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 ● Aid groups say Israel misses US deadline to boost humanitarian help for Gaza
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 ● Why has Centre neglected Maharashtra's sugar industry: Cong

BJP-Congress in direct contest in three out of 5 Assam seats
 ● 9000 polling, 1300 security personnel deployed in 1078 polling stations

Stage set for polls after volatile campaigning

HT Bureau
 GUWAHATI, Nov 12: Polling for five assembly seats will take place on Wednesday with BJP taking on Congress in direct contest in three assembly constituencies.

The ruling party is fighting in three seats while its allies—Asom Gana Parishad (AGP) and United People's Party Liberal (UPPL) have given candidates in two places.

A total of 34 candidates are in the fray with most of them being first-timers, according to the Election Commission.

Bye-elections in five assembly constituencies—Dholai, Samaguri, Behali, Bongaigaon, and Sidli became due following the elections of five legislators in the lower house of the parliament in this year's Lok Sabha polls.

Chief Electoral Officer Anurag Goel told PTI that around 9,000 polling personnel have been engaged to ensure smooth voting across 1,078 polling stations in the five seats.

"All polling parties have left for their booths with the EVM units and many of them have already reached their designated places. The security apparatus has also been in place so that



nothing untoward takes place," he said.

A total of 13 companies of Central Armed Police Forces (CAPF), comprising about 1,300 personnel, have been deployed for the by-elections, Goel said.

The Dholai assembly constituency is reserved for the Scheduled Caste (SC) community and the Sidli seat is reserved for the Scheduled Tribe (ST). Clashes between BJP and Congress supporters have been reported almost on a daily basis in Samaguri since the bypoll was an-

nounced. A number of complaints have been filed by both sides before the Election Commission. Except in Samaguri, where Congress heavyweight Rakibul Hussain has been winning since 2001, the rest of the four seats are with the BJP-led alliance.

The BJP has given candidates in three seats—Dholai, Samaguri and Behali. Diplu Ranjan Sarma has been given a ticket in Samaguri while Diganta Ghatowar and Nihar Ranjan Das will fight for the BJP in Behali and Dholai assembly segments respectively.

BJP's former cabinet minister Parimal Suklabaidya successfully contested in the Silchar Lok Sabha seat and his earlier assembly seat Dholai was vacant. Meanwhile, another senior BJP leader Ranjit Dutta was elected to the lower house of the parliament this time. He was representing the Behali seat in the assembly.

Congress leader Rakibul Hussain defeated the three-time AIUDD MP and party chief Badruddin Ajmal in the Dhubri Lok Sabha seat with a margin of more than 10 lakh votes reinforcing his status as a five-time legislator from the Samaguri assembly seat. (CONTD. ON PAGE-2)

Four killed as car falls from under-construction culvert



TINSUKIA, Nov 12: At least four people, including a five-year-old child, were killed when the car they were travelling fell from an under-construction culvert in Assam's Tinsukia district

on Tuesday, police said.

The car carrying six members of a family fell from the under-construction culvert near Dihingia Gaon on the Tinsukia-Dibrugarh bypass at

around 4 am, an official told PTI. "Four of the six passengers, including a 5-year-old child, died on the spot. The two others sustained critical injuries and were rushed to Assam Medical College and Hospital in Dibrugarh for immediate treatment," he added.

The family, hailing from Bihar, was coming from Dibrugarh to attend a wedding in Tinsukia when the accident occurred.

The deceased has been identified as Mohan Shah, Rajesh Gupta, Montu Shah and child Arthav Gupta.

"We believe that the incident took place due to poor visibility of the road on account of dense fog and absence of proper signage," the police officer said.

Local residents have expressed concern about the incomplete state of the bypass, particularly the unfinished culvert. (PTI)

Situation remains tense in Jiribam, patrolling on

IMPHAL, Nov 12: A day after the killing of eleven suspected militants in a gunfight with security forces in Manipur's Jiribam district, the situation there remained calm but tense on Tuesday morning with policemen patrolling at vulnerable points, officials said.

The district administration imposed prohibitory orders to avoid any untoward incident in the area, while an operation was launched to trace missing persons, they said.

A shutdown has been observed since 5 am on Tuesday in Kuki-Zo majority areas in the hills to protest against the killing of suspected insurgents, the officials said.

