held several election campaign meetings in the Salakati area under Sidli LAC.

Dr Bibhuti P Lahkar receives prestigious Neville Shulman Award



HT Bureau

GUWAHATI, Nov 7: Assam's senior conservation scientist, Dr Bibhuti Prasad Lahkar, has been selected as one of the recipients of the 2024/25 Neville Shulman Award by the prominent environmental organisation Earthwatch Europe.

Dr Lahkar, a senior scientist at Aaranyak—one of the country's leading biodiversity conservation organisations—is the only Indian to receive this honour this year. The award has also been conferred on two other scientists from other parts of the world.

The Neville Shulman Earthwatch Awards offer individuals worldwide the opportunity to receive funding that enables them to undertake new, impactful research, increase local community engagement in en-

vironmental projects, and tackle some of the planet's most pressing environmental challenges.

Dr Lahkar, currently the head of Aaranyak's Elephant Research and Conservation Division, has been tirelessly working on the conservation of Asian elephants and grassland management in Northeast India. Dr Lahkar received the honour under the theme 'Empowering Young Researchers to Shape the Future of Wildlife Conservation in Assam'.

"My project focuses on engaging young researchers in the conservation of wildlife and its habitat in Assam. I am committed to empowering and capacitating the youth, who can become future custodians of the rich biodiversity of Northeast India. I feel very privileged to receive this award and express my gratitude to Earthwatch for this support," Dr Lahkar said upon being selected for the honour.

"The winners of the 2024/25 Neville Shulman Awards have now been chosen, and Earthwatch is thrilled to introduce them! They are three scientists undertaking research in Kenya and India. All three winners will receive grants from the Neville Shulman Awards to begin work on their proposed projects," shared Earthwatch Europe on their official website.

Their research will focus on monitoring and restoring ecosystem health and engaging local communities, as well as the next generation of researchers, in conservation.

"In particular, the award seeks applications from early-career scientists addressing one or more of the following research areas: the impacts of climate change, wildlife and habitat loss, nature in cities, and freshwater pollution," shared Earthwatch Europe.

Chhath Puja events took place.

Chhath Puja is an ancient festival of the Hindu religion, mentioned in the context of the Indian Vedic society.

Chhath Puja is observed each year on the Shashthi tithi of Kartik Shukla Paksha.

In Margherita, the Bhojpur community is also engaged in performing rituals on the banks of the Buridehing river for the holy occasion of Chhath Puja.

The Chhath Puja ghats along the Buridehing river in Margherita were beautifully decorated, attracting thousands of devotees from Margherita town who attended in large numbers, regardless of caste, creed, race, language, or religion. Chhath Puja will conclude with Surya Namaskar on Friday morning.

Anand Kumar Sharma, chairman of the Margherita Municipal Board, stated that Chhath Puja is the biggest festival for Bhojpur community members worldwide and is celebrated each year on the banks of the Buridehing River in Margherita, where people from all backgrounds gather in large numbers. Kailash Kumar Gupta, president of the All Assam Bhojpur Parishad Central Committee, emphasised that Chhath Puja is the biggest festival of the Bhojpur community worldwide and urged everyone to enjoy this auspicious festival with unity, integrity, and brotherhood.

Margherita police and the Margherita co-district administration have enforced tight security at all Chhath Puja ghats in Margherita co-district to prevent any unlawful activities by miscreants.

QUOTE OF THE DAY

We must stop fossil fuels causing global warming, before the world stops using fossil fuels -Myles Allen

Future of fossil fuels

Despite the threat posed by climate change, global efforts at mitigation and adaptation are not keeping pace with the increasing risks: even if current pledges are kept to, the planet will still be on track for a 2.4-2.6°C temperature rise by the end of the century. At present, projections suggest that even if the national climate plans for all 195 countries that are signatories to the Paris Agreement are implemented, emissions are still likely to increase by 8.8 per cent by 2030. The World City Report 2024 by UN-HABITAT, while given this warning, has said, "To limit temperature rise to no more than 1.5°C, as called for in the Paris Agreement, global emissions have to decline by 45 per cent by 2030 compared to 2010 levels and achieve net zero by 2050. Although most countries have agreed to strengthen their climate action plans, lower their emissions and even set net zero targets, there is still a significant gap between rhetoric and action. Bold steps towards reducing emissions are yet to be taken. By contrast, policy support to produce fossil fuels remains strong. A recent assessment of national energy plans and projections shows that "the world's governments still plan to produce more than double the amount of fossil fuels in 2030 than would be consistent with limiting warming to 1.5°C". A further sign of misaligned commitments and actions can be seen in the fact that many major fossil fuel-producing countries are planning to scale up production for years or decades to come, resulting in near-term increases in the global production of coal (until 2030) and long-term increases (until at least 2050) in oil and gas. In line with this trend, fossil fuel subsidies reached a record US\$7 trillion in 2022 in the wake of the economic recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic and Russia-Ukraine conflict. In particular, the conflict placed energy transition at a crossroads and provoked a global "gold rush" for oil, gas and even coal.

These investments have the potential to lock in new GHG emissions for decades and are essentially competing with efforts to accelerate the energy transition and close the 2030 emission gap. However, the International Energy Agency (IEA) notes that the global energy crisis triggered by the Russia-Ukraine war carries the potential to hasten the transition to "a cleaner and more secure energy system." New policies in major energy markets such as the US, EU, China, Japan, Republic of Korea, and India are likely to push annual clean energy investment to more than US\$2 trillion by 2030, up from US\$1.3 trillion in 2021. Nevertheless, amidst the lack of ambition characterizing climate action, there is still some optimism, albeit within a decreasing window of opportunity. A decisive milestone for climate action took place at the 2023 United Nations Climate Change Conference (COP28). Notwithstanding, there is a sense of disappointment in many quarters that the COP28 agreement was not more far-reaching in calling for the explicit commitment to phase out fossil fuels. It remains to be seen how this agreement will be translated into action and what role cities can play in this process: in the meantime, it is likely that fossil fuels will continue to dominate the energy mix for some time to come.

Besides the risk of coastal inundation, cities are also exposed to rainwater flooding as a result of inadequate drainage and the increasing coverage of concrete, asphalt and other materials that prevent water infiltration. Other climate change impacts that are context-specific to cities are urban heat islands. By the 2050s, more than 1.6 billion urban residents will be exposed to extreme temperatures of at least 35°C. As with flooding, poor residents tend to be disproportionately exposed to extreme heat and its attendant impacts. Another problem is urban air pollution, which is entwined with climate change, accounted for 6.7 million premature deaths in 2019, making it the world's largest environmental risk factor for disease and premature death.

In defense of Dighali Pukhuri's trees

Nestled within the bustling urban landscape of Guwahati, Dighali Pukhuri emerges as a cherished refuge, a serene oasis amid the clamor and chaos of modern life. This historic pond, with its tranquil waters and surrounding verdant trees, has long been a symbol of cultural heritage and ecological significance. As residents and visitors alike are drawn to its banks for moments of respite, it becomes increasingly disheartening to witness the looming threat posed by the proposed construction of a flyover in its vicinity. This impending development not only jeopardizes the lush greenery that envelops the pond but also raises critical questions about the values and priorities of urban planning in contemporary society. The trees surrounding Dighali Pukhuri are not merely aesthetic embellishments; they are vital components of the ecosystem, cultural landmarks that connect people to their history, and essential players in the ongoing struggle for environmental sustainability.

Dighali Pukhuri's significance transcends its physical presence. The pond, believed to date back to the reign of the Ahom dynasty, stands as a testament to the rich history of the region. It has been the silent witness to the ebb and flow of time, bearing witness to the transformations that have shaped Guwahati into the vibrant city it is today.

The historical narratives woven into the fabric of Dighali Pukhuri are mirrored in the gnarled branches and steadfast trunks of its surrounding trees. Each tree tells a story - a story of resilience, adaptation, and coexistence in a rapidly changing urban environment. The proposed flyover threatens to sever this connection, uprooting not just trees but also the stories they embody, leaving behind a void that no amount of concrete can fill.

The ecological importance of the trees surrounding Dighali Pukhuri is paramount. In an era characterized by climate change and environmental degradation, the role of urban greenery has become increasingly critical. These trees provide a multitude of ecological services that benefit both the environment and the community. They act as natural air purifiers, absorbing carbon dioxide and releasing oxygen, thereby improving air quality in a city often plagued by pollution. Their presence helps mitigate the heat island effect that is

prevalent in urban areas, where asphalt and concrete trap heat, raising local temperatures. The shade provided by these trees offers a cool respite for those who seek solace by the water's edge, while their roots stabilize the soil, preventing erosion and contributing to the overall health of the ecosystem.

Moreover, Dighali Pukhuri's trees support a diverse array of wildlife, creating a vibrant micro-habitat that sustains various species of birds, insects, and small mammals. This urban biodiversity is a crucial component of the ecological web that supports the city's health.

The trees serve as nesting sites, foraging grounds, and shelter for these creatures, fostering a sense of connection between urban dwellers and the natural world. In a time when many species face extinction and ecosystems are threatened, the preservation of such habitats becomes even more critical. Removing these trees for the sake of a flyover would not only displace wildlife but also contribute to the larger problem of biodiversity loss, a consequence that reverberates through the entire ecosystem.

The decision to construct a flyover in close proximity to Dighali Pukhuri raises significant concerns about urban planning priorities. While infrastructure development is necessary to accommodate a growing population and the accompanying demands on transportation, it is vital to balance such initiatives with the preservation of natural and cultural resources. The urban environment is not merely a canvas for concrete and steel; it is a complex tapestry of interconnected systems that rely on each other for sustainability. Prioritizing short-term infrastructural solutions over the long-term benefits of green spaces is a recipe for ecological disaster.

As cities around the world grapple with similar challenges, many have recognized the need to integrate green spaces into urban planning. For example, cities like Copenhagen and Singapore have pioneered innovative approaches that blend transportation infrastructure with ecological considerations. In these urban centers, parks, green roofs, and sustainable transport options coexist harmoniously, enhancing the quality of life for residents while preserving the environment.

Such examples highlight that it is possible to develop infrastructure

without sacrificing the natural world. Instead of viewing Dighali Pukhuri's trees as obstacles to progress, we should recognize them as essential allies in our quest for sustainable urban living.

Furthermore, the argument that the removal of mature trees can be offset by planting saplings is fundamentally flawed. While reforestation efforts are essential for long-term ecological health, it is essential to acknowledge that young trees require years - often decades - to reach maturity and provide the same environmental benefits as their older counterparts.

The immediate loss of mature trees translates into a significant reduction in the urban canopy cover, leading to increased temperatures, higher levels of air pollution, and a diminished capacity for wildlife to thrive. The notion that we can simply replace these trees with younger versions is a misunderstanding of the ecological processes at play. Protecting mature trees should be a priority, as they offer immediate benefits that cannot be replicated by newly planted saplings.

Beyond their ecological contributions, the trees around Dighali Pukhuri serve a profound cultural and emotional purpose. They are not just part of the landscape; they are woven into the identities of the people who inhabit this city. The presence of green spaces enhances the quality of life, fostering a sense of community and well-being.

Numerous studies have demonstrated that access to nature significantly reduces stress, anxiety, and depression, promoting mental health and overall happiness. Dighali Pukhuri, with its calming waters and lush surroundings, has long been a sanctuary for residents seeking refuge from the demands of urban life. By constructing a flyover, we risk losing not only the physical trees but also the emotional refuge they provide, depriving future generations of a vital source of solace and rejuvenation.

As we consider the implications of the proposed flyover, it is essential to engage in a broader discussion about the values and priorities that guide urban planning decisions. The protection of Dighali Pukhuri's trees is not merely an environmental issue; it is a reflection of our collective commitment to sustainability, heritage, and com-

munity well-being. Allowing the trees to be sacrificed for a flyover sends a troubling message - that we prioritize short-term convenience over the long-term health of our environment and the cultural richness that defines our city. Such a decision undermines the essence of what makes Guwahati unique and diminishes our responsibility to preserve its natural beauty for generations to come.

In defending the trees surrounding Dighali Pukhuri, we must advocate for a holistic approach to urban planning that values sustainability and ecological integrity. This requires a paradigm shift in how we view infrastructure development, moving away from a model that prioritizes growth at any cost and toward one that embraces a vision of harmony between nature and urbanization. The preservation of Dighali Pukhuri's trees must be central to this vision, serving as a guiding principle in our pursuit of sustainable urban futures. To achieve this vision, we need to foster a culture of advocacy and awareness within the community. Local residents, environmental organizations, and cultural

historians must come together to articulate the value of Dighali Pukhuri and its trees. Public forums, awareness campaigns, and collaborative initiatives can play a pivotal role in rallying support for preservation efforts. By amplifying the voices of those who cherish this natural sanctuary, we can create a movement that advocates for the protection of our green spaces and influences decision-making processes at all levels.

Moreover, it is crucial to engage with policymakers and urban planners to emphasize the importance of integrating green spaces into future developments. Urban planning should prioritize the preservation of existing natural resources, recognizing that these elements are not impediments to progress but essential components of a thriving urban environment. By advocating for policies that prioritize green infrastructure, we can create a framework for sustainable development that respects the ecological and cultural heritage of Guwahati.

In envisioning the future of Dighali Pukhuri and its surrounding trees, we must also acknowledge the role of education in fostering a deeper appreciation for

educational programs that emphasize the significance of urban trees and ecosystems can instill a sense of stewardship among young people, encouraging them to engage with their environment and advocate for its protection. By cultivating a generation of environmentally conscious citizens, we can ensure that the legacy of Dighali Pukhuri endures, inspiring future advocates for sustainability.

As we reflect on the proposed construction of a flyover, let us remember that our choices today will shape the landscape of our city for years to come. The trees that line Dighali Pukhuri are not merely obstacles to be removed; they are essential partners in our quest for a sustainable urban future. By defending these trees, we affirm our commitment to preserving the natural beauty, cultural heritage, and ecological integrity of Guwahati.

The fight to protect Dighali Pukhuri's trees is a microcosm of the larger struggle for environmental justice and sustainability in urban environments. It is a battle that transcends geographical boundaries, resonating with communities worldwide facing similar threats to their natural heritage. The challenges posed by urbanization are daunting, but they also present an opportunity for collective action and positive change. By standing together in defense of Dighali Pukhuri's trees, we embrace the chance to create a better, more sustainable future for our city and our planet.

In conclusion, the impending construction of a flyover near Dighali Pukhuri is not merely a logistical challenge; it is a crossroads that demands thoughtful reflection on the values we uphold as a society. The trees surrounding Dighali Pukhuri are more than just a backdrop to our daily lives; they are living embodiments of our history, culture, and commitment to environmental sustainability.

Protecting these trees is not just an act of preservation; it is an affirmation of our responsibility to honor our past, nurture our present, and safeguard our future. By defending Dighali Pukhuri's trees, we defend our collective identity, our connection to nature, and our commitment to creating a vibrant, sustainable city for generations to come. *(The writer is Editor in Chief of the Assamese E-Magazine SAMPROTIK who can be reached at himangshur1989@gmail.com)*

Manipur: A jewel under siege – understanding the crisis and seeking solutions

By: Dipak Kurmi

For the past 17 months, Manipur has remained in the national spotlight, a state grappling with a deep-rooted crisis that erupted into widespread violence following a Manipur High Court order on March 27, 2023. While the court order was the immediate trigger, the seeds of discontent were sown decades ago, with historical tensions and mistrust shaping the current landscape of unrest. The demand for an inner-line permit system, which started over two decades ago, can be seen as the beginning of the state's descent into instability, further exacerbated by socio-political and ethnic tensions.

The trigger: Court order and historical mistrust

The demand for an inner-line permit system gained momentum in Manipur over twenty years ago, highlighting a growing sense of insecurity and mistrust between communities in the state. This culminated in the controversial passing of three bills in the Manipur Legislative Assembly in August 2015, which were met with violent protests in Churachandpur, leading to the tragic death of nine people in police firing. It took 632 days, after several rounds of negotiations between the government and multiple stakeholders, to bury the bodies of those killed.

Peace seemed to have returned to Manipur after these incidents. For nearly a decade, the state witnessed substantial progress, with improvements in socio-economic development that offered hope for a brighter future. However, the fragile peace was shattered once again on May 3, 2023, when violent clashes erupted between the Meitei and Kuki communities, plunging Manipur back into a cycle of violence that continues to flare up sporadically.

A small state with strategic importance

Despite its small size, with a population that accounts for only 0.1 per cent of Delhi's and 0.15 per cent of Mumbai's populations, Manipur holds immense strategic and economic significance. The state, nestled in the northeast of India, serves as a crucial geo-

strategic and geo-economic link for the country, particularly in India's "Act East" policy. It is a land bridge connecting India to Southeast Asia and the ASEAN region, making it a vital player in regional diplomacy and economic outreach. The ongoing violence has not only caused immense hardship for the people of the state but has also drawn attention to Manipur's broader role in India's foreign policy and regional stability. Understanding the complexities of the situation is essential, not just for the sake of the state's people, but for its broader implications for India's strategic interests in Southeast Asia.

Disinformation and weaponisation: Fueling the conflict

One of the most challenging aspects of the current crisis is the role of disinformation in fueling violence. False and doctored videos, along with selective depictions of incidents, have become potent weapons in escalating tensions between communities. From the Anglo-Kuki War Memorial being set on fire to the discovery of the decapitated body of a woman in a suitcase, these half-truths and manipulated narratives have triggered cycles of retaliation and unrest.

In contrast, there have also been videos that depict the harsh realities of the conflict, such as the viral footage of two women being paraded on the streets and the ghostly images of point-blank shootings and decapitations. These visuals, along with word-of-mouth stories (which are often exaggerated or untrue), have inflamed anger in both the Meitei and Kuki communities. Every false or partially true narrative escalates tensions, making it increasingly difficult for security forces to contain the situation.

The mass weaponisation of Manipur's society has been another deeply worrying trend. Beyond the looting of weapons and ammunition from police armories, armed groups like the Arambai Tengol, United National Liberation Front (UNLF-P), other valley-based insurgent factions, and Kuki militants flaunt their firepower openly, moving with impunity. The easy availability of

weapons from neighboring Myanmar has worsened the situation, making violence a constant threat. Recent videos showing large artillery guns being used, alongside improvised mortars, rockets, and locally made "pumpis," paint a grim picture for both security forces and the general populace.

Regional turmoil: Impact of Myanmar and Bangladesh

The instability in Manipur is compounded by the ongoing conflict in neighboring Myanmar and the growing influence of radical groups in Bangladesh. The Myanmar Army has lost control of significant portions of the region bordering Manipur and Mizoram, which has led to a large influx of refugees, particularly into Mizoram and, to a lesser extent, Manipur. The situation is further complicated by the possibility of northeast India's insurgent groups finding renewed support and safe havens in Myanmar and Bangladesh, particularly in areas where radicals have influence.

The role of central security forces—primarily the Indian Army, Assam Rifles, and paramilitary units like the CRPF—has been pivotal in containing the violence. These forces have been involved in evacuating people to safety, setting up relief camps, recovering looted weapons, arresting militants, and dismantling bunkers, all under conditions that are often hostile and precarious. Although the state police initially faced criticism, they have now established a working relationship with central forces and are playing a key role in maintaining order.

A complex political landscape

At the core of the crisis is the demand by the Meitei community for Scheduled Tribe status and the counter-demand by the Kuki community for a separate administration, now escalating into a call for Union Territory status. Both demands are fraught with complications. Granting Scheduled Tribe status to the Meiteis would exacerbate tensions with other groups, particularly the Nagas, and could lead to even greater unrest. On the other hand, according to the Kuki demand for a Union Territory could encour-

age similar demands across the Northeast, including in Nagaland, Assam, and Arunachal Pradesh.

It is critical for both communities to come to the negotiating table and seek a pragmatic solution. Civil society groups, women's organisations, village elders, youth groups, and even armed cadres must reflect on the progress Manipur had made prior to May 3, 2023. The state had been on a path of socio-economic development, which now seems a distant dream due to the ongoing violence.

A path forward

Restoring normalcy in Manipur will require concerted efforts from both the people of the state and the central government. While the immediate focus must be on stopping the violence, longer-term solutions must address the underlying grievances of both the Meitei and Kuki communities. The Centre must tread carefully in responding to demands, ensuring that any decisions do not spark further unrest in the broader Northeast region. At the same time, the people of Manipur must come together to rebuild trust and engage in meaningful dialogue to secure peace.