Eleven suspected militants were killed in a fierce gunfight with security forces on Monday after insurgents in camouflage uniforms, armed with sophisticated weapons, fired indiscriminately at a police station and an adjacent CRPF camp in Jiribam district, they said. Two CRPF personnel also sustained injuries during the heavy exchange of fire at Borobekra, and the condition of one of them was stated to (CONTD. ON PAGE-2)

STF nabs drug peddler in Khanapara

HT Bureau
 GUWAHATI, Nov 12: Acting on a tip-off, the Special Task Force (STF) of Assam Police conducted a raid in Khanapara under the Basistha Police Station jurisdiction on Tuesday afternoon, leading to the arrest of a suspected drug peddler.

During the operation, the STF seized 21 vials containing 28 grams of suspected heroin, along with a mobile phone and Rs 340 in cash.

The accused, identified as Rahul Patir, originally hails from the Matmora village in Lakhimpur district. The 23-year-old is currently residing in Ri-Bhoi, Meghalaya.

Assam Police have confirmed that all necessary legal formalities are being completed, and further investigations are underway to determine Patir's network and potential connections.

Boundary dispute with Meghalaya to be resolved soon: KAAC chief



HT Correspondent
DONGKAMUKAM, Nov 12: Chief Executive Member (CEM) of the Karbi Anglong Autonomous Council (KAAC), Tuliram Ronghang, announced that the long-standing inter-state boundary dispute with Meghalaya

will be resolved soon. Ronghang was speaking during a land patta distribution event at Baithalango Serdihun Aklam in West Karbi Anglong. "The long-standing inter-state boundary issue with Meghalaya will be (CONTD. ON PAGE-2)

No reservation to Muslim candidates in admissions: AMU

ALIGARH, Nov 12: The Aligarh Muslim University (AMU) has denied claims that it extends reservation on religious grounds to Muslim candidates in admissions and recruitment, asserting that it has no such system in place. The university said this in a statement on Monday, days after the Supreme Court held that the legal question over the AMU's minority status would be decided by a new bench and overruled a 1967 judgment that said the university cannot be considered a minority institution since it was created by a central law.

AMU officials have been denying for the last three days claims that a system of reservation of seats for Muslims is being implemented in student admissions and employment of staff at the university.

"The Aligarh Muslim University gives no reservation to Muslim candidates either in admissions in different courses offered by the university or in the recruitment, as has been reported by some media outlets, after the recent judgement of the seven-judge bench of the Supreme Court of India," Prof Mohammad Asim Siddiqui of the AMU's Public Relations Office said in the statement.

"AMU has an internal quota system for the students passing out from the schools run by the university. When these students seek admission in the university, they are considered internal and 50 per cent of seats are reserved for them regardless of their religion or faith, subject to eligibility requirements," it said. Siddiqui added, "Reports about reserving seats for Muslim candidates in AMU are false and misleading."

While referring to the university's minority status at a rally here on November 9, Uttar Pradesh chief minister Yogi Adityanath said the matter is being decided by the Supreme Court, but added, "Such an institution, which is nurtured by India's resources and runs on public taxes, does not give reservation to the backwards, scheduled caste or tribal people, but is arranging 50 per cent reservation for Muslims." "The Constitution of India provides reservation to the people of backward castes based on the reports of Scheduled Castes-Tribes and (CONTD. ON PAGE-2)

UK backs for India's permanent UNSC seat

'Expansion essential to better reflect the world today'

LONDON, Nov 12: The UK has reiterated its support for permanent membership for India in the United Nations Security Council (UNSC) as part of an expansion of the international panel to ensure it can continue to rise to the pressing challenges faced by the world.

In an address to a UN General Assembly plenary in New York on Monday, UK Ambassador to the General Assembly Archie Young reflected upon Prime Minister Keir Starmer's statement at the UNGA back in September calling for UNSC reforms to ensure the global multilateral system is "more representative and more responsive".

Besides India, Young stressed that the UK wants permanent representation for Africa, Brazil, Germany and Japan.

"The UK believes that a reformed Council, coupled with a collective, re-



newed commitment to the UN Charter, would strengthen the Council, so it can continue to rise to the challenges the world is facing; that is why we remain a strong supporter of UN Security Council Reform. The Council must be expanded, to better reflect the world today," said

Young. "We continue to support an expansion in both the permanent and non-permanent categories of membership to a total in the mid-twenties. We want to see permanent African representation, and permanent seats for Brazil, Germany, India and Japan," he said.