Manipur's strategic importance as the linchpin of India's "Act East" policy cannot be overstated. The state serves as a critical gateway for India's outreach to ASEAN, Quad countries, and other nations in Southeast and East Asia. Manipur, known as the "Jewel of India," has a rich cultural and historical legacy dating back to the reign of King Garib Nawaz in 1724. It remains an integral part of India's national identity and aspirations. In these trying times, the people of Manipur must be at the forefront of efforts to restore peace and prosperity to their land. It is only through dialogue, understanding, and cooperation that Manipur can once again embark on its path to glory and become a shining example of development in the Northeast region. The state and its people deserve not just national attention, but the support and prayers of every Indian. *(The writer can be reached at dipakkurmipltd@gmail.com)*

Nehru's legacy: The idealism that cost India a UNSC seat

The question of India's right to a permanent seat on the United Nations Security Council (UNSC) is one that has haunted the nation for decades, stirring passionate debate and historical inquiry. Since its independence, India has sought to assert its influence globally, and membership in the UNSC as a permanent member is seen by many as a rightful position for a nation of its size, population, and economic standing. However, at the heart of this debate is Jawaharlal Nehru, India's first Prime Minister, whose foreign policy decisions have had a profound impact on India's global aspirations, especially concerning its missed opportunity to claim a UNSC seat in the early Cold War years.

Critics often point to Nehru's reported refusal of an offer for India to join the UNSC as a decision rooted in idealism rather than pragmatism. Allegedly, the United States extended a proposition in 1950, suggesting that India could assume the seat otherwise held by the People's Republic of China (PRC).

Nehru declined, reportedly insisting that China's rightful place was in the UNSC, an assertion that stemmed from his belief in regional representation and balance. Nehru's response, while consistent with his principles, has left many wondering if his idealistic vision for an inclusive world order came at the expense of India's strategic interests.

Nehru's position reflects the diplomatic philosophy that he championed: non-alignment. As the world divided into capitalist and communist blocs led by the United States and the Soviet Union, Nehru sought to carve out a path for India that would allow it to retain independence from either superpower.

The doctrine of non-alignment, though aimed at securing India's sovereignty, also became a restraint in some respects, particularly when it came to India's role within the UN. The desire for multilateralism and the balance of power often led Nehru to overlook the opportunity for India to take a more prominent seat at the international table, most critically at the UNSC.

In hindsight, Nehru's insistence on China's inclusion over India's potential ascension to the UNSC can be viewed as both noble and, perhaps, strategically flawed. The absence of documented evidence of a formal offer adds to the ambiguity, but historical accounts suggest that both the United States and the Soviet Union might have considered India's candidacy.

Nehru's refusal to replace China with India showcased his dedication to Asian solidarity and his vision of a cooperative international order where countries would act based on shared principles rather than sheer power politics. Yet, critics argue that by championing China's right over India's influence, Nehru unintentionally diminished India's leverage in international forums.

Nehru's diplomatic choices during this period underscore a tension between principle and pragmatism. On one hand, his advocacy for China's rightful place in the UNSC was grounded in a vision for Asian unity. Nehru believed that a stable Asia, including both India and China as major players, would reduce Cold War tensions

and offer a counterpoint to Western influence in the region. He viewed China's exclusion as a potential catalyst for division and instability, positioning India as a mediator rather than a competitor. This approach, however, often led Western powers, particularly the United States, to interpret India's neutrality as reluctance to oppose communism, straining Indo-U.S. relations and casting doubt on India's commitment to democratic principles.

By prioritizing non-alignment, Nehru placed India in a unique but isolated position. His vision for an independent, neutral foreign policy aligned with India's post-colonial identity but complicated its relationships with both superpowers. To the United States, India's neutrality seemed like ambivalence in the face of a global ideological struggle, and Washington's frustration with Nehru's approach grew. Nehru defended his stance as an assertion of India's cultural and geopolitical uniqueness, viewing sovereignty as acting independently of external pressures. Yet this stance left India without a permanent seat on the UNSC—a loss that would have far-reaching implications for its global standing and influence.

For Nehru, this sacrifice was consistent with India's self-perception as a leader of the Non-Aligned Movement and a proponent of peaceful coexistence. However, his vision also came at a cost. The decision to prioritize

China's representation led India to miss a crucial opportunity to gain a decisive voice on global issues. It hindered India's diplomatic reach, limiting its ability to champion its own security concerns on the global stage. This choice also contributed to a lingering sense of mistrust with the United States, as American officials saw Nehru's neutrality as an unwillingness to ally with Western values.

The question of what might have been had India pursued a permanent UNSC seat is a significant "what-if" in the annals of Indian foreign policy. Nehru's reluctance to accept a position of power, instead advocating for a balanced, inclusive world, demonstrates his commitment to his principles—but at the same time, it reflects a missed strategic opportunity for India. For some, this decision was a mark of statesmanship, positioning India as a voice of moderation and peace. For others, it exemplifies a naive adherence to idealism at the expense of India's national interests.

In retrospect, Nehru's policy of refusing a UNSC seat stands as a poignant reminder of the dilemmas that often accompany foreign policy choices. His legacy in this regard remains both a source of pride and a point of critique, emblematic of the duality of India's diplomatic ideals. The discourse surrounding Nehru's decision underscores a tension that has shaped India's role on the world stage, reflecting its ongoing quest to reconcile principles with the realities of global power. As India today seeks to secure a permanent UNSC seat, Nehru's vision endures, challenging the nation to balance its foundational values with a pragmatic approach to influence and security in a multipolar world. *(The author can be reached at shashankadas007@gmail.com)*

DEGREE OF THOUGHT
Himangshu Ranjan Bhuyan

idents, environmental organizations, and cultural

historians must come together to articulate the value of Dighali Pukhuri and its trees. Public forums, awareness campaigns, and collaborative initiatives can play a pivotal role in rallying support for preservation efforts. By amplifying the voices of those who cherish this natural sanctuary, we can create a movement that advocates for the protection of our green spaces and influences decision-making processes at all levels.

Moreover, it is crucial to engage with policymakers and urban planners to emphasize the importance of integrating green spaces into future developments. Urban planning should prioritize the preservation of existing natural resources, recognizing that these elements are not impediments to progress but essential components of a thriving urban environment. By advocating for policies that prioritize green infrastructure, we can create a framework for sustainable development that respects the ecological and cultural heritage of Guwahati.

In envisioning the future of Dighali Pukhuri and its surrounding trees, we must also acknowledge the role of education in fostering a deeper appreciation for

educational programs that emphasize the significance of urban trees and ecosystems can instill a sense of stewardship among young people, encouraging them to engage with their environment and advocate for its protection. By cultivating a generation of environmentally conscious citizens, we can ensure that the legacy of Dighali Pukhuri endures, inspiring future advocates for sustainability.

As we reflect on the proposed construction of a flyover, let us remember that our choices today will shape the landscape of our city for years to come. The trees that line Dighali Pukhuri are not merely obstacles to be removed; they are essential partners in our quest for a sustainable urban future. By defending these trees, we affirm our commitment to preserving the natural beauty, cultural heritage, and ecological integrity of Guwahati.

The fight to protect Dighali Pukhuri's trees is a microcosm of the larger struggle for environmental justice and sustainability in urban environments. It is a battle that transcends geographical boundaries, resonating with communities worldwide facing similar threats to their natural heritage. The challenges posed by urbanization are daunting, but they also present an opportunity for collective action and positive change. By standing together in defense of Dighali Pukhuri's trees, we embrace the chance to create a better, more sustainable future for our city and our planet.

In conclusion, the impending construction of a flyover near Dighali Pukhuri is not merely a logistical challenge; it is a crossroads that demands thoughtful reflection on the values we uphold as a society. The trees surrounding Dighali Pukhuri are more than just a backdrop to our daily lives; they are living embodiments of our history, culture, and commitment to environmental sustainability.

Protecting these trees is not just an act of preservation; it is an affirmation of our responsibility to honor our past, nurture our present, and safeguard our future. By defending Dighali Pukhuri's trees, we defend our collective identity, our connection to nature, and our commitment to creating a vibrant, sustainable city for generations to come. *(The writer is Editor in Chief of the Assamese E-Magazine SAMPROTIK who can be reached at himangshur1989@gmail.com)*

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Protecting these trees is not just an act of preservation; it is an affirmation

Turn of the tide in Myanmar?

By: Hiranmay Karlekar

Myanmar's ruling junta is facing defeat and ouster, which will happen sooner than most people think. The latest, and one of the most serious, reverses suffered by the Sit-Tat (Myanmar's Army's name), has been the fall, on October 8, 2024, of the township of Pinlebu to the Kachin Independence Army (KIA), an important part of the coalition of forces fighting the junta, and its allies. Located on the border of the Sagaing Region and Kachin State, its capture opens up to the opposition forces the routes leading to the Kawlin township and the surrounding areas.

Apart from its geo-strategic importance, the township's capture is significant for what it revealed of the Sit-Tat's state. It suffered a resounding defeat. A report by Saw Lin, published in the news website, The Irawaddy, on October 14, 2024, cites the opposition National Unity Government as claiming that the junta's troops, numbering 800, were defeated despite 670 airstrikes and the dropping of over 5,000 bombs, that around 70 junta soldiers were killed, 275 were missing, 225 were wounded, 48 surrendered and 102 captured during the fighting. Around 400 firearms and other military equipment were seized.

The report further cites Thoe Gyi, the leader of Kawlin District People's Defense Team, as saying that Pinlebu, surrounded by forests and mountains, was easy to defend, and difficult to attack. There had been four attacks since the first one in 2022, each of which had almost succeeded but the regime held on with air support and airlifted troops. The fifth one, which began on August 15, 2024, was successful.

The enemy, Thoe Gyi said, was weak. Those who were forcibly recruited or drafted under the conscription law dared not fight and surrendered when the fighting broke out. Others surrendered after they ran out of food and could no longer fight. The Sit-Tat suffers from other weaknesses as well. There is discord within. Several three-star generals have been removed. Many younger of-



icers are unhappy as they recognise that almost the entire country is against them.

Prior to Pinlebu, anti-junta forces had captured four towns in northern Mandalay. According to a report by Andrew Nachemson published in Al Jazeera dated September 23, 2024, their capture had placed them within striking distance of the city of Mandalay, Myanmar's second largest urban centre, with a population of nearly two million.

In fact, the Sit-Tat has suffered a series of reverses since the opposition Three Brotherhood Alliance (henceforth the Alliance) launched its offensive, code-named Operation 1027, on October 27, 2023. Comprising the Myanmar National Democratic Alliance Army (MNDAA), active in the Kokang Special Region of northern Shan State, the Ta'ang National Liberation Army (TNLA), also active in the Shan State and the Arakan Army (AA), based in the Rakhine State in the country's western part, it has been acting in close cooperation with the opposition National Unity Government's military arm, the People's Defence Force (PDF) and other ethnic armies like the Karen National Liberation Army (KNLA) and Karen National Army.

The AA had brought almost the entire Rakhine State under its control by April, 2024. In a major development, the MNDAA claimed on July 31, 2024, that it had captured Sit-Tat's military base in Lashio, a city in Shan State close to the border with China, and its airport. This was a major loss for the junta. As Vivek Shankar has pointed out in a piece in The New York Times

dated August 5, 2024, the "city of Lashio and its airport lie on a crucial trade corridor to Yunnan Province in China, which is spending hundreds of millions of dollars on a high-speed rail link and other infrastructure projects on both sides of the border."

The opposition forces now control large swathes of territory along Myanmar's borders and mountainous region; the military retains control over the major cities and lowlands in the central Irawaddy Valley. It is losing even the cities and towns. As Vivek Shankar has stated in the article cited above, the forces resisting the junta now held "roughly 75 cities and towns across Myanmar and two airports, one in Thandwe in Rakhine State in the west, and the other in Lashio."

The odds are now rapidly increasing against the Junta. The latter doubtless has tanks and other armoured vehicles, artillery and air force. Tanks and armoured vehicles are very difficult to deploy in the areas dominated by the ethnic forces. With densely forested mountainous terrain, deep gorges and steep climbs, these are ideal for staging ambushes. Moreover, air-strikes and artillery do not win wars, even when backed by heavily armed and trained infantry. Otherwise, the United States would have romped to a victory in Vietnam.

Can the junta see the writing on the wall? During its 8 p.m. news broadcast on September 26, 2024, the junta seemed to offer, for the first time, a major concession to the opposition armed resistance groups. It said in a statement, "The state lost a large

number of human resources, infrastructures, lives and property of the people due to the fact some individuals and organizations chose to resort to armed terrorism and armed struggle line without solving political problems through political ways." Given the statement's accusatory undertones and unbelievable inherent irony, it is hardly surprising that several commanders of the rebel forces, ethnic armies, and the opposition NUG government, promptly rejected the offer.

A report (dated September 27, 2024) by Sui-Lee Wee in The New York Times, quoted Ye Myo Hein, a visiting senior expert for the Myanmar programme of the United States Institute for peace, as saying, "The reason they made this announcement is to appease China." It could well be so.

As Wee points out in her report, while expressing support for the junta, Beijing has also been engaged in talks with northern Myanmar's ethnic armed groups. According to the report, China's foreign minister, Wang Yi, had travelled to Myanmar in August, 2024, to urge the country's army chief, Senior General Min Aung Hlaing, to pursue political reconciliation and hold elections. Earlier, in a meeting with Myanmar's president, Thein Sein, in China in June, Wang Yi had also called on the military to hold talks with Aung San Suu Kyi, who is currently serving a 27-year prison term on totally false charges.

There is no indication that the junta has any intention of holding talks with Suu Kyi. In fact, in an interview to Myein Myein carried in The Irawaddy on October 24, 2024, her son, Kim Arris, said she had been kept completely incommunicado in prison in Naypyitaw with even her family and lawyers barred from meeting her.

The conditions in the prison being terrible and with Suu Kyi having serious health issues, he expressed the fear that she might die in prison, which may well happen. In that case, the burden of guilt not only be on the junta but the Western democracies which seem no longer bothered about developments in Myanmar. (Courtesy: The Pioneer)

Depsang to Kazan: Emerging détente between China and India

By: Atul Kumar & Antara Ghosal Singh

The fact that an agreement between China and India to move forward on the Line of Actual Control (LAC) was in the works has been anticipated in both capitals. Since late 2022, both governments have pursued a modus vivendi for disengagement at Depsang and Demchok, with the issue discussed threadbare in the Corps Commanders' meetings. The 17th Corps Commanders' meeting on 20 December 2022 marked a critical point. Following the establishment of five buffer zones in Eastern Ladakh and the Yangtze clash on 9 December 2022, the meeting provided an in-depth dialogue on the disengagement frameworks and probable solutions. In the next two years, these frameworks were substantially refined by both militaries which received the political endorsement this year.

This agreement has initiated the disengagement process at both remaining locations. As discussed below, a review of the lead-up to the Kazan agreement, its specifics on the ground and perspectives on this agreement from China, indicates that within strategic and political constraints, the agreement is a constructive restart for both states, though tempered with cautious optimism.

The buffer zones and their complexities

By September 2022, China and India had established five buffer zones at Pangong Tso Lake near Fingers 4-8, Gogra, Hot Springs, Kugrang Nullah and the Galwan Valley. This belt of buffer zones was aimed to separate both a forces from their face-to-face deployments and was located mostly on the Indian side of the LAC, creating a distance of 3-10 kilometres between both sides and establishing restrictions on human patrolling or grazing temporarily. Only electronic surveillance was allowed. The denial of grazing received substantial criticism in India as these areas were traditional grazing grounds for the local population. However, the Indian government argued that if they could not patrol or graze in these buffer zones, neither could the Chinese and that ensured stability and peace in these areas.

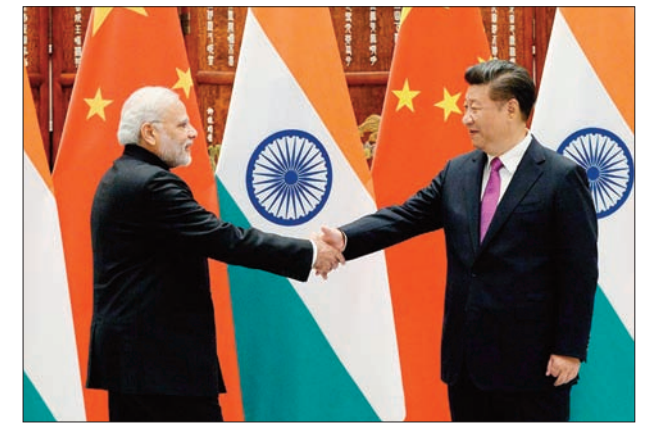
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The negotiation for achieving a similar modus vivendi in Depsang and Demchok proved difficult. The standoff in these two places was a legacy issue, starting in 2008-09 and eventually becoming a part of the 2020 Galwan Clash discourse.

After surveying this area in September 2013, the Shyam Saran Committee reported that the Chinese were not allowing the Indian Army patrol units to access patrolling points 10 to 13 in the Depsang bulge area and creating difficulties for patrols in the Sirijap and Demchok area. Therefore, these two locations proved to be the toughest to negotiate.

Nevertheless, the Indian establishment displayed adept negotiation skills, finally securing the Kazan Agreement. This accord avoids creating buffer zones in the area, allowing staggered patrolling by small patrol units from both sides. Indian troops can finally access patrolling points 10 to 13 in this region again.

Economic foundation for the political agreement Since the 2020 clashes, China-India relations have stagnated, marked by minimal engagement across trade, economics and regional political fronts. India, stepping away from its oft-professed neutral politics, has actively engaged in the Malabar Exercises and the



QUAD, aligned closely with the United States (US), while restricting Chinese investments, apps, and airlines. India has often adopted positions countering China. Beijing believes India has become detrimental to its Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) in Southern Asia and withheld support from multiple Chinese economic initiatives namely, the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor, China-Myanmar Economic Corridor, and the China-Nepal India Corridor.

China-India trade, however, has remained strong. Consequently, India's trade deficit has grown over the last three years, often crossing US\$ 100 billion a year. In addition, foreign direct investment (FDI) in India has dropped substantially, to less than US\$30 billion in the last financial year. The Indian Finance Ministry has, therefore, expressed concerns, prompting the Indian Chief Economic Advisor, Anantha Nageswaran, to advocate for renewed engagement with China in the 2024 Economic Survey. China, meanwhile, is in difficult terrain as its industrial overcapacity, high unemployment rate and collapsing real estate sector, along with severe societal repression by a paranoid Chinese state, has created a volatile economic environment. The Kazan Agreement is, thus, viewed as a mutually beneficial pact to reduce hostilities and reestablish a working arrangement to minimise the potential for bilateral conflict.

Opinions in China on the agreement The border agreement with India has received intense attention within China's strategic community. The big question everyone tends to ask "Now that India's Modi has given a thumbs up, will China and India turn the page in terms of bilateral ties." In the Chinese assessment, this is a substantial achievement, a hard-won success. It is being argued that this ice-breaker will revitalize China-India relations and can potentially open up new space for cooperation between the two countries on the global stage. For example, some Chinese scholars believe the Kazan meeting will pave the way for greater cooperation between China and India on the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation (SCO) platform. There are talks about PM Modi personally attending the summit in China next year and opening up a new chapter in bilateral cooperation.

As per Lin Minwang, a researcher at the Centre for South Asian Studies, Fudan University, the current positive turn in China-India relations shows that India's diplomatic strategy is gradually returning to its "multilateral" core position under the Modi government. Similarly, Zhang Jiadong, another India watcher associated with Fudan University argued that "both sides realize that their primary focus is still economic development and responding to changes in the international landscape. In that case, a costly border dispute is not in the interests of both countries."

The Chinese side further notes how the handshake across the Himalayas can be an important turning point in global geopolitics and have a far-reaching international political significance. The warming of Sino-Indian relations will make the US and the West uneasy and may impact their strategic layout and global and regional policies. It is, therefore, no coincidence, they argue, that the

US has been building pressure upon India on the Khashan issue and has threatened to adopt severe measures if India does not cooperate. Simultaneously, other Western powers continue to court India and lure it into the "trap of replacing China". For example, Chinese scholars note with concern how German Chancellor Scholz recently led a delegation to India, promising the strengthening of German-Indian economic cooperation while publicly promoting a "de-risking from China" strategy and projecting India as an alternative to China.

However, while appreciating the development, Chinese scholars advise caution given the structural differences in China-India ties. There seems to be a consensus within the Chinese strategic community that "the border agreement signed by China and India does not mean that all issues have been resolved. The agreement's implementation, the progress of subsequent negotiations, and whether the two sides can trust each other are all important factors in the future of China-India relations." The signing of the agreement is only "a starting point".

Chinese scholars argue that true reconciliation with India will require greater patience and sincerity, as the border issue is complex, involves sovereignty issues, and is subject to interference from third parties or external forces. Liu Zongyi, director of the South Asia Research Center at the Shanghai Institutes for International Studies (SIIS), argued that although there have been some positive developments in bilateral ties, it will still take some time for the relationship to recover. Since India's great power ambitions and its overall strategic goals of outcompeting China have not changed much, China needs to exercise caution, particularly Chinese companies still need to adopt a cautious attitude when investing in India."

Final evaluation The general feeling in China is that although both states have reached a preliminary agreement to disengage, the future development path of China-India relations is still full of potholes and slippery slopes. The two sides still face the possibility of a sudden escalation in conflicts and differences because the borderline has not yet been fully determined.

In addition, the future direction of the China-US-India trilateral relationship is full of uncertainty. The US elections, scheduled for November 2024, will also impact China-India relations. China will keep a keen eye on how India can maintain good relations with China while maintaining cooperation with the United States in the future.

Similarly in India, the disengagement at Depsang and Demchok is ongoing, and the patrolling may begin around Diwali. However, hereafter both sides must negotiate de-escalation and deinduction and future access and patrolling in existing buffer zones. The completion of this process will bring back a modicum of sensitivity towards each other's red lines and may generate mutual respect. The Kazan Agreement, in sum, has reduced the animosity and mistrust and opened the scope for bilateral cooperation. The trust between both Indian and Chinese militaries, however, is a long way ahead. (Courtesy: ORF)

How performative outrage on social media is hampering Indian Muslims

By: Istikhhar Ali

Every time I log into my social media accounts, including WhatsApp, I am confronted with an endless stream of posts about the suffering of Muslims around the world. From the oppression of the Palestinians to the authorities in Indian states bulldozing homes, from protests against state brutality in Uttar Pradesh's Bahraich to the systematic discrimination faced by Indian Muslims, my timeline is a relentless reminder of collective pain.

Amidst this flood of distressing content, I have been noticing a troubling trend within the Muslim community itself: an overreliance on performative outrage that rarely translates into tangible action.

Illusion of activism

Take, for example, a well-known influencer in the Indian Muslim community. Over the years, I have observed his social media presence grow significantly. He has amassed thousands of followers, many of whom look to him for guidance. He frequently shares posts about the rising tide of anti-Muslim sentiment in India, showcasing incidents of violence and systemic discrimination.

But despite his ability to amplify these issues, I often find myself frustrated by the absence of solutions. Instead of encouraging community organising or local activism, his posts, like many others, focus solely on Muslim victimhood.

I often ask myself whether any good will come from raising awareness if it does not lead to action. Scrolling past his latest viral video of communal violence, captioned, "When will the world wake up?", I cannot help but feel that we are stuck in a loop – constantly highlighting suffering but offering no roadmap for alleviating it.

I do know a few people working on both problem-solving and community-building, but their efforts are overshadowed by the sheer volume of performative social media posts.

In this cycle, many well-meaning individuals have unintentionally become conduits for outrage.

Capitalist exploitation of activism

Social media, in its dual role as a platform for marginalised voices and a profit-driven ecosystem, has transformed activism into a commodity. It provides visibility for important causes but it also exploits these narratives for clicks, shares and likes.

Many young Muslims have internalised the notion that sharing distressing content is equivalent to activism – that raising awareness alone is enough to bring about change. But real activism requires more than just raising awareness – it requires engagement, planning and action.

I have watched as my peers flood their feeds with outrage-laden posts, believing their online presence constitutes meaningful activism. Yet, as their followers grow and their perceived influence expands, it becomes clear that many are more focused on building personal brands than



Many young Muslims have internalised the notion that sharing distressing content is equivalent to activism – that raising awareness alone is enough to bring about change. But real activism requires more than just raising awareness – it requires engagement, planning and action

working towards solutions.

This commodification of outrage fuels the capitalist machinery of social media, where emotions – anger, grief, frustration – are turned into consumable content. The very platforms that profit from our pain are designed to keep us trapped in cycles of fear, outrage and helplessness.

Cycle of fear and hate

Many fail to realise that by constantly sharing videos of violence or discrimination, they are inadvertently reinforcing fear and victimhood. Rather than empowering the community, they perpetuate a sense of helplessness. They thrive on crises because crises generate content.

Instead of organising locally, joining protests or engaging in community-building, they curate online personas, share viral videos, and tweet their outrage, believing they are making a difference. But what do these heart-wrenching images and videos do for the community beyond stirring emotions?

The validation they receive – likes, shares, retweets – creates only the illusion of empowerment. The social media landscape has projected them as activists, yet there is a hollow core at the centre of this engagement. They are using the struggles of their community to boost their online visibility. It is all about capitalising on the moment, often without recognising that their emotional expressions – anger, grief – are being exploited by algorithms designed to fuel the very cycle they are trying to escape.

Mental health, community connection

This culture of performative outrage also has significant ramifications for mental health. The constant exposure to negative messages not

only diminishes self-confidence but erodes overall mental well-being. Many of us spend countless hours on social media, often using it as a distraction from our real-life responsibilities and challenges. This cycle of outrage and helplessness leaves many feeling demoralised and disillusioned.

Many choose to limit their discussions of these issues to chat rooms or social media spaces, which often lack the nuance and care necessary to foster real dialogue.

It would make a world of difference if these influencers, who are assumed to be social media activists, actually visited marginalised communities and offered reassurance to those most affected by systemic discrimination. It would go a long way in providing emotional relief and fostering a sense of solidarity if they were to reach out with a simple message: "We are here for you. Let us know if you need anything."

Beyond social media

Being socially and politically aware requires more than just WhatsApp messages, posting on social media, or retweeting outrage. The challenge lies not only in addressing the injustices faced by Muslims in India but in reshaping the narrative – from one of fear and victimhood to one of empowerment and agency.

While social media can amplify voices, it is the actions taken offline that truly matter. The time has come for a collective awakening, one that moves beyond sharing stories of horror and starts creating stories of hope and progress. Our community needs to reclaim its narrative, not as passive victims, but as active agents of change capable of forging a better future. (Courtesy: Scroll.in)

50 European leaders assess how Trump will affect their fortunes

BUDAPEST (HUNGARY), Nov 7: Around 50 European leaders, including Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy and NATO Secretary-General Mark Rutte, will be reassessing their trans-Atlantic relations in the hope that Donald Trump's second US presidency will avoid the strife and political pitfalls of his first administration.

Further compounding an already complicated situation, Germany — Europe's troubled economic juggernaut — sank into political crisis after German Chancellor Olaf Scholz fired his finance minister. It raises the spectre of an election in a few months and yet another standoff between the emboldened hard right and the establishment parties in Europe.

Those two combined "adds even more pepper and salt to this situation," Polish Prime Minister Donald Tusk said.

But the US election fallout still took centre stage. "Our relationship with the US is essential and we are ready to deepen it," European Council President Charles Michel said.

The 27 nations from the European Union bloc will be meeting in a separate summit as soon as other leaders from the United Kingdom, Turkey and the Balkans leave in the evening.

During his election campaign, Trump had threatened anything from a trade war with Europe to a withdrawal of NATO commitments and a fundamental shift of support for Ukraine in its war with Russia — all issues that could have ground

breaking consequences for nations across Europe.

Summit host and ardent Trump fan, Hungarian Prime Minister Viktor Orban, said early Thursday he already had a phone call with the incoming president overnight, announcing that "We have big plans for the future!"

So did hard-right Italian Prime Minister Giorgia Meloni, who lauded the "deep and historic strategic partnership that has always tied Rome and Washington."

That partnership came under constant pressure during Trump's first term, from 2017-2021.

Trump's administration slapped tariffs on EU steel and aluminum in 2018, based on the claim that foreign products, even if produced by American allies, were a threat to US national security. Europeans and other allies retaliated with duties on US-made motorcycles, bourbon, peanut butter and jeans, among other items.

The impact of the US election result could be felt in Europe for years to come, on issues including the wars in Ukraine and the Middle East, as well as migration and climate change.

Among the leaders due to attend on Thursday is Zelenskyy, who is expected to make another plea for more aid as his country fends off Moscow's invasion. The timing is laden with significance as Trump has vowed to end the war "within 24 hours" of being elected — something leaders in Kyiv interpret as an impending evaporation of US support following Trump's win. (AP)

Fed's future moves are now more uncertain

Federal Reserve is set to cut interest rates again as post-election uncertainty grows

WASHINGTON, Nov 7: Federal Reserve officials are poised Thursday to reduce their key interest rate for a second straight time, responding to a steady slowdown of the inflation pressures that exasperated many Americans and contributed to Donald Trump's presidential election victory.

Yet the Fed's future moves are now more uncertain in the aftermath of the election, given that Trump's economic proposals have been widely flagged as potentially inflationary. His election has also raised the specter of meddling by the White House in the Fed's policy decisions, with Trump having proclaimed that as president he should have a voice in the central bank's interest rate decisions.

The Fed has long guarded its status as an independent institution able to make difficult decisions about borrowing rates, free from political interference. Yet during his previous term in the White House, Trump publicly attacked Chair Jerome Powell after the Fed raised rates to fight inflation, and he may do so again.

The economy is also clouding the picture by flashing conflicting signals, with growth solid but hiring weakening. Even so, consumer spending has been healthy, fueling



concerns that there is no need for the Fed to reduce borrowing costs and that doing so might overstimulate the economy and even re-accelerate inflation.

Financial markets are throwing yet another curve at the Fed: Investors have sharply pushed up Treasury yields since the central bank cut rates in September. The result has been higher borrowing costs throughout the economy, thereby diminishing the benefit to consumers of the Fed's half-point cut in its benchmark rate, which it announced after its September meeting.

The average U.S. 30-year mortgage rate, for example, fell over the summer as the Fed signaled that it would cut rates, only to rise again once the central bank actually cut its benchmark rate.

Broader interest rates have risen because investors are anticipating higher inflation, larger federal budget deficits, and faster economic growth under a President-elect Trump. In what Wall Street has called the "Trump trade," stock prices also soared Wednesday and the value of bitcoin and the dollar surged. Trump had talked up cryptocurrencies during his campaign,

and the dollar would likely benefit from higher rates and from the across-the-board increase in tariffs that Trump has proposed.

Trump's plan to impose at least a 10% tariff on all imports, as well as significantly higher taxes on Chinese goods, and to carry out a mass deportation of undocumented immigrants would almost certainly boost inflation. This would make it less likely that the Fed would continue cutting its key rate. Annual inflation as measured by the central bank's preferred gauge fell to 2.1% in September.

Economists at Goldman Sachs estimate that Trump's proposed 10% tariff, as well as his proposed taxes on Chinese imports and autos from Mexico, could send inflation back up to about 2.75% to 3% by mid-2026.

Such an increase would likely upend the future rate cuts the Fed had signaled in September. At that meeting, when the policymakers cut their key rate by an outside half-point to about 4.9%, the officials said they envisioned two quarter-point rate reductions later in the year — one on Thursday and one in December — and then four additional rate cuts in 2025.

But investors now foresee rate cuts next year as increasingly un-

likely. The perceived probability of a rate cut at the Fed's meeting in January of next year fell Wednesday to just 28%, down from 41% on Tuesday and from nearly 70% a month ago, according to futures prices monitored by CME Fed-Watch.

The jump in borrowing costs for things like mortgages and car loans, even as the Fed is reducing its benchmark rate, has set up a potential challenge for the central bank: Its effort to support the economy by lowering borrowing costs may not bear fruit if investors are acting to boost longer-term borrowing rates.

The economy grew at a solid annual rate of just below 3% over the past six months, while consumer spending — fueled by higher-income shoppers — rose strongly in the July-September quarter.

At the same time, companies have reined in hiring, with many people who are out of work struggling to find jobs. Powell has suggested that the Fed is reducing its key rate in part to bolster the job market. But if economic growth continues at a healthy clip and inflation climbs again, the central bank will come under growing pressure to slow or stop its interest rate cuts. (AP)

Interior minister meets China's envoy

ISLAMABAD, Nov 7: Interior Minister Mohsin Naqvi Thursday met with China's top diplomat at the country's embassy here and assured him of the safety of Chinese citizens and projects in Pakistan, saying it was the government's topmost priority.

Naqvi's visit to the Chinese mission to meet Ambassador Jiang Zaidong comes two days after a local security guard opened fire at two Chinese nationals on Tuesday following a quarrel in the port city of Karachi.

According to a statement, Naqvi regretted the firing incident in Karachi in which two Chinese citizens were injured.

Both sides agreed to devise a joint strategy to prevent such incidents in the future.

Naqvi underscored that the protection of Chinese citizens remains a top priority, especially in light of the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) projects, which are integral to the bilateral partnership.

"All possible steps are being taken to secure a peaceful environment for Chinese nationals working in Pakistan," he said, adding that those responsible for the Karachi attack would be brought to justice.

Naqvi also conveyed condolences to the victims and their families, providing updates on the investigation's progress.



Both sides discussed strategies to prevent similar incidents in the future, with a commitment to enhancing bilateral security cooperation and the safety of Chinese workers in Pakistan.

The ambassador thanked the minister for the recent security measures during the Chinese premier's visit and conveyed a message from President Xi Jinping to Pakistan's President Asif Ali Zardari, wishing him a swift recovery.

The meeting was attended by senior officials from Pakistan's interior ministry and the Chinese embassy, with discussions highlighting the ongoing growth in Pakistan-China cooperation and the need for a stable environment to support this alliance.

This was the third incident involving attacks on Chinese or other foreign nationals in Karachi this year.

In October, two Chinese engineers working at the Port Qasim terminal were killed when a suicide bomber struck the vehicle carrying them near the Karachi airport.

In April, five Japanese nationals working in the Landhi industrial zone came under attack by a suicide bomber but luckily escaped unhurt.

Last week, Deputy Prime Minister Ishaq Dar said that the Pakistan government will leave no stone unturned to protect the lives and properties of Chinese nationals living in the country.

Thousands of Chinese personnel are working in Pakistan on several projects under the aegis of the USD 60 billion China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC).

The issue of security of Chinese nationals is a moot point between Pakistan and China. The two sides openly differed for the first time when the Chinese ambassador last week expressed concerns over the security of Chinese nationals in Pakistan.

In response, Pakistan foreign office spokesperson Mumtaz Baloch termed his views as "perplexing", while saying that Pakistan is committed to providing full security to Chinese nationals, projects and institutions in Pakistan. (PTI)

UK PM Starmer covers defence, security in first call with Trump

LONDON, Nov 7: British Prime Minister Keir Starmer touched upon a range of topics, including defence and regional security, during his congratulatory phone call with US President-elect Donald Trump after a "historic" election victory.

During the call on Wednesday evening, both leaders agreed to work towards strengthening the "incredibly strong" US-UK special relationship and committed to ensure the bilateral ties continue to thrive. "The Prime Minister offered his hearty congratulations and said he looked forward to working closely with President-elect Trump across all areas of the special relationship. From defence and security to growth and prosperity, the relationship between the UK and US was incredibly strong and would continue to thrive for many years to come, the leaders agreed," a Downing Street spokesperson said.

Starmer is said to have also reflected on the situation in the Middle East and "underscored the importance of regional stability". They went on to discuss their recent meeting at Trump Tower when Starmer was in New York for the United Nations General Assembly. "The leaders fondly recalled their meeting in September, and President-elect Trump's close connections and affinity to the United Kingdom and looked forward to working with one another," Downing Street added.

The phone call came after a heated first exchange between Starmer and the newly elected UK Leader of the Opposition Kemi Badenoch in the House of Commons.

The Conservative Party chief challenged the Labour leader over his party volunteers having flown in to support the cam-

paign of Trump's Democrat rival Kamala Harris.

"I am very sure that President Trump will soon be calling to thank him for sending all of those north London Labour activists to campaign for his opponent," Badenoch taunted.

"It is absolutely crucial that we have a strong relationship — that strong, special relationship, forged in difficult circumstances — between the US and the UK. We will continue to work, as we have done in our four months in government, on issues of security, our economy and global conflict," Starmer responded. Earlier, Starmer had been forced to stress that any party activists in the US during the election campaign were there as volunteers on their own time.

Badenoch also raised the risk of increased tariffs on UK exports by the new Trump administration, which would threaten the country's manufacturing sector and urged him to revive UK-US free trade agreement (FTA) talks, which the previous Biden regime had cancelled.

Meanwhile, Starmer is in Budapest on Thursday for a summit hosted by Hungarian Prime Minister Viktor Orban where Trump's victory and its implications on Europe and the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation (NATO) are expected to dominate the agenda. The European Political Community (EPC), which holds these summits every six months, was set up in the wake of the Russia-Ukraine conflict as a chance for the European Union (EU) to meet wider partners including non-members such as the UK and Türkiye to discuss key security challenges affecting Europe. (PTI)

President Xi congratulates Trump; says China, US should find 'right way' to manage differences

BELING, Nov 7: Chinese President Xi Jinping on Thursday congratulated President-elect Donald Trump on his election victory and called for China and the US to find the right way to manage the differences by strengthening dialogue and communication. Trump won the US presidential election for a second term on Wednesday in one of the most remarkable comebacks in American electoral history.

Xi, in his congratulatory message to Trump, called for the two countries to strengthen dialogue and communication, properly manage differences and expand mutually beneficial cooperation, official media reports here said. "I urge China and the US to expand mutually beneficial cooperation," Xi said. "I call for the right way for China, and the US to get along in the new era," he said, adding that both the countries, the top two economies of the world, should strengthen dialogue and communication.

History teaches that China and the United States gain from cooperation and lose from confrontation, Xi said, noting that a stable, sound and sustainable

China-US relationship serves the two countries' shared interests and meets the aspirations of the international community. He expressed the hope that the two sides will uphold the principles of mutual respect, peaceful coexistence and win-win cooperation, strengthen dialogue and communication, properly manage differences and expand mutually beneficial cooperation. Also on Thursday, Chinese Vice President Han Zheng congratulated JD Vance on his election as vice president of the United States, state-run Xinhua news agency reported.

As the results of the US presidential elections poured in on Wednesday pointing to a sweeping victory for Trump, who pursued a tough policy against China in his first term including clamping tariffs on over USD 380 billion Chinese exports to the US, Beijing reacted guardedly and said that it respects the choice of the American people. Our policy towards the United States has been consistent and we will continue to view and handle the China-US relations in accordance with the principles of mutual respect, peaceful coexistence and

win-win cooperation," Chinese Foreign Ministry spokesperson Mao Ning told a media briefing here. She dismissed the question on Trump's campaign promise to sharply raise tariffs on Chinese imports, higher than his first term. "We do not respond to hypothetical questions," she said. The return of Trump as US President for a second term after a gap of four years has increased Beijing's anxieties especially when the Chinese economy faced a serious slowdown resulting in a declining growth rate and business environment with job losses and increased unemployment. In its flash editorial on Trump's re-election, state-run China Daily said his victory "could mark a new beginning in the China-US relations if the chance that has been offered is not wasted. The upcoming four years will provide new opportunities for the next US administration to take the overall picture of the China-US ties into account and strengthen dialogue and communication with China to properly handle the differences that exist between the world's two largest economies, which range from the Taiwan question to trade, and to the South China Sea," it said. (PTI)

Indian Americans welcome Trump's re-election

WASHINGTON, Nov 7: Eminent Indian Americans have welcomed the re-election of Donald Trump as the 47th president of the United States and assured to work with him on issues of importance in the US-India ties.

"Congratulations to President Donald Trump on his decisive victory. We are in a golden age of American innovation and are committed to working with his administration to help bring benefits to everyone," Google CEO Sundar Pichai said on Wednesday.

The American people have spoken, former South Carolina Governor Nikki Haley said.

"Congratulations to President Trump on a strong win. Now, it's time for the American people to come together, pray for our country, and start the process of a peaceful transition," she said. "That begins with Kamala Harris conceding. You can't just talk about unity in a campaign, you have to show it regardless of the outcome," Haley said. Former Louisiana Governor Bobby Jindal called it a great day for America.

"Let's take a moment to celebrate. Then begins the hard work to get our country back on track!" said Jindal. "It's almost morning in America," said entrepreneur-turned-politician Vivek Ramaswamy. "Now let's go save a country," he said.

"Congratulations to President Trump. We look forward to working with him and his administration on issues of bilateral importance in the US-India relationship, and on global challenges that the two countries can lead together," said M R Rangaswami, founder of Indiaspora, a

community engagement platform.

Ajay Jain Bhatnara, a major fundraiser of the Kamala Harris campaign, also congratulated Trump.

"Congratulations President-elect Trump! America failed to elect its First Women President again! People have voted for a change to handle border issues, the economy, immigration, crime, and wars! I respect their choice. We did all we could!" said Bhatnara.

New York-based prominent entrepreneur AI Mason said: "God saved Trump from two assassination attempts — there is a reason for the same. Trump is going to be a messiah for the American people and the rest of the world. There will be a very prosperous America, a safer world free of wars. In fact, a golden era begins for the United States of America." (PTI)

When should kids start using social media? Australia's government proposes age limit of 16

MELBOURNE, Nov 7: The Australian government announced on Thursday what it described as world-leading legislation that would institute an age limit of 16 years for children to start using social media, and hold platforms responsible for ensuring compliance.

"Social media is doing harm to our kids and I'm calling time on it," Prime Minister Anthony Albanese said.

The legislation will be introduced in Parliament during its final two weeks in session this year, which begin on Nov. 18. The age limit would take effect 12 months after the law is passed, Albanese told reporters.