Reflecting on the 2023 Security Council reform agenda at the UN General Assembly, Britain's UN representative recalled the perilous and dangerous state of the world at the time and the challenge this posed to the multilateral system.

He noted: "A year later, the situation is even more acute, and the need to strengthen our multilateral system through reform, ever more pressing."

"During his address to the UN General Assembly in September, my Prime Minister reflected on the increasingly complex and (CONTD. ON PAGE-2)

National seminar on 75 years of Sixth Schedule begins in Diphu

Indigenous tribes vital for ecosystem: Wangchuk

HT Bureau
DIPHU, Nov 12: A two-day national seminar on the "75th Year of the Sixth Schedule," organized by the Karbi Anglong Autonomous Council (KAAC) in association with the Centre for Karbi Studies, Diphu, and the Department of Political Science at Assam University Diphu campus, kicked off at the Diphu Arboretum-cum-craft centre on Tuesday.

In the inaugural session, renowned climate activist and Ramon Magsaysay Awardee Sonam Wangchuk from Ladakh graced the occasion as the chief guest.

Wangchuk emphasised that strengthening indigenous tribes is crucial for preserving the fragile ecosystem in the region. He also noted that around 2 billion people depend on the Himalayas for water, with the northern part of India, southern China, and Tibet relying on mountain glaciers and a delicate ecology that sustains a quarter of the global population.

"Indigenous communities are the best stewards of these regions, having preserved them for thousands of years. However, in Ladakh, where there is a council but no legislative power due to the lack of inclusion in the Sixth Schedule, governance relies on bureaucrats with short-term assignments, which risks harming the environment for future generations in pursuit of profit," added Wangchuk.

Wangchuk also expressed gratitude to the KAAC and the Centre for Karbi Studies for providing a platform for people from across the Northeast and stu-



dents to learn about the Sixth Schedule.

He pointed out that while most Sixth Schedule areas have around 50 per cent indigenous populations, Ladakh has 95 per cent indigenous tribal people.

He further recalled that the ruling party had made written promises in 2019-2020 to include Ladakh in the Sixth Schedule and expressed hope that the government would consider this commitment.

KAAC executive member Surya Rongphar shared his experiences with the functioning of the Autonomous Council, describing the Karbi Anglong Autonomous Council as a model Sixth Schedule Council. Despite 70 years of experience with the Sixth Schedule, Rongphar highlighted contradictions between the state and the Council.

Dhrupadi Asamiya Bhasha award conferred to Nagen Saikia



HT Correspondent
DIBRUGARH, Nov 12: Dhrupadi Asamiya Bhasha Award was conferred to the ex-president of Axom Xahatiya Sabha Dr Nagen Saikia by the Guwahati Literature Festival on Tuesday.

The officials of the Guwahati Literature Festival handed over the award to Saikia at his residence.

He was conferred the prestigious

award for his profound contributions to Assamese literature and his commitment to the promotion of the Assamese language.

Saikia was formerly a professor at Dibrugarh University's Assamese Department. He had also been a member of the Rajya Sabha from 1886-1992 and was the vice-chairman of the Upper House from 1990-1992. (CONTD. ON PAGE-2)

Zero-error entrance tests: Education Minister seeks support from states

'Zero error responsibility of both Centre and state'

NEW DELHI, Nov 12: Union Education Minister Dharmendra Pradhan on Tuesday announced that the Centre is introducing various reforms in the entrance examinations in the country beginning in January and appealed to the state governments to extend their support for zero-error entrance tests.

Pradhan said that the Radhakrishnan panel has submitted its report outlining reforms in the National Testing Agency (NTA) and to implement the recommendations, the cooperation of states is essential.

"I have appealed to all state government education secretaries. A new entrance exam series for the upcoming year will begin in January. Based on last year's experiences, the government has introduced numerous reforms," he told reporters on the sidelines of a national workshop on higher and technical education attended by secretaries of states and Union territories (UTs).

"The Radhakrishnan committee has submitted its recommendations and to implement



them, the states' cooperation is essential. I have appealed to everyone on this matter, especially regarding entrance examinations."

"Bringing examinations, especially entrance exams, to zero error is the responsibility of both the Government of India and the state governments. We will work as a team to build confidence in the children of our country," the education minister added.

In the line of fire over alleged irregularities in the medical entrance examination NEET and PhD entrance NET, the Centre had in June set up the panel headed by former ISRO chief K Radhakrishnan to ensure transparent, smooth and fair conduct of examinations by the NTA.