The platforms including X, TikTok, Instagram and Facebook would need to use that year to work out how to exclude Australian children younger than 16.

"I've spoken to thousands of parents, grandparents, aunts and uncles. They, like me, are worried sick about the safety of our kids online," Albanese said.

The proposal comes as governments around the world are wrestling with how to supervise young people's use of technologies like smartphones and social media.

Social media platforms would be penalized for breaching the age limit, but under-age children and their parents

would not. "The onus will be on social media platforms to demonstrate they are taking reasonable steps to prevent access. The onus won't be on parents or young people," Albanese said.

Antigone Davis, head of safety at Meta, which owns Facebook and Instagram, said the company would respect any age limitations the government wants to introduce.

"However, what's missing is a deeper discussion on how we implement protections, otherwise we risk making ourselves feel better, like we have taken action, but teens and parents will not find themselves in a better place," Davis said in a statement.

She added that stronger tools in app stores and operating systems for parents to control what apps their children can use would be a "simple and effective solution."

X did not immediately respond to a request for comment on Thursday. TikTok declined to comment.

The Digital Industry Group Inc., an advocate for the digital industry in Australia, described the age limit as a "20th Century response to 21st Century challenges."

"Rather than blocking access through



bans, we need to take a balanced approach to create age-appropriate spaces, build digital literacy and protect young people from online harm," DIGI managing director Sunita Bose said in a statement.

More than 140 Australian and international academics with expertise in fields related to technology and child welfare signed an open letter to Albanese last month opposing a social media age limit as "too blunt an instrument to address risks effectively."

Jackie Hallan, a director at the youth mental health service ReachOut, opposed

the ban. She said 73% of young people across Australia accessing mental health support did so through social media.

"We're uncomfortable with the ban. We think young people are likely to circumvent a ban and our concern is that it really drives the behavior underground and then if things go wrong, young people are less likely to get support from parents and carers because they're worried about getting in trouble," Hallan said.

Child psychologist Philip Tam said a minimum age of 12 or 13 would have been more enforceable.

"My real fear honestly is that the problem of social media will simply be driven underground," Tam said.

Australian National University lawyer Associate Prof. Faith Gordon feared separating children from their families.

Albanese said there would be exclusions and exemptions in circumstances such as a need to continue access to educational services.

But parental consent would not entitle a child under 16 to access social media.

Earlier this year, the government began a trial of age-restriction technologies. Australia's eSafety Commissioner, the online watchdog that will police compliance, will use the results of that trial to provide platforms with guidance on what reasonable steps they can take.

Communications Minister Michelle Rowland said the year-long lead-in would ensure the age limit could be implemented in a "very practical way."

"There does need to be enhanced penalties to ensure compliance," Rowland said. "Every company that operates in Australia, whether domiciled here or otherwise, is expected and must comply with Australian law or face the consequences," she added. (AP)

Hindu temple in Brampton suspends priest for spreading 'violent rhetoric'

OTTAWA, Nov 7: The priest of a Hindu temple in the Canadian city of Brampton has been suspended for spreading "violent rhetoric" during recent clashes between protesters carrying Khalistani flags and the people present there.

On November 3, the protest occurred at the Hindu Sabha temple in Brampton and unverified videos circulating on social media appeared to show demonstrators holding banners in support of Khalistan. The videos showed fist fights and people striking each other with poles on what appears to be the grounds surrounding the temple.

The protesters carrying Khalistani flags clashed with people and disrupted a consular event co-organised by the temple authorities and the Indian Consulate.

On Wednesday, a statement from the Hindu Sabha Mandir said the suspension was due to the priest's "controversial involvement" with protesters on Sunday, but did not elaborate, the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation reported.

Taking to X, Brampton

Mayor Patrick Brown said the priest spread "violent rhetoric," asking the community not to respond to violence and hate.

"This is leadership that is helpful. The vast majority of Sikh Canadians and Hindu Canadians want to live in harmony and don't tolerate violence. Hindu Sabha Mandir President Madhusudan Lama has suspended the pundit who spread violent rhetoric. The Ontario Sikhs and Gurdwara Council denounced the acts of violence at the Hindu Sabha on Sunday night," Brown said in the post.

"Remember we all have more in common than what divides us. In tense times, we can't let the agitators fuel the flames of division. The leadership of both Sikh and Hindu communities in the GTA do not want this division, hate and violence. I am asking everyone in the community to not respond to violence and hate. Law enforcement will be there to respond. This is their job. We must continue to be the country where the rule of law is followed," the post further read. (PTI)

Liangmai Naga Council appeals to President to ban COTU

COTU accused of inciting violence and disrupting Liangmai cultural celebrations

IMPHAL, Nov 7: The Liangmai Naga Council (LNC) has petitioned President of India, Draupadi Murmu, today requesting her for declaration of the Committee on Tribal Unity (COTU) Kangpokpi as "an unlawful organization under the Unlawful Activities (Prevention) Act (UAPA) and Implementation of strict legal measures against actions inciting violence and disrupting public order".

Giving the reasons, the LNC cited the alleged incident involving Committee on Tribal Unity (COTU) on October 29, 2024. The Liangmai body said that, on the day, Lamminlun Singit, general secretary of the Committee on Tribal Unity (COTU) issued a highly provocative statement, calling the visit of Chief Minister of Manipur, N. Biren Singh along with his cabinet ministers to Senapati district for the Liangmai Chaga Ngee celebrations a "trespass" and a "dangerous provocative act." The LNC also alleged that Singit further incited tensions by claiming that the visit would be an intrusion into Kuki-majority areas and that it would lead to disturbance and direct threat to Liangmai people. "This statement is deeply misleading and unacceptable. The Liangmai community, along with other Naga communities in the region, perceives these remarks as a direct threat to our peace, unity, and cultural heritage. It is clear that COTU's actions were intended to provoke conflict and escalate tensions within the region, especially between the Liangmai Nagas, Kukis, and other communities. Such provocative rhetoric only serves to deepen existing divisions, especially in a time when efforts for reconciliation and unity are needed more than ever," the LNC memorandum said.

The LNC then said that, on October 30, 2024, COTU organized protests, which escalated into a



highly disruptive demonstration in Gangiphai, Kangpokpi district. This protest, which involved large crowds and militant elements, was aimed directly at disrupting the Liangmai community's celebration of Chaga Ngee, the LNC also said. The actions of COTU caused significant psychological distress to the Liangmai people, violated their cultural rights, and threatened their long-standing traditions, it added.

The Liangmai body then said, "These acts of aggression and intimidation violate our right to peaceful celebration and self-expression. Furthermore, the activities of COTU are directly undermining the region's public safety and peace efforts. The unwarranted threats to our VIP Guests visit and the deliberate disturbance caused by the protests are a clear demonstration of the COTU's unlawful conduct".

The LNC gave some backgrounds by saying that "indigenous Liangmai tribe, recognized as a Scheduled Tribe under the Constitution (Scheduled Tribes) Order (Amendment) Act, 2011, published in the Manipur Gazette No. 838 on March 27, 2012, is an integral part of the diverse tribal communities in the region". The Liangmai community predominantly resides in the districts of Tamenglong, Senapati, Kangpokpi, Noney, Imphal West in Ma-

nipur, with a population of approximately 70,000 individuals spread across nearly 100 villages, it also said. The LNC also said that a significant cultural event for the Liangmai people is the Chaga Ngee Festival, celebrated annually on October 30. This festival holds deep cultural, spiritual, and traditional importance, as it is a time of sanctification, purification, and seeking divine blessings. This year, we planned to celebrate this occasion at Marenmai Village, Senapati District, with full cultural reverence. The Government of Manipur has already recognized this event by declaring October 30 as a restricted holiday in the state, the LNC stated.

The LNC then said that the COTU—"who now claims large portions of land in the district"—has gained significant influence, not through historical or cultural ties, but through the illegal immigration of people from Myanmar over the past several decades. The LNC said this influx of settlers has not only altered the demographic balance but has also led to environmental degradation through activities such as deforestation, illegal timber logging, and poppy cultivation, which have exacerbated the region's ecological imbalance and contributed to climate change. "In light of these unlawful activities and the demographic shift, the Liangmai people find the

actions of COTU to be not only an affront to our cultural rights but also a threat to our land and resources," said the LNC. The Kuki settlements in Kangpokpi have over time led to the marginalization of indigenous communities like the Liangmai and other Naga tribes, the Liangmai body also said. "COTU's interference in our cultural celebrations, coupled with their threatening actions, is a stark reminder of how vulnerable the indigenous populations have become in their own ancestral lands," it added.

The LNC then said the Liangmai people have faced ongoing political challenges since 1974. Despite residing in Kangpokpi District, an Assembly Constituency represented predominantly by Kuki MLAs, they have seen limited benefits from developmental schemes, it stated. This situation has led to feelings of marginalization, as the majority representation often controls and suppresses the voices of the Liangmai people, leaving them without significant access to government benefits or development in Liangmai areas under Kuki-dominated leadership, the LNC rued. "This neglect has contributed to long-standing grievances and frustrations within the community. Addressing these issues requires the present government to recognize and act upon these challenges to uplift and empower the Liangmai people, ensuring they receive their rightful share of development and representation," the LNC added.

In light of the above, the "Liangmai community" requested that the Government of India take immediate and decisive action to address the unlawful conduct of the Committee on Tribal Unity (COTU). "We respectfully request that the government consider the following: declaration of COTU as an unlawful organization due to its provocative rhetoric, acts of vio-

lence, and disruptions to peaceful cultural practices, giving psychological trauma, taking law into their own hand and indigenous Liangmai people cannot move easily in their own land". The LNC further urged the government that the Committee on Tribal Unity (COTU) be declared an unlawful organization under the Unlawful Activities (Prevention) Act (UAPA) or any other relevant legal provisions. "Strict legal action should be taken against individuals and groups who incite violence, disrupt public order, and violate the rights of indigenous communities, especially in the context of cultural and religious celebrations," it added.

The LNC also appealed for the protection of the rights and dignity of indigenous communities, ensuring that their right to peacefully celebrate their traditions is not jeopardized by threats or interference from any group. "The government must take effective steps to address the issue of illegal immigration and the demographic changes that are altering the social and cultural fabric of the region," it added. The memorandum then said, "Liangmai Naga Council and the larger Liangmai community extend our heartfelt appeal to your excellency, the President of India, to intervene and help bring justice to this situation. We urge the Government of India to ensure that the rule of law is upheld and that organisations like COTU that undermine peace, harmony, and indigenous rights are held accountable".

As indigenous people of Manipur, the LNC said, "we seek to preserve our cultural identity, traditions, and heritage in the face of growing challenges". The Government of India's support in maintaining our dignity and ensuring the safety of our communities will strengthen the values of unity, inclusivity, and peace in Manipur, it stated. (NNN)

Three Bangladeshis, including a minor detained at Agartala Railway Station



HT Correspondent
AGARTALA, Nov 7: The Government Railway Police (GRP) detained three Bangladeshi nationals, including a minor girl, at Agartala Railway Station.

The three Bangladeshi nationals were detained on Wednesday.

GRP Officer-In-Charge Tapas Das reported that they had received information about individuals crossing the Bangladesh-India border into Tripura and subsequently reaching Agartala Railway Station with the intent of traveling beyond the state.

"Upon receiving the information, we alerted all our security agencies and deployed personnel

in plain clothes to cordon off the railway station," Das stated. "We observed three individuals, including a child, approaching the station from the rear, and their behavior appeared suspicious. They were subsequently detained. Initially, they claimed Indian citizenship, but upon further questioning, they confessed to being Bangladeshis who had crossed into Tripura on November 4. As they possessed no documentation, a case has been registered against them." He detained individuals have been identified as Ruma Begum, her husband Md. Jalal, and their young daughter, all residents of Bagerhat, Bangladesh.

Tripura Govt shows lack interest in providing full DA like Centre: Former CM



HT Correspondent

AGARTALA, Nov 7: Former Tripura Chief Minister Manik Sarkar said on Thursday that the present BJP government in the state is lack interest to provide full Dearness Allowance (DA) to government employees or Dearness Relief (DR) to the pensioners, unlike the Central government, which is currently providing 53%.

Speaking on the matter, Sarkar, who is also a politburo member, stated that when the CPI(M) was in power, they provided DA and DR twice a year.

"We are not claiming that we gave Dearness Allowance (DA) to government employees or Dearness Relief (DR) to the pensioners at the same level as the Central government. But we did provide it twice a year. Our aim was to match

the Central government's DA, though this was not fully achieved. I understand that there is still a 23% gap to reach parity with the Centre.

The state government doesn't lack funds, especially with a 'double engine' government at work. And it's not just double but triple, as Tipra Motha has also joined. With the BJP in power at the Centre, what are they waiting for?" Sarkar remarked.

He added that the state government could exert pressure on the Centre to secure the necessary funds and clear all pending DA and DR.

"This would make people happy, which would benefit the government and boost business. The main issue is that the government lacks interest," he concluded.

Sikkim CM mourns loss of two women in Surat Fire

GANGTOK, Nov 7: Sikkim Chief Minister Prem Singh Tamang expressed sorrow over the fire incident in Gujarat's Surat which claimed the lives of two women from the northeastern state on Wednesday evening.

In an official statement on Thursday, Tamang extended his deepest condolences to the bereaved families and assured them of the state's support during this difficult time.

"In this moment of grief, we are standing in solidarity with you," said Tamang. He also announced that the Sikkim government has reached out to the Gujarat administration for immediate assistance.

The Principal Resident Commissioner in Delhi has been directed to oversee and ensure that the necessary support is provided to the affected families, he added.

Two women from Sikkim, Benu Hangma Limboo (30) and Manisha (24), lost their lives in a devastating fire at a spa in Surat on Wednesday evening.

"A fire broke out in a spa centre located on the third floor of Shiv Puja Complex in Athwa Lines area in Surat. There were five women inside, three of whom escaped but two others hid in the washroom and later died from asphyxiation," police said. (PTI)

Manipur: Thadou Community rejects Kuki identity urges respect for distinct heritage

IMPHAL, Nov 7: The Thadou Community International (TCI) said that the Kuki National Front (KNF), a Suspension of Operation (SoO) group, issued a press communique on November 4, 2024 circulated through social media against the declaration of the Thadou Convention 2024 that Thadou is not Kuki.

In a statement issued today, the TCI said, "Firstly, we would like to bring to the notice of all concerned that Thadou Community International (TCI) was formed on August 3, 2024 with the initiative and participation of Thadou people living in different parts of the world, including Manipur (India), which is home to Thadous". With Thadou people being the most victimized in the current Manipur crisis and at the same time being silenced with no one to highlight their plight, the need for a platform to raise the suppressed voice of Thadous was immensely felt, leading to the formation of TCI, the statement also said. The TCI said it sought to preserve and protect the non-negotiable Thadou distinct identity, culture, customs, traditions, costumes.

The TCI also said it would like to address the issues raised by the KNF regarding "our stance on the distinct identity of Thadou and not belonging to Kuki". The statement added, "We are glad to know that the KNF is keen on envisaging their idea of inclusivity of pan-Kuki where there is no subjugation of any tribe by any means or method. However, the allegation of the declaration of Thadou not being Kuki is an attempt to divide the community, is without any merit or basis".

The statement then said, "On the contrary, it is an open secret that Kuki organisations are dominated and run by Thadou speaking people who have dissociated themselves from Thadou tribe, clinging onto the new fake tribe called Any Kuki Tribes (AKT) that was fraudulently added to the list of Scheduled Tribes of Manipur in 2003 for political reasons. Kuki is not accepted by any of the non-Naga tribes in the state of Manipur, except AKT," it further added.

The TCI then said that, the irony is that the very people who claimed to represent the Thadou tribe are now indulging in suppressing the voice of self-assertion in the name of faux unity. The TCI further said the idea of Kuki being an umbrella organisation of kindred tribes had dissipated and became irrelevant a long time ago and it remains a utopian dream. "So, there is no question of an attempt to cause any division within

any community. The only Kuki that remains today is AKT. The sooner this is accepted the better it will be for all. It is an undeniable fact that kindred tribes like Paite, Vaiphei, Zou, Simte etc have identified themselves under the collective nomenclature Zomi, which is not a tribe, or the name of a particular tribe," the statement also said. Tribes under the collective Zomi nomenclature and Hmar tribe all exist as distinct independent tribes but not Kuki, it further said. There is no logic for an independent ethnic tribe to be under another tribe, that too a fake one, like the AKT, it added.

The TCI also clarified the KNF statement where it stated that, for a tribe to declare that they are not Kuki-Zo is equivalent to saying they are a different people, like Tangkhul, Mao, Meitei, Pangal etc. The declaration of detachment and disowning of colonial tag Kuki by Thadou is in fact equivalent to Thadou maintaining its distinct tribe status like the status of Tangkhul or any other distinct tribe, the TCI said.

According to the TCI, the KNF statement added that they believe "Kuki-Zo" people cannot get a Separate Administration from Manipur other than in the name of Kuki. To this, the TCI CI pointed out that the term "Kuki-Zo" is also ambiguous "as it deviates from the unilateral stance of one Kuki as it does not define the components of the two hyphenated words". Further, the Zomi, Hmar and Mizo brethren do not accept the post-May 3, 2023 term 'Kuki-Zo', which is construed to represent only Kuki, an apparent attempt to elevate the stature of Kuki equal to the broader term 'Zo', the TCI added.

The TCI said the quest for peace for Thadou people will continue for the all-round development of the Thadou people. It also said conflicts between nations or communities do occur in various parts of the world. "However, there comes a time for reconciliation as there can be no progress and development without any solution. All the affected communities have to find the path to resolve the current crisis in Manipur through non-violent means", it stated.

The TCI said it understood that the KNF is for a separate administration in the name of Kuki, "but TCI being an apolitical organisation, we have no political interest or agenda against the political demands of any organization".

The TCI then said it took strong exception to the line in the KNF's statement that translates as "We are currently still fighting a war,

we don't want to take extreme actions or kidnapping, death penalty etc within the community." This implies threats and intimidation against Thadou to denounce their distinct identity from Kuki, but to be Kuki or accept Kuki, or else they will face dire consequences, the TCI explained.

This statement is uncalled for in a civilized society. Threats and intimidation may deter people but the determination and ideology will not vanish without leaving a mark. Rampant and widespread Kuki supremacy, intimidation, suppression, coercion, control, human rights violations and extreme actions like physical violence and death penalty by Kuki militants and Kuki supremacists against Thadou is the very reason why the declaration was made.

"We would appreciate it if the KNF and other Kuki militant groups respect the rights of Thadous with full dignity as a distinct identity. Kuki supremacy or any supremacist agenda is against the law of the land and Indian Constitution which guarantee the right to live with dignity under Article 21," the TCI also said.

The TCI then said that, any rhetoric or narrative that mis-portrays Thadou and other kindred tribes as Kuki, or a part of Kuki, is an attempt to impose Kuki on non-Kuki tribes and is simply another example of Kuki supremacy and its agenda against the original 29 tribes or indigenous/native tribes and communities, who have each been recognised as a separate distinct tribe by the Government of India under the 1956 Presidential Order.

The TCI said the KNF statement also made threats to an unnamed Manipur State Government officer for remaining in Imphal and accusing him of doing his duty as a government employee as appealing the CM of Manipur. "If the KNF is bothered with the discharging of duties of a government employee, why not ask the 10 Zo tribal MLAs to withdraw from the government headed by the CM, which all the MLAs still support and are still part of. This is a self-contradictory stance and does not have a merit ground," the TCI also said.

The TCI then reiterated and "firmly stands" by the Thadou Convention 2024 declaration and resolutions. The TCI urged all stakeholders to engage in constructive dialogue and work towards a harmonious resolution rather than spreading hatred and issuing threats. It also said Thadous do not need Kuki permission or interference to assert "our distinct identity". (NNN)

Special Lok Adalat tomorrow, over 14, 000 cases to be address in Tripura



HT Correspondent

AGARTALA, Nov 7: A Special Lok Adalat will be held across all the District and Sub-Divisional Courts of Tripura on Saturday, November 9.

Jhuma Datta Chowdhury, Member Secretary of the Tripura State Legal Service Authority said in a press statement that over 14,223 pending cases are set to be addressed in this one-day effort, with the aim of resolving disputes through amicable settlements.

"The cases taken up will cover a wide range of issues, including 9,756 traffic-related cases under the Motor Vehicles (MV) Act, 3,832 cases under the Tripura Po-

lice Act, 122 under the Tripura Gambling Act, 441 related to the Tripura Excise Act, 31 cheque bounce cases under the Negotiable Instruments (NI) Act, 7 forest-related criminal cases, 27 cognizable criminal cases, and 7 cases under the Animal Act", she said.

She said that to manage the volume, 24 special benches have been constituted for these Lok Adalat, with a maximum of 5 benches operating in Khowai district alone.

Paralegal volunteers will be available to assist parties who have received notices, ensuring they have the support necessary to understand the proceedings and make informed decisions.

Safeguarding country's integrity duty of every citizen: Manipur CM

India's unity reaffirmed in response to Zo unification remarks

IMPHAL, Nov 7: Manipur Chief Minister N Biren Singh on Thursday asserted that safeguarding the integrity of the country is the duty of every citizen and no one can challenge the state's sovereignty.

His remarks came in response to a question by a reporter about Mizoram Chief Minister Lalduhoma's comments during his visit in September to the US. Lalduhoma reportedly expressed support for the unification of the Zo people under a single leadership and said "even if it meant transcending national borders".

Zo is a term to denote different groups of related tribes sharing cultural and linguistic affinities and living in parts of the Northeast, Chittagong Hill Tracts of Bangladesh, and Myanmar's Chin state.

Singh said, "I don't want to react or comment on him (Lalduhoma). As a proud Indian, as the Chief Minister of Manipur, and as a nationalist, no one can touch India's integrity and Manipur's integrity. India is not just a country, it is a big



country, and we should be proud to be Indians."

He stressed that his position was clear, stating that the unity and integrity of India must be preserved at all costs.

"I don't want to comment on others' personal views, but my stand is very clear—to maintain

the unity and integrity of India. Keeping India strong is our duty, and anyone who challenges it will be given a befitting reply," Singh told reporters after attending a school function in Imphal.

According to the website of Mizoram government's Directorate of Information and Public Relations,

and this is something we can never accept."

Mizoram shares a 510-km long border with Myanmar's Chin state and the Mizos share ethnic ties with the Chins.

Lalduhoma had earlier said that people in Mizoram and Myanmar do not accept the present border as it was demarcated and imposed by the British on the Mizo people without consulting them. (PTI)

Resolution for restoration of Article 370

J&K assembly adjourned for the day amid ruckus

SRINAGAR, Nov 7: The Jammu and Kashmir Assembly was adjourned for the day on Thursday following a brawl between the BJP MLAs and marshals, as the opposition members protested against a resolution for the restoration of the erstwhile state's special status for the second consecutive day.

While the opposition BJP said the resolution is "illegal" and demanded its withdrawal, the speaker said he does not have such powers as anything passed by the House can only be undone by the House itself.

Amid high drama, the day also witnessed a group of MLAs, including those from the PDP and Peoples' Conference, submitting a fresh resolution demanding immediate restoration of Articles 370 and 35A of the Constitution in their original form.

As soon as the Assembly met in the morning, pandemonium broke out as the BJP members protested against the resolution that was passed on Wednesday.

While Leader of Opposition Sunil Sharma (BJP) was speaking on the resolution, Awami Ittehad Party leader Sheikh Khurshid jumped into the well with a banner that read Articles 370 and 35A be restored.

This irked the BJP members, who also jumped into the well, snatched the banner from the Langate MLA and tore it into pieces.

There was a minor scuffle between the BJP MLAs and Khurshid. Finding the latter outnumbered, Peoples' Conference MLA Sajad Lone came to the rescue of the legislator from his neighbouring constituency.

Amid the din, Speaker Abdul



Rahim Rather adjourned the House for 15 minutes.

After the House resumed its proceedings, the BJP continued its protest, even as the speaker requested the opposition members to take their seats.

As the protest continued, the speaker said, "I am very closely watching the activities of some members. Do not force me to do what I do not want to do."

Sharma, however, said "I want the National Conference's drama of special status to end", which infuriated the ruling party members.

The BJP MLAs raised slogans, such as "Balidan huye jahan Mookerjee, woh Kashmir hamara hai", while the NC members shouted "Jis Kashmir ko khooon se seencha, woh Kashmir hamara hai".

The BJP was referring to Syama Prasad Mookerjee, who founded the Bharatiya Jana Sangh that later became the Bharatiya Janata Party.

As the uproar continued, the speaker issued directions that nothing should be recorded or reported.

He then directed marshalling out of the BJP members, who stormed

the well, leading to a scuffle between them and the marshals.

"They deserve it, throw them out," the speaker said.

While they were being evicted, the BJP MLAs came to blows with the marshals. Three BJP MLAs were marshalled out of the House amid thumping of tables by the treasury bench members.

Minister Satish Sharma stood up and said the BJP "is playing divide and rule". He said "Bharat Mata" belongs to all.

"The Constitution of India was on the table on which they (BJP MLAs) were standing yesterday. They were standing on it with their shoes on. They should be punished for it," the minister said.

However, the pandemonium continued, resulting in the speaker adjourning the proceedings till Friday, the last scheduled day of the session.

The House witnessed an uproar on Wednesday too as the BJP MLAs protested vociferously after the passage of the resolution. Eventually, the speaker adjourned the House for the day.

Deputy Chief Minister Surinder Choudhary moved the resolution that said: "This Legislative Assembly reaffirms the importance of the special status and constitutional guarantees, which safeguarded the identity, culture and rights of the people of Jammu and Kashmir, and expresses concern over their unilateral removal."

It said the Assembly calls upon the Centre to initiate talks with elected representatives from the region for the restoration of Jammu and Kashmir's special status and constitutional guarantees, and to work out constitutional mechanisms for the same.

"This Assembly emphasises that any process for restoration must safeguard both national unity and the legitimate aspirations of the people of Jammu and Kashmir," it added.

Meanwhile, a group of MLAs, including from the People's Democratic Party (PDP) and Peoples' Conference, submitted a fresh resolution in the Assembly demanding immediate restoration of Articles 370 and 35A in their original form.

"This House strongly condemns the unconstitutional and unilateral abrogation of Article 370 and Article 35A, along with the enactment of the Jammu and Kashmir Reorganisation Act, 2019, by the Government of India," the resolution read.

"These actions stripped Jammu and Kashmir of its special status and statehood, undermining the foundational guarantees and protections originally accorded to the region and its people by the Constitution of India," it added.

The resolution was submitted by PDP MLAs Waheed Para and

Fayaz Mir, People's Conference MLA Sajad Lone, Awami Ittehad Party's Sheikh Khurshid (brother of MP Sheikh Abdul Rashid alias Engineer Rashid) and independent MLA Shabir Kullay.

Talking to reporters, Para said the NC and the BJP are "playing a fixed match".

Lone said their resolution has been named as people's resolution, which clearly and unconditionally condemns what was done on August 5, 2019.

"We do not want to criticise (the NC), but the NC should either support this resolution or pass the same resolution that we will vote for. Otherwise, they should say what is the difference between our resolution and theirs," he added.

He said the NC's "weak resolution" is a "humiliation and betrayal" for the people of Jammu and Kashmir.

However, the BJP said Article 370 is history and it cannot be restored.

BJP MLA R S Pathania said it is "unfortunate" that the ruling NC has "compromised the integrity" of the Assembly and made a "joke" of parliamentary democracy by bringing a resolution that questions a decision taken by Parliament.

The opposition party has demanded that the resolution passed on Wednesday be withdrawn.

Talking to PTI, the speaker said the BJP's demand is unreasonable as only the House has the power to reverse any business passed by it.

"They are asking the speaker to take the resolution back. The speaker does not have the power. Anything passed by the House can only be undone by the House itself," he said. (PTI)

BJP's graph diving, INDIA bloc to form govts in Maharashtra, Jharkhand: Pilot



BHOPAL, Nov 7: Senior Congress leader Sachin Pilot on Thursday claimed that BJP's favourability is declining as people are fed up with its "policies" and "misuse of agencies", and predicted the victory of INDIA bloc in Maharashtra and Jharkhand assembly polls.

"BJP's graph in the entire country is declining and the INDIA grouping will win the upcoming elections in Maharashtra and Jharkhand. I have been to Jamshedpur (Jharkhand) and there is a one-sided wave prevailing in that state," Pilot told reporters at the residence of Madhya Pradesh Congress President Jitu Patwari.

Senior Congress leader and Rajya Sabha MP Vivek Tankha was also present.

Pilot arrived here to campaign for Congress in the November 13 bypoll in Vijaypur assembly constituency in Sheopur district, bordering Rajasthan.

The former Rajasthan deputy chief minister accused BJP leaders of using low-level language during polls, referring to comments like "snatching mangal sutra" and "taking away your buffaloes" during the Lok Sabha elections and the recent "batenge toh katenge" (if divided, we will be finished) by Uttar Pradesh CM Yogi Aditya Nath.

The Congress is focussed on giving slogans with positivity like "padhenge toh badhenge" (if we study, we will progress), he said.

"This type of culture should be promoted. People in the country are now fed up with the BJP over misuse of power and central agencies, and polarisation," he said.

Pilot also slammed the BJP over the arrest of two CMs - Jharkhand's Hemant Soren and Delhi's Arvind Kejriwal - and accused it of exploiting central agencies for political gains.

He said that former Congress president Rahul Gandhi, current party chief Mallikarjun Kharge and leaders of the opposition INDIA bloc are working towards strengthening the country and the results of the bypolls in MP will leave their mark in the 2028 assembly elections. Besides Vijaypur, a bypoll will also be held on November 13 in the Budhni constituency, earlier represented by former CM Shivraj Singh Chouhan. Votes will be counted on November 23.

The results of the bypolls in various states, including Wayanad from where Congress general secretary Priyanka Gandhi Vadra is contesting her maiden Lok Sabha polls, and the assembly elections in Jharkhand and Maharashtra will be satisfying for the Congress and the outcomes will have a direct impact on future elections, said Pilot.

In Vijaypur, the Congress has fielded senior tribal leader Mukesh Malhotra. The bypoll was necessitated after sitting Congress MLA Ramiwas Rawat joined the BJP during the Lok Sabha polls earlier this year. He is contesting the bypoll on a BJP ticket.

Rawat had won from Vijaypur six times as a Congress candidate in 1990, 1993, 2003, 2008, 2013 and 2023.

Responding to a question about BJP's allegation that Congress and other parties encouraged infiltration in Jharkhand in a planned manner, Pilot asked, "Who is responsible for protecting the country's borders? They are levelling allegations by shirking away their own responsibilities."

He alleged that the BJP raises issues like "one election, one nation", cows and Gods before elections just for votes and never talks about its performance in the areas of industrialisation, jobs, roads and water. (PTI)

Maharashtra polls: No direct fight but BJP still jittery about Jarange factor in Jalna

JALNA, Nov 7: Activist Manoj Jarange may have decided not to field candidates in the upcoming Maharashtra polls but continues to make the BJP nervous in Jalna district, the epicentre of Maratha agitation, political observers have said.

The BJP had won three key constituencies - Bhokardan, Partur and Badnapur - in the district in 2019 and is trying to retain them, although the political and social landscapes there have seen tectonic shifts, they said.

The party has renominated two-term MLA Santosh Danve, son of former Union minister Raosaheb Danve, from Bhokardan, Babanrao Lonikar in Partur and Narayan Kuche in Badnapur constituencies.

However, in the past five years, while Shiv Sena and NCP have split, Jalna has seen massive protests by the Maratha community led by Jarange demanding reservation in education and government jobs.

Jarange has repeatedly targeted the BJP warning that the community would defeat its candidates in the assembly polls, which will be held on November 20. He, however, recently decided not to field candidates in the polls.

Marathas comprise about 32 per cent of the population in the district, a part of the state's Marathwada region with 46 assembly segments.

BJP's ally Shiv Sena, led by Chief Minister Eknath Shinde, has fielded candidates in the Ghanawangi and Jalna seats in the district.

In Bhokardan, where 32 candidates are in the fray, the main contest is between Santosh Danve and NCP (SP) candidate Chandrakant Danve, a three-term MLA. Union ex-minister Raosaheb Danve lost from Jalna in the Lok Sabha elections earlier this year, with political observers pointing to the Jarange factor.

Santosh Danve had defeated Chandrakant Danve by 32,000 votes last time.

In Partur, two-time MLA and former minister Babanrao Lonikar faces Shiv Sena (UBT) candidate Asaram Borade and Congress rebel Suresh Jethliya. Jethliya, the former head of the Partur Municipal Council, enjoys local support.

While the division of votes between Borade and Jethliya might help Lonikar, the Maratha and Banjara communities are likely to play a pivotal role in deciding the winner in Partur constituency, said a political observer.

In the reserved constituency of Badnapur, two-time MLA Narayan Kuche faces off against Rookkumar Bablu Choudhari of the NCP (SP). The Maratha votes could have a significant impact on the outcome here as many from the community have voiced dissatisfaction with Kuche. (PTI)

Congress slams Fadnavis for criticising Rahul Gandhi's red-cover Constitution

NEW DELHI, Nov 7: The Congress on Thursday hit out at BJP leader Devendra Fadnavis for his remarks on Rahul Gandhi showing a "red-cover" copy of the Constitution, alleging the Maharashtra deputy chief minister is "taking objection" to the very same Constitution the RSS attacked in 1949 for not being inspired by Manusmriti.

The Congress' attack came a day after Fadnavis asked what message Rahul Gandhi wanted to give by showing a red copy of the Constitution of India. Fadnavis also accused the Congress leader of building a coalition of anarchists. In politics, the colour red is often associated

with the Marxist or communist ideology. Congress General Secretary (In-charge, Communications) Jairam Ramesh said, "Devendra Fadnavis is getting desperate. He accuses Rahul Gandhi of showing a 'red book' to seek support from so-called 'urban naxals'."

"This book which Mr. Fadnavis is taking objection to is the Constitution of India, of which Dr. Babasaheb Ambedkar was the main architect. This is the very same Constitution of India which the RSS had attacked in November 1949 as not having been inspired by Manusmriti," Ramesh said in a post on X. "It is the very same Constitution of

India that the non-biological PM wants replaced," the Congress leader said. As far as the "red book" is concerned, Fadnavis should know that it carries a foreword by one of India's most distinguished legal personalities, K K Venugopal, who was the Attorney General of India during 2017-2022, Ramesh said.

"Previously, the non-biological divinity and the self-proclaimed Chanakya have also been presented with the red book. As far as 'urban naxals' is concerned, the Union Home Ministry told Parliament on February 9th, 2022, and March 11th, 2020, that the Government of India does not use the term!" he said. (PTI)

Oppn members of JPC on Waqf Amendment Bill to boycott next round of meetings

KOLKATA, Nov 7: Alleging high-handedness and arbitrary action of the chairman of the JPC on the Waqf Amendment Bill, Trinamool Congress MP Kalyan Banerjee on Thursday said opposition members of the Joint Parliamentary Committee will boycott the next round of meetings beginning November 9.

Banerjee, a member of the JPC on the Waqf Amendment Bill, said the chairman of the JPC, BJP's Jagdambika Pal, has fixed a hectic schedule of meetings in Guwahati, Bhubaneswar, Kolkata, Patna and Lucknow over six days, with Sunday being a holiday in between.

All the opposition members of the JPC have decided to boycott the tour and its meetings as the chairman is working in an arbitrary and high-handed manner, Banerjee told reporters at a press conference jointly addressed with party MP Nadimul Haque at the Press Club here.

He said the future course of action will be decided jointly

by the members of the opposition.

Banerjee said the opposition members of the JPC met the Lok Sabha Speaker on November 5 and sought deferment of the schedule and also reduction in the number of days of meetings of the JPC from two days a week to one day a week or two consecutive days every fortnight.

He said the Speaker had verbally agreed to sympathetically consider their demands and speak to the chairman, but nothing happened thereafter.

Banerjee also alleged that the process in which the chairman of the committee was proceeding was violative of well-established parliamentary norms.

He also alleged that the members belonging to the ruling dispensation were working as per their own agenda and "not in the interest of the nation".

Stating that the members, as MPs, also have other important official work and have to attend to their constituencies,

Banerjee said that the hectic schedule of meetings of the JPC - two days a week, was affecting those.

"Waqf property stakeholders are not being given enough time percentage-wise, while organisations having no stake with the Waqf Amendment Bill are being called to meetings," he said.

A meeting of the Joint Committee on Waqf Bill took a dramatic turn on October 22 when Banerjee smashed a glass water bottle and threw it away during a heated exchange of words with BJP's Abhijit Gangopadhyay.

The TMC MP was suspended for one day from the parliamentary committee on Waqf for unruly conduct.

Banerjee, a senior advocate, had hurt his thumb and index finger and had to be given first aid.

The committee, chaired by Pal, was listening to the views of a group of retired judges and lawyers when the opposition members questioned what was their stake in the bill. (PTI)

Mandal Murmu joined BJP due to plight of tribals in Jharkhand: Champai Soren



JAMSHEDPUR, Nov 7: Former Jharkhand Chief Minister Champai Soren on Thursday claimed that Mandal Murmu, a descendant of tribal icons Sidho-Kanhu, joined the BJP due to the plight of tribals in Santal Parganas.

Soren, the BJP candidate from Seraikela assembly constituency, alleged that Bangladeshi infiltrators were causing hardship for local tribals, with the state government failing to act.

Murmu was one of the proposers for Jharkhand CM Hemant Soren's nomination from Barhait assembly constituency in the upcoming polls.

"Do you want to know why this young man, who has been raising

said, emphasising the growing influence of these infiltrators in the region.

"Our ancestors fought to protect our land, daughters, and livelihoods from the British, but now it's under the control of these infiltrators," he added.

There are dozens of villages, such as Jikrahatti, Malpaharia, Talwadanga, and Kitazhor, where tribals can barely be found. Their homes, land and fields have been taken over by infiltrators, Soren added.

He also criticised the Jharkhand government, which he accused of filing false affidavits in the High Court to deny the existence of the issue.

When the High Court ordered the formation of a fact-finding committee, the state government appealed to the Supreme Court, which Soren said showed that the government was more concerned about protecting infiltrators than addressing tribal concerns.

Soren also criticised the Congress for being anti-tribal and anti-Jharkhand, accusing them of crushing the Jharkhand movement. He reminded people of the Congress's role in removing the "Tribal Religion Code" from the 1961 census. (PTI)

BJP cemented Goa's political stability under CM Sawant: Party leaders

Pramod Sawant becomes Goa's longest-serving CM of Goa

PANAJI, Nov 7: Chief Minister Pramod Sawant, who has now become the longest serving CM of Goa, has earned praise from his party colleagues and political analysts for striving to provide a stable government in the state.

Goa assembly speaker Ramesh Tawadkar's recent decision to dismiss the disqualification petition of the Congress against eight MLAs who switched over to the BJP has further cemented the coastal state's political stability, say experts.

BJP leader Sawant, who took over reigns of the state in March 19, 2019 after the demise of then chief minister Manohar Parrikar and successfully contested the 2022 election, has now become the longest serving chief minister of Goa after it attained statehood 1987.

He is in the chair now uninterrupted for 5 years and 231 days.

Earlier, when Goa was a Union Territory, its first CM Dayanand Bhandodkar had a continuous stint of 6 years and 129 days before his



demise, his daughter Shashikala Kakodkar ruled the state for 5 years and 258 days, while Pratapsingh Rane had an uninterrupted stint of 7 years and 134 days.

Local political analyst Sid-dhant Samant said stability is of utmost importance to the state for its development.

"I have seen Sawant maturing as a chief minister, providing a stable government to the state," he

campaigning there with full concentration," he said.

State Fisheries Minister Nilakant Halarnkar, who shifted from the Congress to BJP in 2019, recalled how his chances of winning the Thivim seat in North Goa bolstered under the leadership of Sawant.

"I contested the Goa assembly election in 2022 on BJP's symbol. I had shifted from Congress to BJP just two years prior to that. I had a smooth sailing under the leadership of Sawant," he said.

Halarnkar said the chief minister has the habit of facing everything with a smile on his face.

"He has maturely handled all the issues which have surfaced during his career," he said.

BJP MLA Sankalp Amonkar said his decision to join the ruling party and quitting the Congress was majorly due to Pramod Sawant's charisma.

Sawant has provided a stable government which has resulted in the development of the state, he added. (PTI)

SC refuses to transfer Kolkata rape-murder case trial outside West Bengal

NEW DELHI, Nov 7: The Supreme Court on Thursday refused to transfer the rape and murder trial pertaining to a doctor in Kolkata outside West Bengal.

A bench headed by Chief Justice D Y Chandrachud said the trial court judge had sufficient powers to order another investigation upon feeling it necessary after examining the evidence.

The top court also examined the sixth status report filed by the CBI in relation to the case of rape and murder at Kolkata's R G Kar Medical College and Hospital, but refrained from making observations saying the probe was underway.

The apex court noted that a Kolkata court had framed charges against prime accused, Sanjay Roy, on November 4 and a day-to-day trial in the case would start November 11 onwards.

During the hearing, the national task force (NTF), formed to create a protocol over the safety of health professionals, submitted its report in the apex court.

The top court directed the NTF's report to be shared with all states and union territories and posted the hearing after four



weeks.

The top court on October 15 questioned the West Bengal government over the hiring of civil volunteers in the state and sought data on their recruitment and appointment process.