While NEET was under the scanner over several irregularities, including alleged leaks, UGC-NET was cancelled as the ministry received inputs that the integrity of the exam had been compromised. Both matters are being probed by the CBI.

Two other exams – CSIR-UGC NET and NEET PG – were cancelled at the last moment as a pre-emptive step.

The panel also includes former AIIMS Delhi director Randeep Guleria, Central University of Hyderabad Vice-Chancellor B J Rao, Professor Emeritus in the Department of Civil Engineering at IIT Madras K Ramamurthy, People Strong co-founder and Karmayogi Bharat board member Pankaj Bansal, IIT Delhi Dean of Student Affairs Aditya Mittal (CONTD. ON PAGE-2)

'Water conservation important to achieve development goals'

GUWAHATI, Nov 12: Union Jal Shakti Minister CR Paatil on Tuesday stressed the need to work for water conservation, utilising technological interventions for it, to achieve the goal of a developed India.

He said if measures are not adopted for the conservation and management of water now, future generations will hold today's generation accountable.

Paatil was speaking at the 13th High Powered Review Board meeting of the Brahmaputra Board and the inauguration of the two-day Springshed Management Workshop 2024 here.

The minister emphasised the urgent need for a national commitment to water conservation and said, "It is high time for all of us to focus on conserving our water sources and managing them wisely to protect them for future generations." An official release said the High Powered Review meeting took stock of initiatives to advance the Brahmaputra Board's strategic goals, including a transformation plan, recruitment and deputation policy reviews, remote work provisions, basin and sub-basin master plan assessments and effective utilisation of EFC-approved river basin management funds.

Several key decisions were made to enhance the Board's operational capacity. Plans were approved to establish a Central Planning Unit (CPU) and Project Management Unit (PMU) at the Board's headquarters for better oversight and project execution.

Additionally, specialised cells focused on information technology, artificial intelligence, data management, media and communication, monitoring and quality management, GIS and remote sensing, and international cooperation to build institutional expertise.

The high-level meeting was attended by senior officials and ministers responsible for water resources and related sectors from Arunachal Pradesh, Meghalaya, Mizoram, Manipur, Tripura and Nagaland, under the ministry of Jal Shakti. The Springshed Management Workshop, organised by the Brahmaputra Board, brought together stakeholders to discuss strategies for spring preservation and (CONTD. ON PAGE-2)

Sensex tanks 821 pts on FII selling, weak global trends

Investors lose over ₹ 5 lakh cr in single day

MUMBAI, Nov 12: Benchmark BSE Sensex tumbled by nearly 821 points or more than 1 per cent and broader Nifty plunged below 23,900 level on Tuesday due to heavy selling in banking, power and auto shares and sluggish global trends.

The 30-share Sensex tumbled 820.97 points or 1.03 per cent to settle at 78,675.18 with 25 of its constituents ending lower and five higher. During the day, it plunged 948.31 points or 1.19 per cent to 78,547.84.

Falling for the fourth day running, the NSE Nifty tanked 257.85 points or 1.07 per cent to close at 23,883.45. As many as 46 Nifty stocks closed lower and four higher.

Investors' wealth eroded by ₹ 5.29 lakh crore to ₹ 437.24 lakh crore (USD 5.18 trillion).

From the 30-share Sensex pack, NTPC, Asian Paints, HDFC Bank, State Bank of India, Tata Motors, JSW Steel, Maruti and Power Grid were among the major laggards.

On the other hand, Sun Pharma, Infosys and ICICI Bank were the gainers. "FII-triggered selling pressure continued to impact the domestic market. The recent



strengthening of the dollar, driven by aggressive 'Trumponomics' is adding fears," Vinod Nair, Head of Research, Geojit Financial Services said.

Foreign institutional investors offloaded equities worth ₹ 2,306.88 crore on Monday, while domestic institutional investors infused ₹ 2,026.63 crore in shares, according to exchange data.

"The markets remained under pressure, shedding over a per cent, extending the ongoing correction phase. Despite an initial uptick, Nifty witnessed sharp swings in the first half before selling pressure

in heavyweight stocks shifted the momentum downward," Ajit Mishra - SVP, Research, Religare Broking Ltd, said.

Analysts said investors also turned cautious ahead of inflation and IIP data which were released after market hours.

Official data released on Tuesday showed retail inflation rose to 6.21 per cent in October from 5.49 per cent in the preceding month mainly due to higher food prices, breaching the Reserve Bank of India's (RBI's) upper tolerance level.