The apex court on September 30 expressed dissatisfaction over the state's "tardy" progress in installing CCTVs and building toilets apart from separate resting rooms in government medical colleges, and ordered its completion

by October 15.

On September 17, the top court expressed anguish over the findings in a CBI status report in the case, refusing to divulge details and observing any disclosure could jeopardise the ongoing investigation.

Earlier on September 9, the top court expressed its concern over the absence of the "challan" -- a key document forwarding the doctor's mortal remains for post-mortem -- from the records placed

before it and sought a report from the state government.

On August 22, the apex court pulled up the Kolkata police over the delay in registering the case of unnatural death of the deceased, calling it "extremely disturbing" while frowning upon the sequence of events and the timing of its procedural formalities.

The top court had constituted a 10-member NTF to formulate a protocol for ensuring the safety and security of doctors and other healthcare professionals.

Termining the incident as "horrific", the apex court had censured the state government over the alleged delay in filing of the FIR and allowing a crowd of thousands to vandalise the state-run facility.

The death of the doctor, whose mortal remains indicated injury marks, had sparked nationwide protests and an initial probe had led to the arrest of a civic volunteer by the Kolkata police the next day of the crime.

On August 13, the Calcutta High Court ordered the transfer of the probe from the Kolkata police to the CBI, which began its investigation on August 14. (PTI)

Experts cite enforcement gaps for firecracker ban violations in Delhi

NEW DELHI, Nov 7: In a major development in the Jet Airways insolvency saga, the Supreme Court on Thursday ordered the grounded airline's liquidation, forfeiture of ₹ 200 crore infused by successful bidder Jalan Kalrock Consortium and permitted the lenders led by SBI to encash ₹ 150 crore performance bank guarantee.

Invoking its extraordinary powers under Article 142 of the Constitution, a bench comprising Chief Justice D Y Chandrachud and Justices J B Pardiwala and Manoj Misra put the curtains down on the insolvency proceedings of the airlines by setting aside the order of the National Company Law Appellate Tribunal (NCLAT).

The bench termed the case as an "eye opener" and rapped NCLAT for allowing adjustment of performance bank guarantee (PBG) in view of payment of the first tranche by Jalan Kalrock Consortium (JKC).

Insolvency appellate tribunal NCLAT had allowed JKC to take over Jet Airways without fully complying with its payment obligations, it observed.

"The impugned order of the NCLAT directing the SRA (successful resolution applicant) to adjust PBG of ₹ 150 crore against first tranche of payment of ₹ 350 crore was in flagrant disregard of the order of this court..." it said.

Pronouncing judgement for the bench, Justice Pardiwala allowed the plea of SBI and other creditors against the NCLAT decision that upheld the resolution plan of Jet Airways in favour of JKC.

The apex court, as a result, allowed the appeals of the lenders and set aside the NCLAT order.

"In the peculiar and alarming circumstances as discussed in this judgement, and also keeping in mind the fact that almost five years have elapsed since the resolution plan was duly approved by the

NCLT (National Company Law Tribunal) and there being no progress worth the name, we are left with no other option but to invoke our jurisdiction under Article 142 of the Constitution and direct to the corporate debtor be taken in liquidation," held the bench.

Article 142 of the Constitution gives top court the power to make orders and decrees to ensure complete justice in any matter or cause pending before it.

The bench ordered that requisite steps be taken for commencement of liquidation process of the grounded airline and "the amount of ₹ 200 crore already infused by the SRA stands forfeited".

"The lender creditors are further permitted to encash the performance bank guarantee of ₹ 150 crores furnished by the SRA," it added.

It held that the NCLAT's approval of adjusting the performance bank guarantee as a partial payment was in "flagrant disregard" of an earlier directive of the top court, as well as the terms of the resolution plan and established principles under the Insolvency and Bankruptcy Code.

It noted in addition to non-payment of the initial tranche, JKC, represented by advocates Debmalaya Banerjee and Kartik Bhatnagar of Karanjawala & Co., had not cleared other crucial dues, including corporate insolvency resolution process costs and employee dues.

"The litigation has been an eye-opener on multiple issues, including NCLAT's functioning," Justice Pardiwala noted, stressing that JKC's failure to implement the resolution plan triggered provisions of the IBC that necessitate liquidation.

It emphasised that timely compliance with resolution plans is fundamental to the IBC's purpose, which prioritises swift and effective resolution for distressed companies.

"We have no doubt in our mind that the NCLAT acted contrary to the settled legal principles and went to the extent of drawing wrong inferences from true facts while deciding the matter," it said.

On the first issue, the top court concluded that the performance bank guarantee of ₹ 150 crore could not have been adjusted against the first tranche payment of ₹ 350 crore, which was to be made by the SRA under the resolution plans.

"The IBC is clear in its intention that PBG shall not be set off or used as a part of the consideration that was to be given by the SRA under the plan," it said.

"We arrived at the findings that this SRA failed to implement the resolution plan by not depositing the first tranche of payment..." it said.

The NCLAT on March 12 upheld the resolution plan of the grounded air carrier and approved the transfer of its ownership to JKC. The SBI, Punjab National Bank and JC Flowers Asset Reconstruction Private Limited challenged the NCLAT verdict.

The appellate tribunal had further directed the Jet Airways monitoring committee to complete the transfer of ownership within 90 days. Besides, the NCLAT had also directed the lenders of Jet Airways to adjust ₹ 150 crore paid by the consortium as performance bank guarantee.

The banks had said the JKC failed to meet its financial obligations, including the infusion of ₹ 350 crore within the stipulated 180-day period from the effective date under the resolution plan.

Jet Airways, which has remained grounded since April 2019, had in September, 2023 said the new proposed promoters -- the Jalan-Kalrock consortium -- had completed an additional infusion of ₹ 100 crore into the carrier. (PTI)

Zika virus case detected in Gujarat

AHMEDABAD, Nov 7: A 70-year-old man from Gandhinagar city contracted Zika virus infection following which he was treated in a hospital and discharged, officials said on Thursday.

While the report confirming that the man was infected with the Zika virus came four days ago, he was sent home from the hospital a week ago after full recovery, said the Gujarat Health Department in a statement.

Zika virus is transmitted primarily by Aedes mosquitoes. The symptoms include rash, fever, conjunctivitis, muscle and joint pain. Zika infection during pregnancy can cause infants to be born with microcephaly and other congenital malformations as well as preterm birth and miscarriage.

On October 24, the septuagenarian was admitted to a hospital in Gandhinagar after he had a cold, fever and joint pain.

He was referred to an Ahmedabad-based private hospital, where doctors sent his body fluid samples to the National Institute of Virology (NIV) in Pune over the suspicion that it could be a case of Zika infection, said the release.

Following treatment, the patient recovered and was discharged from the hospital about a week ago, said the statement, adding that the man had not travelled abroad in recent times.

Meanwhile, a report that arrived nearly four days ago from NIV confirmed Zika infection.

As a precautionary measure, health authorities visited the area where the person lives and carried out surveillance and tracking exercises, it said.

No person in the area showed any symptoms of Zika infection, said the statement, adding that samples of his family members turned negative for infection. (PTI)

Odisha-based researcher gang raped in Delhi, 3 arrested

NEW DELHI, Nov 7: An Odisha-based woman with mental illness, who has previously worked as a researcher, was kidnapped and gang raped here in the Sarai Kale Khan area last month and three men have been arrested for it, police said on Thursday.

The victim is receiving treatment for her mental health condition at AIIMS, Delhi after the alleged gang rape on October 10. She travelled to Delhi on May 9 without informing her family which has filed a missing person's report in Puri, they said.

Police said the woman has a postgraduate degree in social work from Utkal University of Culture, Bhubaneswar, has been a research fellow, and has over eight years of experience in the social sector.

She was rescued a day after the alleged rape when she gave an initial statement but could not cooperate further with the police investigation or the hospital staff due to her illness, they said.

Later, a police officer posing as a social worker, with the help of a native Odia speaker, gained her trust over time and gathered crucial information from her. The first arrest was made on October 30 and subsequently, the other two accused were held.

According to police, they received information regarding a woman lying injured and bleeding near Sarai Kale Khan area on October 11.

"The police staff immediately reached the spot, where the victim was found in a state of distress and was rushed to AIIMS Trauma Centre for medical examination and care. Upon arrival at the hospital, the victim disclosed to the attending doctor that she had been sexually assaulted by three people," Deputy Commissioner of Police (Southeast) Ravi Kumar Singh



said.

After her initial statement, the victim could not cooperate further with the investigation or hospital staff due to her illness, Singh said.

Police said she is a dedicated researcher and community leader with over eight years of experience in the social sector.

"While checking her profile, the team got to know that she is a post-graduate in social work from Utkal University of Culture in Bhubaneswar.

She has actively contributed to various developmental organisations. She also worked as a Research Fellow at Kalinga Network for People Living with HIV/AIDS, Community Leader at Women Power for Sanitation Awareness, and Counsellor at One Stop Centre in Puri," the DCP said.

She travelled to Delhi on May 9 without informing her family, he said.

A missing person's report was registered by her parents on June 9 at Kumbharpada police station in Puri, he said.

Police said after the incident, she was not able to give any leads about the incident to the police.

"As she was not able to share vital clues, thus during the operation, special permission was taken from the management staff of

AIIMS Trauma Centre, and a woman officer Sangeeta took cover as a social worker while a native Odia woman took cover as a nurse and they were assigned to take care of the victim to try to build trust and gather crucial information from her," the DCP said.

He said that Sangeeta won over her trust and was able to get some important details from the victim -- the involvement of an unknown autorickshaw driver who allegedly dumped her after the rape and two other persons, one of who had a physical handicap.

"The victim was unable to reveal other crucial details regarding the time and place of the incident due to her mental health challenges and trauma from the incident, he said.

With the limited details, a comprehensive site plan was developed and 700 CCTVs were identified that could give more information. More than 150 suspected autorickshaws were also checked to nab the accused, he said, adding that 10 police teams were involved in it.

On October 30, police arrested Prabhoo Mahto, and subsequently, Pramod Babu and Mohammad Shamsul were also identified and arrested on November 2 and November 4, respectively, the officer said. (PTI)

Recruitment rules for govt jobs can't be changed midway unless prescribed: SC



NEW DELHI, Nov 7: In an important ruling having a bearing on the recruitment process, the Supreme Court on Thursday held that "rules of the game" for appointment in government jobs cannot be changed midway unless the procedure permits so.

A five-judge Constitution bench headed by Chief Justice D Y Chandrachud said recruitment process commences from the issuance of advertisement calling for applications and ends with filing up of vacancies.

"Eligibility criteria for being placed in the select list notified at the commencement of the recruitment process can't be changed midway through the recruitment process unless the extant rules so permit or the advertisement which is not contrary to the extant rules so permit," the bench said.

The bench, also comprising Justices Hrishikesh Roy, P S Narasimha, Pankaj Mishra and Manoj Misra, unanimously held if change of criteria is permissible under the extant rules or advertisement, it would have to meet the requirement of Article 14 (right to equality) of the Constitution and satisfy the test of non-arbitrariness.

"Recruiting bodies subject to the extant rules may devise appropriate procedure for bringing the recruit-

ment process to its logical end provided the procedure so adopted is transparent, non-discriminatory, non-arbitrary and has a rationale nexus to the object sought to be achieved," Justice Misra said while pronouncing the verdict.

The bench said that extant rules having statutory force are binding on the recruiting bodies both in terms of procedure and eligibility.

"Placement in the select list gives no indefeasible right to appointment. The state or its instrumentality for bona fide reason may choose not to fill up the vacancy," it said.

However, the bench clarified if vacancies exist, the state or its instrumentality cannot arbitrarily deny appointment to persons who are in the zone of consideration in the select list.

The top court said that if the extant rules or the advertisement provides for setting of benchmarks for different stages of recruitment process and if any such benchmark is set, the same should be stipulated before the commencement of the recruitment process.

"But if the extant rules or the advertisement inviting application empowers the competent authority to set benchmarks at different stages of the recruitment process, then such benchmarks may be set anytime before that stage is reached so that neither the candidates nor the evaluator/examiner/interviewer is taken by surprise," the bench said.

The top court answered a question related to appointment criteria for government jobs referred to it by a three-judge bench in March 2013.

Referring to a 1965 verdict, the three-judge bench had said it was a salutary principle not to permit the state or its instrumentalities to tinker with the "rules of the game" insofar as the prescription of eligibility criteria was concerned. (PTI)

Shortlist for Crossword Book Jury Awards features 25 works across five categories

NEW DELHI, Nov 7: The Crossword Book Jury Awards has announced a shortlist of books in categories of Fiction, Non-Fiction, Business and Management, Children's Books, and Translations.

Each category is being judged by a separate jury. The jury for Fiction comprises Manjula Narayan, Prayaag Akbar, and Somak Ghoshal. The Nonfiction jury consists of TCA Raghavan, Anuradha Sengupta, and Kaveree Bamzai. Translations are being judged by Arshia Sattar, Nandini Nair, and Malashri Lal. The judges for Children's are Paro Anand, Parvati Sharma, and Bulbul Sharma. Khozem Merchant, Shaili Chopra, and Sriram make up the jury for Business and Management.

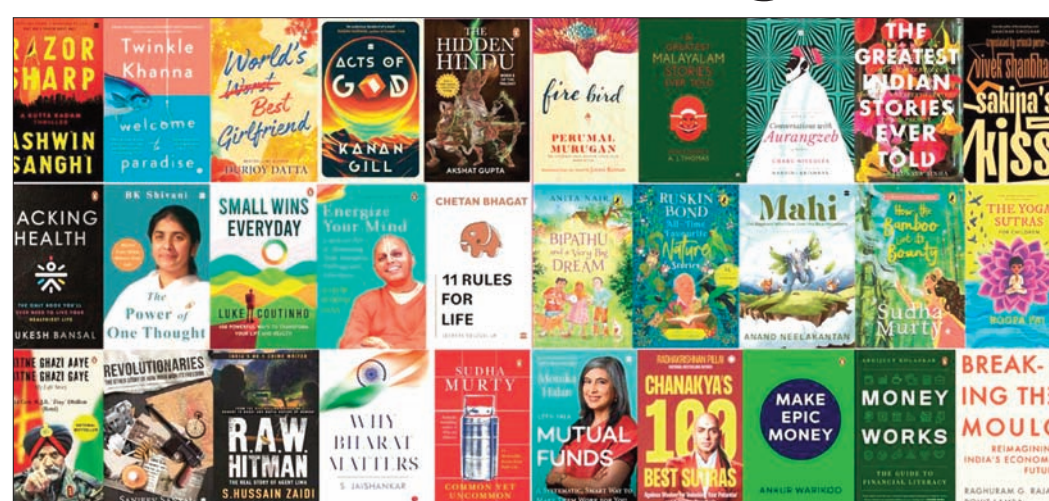
The Fiction shortlist features "The East Indian" by Brinda Charry, "Quarterlife" by Devika Rege, "Chronicle of an Hour and a Half" by Saharu Nussaiba Kannanari, "Tall Tales by a Small Dog" by Omair Ahmad and "Never Never Land" by Namita Gokhale.

Sudha Bharadwaj's "From Phansi Yard: My Year with the Women of Yerawada", "The Day I Became a Runner: A Women's History of India through the Lens

of Sport" by Sohini Chattopadhyay, "City on Fire: A Boyhood in Aligarh" by Zeyad Masroor Khan, "Mother Cow, Mother India: A Multispecies Politics of Dairy in India" by Yamini Narayanan, and "Marginlands: Indian Landscapes on the Brink" by Arati Kumar-Rao have made it to the Non-Fiction shortlist category.

"This year, we have witnessed a plethora of outstanding literary works vying for recognition. The shortlisted books represent the pinnacle of Indian literary achievement, showcasing the incredible diversity of voices and perspectives that enrich our literary landscape. We are honoured to celebrate these talented authors and their remarkable contributions to the world of literature," Aakash Gupta, ceo of Crossword Bookstores, said in a statement.

The Business and Management shortlist includes "Accelerating India's Development: A State-led Roadmap For Effective Governance" by Karthik Muralidharan, "AI Rising: India's Artificial Intelligence Growth Story" by Leslie D'Monte and Jayanth N. Kolla, "Exprovement: Exponential Improvements Through Converging



Parallels" by Hersh Haladker and Raghunath Mashelkar, "Lilliput Land: How Small Is Driving India's Mega Consumption Story" by Rama Bijapurkar, and "Mastering the Data Paradox: Key To Winning In The AI Age" by Nitin Seth.

In Children's Books category, Devika Cariapa's "A Children's History of India in 100 Objects", Shabnam Minwalla's "Zen", "The Case of the Vanishing Gods" by Mallika Ravikumar, "Bipathu and a Very Big Dream" by Anita Nair,

and "The Henna Start-Up" by Andaleeb Wajid have made it to the shortlist.

Five translated works from Nepali, Kannada, Hindi and Malayalam languages to English have been shortlisted for the award.

"Fruits of the Barren Tree" by Lekhnath Chhetri and translated from the Nepali by Anurag Basnet, "Sakina's Kiss" by Vivek Shanbhag and translated from the Kannada by Srinath Perur, "Boy,

Unloved" by Damodar Mauzo and translated from the Konkani by Jerry Pinto, "I Named My Sister Silence" by Manoj Rupda and translated from the Hindi by Hansda Sowvendra Shekhar, and "Maria, Just Maria" by Sandhya Mary and translated from the Malayalam by Jayasree Kalathil have been shortlisted.

The awards will be announced on December 8 and the winning authors in each category will receive a cash prize of ₹ 50,000. (PTI)

Punjab farmers condemn Centre's move of doubling fines for stubble burning

CHANDIGARH, Nov 7: Farmer bodies in Punjab on Thursday strongly condemned the Centre's move of raising fines for stubble burning and asked why the government was not providing crop residue management machinery to them to check farm fires.

The Centre has doubled the fine for farmers burning crop residue in view of the deteriorating air quality in the Delhi-NCR region, with the penalty going up to ₹ 30,000 for those with more than five acres of farmland.

According to a notification published on Wednesday following the Supreme Court's tough stance on the issue, farmers with less than two acres of land will now have to pay environmental compensation of ₹ 5,000, up from ₹ 2,500. And those with land between two and five acres will be fined ₹ 10,000 instead of ₹ 5,000.

Reacting to the union government's move, farmers' unions pointed out that farmers never want to set the crop residue on fire but they are forced to do so for want of required machinery.

They also said why farmers are always being "targeted" for pollution, asking the government about any action taken against the industry for polluting the environment.

Punjab has reported 5,041 farm

fires during September 15 and November 6, registering more than 70 percent decline in such cases as compared to corresponding period last year.

Bharti Kisan Union (Ekta Ugrahan) general secretary Sukhdev Singh Kokrikalan slammed the Centre for its "anti-farmer" move of increasing fine on farmers.

"We strongly condemn this decision," Kokrikalan told PTI.

He said the Union government was trying to increase pressure on farmers through such "tactics."

"Those farmers who have crop residue management machinery did not burn stubble at all," he pointed out.

Farmers are compelled to set the paddy straw on fire as they do not have the required machinery, he said. "They do not have any option, that is they burn it," he said. (PTI)

CORRIGENDUM NO. 01 & 02 AGAINST TENDER NOTICE NO. : CE/CON/2024/OCT/03. Dated : 21-10-2024

Corrigendum-01 & 02 for Tender No. CE-CON-DK-PW-2024-05 has been published. For details please visit www.irps.gov.in.

Chief Engineer/Con-6, Maligaon
Northeast Frontier Railway
(Construction Division)
"SERVING CUSTOMERS WITH A SMILE"

NANI, SRIKANTH ODELA'S FILM TITLED 'THE PARADISE'



NEW DELHI, Nov 7: Telugu cinema star Nani will next be seen in "The Paradise", which reunites him with his "Dasara" director Srikanth Odela.

The film, also penned by Odela, was officially launched on the festival occasion of Dussehra in October.

Sudhakar Cherukuri of SLV Cinemas is producing "The Paradise", a press release stated.

The makers launched the film's poster featuring guns, bloodshed, and the iconic Charaminar.

Anirudh Ravichander, who gave the music for Nani's films "Jersey" and "Gangleader", will compose the soundtrack of the new movie.

According to the makers, "The Paradise" is the actor's "most expensive project so far".

Nani was last seen in "Saripodhaa Sanivaaram". His forthcoming film release is "HIT: The Third Case", set to be released in 2025. (PTI)

Bill Skarsgard-starrer 'Boy Kills World' to debut on Lionsgate Play on Nov 29

NEW DELHI, Nov 7: "Boy Kills World", an action thriller starring Bill Skarsgard in the lead role, will premiere on Lionsgate Play on November 29, the streamer announced on Thursday. Directed by Moritz Mohr, the film had its world premiere at the 2023 Toronto International Film Festival. It was released in the US theatres in April this year.

"Boy Kills World" features Skarsgard as Boy, a deaf-mute who endures a brutal life by escaping into a vivid fantasy world. After his family is murdered, he trains under a mysterious shaman to become an unstoppable killing machine, according to the official plotline.

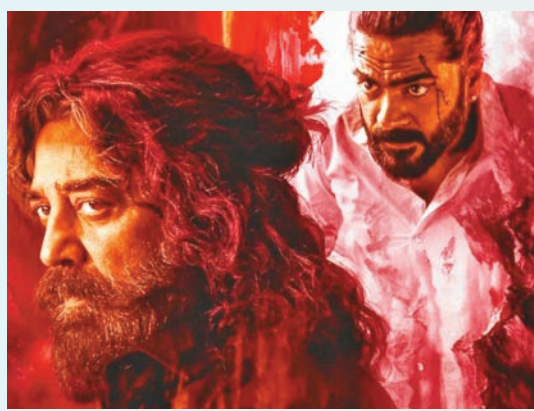
Fuelled by rage and thirst for revenge, he transforms his pain into power, setting off on a relentless quest to take down those responsible, it added.

In a statement, Skarsgard said he underwent a drastic transformation for the role and lost 20 pounds.

"I also had to learn to fight from the ground up. It was a very short amount of time to do all that. I worked many hours just learning the basics. I wasn't sure I could do it, but I watched a lot of martial arts movies to prepare," the actor said. The film also stars Jessica Rothe, Michelle Dockery, Brett Gelman, Isaiah Mustafa, Yayan Ruhian, Andrew Koji, Sharlto Copley and Famke Janssen. (PTI)



Kamal Haasan-Mani Ratnam's 'Thug Life' to release in June 2025



NEW DELHI, Nov 7: Kamal Haasan-starrer "Thug Life", directed by Mani Ratnam, is set to hit theatres across the globe on June 5, 2025.

The makers announced the release date of the upcoming Tamil film on the occasion of Haasan's 70th birthday. Haasan's Raaj Kamal Films International, one of the production houses behind "Thug Life", shared the update on its official X page on Thursday.

"His STORY, His RULES #KHBirthdayCelebrations #HBDKamalHaasan #ThugLifeFromJune5," the banner captioned the release date re-

veal video.

Silambarasan TR, Trisha, Ashok Selvan, Abhirami, Nassar, Joju George, Aishwarya Lekshmi, Ali Fazal and Vaiyapuri round out the cast of the film. "Thug Life" reunites Haasan and Ratnam after 35 years for what marks the veteran star's 234th feature film. The duo last collaborated on the 1987 critical hit "Nayakan".

Udhayanidhi Stalin's Red Giant Movies and Ratnam's Madras Talkies are also backing the movie. The music will be composed by AR Rahman. (PTI)

Cox says Jennifer Aniston took a lot of dresses from 'Friends' set

MUMBAI, Nov 7: Big blockbuster movies have a way of reviving careers and Arjun Kapoor hopes the same happens with his portrayal of the main antagonist in Rohit Shetty's "Singham Again", which he calls his "new starting point". The action-drama franchise, headlined by Ajay Devgn, is the third film in the "Singham" series, which started with 2011's "Singham" and was followed by "Singham Returns" in 2014.

The two movies along with Ranveer Singh's "Simmba" (2018) and "Sooryavanshi" (2021), starring Akshay Kumar, are part of Shetty's cinematic cop universe. They both feature in the movie alongside Deepika Padukone, Kareena Kapoor Khan, Tiger Shroff and Kapoor. "I'm happy people are liking my work... Now is the new starting point. The rebirth or the redemption, whatever you want to call it, I think it starts now," the actor told PTI in an interview. Kapoor, who plays the modern day version of Raavan, named Danger Lanka, in the movie, said he has always been a fan of Shetty's work, including hits like "Golmaal", "Singham", and "Simmba". He was thrilled to be approached

for the role. "He trusted me and he took that chance and I hope I repaid his faith. I loved working on the film." The 39-year-old actor, who made his debut in 2012 with "Ishaqzaade", about two enemies-turned-star-crossed lovers, said the offer for "Singham Again" came at the right time in his life. "I was looking at a challenge and an opportunity to prove and push myself and grab my chance in a competitive environment... I thought this was the right opportunity."

Kapoor has portrayed characters of varying shades right from the beginning whether it was his debut film or movies like "Ek Villain", "Gunday", and "Aurangzeb". But the actor said his portrayal in "Singham Again" gave him a chance to go all the way out. "I knew it's a blockbuster, a big budget bonanza that people come to watch. If I have to go all the way there, you choose a film like this. "Like, Ajay Devgn sir did 'Khakee', it's a big film in which he chose to play a villain, Saif (Ali Khan) did 'Omkaara', and Bobby (Deol) did 'Animal'. So, when you go for big films, you go to the extreme. The payoff is that the mainstream audience that has liked

you as a positive, will also like the negative thing." Kapoor said he didn't approach his role as that of a demon king, Raavan, though the film is Shetty's interpretation of the epic "Ramayana".

In the film, the actor abducts Kareena Kapoor Khan, who plays the wife of Ajay Devgn's honest cop Bajirao Singham.

"I didn't see it as playing Raavan, I thought of him as Danger Lanka. I was like, there's an interpretation of Ramayana in the film. Like, 'Rang De Basanti' had the legend of Bhagat Singh, but it was about those characters. He (Rohit) was making the Ramayana the way he had imagined it."

"But, for me, the excitement was to play this uncontrollable mad man, who believes he is right. It is a delicious place to be at, you can do what you feel like. I did what I felt like, and that was the most exciting part of the film as an actor to do." Kapoor, known for films like "Ishaqzaade", "Gunday", "2 States", and "Sandeep Aur Pinky Farar", said he has become aware that he needs to take care of himself physically and mentally to deliver his best as an actor. (PTI)

'SINGHAM AGAIN' MY REBIRTH AS AN ACTOR, SAYS ARJUN KAPOOR

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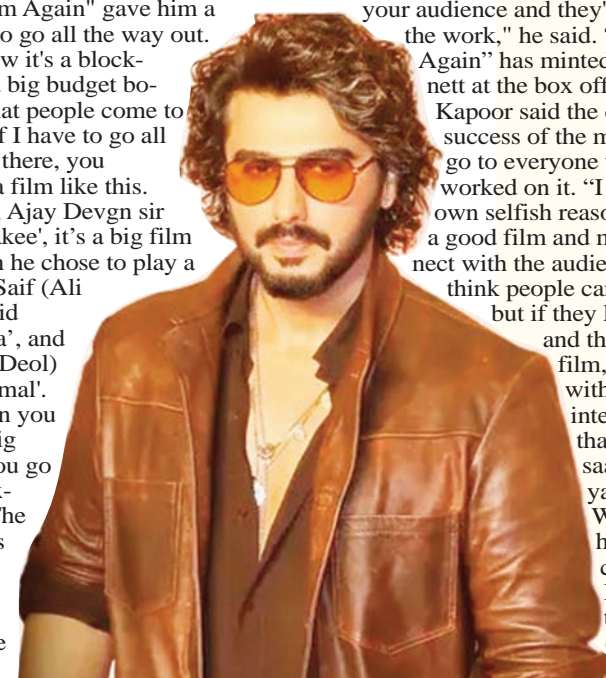
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"When you're young, you can take on a lot. As time proceeds, I want to be very clear about saying yes because I want to really go out there and do a film. So, the choices you're making on a day-to-day basis have to get better." Kapoor believes his career took a hit in 2018 but with "Singham Again" turning out to be a hit, he hopes to make better choices in the future.

"The last couple of years from 2018-2019, when I had a couple of films, and it didn't do it and then COVID-19 happened. Post COVID-19, things didn't really hit the spot.

"I signed a couple of films, and not everything panned out perfectly. So for about five-six years... It's a long time before you feel any kind of connect with the audience. It's not about praise or hate. You feel disconnected from your audience and they're not seeing the work," he said. "Singham Again" has minted Rs 160 crore nett at the box office and

Kapoor said the credit for the success of the movie should go to everyone who has worked on it. "I did it for my own selfish reasons of being in a good film and making a reconnect with the audience. I don't think people came to see me, but if they left with me, and they liked the film, I'm happy with that. But the intent was never that. 'Inn sabke saamne mujhe yaad rakhna'. We are all happy with the credit, I'm sure I can speak on their behalf. (PTI)



MUMBAI POLICE SUMMON RAIPUR LAWYER OVER DEATH THREAT TO SHAH RUKH KHAN

MUMBAI, Nov 7: Maharashtra police's cyber wing has issued a notice to on-line ticketing website BookMyShow, asking it to implement strict measures including sale of name-based tickets for the concerts of British band "Coldplay" in January and other shows.

The notice was issued by the Maharashtra Cyber to prevent exploitation of fans who buy tickets from online platforms, an official said on Wednesday.

There are increasing number of complaints across online forums and social media about problems faced in booking tickets of such high-profile concerts and events through online platforms, he said.

Many people reported unresponsive websites during critical booking period, he said, adding that it leads to black-marketing of tickets at exorbitant prices, sometimes as high as 10 times the original price.

The Maharashtra Cyber found that measures taken by the platforms to avoid such situations are insufficient, said the official.

A PIL has also been filed in the Bombay High Court seeking guidelines to curb black marketing and ticket scalping at major events, in the backdrop of alleged foul play during the online tickets sale for Coldplay's highly anticipated concert in Navi Mumbai in January 2025.

The PIL said there are several irregularities and illegalities during the sale of tickets for major events, such as concerts, live shows and so on. Such irregularity and illegality was witnessed in September when tickets for the Coldplay concert were made available on the BookMyShow platform, it said. (PTI)

Bengaluru FC hope to continue winning streak at home against NEUFC in ISL



BENGALURU, Nov 7: Table-toppers Bengaluru FC will seek to bounce back from their previous match setback when they face NorthEast United in their Indian Super League (ISL) fixture here on Friday.

Sitting atop the table, Bengaluru FC have garnered 16 points from seven games with the help of five victories and a

draw. Their six-game-long unbeaten streak was snapped by FC Goa (who won 3-0) in their previous outing.

Regardless of that setback, the Gerard Zaragoza-coached side has showcased sublime cohesion in all departments -- strengthening the hopes of their fans that they would bounce back stronger in the coming

game. However, it will not be easy against NorthEast United FC, who won 3-2 against Odisha FC in their last match. The Highlanders have struck 17 goals -- the most in the league thus far, and notched three wins and two draws in their seven matches to accumulate 11 points and occupy the sixth place in the

standings currently. Bengaluru FC have emerged victorious in each of their last four home matches, keeping clean sheets in all of those games, and they would be hoping for another strong show at their fortress.

Their defensive solidity, especially in their own backyard at the Sree Kanteerava Stadium,

makes them a tough nut to crack for the visiting sides.

The Blues have netted 11 goals in seven matches, but they have given away only four goals, which arguably show that the base of their success has been built upon their backlines.

NorthEast United, meanwhile, have struggled in away matches. They have won only two of their last 31 away games in the ISL, drawing nine times and losing 20 times in the process.

In both the wins, the Highlanders kept a clean sheet, demonstrating the desperate need for defensive discipline in unfamiliar conditions for them to bag three points.

The two sides have played 16 times against each other in the ISL, with Bengaluru FC and NorthEast United FC winning eight and two matches respectively. Six games have resulted in a draw.

"The lesson is that what we did yesterday is not enough for today. We need to adapt our style. We are going to fight and the boys are ready for tomorrow's clash," Bengaluru FC head coach Gerard Zaragoza said.

NorthEast United FC head coach Juan Pedro Benali said his team will not be under pressure in Thursday's match.

"We are paid to play, travel, enjoy, and be heroes for so many people, to make them proud and smile. When we see our fans smiling after the games, that's priceless. We work full week for the match and we give everything for it," Benali said. (PTI)

Group C: Manohar's unbeaten fifty keeps Karnataka afloat against Bengal

BENGALURU, Nov 7: Abhinav Manohar made a determined unbeaten fifty to rescue Karnataka after a top-order collapse, taking the hosts to 155 for five against Bengal after second day's play of their Ranji Trophy Group C match here on Thursday.

Manohar made 50 off 73 balls (6x4, 1x6) and added 58 runs for the unbroken sixth wicket stand with Shreyas Gopal (23 batting) as Karnataka recovered from a wobbly 97 for five.

Karnataka still trail by 146 runs.

Bengal, resuming from overnight 249 for five, could not progress much and got bowled out for 301.

Pacer Vasuki Koushik (5/38) and leg-spinner Shreyas (3/87) combined to pluck the remaining five Bengal wickets for 52 runs.

But that joy was short-lived as Bengal bowlers Suraj Sindhu Jaiswal (2/53) and R Vivek (2/44) rocked the Karnataka top-order with regular strikes.

In fact, the home side lost their most experienced batters -- captain Mayank Agarwal (17) and Manish Pandey (0) -- in the space of six balls.

Agarwal was cleaned up by Jaiswal while Pandey's two-ball innings was snapped by Vivek.

However, Karnataka found some fight through Manohar, a white ball specialist, and Shreyas, who returned to the

state side after spending last season with Kerala, as they negated 18 overs to keep their side afloat.

Brief scores: In Bengaluru: Bengal 301 all out in 101.5 overs (Anustup Majumdar 101, Sudip Chatterjee 55, Shahbaz Ahmed 55; Vasuki Kaushik 5/38; Shreyas Gopal 3/87) vs Karnataka: 155/5 in 51 overs (Abhinav Manohar 50 batting, Shreyas Gopal 23 batting; Suraj Jaiswal 2/53, R Vivek 2/44). Karnataka trail by 146 runs.

In Thumba: Uttar Pradesh 162 all out vs Kerala: 340/7 in 110 overs (Sachin Baby 83, Salman Nizar 74 batting, Jalaj Saxena 35; Shivam Mavi 2/56, Shivam Sharma 2/77).

Kerala lead by 178 runs.

In Patna: Madhya Pradesh: 616 all out in 130.2 overs (Shubham Sharma 240, Venkatesh Iyer 174; Himanshu Singh 5/196, Sachin Kumar Singh 4/211) vs Bihar: 131/4 in 42 overs (Babul Kumar 47, Piyush Kumar Singh 37; Saransh Jain 2/46). Bihar trail by 485 runs.

In Rohtak: Haryana 114 and 243 all out in 53.5 overs (Himanshu Rana 68, Ankit Kumar 38; Mayank Markande 3/52 vs Punjab: 141 all out in 52.1 overs (Anmolpreet Singh 45, Mayank Markande 30; Nishant Sindhu 6/47) and 73/3 in 18 overs (Prabhsimran Singh 23 batting; Nishant Sindhu 2/15). Punjab need 144 runs; Target: 217. (PTI)

Kerala lead by 178 runs.

Shorey's hundred puts Vidarbha in command against Himachal



NAGPUR, Nov 7: Opener Dhruv Shorey compiled a neat century as former champions Vidarbha responded strongly to reach 283 for two at stumps after bowling out Himachal Pradesh for 307 on day two of their Ranji Trophy match here on Thursday.

Shorey, who switched to Vidarbha ahead of the 2023-24 season after playing for 10 years for his native state Delhi, led the way for Vidarbha and was batting on 108 at close of play.

Karun Nair, who parted ways with Karnataka to join Vidarbha last season, was unbeaten on 76.

The duo of Shorey and Nair added 142 runs for the third wicket to put Vidarbha in a commanding position as they now trail Himachal by just 24 runs.

Vidarbha began on a solid note with Shorey and Atharva Taide (33) putting on 50 runs for before Mukul Negi gave Himachal their first breakthrough by having the latter trapped in front of the wicket.

Shorey found an able ally in Danish Malewar as the two added 91 runs for the second wicket to lay a strong foundation for Vidarbha.

Medium pacer Vaibhav Arora brought some cheer for Himachal as he dismissed Malewar for a 72-ball 59, during which the batter struck 10 boundaries.

However, Himachal's joy was short-lived as Shorey and Nair handled the Himachal bowlers without much difficulty to lift their team to a position of strength by the end of day's play.

Shorey, who faced 192 balls for his knock, hit only six fours and ran a lot of singles and twos during his stay in the middle.

Malewar on the other hand, found the fence 10 times during his 72-ball knock. Shorey's two partnerships, with Nair and

Malewar, went a long way in helping Vidarbha take the upper hand in the Elite Group B game.

Earlier, resuming the day on 263 for six, Himachal added 44 runs to their overnight total before being bowled out in their first innings.

Overnight batting on 47, captain Rishi Dhawan was the chief contributor with the bat for Himachal as he top-scored with a 73-run knock that came off 135 balls.

Mukul Negi, the other overnight batter, fell for 38 while the last three men could not contribute anything with the bat for Himachal Pradesh.

Left-arm spinner Harsh Dubey was the most successful bowler for Vidarbha, returning figures of 5/71 in 34 overs, while there were two wickets apiece for Praful Hinge (2/57) and Akshay Wakhare (2/42).

Brief scores: In Nagpur: Himachal Pradesh 1st innings 307 all out in 108 overs (Rishi Dhawan 73; Harsh Dubey 5/71) vs Vidarbha 1st innings 283/2 in 70 overs (Dhruv Shorey batting 108, Karun Nair 76).

In Vizianagaram: Uttarakhand 1st innings 338 all out in 135.2 overs (Priyanshu Khanduri 112, Avneesh Sudha 86, Ravikumar Samarth 59; Lalith Mohan 4/104) vs Andhra 1st innings 92/4 in 35.5 overs (Abhishek Reddy 35; Deepak Dhapola 2/13).

In Ahmedabad: Puducherry 1st innings: 361 all out in 127.2 overs (Ajay Rohera 80, AKash Kargave 71; Siddharth Desai 4/64) vs Gujarat 1st innings 128/3 in 38 overs (Aarya Desai 66; Sagar Udeshi 2/29).

In Jaipur: Hyderabad 1st innings 410 all out in 144 overs (Rahul Radesh 100, Rahul Singh 66; Kukna Ajay Singh 5/139) vs Rajasthan 1st innings: 117/1 in 31 overs (Mahipal Lomror batting 58, Abhishek Tomar batting 44). (PTI)

Sinner and Alcaraz headline the ATP Finals with Djokovic out

TURIN (ITALY), Nov 7: Jan-nik Sinner and Carlos Alcaraz are poised to add another entry into their rapidly developing rivalry when the ATP Finals open Sunday without any members of the Big Three for the first time in nearly a quarter century.

The top-ranked Sinner and No. 3 Alcaraz evenly split the year's Grand Slam titles between them with two apiece and it would be fitting if the pair meet again in Turin. And since Alcaraz was overtaken by Alexander Zverev in the rankings this week, the Spaniard could be placed in the same round-robin group as Sinner. The draw for the eight-man event is scheduled for later Thursday.

After the round-robin stage, the top two finishers in each group advance to the semifinals.

The other qualifiers are: Zverev, Daniil Medvedev, Taylor Fritz, Casper Ruud, Alex de Minaur and Andrey Rublev.

The big name missing is that of defending champion Novak Djokovic, who withdrew on Tuesday due to an unspecified injury. 23 years since Djokovic, Federer and Nadal missed the fi-



nalsNot since 2001 has the finals been held without at least one of Djokovic, Roger Federer or Rafael Nadal. This season also was the first since 2002 without at least one Grand Slam title for a member of that trio.

Djokovic has won the ATP Finals a record seven times. He beat Sinner for the title last year.

Federer, who announced his retirement in 2022, won the event six times after making his debut in 2002; Nadal, who is retiring after playing in the Davis Cup the

week after finals, was the runner-up twice at the finals but never won it.

Sinner withdrew from last week's Paris Masters due to a virus and showed up early in Turin for training.

"This is for me the main event of the end of the year," Sinner said.

A final decision in Sinner's doping case is still pending. As an Italian, Sinner will be the main focus of attention in Turin.

It's the first time that Sinner

will be playing at home since it was announced before his U.S. Open title that he had tested positive in two separate drug tests earlier in the year.

A decision to clear Sinner of wrongdoing was appealed by the World Anti-Doping Agency in September and the Switzerland-based Court of Arbitration for Sport is expected to make a final ruling on the case early next year.

Alcaraz has won all 3 of his official meetings with Sinner this year. Sinner opened this year by winning the Australian Open to become the first Italian man to win a Grand Slam singles title in nearly a half-century -- since Adriano Panatta raised the French Open trophy in 1976.

Alcaraz then claimed the French Open and Wimbledon titles to raise his career total to four Grand Slams.

Sinner responded by winning the U.S. Open.

Alcaraz won all three official meetings with Sinner this year and holds a 6-4 advantage in their career head-to-head rivalry. Last month, Sinner beat Alcaraz in the Six Kings Slam exhibition in Saudi Arabia. (AP)

French interior minister wants explanation from PSG for 'Free Palestine' banner



PARIS, Nov 7: A giant "Free Palestine" banner unveiled at Paris Saint-Germain's Champions League match against Atletico Madrid was "unacceptable," French Interior Minister Bruno Retailleau said on Thursday. The banner unfurled by PSG fans on Wednesday night featured a drawing of a map includ-

ing Israel, the West Bank and Gaza in the colours of the Palestinian keffiyeh scarf, which has become a symbol of support for Palestinian people.