India's industrial production

growth slowed down to 3.1 per cent in September from 6.4 per cent in September 2023.

The BSE smallcap gauge tanked 1.26 per cent and midcap index declined by 0.98 per cent.

Among sectoral indices, power slumped the most 2.79 per cent, followed by utilities (2.20 per cent), capital goods (2.14 per cent), auto (1.95 per cent), industrials (1.82 per cent) and metal (1.52 per cent).

Realty and Focused IT were the gainers.

A total of 2,742 stocks declined while 1,226 advanced and 93 remained unchanged on the BSE.

In Asian markets, Seoul, Tokyo, Shanghai and Hong Kong settled in the negative territory. European equity markets were also trading in the red. Wall Street ended higher on Monday.

Global oil benchmark Brent crude climbed 0.56 per cent to USD 72.23 a barrel.

After gyrating between highs and lows, the BSE benchmark eked out a marginal gain of 9.83 points or 0.01 per cent to settle at 79,496.15 on Monday. The Nifty dipped marginally by 6.90 points or 0.03 per cent to 24,141.30. (PTI)

Rupee slips 1 paisa to fresh all-time low of 84.39 against US dollar

MUMBAI, Nov 12: The rupee fell 1 paisa to a new lifetime low of 84.39 against the US dollar on Tuesday as persistent foreign fund outflows and a strengthening greenback against major crosses overseas dented investor sentiments.

Forex traders said the rupee is likely to trade between 83.80 and 84.50 in the medium term, with the Reserve Bank of India likely limiting any significant downside, aided by its robust foreign exchange reserves.

At the interbank foreign exchange, the rupee opened at 84.39 against the US dollar. During the session, the local currency touched a high of 84.38 and a low of 84.41. It finally settled at 84.39, a decline of just 1 paisa against the US currency, registering the loss for the fifth straight session.

On Monday, the rupee dropped 1 paisa to hit a new lifetime low of 84.38 against the US dollar.

In the last five sessions, the local unit has lost 32 paise against the greenback. "The rupee traded weaker as foreign funds continued

their selling spree in the Indian market. However, the rupee received some relief from falling crude and gold prices, as the reduced pace of decline could potentially improve India's import bill in the coming months," said Jateen Trivedi, VP Research Analyst - Commodity and Currency, LKP Securities. Despite this, the dollar index's continued strength above 105 is expected to maintain pressure on the rupee, limiting any significant recovery in the near term.

"With resistance near the 84.25-84.30 zone and support is seen lower at 84.55. This week's focus will be on the US CPI data release, which could influence the dollar's trajectory. Additionally, US Fed Chairperson Jerome Powell's upcoming speech is expected to provide insights that may drive price action in the dollar, currently trading at a four-month high of 105.75," Trivedi said.

Meanwhile, the dollar index, which gauges the greenback's strength against a basket of six currencies, was trading 0.06 per cent higher at 105.60. Brent crude, the

global oil benchmark, rose 0.60 per cent to USD 72.26 per barrel in futures trade.

In the domestic equity market, the 30-share BSE Sensex fell 820.97 points, or 1.03 per cent, to close at 78,675.18 points, while Nifty fell 257.85 points, or 1.07 per cent, to settle at 23,883.45 points.

Foreign Institutional Investors (FIIs) were net sellers in the capital markets on Tuesday, as they offloaded shares worth Rs 3,024.31 crore, according to exchange data.

"The rupee traded almost flat in a narrow range but was seen touching a new record low around 84.42 while the Indian central bank continued to sell dollars supporting the rupee. It was also pressured by a Chinese Yuan-led decline in Asian currencies," said Manesh Sharma, AVP - Commodities & Currencies, Anand Rathi Shares and Stock Brokers.

Meanwhile, an SBI research report on Monday said that the rupee may depreciate 8-10 per cent against the US dollar during the Trump 2.0 regime. (PTI)

Contd. from Page 1.

Stage set for polls after

Meanwhile, another ally of the BJP—Asom Gana Parishad (AGP) will contest polls in the Bongaigaon assembly constituency. United People's Party Liberal (UPPL) gave a ticket to Nirmal Kumar Brahma, who is the current district president of the party in Chirang.

Meanwhile, CM Sarma said, "We will comfortably win four seats and there is a contest in one seat. However, there are possibilities that the BJP and our allies can win all five assembly seats in the upcoming by-elections." The chief minister asserted that the people have been connected with the ruling party and they are happy with the government's performance.