The banner also featured a character looking like a masked fighter, a tank, and a Lebanon flag. Below the banner, a message read, "War on the pitch, but

peace in the world."

Asked whether the club should be punished, Retailleau told Sud Radio he does not rule out anything and will ask for explanations from PSG, which has been owned by Qatar Sports Investments since 2011.

"This is unacceptable," Retailleau said. "UEFA rules forbid political messages, and it is a political message." Yonathan Arfi, the president of the Representative Council of the French Jewish institutions, called the banner "scandalous."

"A map where the state of Israel no longer exists. A masked Palestinian fighter. This is not a message of peace but a call to hatred," he wrote on X. "The perpetrators of this banner must be punished! Intolerable!"

UEFA rules ban the use of gestures, words, objects or any other means to transmit a provocative message that is judged not fit for a sports event, particularly provocative messages that are of a political, ideological, religious or offensive nature. Financial penalties are typical for a first-of-

fence -- 10,000 euros (USD 10,700) for a political banner or disturbances.

Retailleau also urged clubs to ensure politics "do not spoilsport, which must always remain a unifying force." Writing on X, he said if such incidents happen again he would have to consider banning tifos of clubs which don't abide by the rules.

The incident came before France hosts Israel on Nov. 14 in the Nations League. This week, pro-Palestinian supporters protested at the French Football Federation to call for the cancellation of the game.

French authorities confirmed last month that the match would go ahead with fans allowed in the stadium after Italy hosted Israel in the same competition without incident despite security concerns.

The match at the Stade de France will be played against the backdrop of the ongoing conflict in the Middle East which has spread to Lebanon after more than a year-long war in Gaza. (AP)

From Delphi to Delhi to Chandigarh, Pythian Games seek revival

NEW DELHI, Nov 7: Once a crucial part of Pan-Hellenic Games, the Pythian Games' revival journey began last year in Delhi after a lull of 1630 years and is now set for its inaugural national edition in Chandigarh.

The Games were first held around 582 BC when Greek god Apollo killed mythical Python and set up the Oracle at Delphi but the Games discontinued in 394 AD, according to the organisers. In Greek mythology, Apollo, by slaying Python, had committed a crime and Zeus, the King of gods, declared that he had to make amends.

Apollo then created the Pythian Games to pay for the death. Pan-Hellenic is the collective term for four separate religious festivals held in ancient Greece: the Olympic Games, which were held at Olympia in honor of Zeus, the Pythian Games, which took place in Delphi and honoured Apollo; the Nemean Games, occurring at Nemea and also honouring Zeus and, finally, the Isthmian Games set in Isthmia and held in honour of Poseidon.

According to the organisers, the Pythian Games were second in terms of importance after Olympics.

While the Olympics were limited to sports, the Pythian Games were a fusion of music, dance, poetry, athletics, wrestling, and chariot racing.

Delphi, a tiny village in Greece was the place for the peace, brotherhood and excellence in the sphere of arts, culture and sports.

People travelled to Delphi to seek fame and glory and showcase their skills. The Games shaped European history in a significant and sustainable way.

Inspired by Pierre de Coubertin's revival of Olympic Games, India's Bijender Goel founded International Pythian Games and hosted the Modern Pythian Games in Delhi in December 2023.

Now Goel is gearing up to host the first National Cultural Pythian Games which will have close to 30 events on the roster, including the ancient 'Gada Yuddh' at three venues from December 12-15. (PTI)

South Africa looking to add a touch of revenge

1st T20I: India's second line stars look for a breakaway series against South Africa

DURBAN, Nov 7: As India firmly embraces a transition phase, a clutch of second line stars such as Sanju Samson and Abhishek Sharma will be hoping for a breakaway series in the four T20Is against South Africa, starting with the first contest here Friday.

It is imperative for them to shed the tag of sidekicks and establish themselves as the first-choice players in this format.

The recent home T20I series against Bangladesh was a precursor. Samson received a chance to open consistently against the neighbours, and he made most of it slamming a 47-ball 111.

In the post-Rohit Sharma era in T20Is, Samson would like to further buttress his claim for a regular opening slot with a few fruitful outings against the Proteas.

This is an important series for Abhishek as well. The dashing left-hander showed his impressive skills while hammering a 47-ball hundred against Zimbabwe at Harare in July, but his other six international innings have produced - 0, 10, 14, 16, 15, 4.

Abhishek will be keen to be more consistent to safeguard his place, and he will also be looking to be more penetrative with his left-arm spin.

Tilak Varma offers a similar case. The left-hander has somewhat fallen off the radar after making a solid beginning to his T20I career against the West Indies in



August 2023.

Since then, his 12 outings in the shortest format have produced just one fifty and has not featured in the blue jersey after appearing against Afghanistan earlier this January.

So, the Hyderabad will be keen to impress the selectors with some meaningful efforts against the Africans, and he has also started using his off-spin more regularly.

This series also offers an excellent opportunity for wicketkeeper batter Jitesh Sharma, who has slipped a few rungs below in the

pecking order, and spinner Varun Chakravarthy, who impressed against Bangladesh taking five wickets, to keep themselves afloat over the competition.

The selectors will also closely monitor how a new-look pace bowling unit - Arshdeep Singh, Avesh Khan, Vyshak Vijaykumar and Yash Dayal - fare against South Africa.

While Arshdeep and Avesh have their moments at the top-level, Vyshak and Dayal will look to carry their success in domestic cir-

cuit and in the IPL to international cricket. Ramandeep Singh, who was retained by Kolkata Knight Riders after a productive IPL 2024, will be eager to replicate his success here.

Ramandeep brings to the table exciting multiple skillsets - a daring batter down the order, useful medium pacer and a gun outfielder.

The seniors in the side like skipper Suryakumar Yadav, all-rounders Hardik Pandya and Axar Patel, the only member from the

Test side here, will be hoping for a strong outing so that India can apply some balm over the wounds from their recent home series defeat against New Zealand.

On a personal level, four players - Arshdeep, Avesh, Jitesh and Vyshak - will want impact outings here after not getting retained by their respective franchises ahead of the IPL mega auction November 24 and 25.

All other 11 players in the side have managed to get a retention from their IPL teams.

South Africa will be looking to add a touch of revenge to the series after losing to India in the T20 World Cup final in June, the last time these two sides met.

Teams:

India: Suryakumar Yadav (C), Abhishek Sharma, Sanju Samson (WK), Rinku Singh, Tilak Varma, Jitesh Sharma (WK), Hardik Pandya, Axar Patel, Ramandeep Singh, Varun Chakravarthy, Ravi Bishnoi, Arshdeep Singh, Vijaykumar Vyshak, Avesh Khan, Yash Dayal.

South Africa: Aiden Markram (c), Ottneil Baartman, Gerald Coetzee, Donovan Ferreira, Reeza Hendricks, Marco Jansen, Heinrich Klaasen, Patrick Kruger, Keshav Maharaj, David Miller, Mithali Pongwana, Ngaba Peter, Ryan Rickelton, Andile Simelane, Lutho Sipamla (3rd and 4th T20Is), and Tristan Stubbs.

Match starts at 8.30pm IST. (PTI)

Jurel shines, Rahul fails as India A flounder bounce test



MELBOURNE, Nov 7: Dhruv Jurel showcased his sound technique and cool temperament while wickets fell like ninepins at the other end in another shoddy batting display by India A on the opening day of the second unofficial Test against Australia A at the iconic MCG on Thursday.

Jurel (80 off 186 balls), who came to bat in the third over scored nearly half of India A's paltry first innings total of 161 in 57.1 overs with only other batter to cross 20-run mark was Devdutt Padikkal (26).

Veteran KL Rahul (4), opening the batting, done in by a peach of a delivery from Scott Boland (1/51 in 15 overs).

Michael Neser (4/27 in 12.2 overs), one of the finest and unluckiest among contemporary Australian pacers, dealt a telling blow in the opening over from which India A couldn't recover.

At stumps, Australia A were 53 for 2 in reply with Mukesh Kumar again looking best among Indian bowlers.

What stood out during the day was Jurel's composure and ability to play late, using soft hands.

When there was extra bounce, he would quickly loosen his bottom hand grip to ensure that the ball didn't go to slip or gully region.

He judged the length perfectly and the flicked six off Boland was

a treat to watch.

While Rishabh Pant is the first-choice wicketkeeper batter, Jurel's ability to leave deliveries on length should put him in a better position than Sarfaraz Khan in the middle-order batter role.

It was also the day when one got an indication that India senior team might bank on Rahul's experience of opening the innings if Rohit Sharma skips a match.

However, Boland got him with a perfectly pitched up delivery that straightened to take his outside edge.

But Rahul would be any day better than Abhimanyu Easwaran (0) who is increasingly looking out of sorts at this level.

This was after Neser bowled a hostile opening over with Easwaran left in a complete tangle to a well-disguised short ball that ballooned to gully.

In-form Sai Sudharsan (0) then got a Neser delivery that was aimed at his midriff and he tried to fend it, resulting in a regulation catch in the slips.

Skipper Rituraj Gaikwad's suspect technique got exposed when he jabbed with hard hands at a delivery that bounced a tad extra from length to be caught at slips.

Nitish Reddy (16) played the ball didn't go to slip or gully region.

He judged the length perfectly and the flicked six off Boland was

Ranji Trophy: Shreyas Iyer's majestic 233 puts Mumbai in complete command against Odisha

MUMBAI, Nov 7: Shreyas Iyer continued with his red-hot form, smashing a stroke-filled 233 to lead Mumbai to a massive 602 for four declared in their Ranji Trophy Elite Group A match against Odisha, here on Thursday.

Iyer's second consecutive ton in Ranji Trophy also turned out to be his highest score in first-class cricket as the right-hander hammered Odisha all around the park at a strike rate of nearly 103.

Iyer's knock was well complimented by comeback man Siddhesh Lad's 169 not out, who hit 17 fours in his 337-ball innings.

Mumbai added another 217 runs to their overnight score of 385 for three with Iyer and Lad putting on an overall 354 runs for the fourth wicket - now a record for the 42-time winners in the Ranji Trophy.

Home spinners Shams Mulani (2/52) and Himanshu Singh (2/22) then provided crucial breakthroughs to reduce the visitors to 146 for five.

Odisha are still trailing by another 456 runs in the first essay and have Sandeep Pattanaik (73 not out) and Debabrata Pradhan (7) at the crease.

Shardul Thakur provided an early breakthrough when he cleaned up the Odisha opener Swastik Samal for a seven-ball duck.

Odisha recovered strongly as Anurag Sarangi and Pattanaik put on 107 for the second wicket until the former was cleaned up by lanky spinner Himanshu Singh.

Soon after, Mulani had Odisha skipper Govinda Poddar (0) caught behind and Himanshu had Bipal Samantaray (0) caught by Ajinkya Rahane at first slip.

In Pune, Maharashtra slipped to 185 all-out against Services' 293 in the first innings as the visitors took a big 108-run lead in the first innings at the MCA Stadium.

Services were 15/0 in second essay, with an overall lead of 123 runs.

After Hitesh Walunj's five for 103 helped Maharashtra restrict

Services, Amit Shukla returned 7/65 as the hosts were bowled out for 185 despite skipper Ankit Bawane's 73.

At Shillong, visitors Jammu and Kashmir were 16 for one and needed another 59 runs to win after hosts Meghalaya folded for another low score of 195 in the second innings, setting a target of 75 to win.

J&K, who had shot Meghalaya out for a mere 73 in the first innings, made 194 in reply to take a 121-run lead.

At Agartala, hosts Tripura were placed strongly at 192 for one in reply to Baroda's 235 in the first innings.

Bikram Kumar Das (97) fell short of his century but Jivanjot Singh (58 not out) and Tejasvi Jaiswal (34 not out) took them to 192 for one, trailing by another 43 runs.

Brief Scores:

At Mumbai: Mumbai 602/4 decl. in 123.5 overs (Angkrish Raghuvanshi 92, Siddhesh Lad 169*, Shreyas Iyer 233, Suryansh Shedge 79*, Bipal Samantaray 2/57) lead Odisha 146/5 in 49 overs (Sandeep Pattanaik 73 not out; Shams Mulani 2/52, Himanshu Singh 2/22) by 456 runs.

At Pune: Services 293 in 110.3 overs (Suraj Vashisht 79, Shubham Rohilla 67, Ravi Chauhan 59, Rajat Paliwal 57; Hitesh Walunj 5/103) & 15/0 in 6 overs lead Maharashtra 185 in 58.5 overs (Ankit Bawane 73, Amit Shukla 7/65) by 123 runs.

At Shillong: Meghalaya 73 & 195 (Amit Subhas 74; Auqib Nabi 5/60) lead Jammu and Kashmir 194 in 51.4 overs (Abid Mushtaq 37, Aryan 5/42) & 16/1 in 4 overs (Ahmad Sanday 5*; Dipu 1/3) by 59 runs.

At Agartala: Baroda 235 in 82.2 overs (Jyotsnil Singh 46, Atit Sheth 78, Mitesh Patel 49; Abhijit Sarkar 5/74, MB Mura Singh 3/46) lead Tripura 192/1 in 51 overs (Bikram Kumar Das 97, Jivanjot Singh 58*, Tejasvi Jaiswal 34*; Bhargav Bhatt 1/47) by 43 runs. (PTI)

Harmanpreet features in 50-player shortlist for WBBL Team of the Decade

MELBOURNE, Nov 7: Captain Harmanpreet Kaur is the lone entry from India in the 50-player shortlist for the Women's Big Bash League (WBBL) Team of the Decade, which was released on Thursday. The shortlist comprises cricketers who have played a minimum of 60 WBBL matches prior to this season.

The list will be pruned to 12 by a selection panel of experts after taking into account public voting. The public voting will be open between November 11-24 on the Big Bash App.

The Team of the Decade will honour the greatest players from across the 10-year history of the WBBL.

The selection panel is being chaired by Cricket Australia Director Clea Smith, and also includes Mel Jones, Lisa Sthalekar, Matthew Mott, Quentin Hull, Laura Jolly and Alistair Dobson.

Public voting will be given equal importance and the panel will then review and combine those votes with their own selections to finalise the 12-player side, to be announced at



the WBBL 10 final on December 1.

The final XI will have a maximum of three overseas players in keeping with league's rules.

WBBL Team of the Decade shortlist: Sarah Aley, Samantha Bates, Suzie Bates (International), Alex Blackwell, Nicole Bolton, Nicola

Carey, Lauren Cheatle, Sarah Coyte, Hannah Darlington, Sophie Devine (International), Mignon du Preez (International), Jess Duffin, Rene Farrell, Ashleigh Gardner, Heather Graham, Nicola Hancock, Grace Harris, Laura Harris, Rachael Haynes, Alyssa Healy, Sammy-Jo Johnson, Jess Jonassen, Marizanne Kapp (International), Harmanpreet Kaur (International), Delissa Kimmince, Alana King, Heather Knight (International), Meg Lanning, Lizelle Lee (International), Katien Kamm, Hayley Matthews (International), Tahliha McGrath, Tegan McPharlin, Sophie Molineux, Beth Mooney, Ellyse Perry, Rachel Priest (International), Georgia Redmayne, Amy Satterthwaite (International), Megan Schutt, Natalie Sciver-Brunt (International), Molly Strano, Annabel Sutherland, Stafanie Taylor (International), Dane van Niekerk (International), Elyse Villani, Georgia Wareham, Amanda-Jade Wellington, Laura Wolvaardt (International), Danni Wyatt-Hodge (International). (PTI)

Sindhu's academy to come up in Visakhapatnam

VISAKHAPATNAM, Nov 7: Two-time Olympic medalist shuttler PV Sindhu's dream project, the PV Sindhu Centre for Badminton and Sports Excellence, will be set up in the port city here.

The facility will be dedicated to nurturing and empowering athletes across multiple sports and disci-

plines. Sindhu and her Team PVS thanked Andhra Pradesh Chief Minister N Chandrababu Naidu for continued support.

"I'm truly grateful to be building this centre for the incredible people of Vizag. In choosing a location, I couldn't imagine a better place than this wonderful city. This

centre will be a space where athletes of all levels and from any discipline can find a home and a mentor dedicated to guiding the next generation to the top," Sindhu said in a statement.

"I've always dreamed of building a place where young players can truly thrive, with world-class

training and the support they need to reach their full potential. This centre is more than just a facility - it's a call to action.

"As Indian badminton faces challenges in terms of results, I feel it's my responsibility to lead the way and guide the next generation." (PTI)

Annual Sports Day celebrated at Kendriya Vidyalaya Diphu



HT Bureau

DIPHU, Nov 7: PM Shri Kendriya Vidyalaya, Diphu celebrated its Annual Sports Day with great enthusiasm on Thursday. The event, inaugurated by chief guest Arunav Jyoti Baruah, assistant commissioner of Karbi Anglong, commenced with the unfurling of the national flag, followed by a spirited march-past by the four houses—Shivaji, Tagore, Ashoka, and Raman.

Exciting competitions, including kabaddi, relay races, sprints, and tug-of-war, showcased the students' sportsmanship and teamwork. During the awards ceremony, the chief guest presented medals to the winners, applauding their commitment and skill.

The Annual Sports Day emphasised the importance of sports in fostering resilience, teamwork, and a well-rounded education for students at PM Shri Kendriya Vidyalaya Diphu.

Wright was ideal India coach, he gave players free-hand unlike Chappell, Kumble: Sandeep Patil



MUMBAI, Nov 7: The 1983 World Cup winner and ex-chairman of selectors, Sandeep Patil feels John Wright's approach of giving a free-hand to players led to his successful coaching stint with India, something his more authoritarian successors Greg Chappell and Anil Kumble failed to emulate.

In his autobiography -- Beyond Boundaries -- launched here on Wednesday, Patil gave deep insights in his book about the reason behind Wright's success as India

coach vis a vis Chappell and Kumble.

Patil was privy to several developments of the tumultuous Chappell era as he used to attend selection and board meetings in his capacity as the then India A coach.

"Since 2000, India have had an array of international coaches and support staff. This has paid rich dividends, because India's overseas record has improved steadily. It all started with John Wright becoming India's first foreign coach.

"I think John was the ideal coach for India. He was soft spoken, polite, well-mannered, always kept to himself, and was happy to be in Sourav Ganguly's shadow.

"In addition to all that, he kept a distance from the Press. He managed that so well, that he was hardly in the news -- unlike what happened in the Greg Chappell years," Patil wrote in his book.

"With Chappell, he was in the news every day. It is very important for a coach to first understand the policy of that particular board, the thinking of the board members, and the President. He should have a good rapport with the President and the Secretary, and of course the captain and the team. John did that wonderfully."

Patil observed that every player was equal and the team came first for Wright.

"...during his tenure, there was no 'seniors' and 'juniors' business. It was one team. He believed all seniors were leaders in some way. He gave them respect, and a free hand, which I feel Anil Kumble didn't do. Greg Chappell too," he wrote.

The former India coach felt that

Chappell's aggressive approach did not suit the Indian dressing room atmosphere.

"Greg is a very strong personality; very aggressive. The moment Jagmohan Dalmiya said you have a free hand, he thought that he can change everything overnight. John waited, and learnt the system. Greg wanted to change the entire system, the entire thinking, and the selection process," Patil elaborated.

"He introduced flexibility in the Indian team, and he spoiled things for Rahul Dravid, who took over from Ganguly as captain. Irfan (Pathan) was asked to move up the order. Seniors don't like to change numbers, whether it is Sachin Tendulkar, Dravid, or Virender Sehwag.

"The other issue in the Greg Chappell saga was the presence of Ian Fraser as Assistant Coach. Most players didn't like his presence."

Patil said Chappell was in a hurry to introduce the Australian culture in the Indian system.

"Greg wanted to introduce the Australian culture, the Australian way of playing cricket, and the Australian way of thinking. He

could've done it, but he didn't bide his time. That's where I think the rift started, and he was against a few seniors who were not toeing the line.

"Sourav is not a guy who will get up and start running and doing stretches. You need to give him time. I think Greg rubbed seniors the wrong way, though a few seniors didn't speak openly about him - some like Kumble still haven't. It's the same with Dravid. Ironically, Ganguly got him in, but was instrumental in his exit," he wrote.

Patil felt Gary Kirsten turned out to be the most successful Indian coach because of his closeness with the players.

"Gary Kirsten was very successful - you could say most successful, because his squad won the 2011 World Cup. Gary, again, was well-respected and soft-spoken. He had played against the same players and got runs. This counts, in a way.

"Having played in India, he knew what to expect. He also stayed away from the Press, and gave all his 24 hours to the team," he wrote. (PTI)