The Samaguri assembly constituency has witnessed sporadic pre-poll violence with supporters of BJP and Congress clashing with each other on several occasions. On late Saturday night when suspected armed criminals opened fire on a BJP march that included Barhampur MLA Jitu Goswami, injuring at least three people. Attackers targeted BJP politicians taking part in the march, including MLA Goswami, in the Moriputhi neighbourhood of Samaguri.

According to witnesses, the attackers first pelted stones at the participants before striking them with sticks. Three people were then hurt when unidentified persons opened fire on the group. The attack also caused some damage to Goswami's car. Reacting to the incident, chief minister Himanta Biswa Sarma aimed at the Congress party alleging that the opposition party which does photo-op with the Constitution is actually resorting to violence and attacking the BJP workers. Sarma claimed that Congress has resorted to violence not because of fearing defeat in the elections but because its fundamental vote bank has made the opposition workers do such extreme things. (With inputs from PTI)

Boundary dispute with Meghalaya

solved soon. Similarly, the border problem between Assam and Nagaland will also see a resolution," the KAAC CEM said.

Ronghang further described the free land patta distribution as a "historic day" for the hill tribes. The remaining land pattas will be distributed in phases. The CEM urged people to have faith in the KAAC, noting that the status of the Professional Grazing Reserve (PGR) and Village Grazing Reserve lands will soon be clarified. He also announced that major road connectivity projects from rural to urban areas are on track for completion.

Besides this, a White Paper on the PGR land in Kheroni (Hawaipur) was released by CEM Tuliram Ronghang on the occasion.

On the other hand, MP Amar Sing Tisso, in his speech, informed that the Annual Pattas being issued now will be converted into Meadi Pattas next year. A total of 10,000 pattas were distributed. The event was attended by MLAs Rupsing Teron and Darsing Ronghang, KAAC chairman Raju Tisso, West Karbi Anglong DC Sarangapani Sharma, SP Indranil Barua, and traditional Karbi King Ramsing Ronghang.

UK backs for India's permanent

interconnected challenges the world, and our multilateral system, are facing," he said.

"Conflict touches more countries now than at any time in the history of the United Nations, exacting a terrible human toll in Ukraine, Gaza, Sudan, and elsewhere in the world. The Security Council's role - and its responsibility for international peace and security - is as important now as it has ever been," he added. Young admitted that agreeing on a model of reform for the Security Council will be "difficult" but asserted the importance of tackling the issue.

"It is incumbent on all of us to work together, in the spirit of compromise, to deliver the change we know is needed. The UK is committed to doing just that, and we look forward to detailed and constructive discussions in the intergovernmental negotiations, which we hope will move us forward towards text-based negotiations," he added.

The UK's intervention came as India's Permanent Representative to the UN Parvathaneni Harish also focussed his address at the plenary session on urgent UNSC reform. "As we begin this year's deliberations, we note that the reform of the UN Security Council was once again identified as a critical and immediate priority at the summit of the future discussions by our leaders. However, in spite of several decades of collective reiteration of this sentiment, it is disheartening that we have had no results to show in this regard since 1965 when the Council was last expanded in the non-permanent category alone," he said. (PTI)

Situation remains tense in Jiribam,

be critical, they said. Following this incident, fresh violence was reported from multiple places in Imphal Valley where armed groups from the two warring sides engaged in exchanges of fire, police said. The Kuki-Zo Council called for a total shutdown in the hill areas of the state from 5 am to 6 pm on Tuesday to express their "collective grief and solidarity who were brutally shot dead".

In a series of attacks, the suspected militants torched several shops and houses in and around the Jakurador Karong market, besides the Borobekra police station and the CRPF camp located adjacent to it. As the security forces retaliated, a heavy exchange of fire began and 11 suspected militants were killed, the officials said. The exchange of fire lasted 40-45 minutes, following which the situation was brought under control, the police said.

Operations were continuing to flush out militants, and reinforcement teams consisting of Assam Rifles, CRPF and police were rushed to the spot, the police said. On Monday evening, violent clashes were reported from various villages in Imphal West and Imphal East districts, the officials added. (PTI)

No reservation to Muslim

Mandal Commission, but why is this facility not available in AMU," he posed. Adityanath also argued that when the country's money is being invested in the university, people should get the benefit of reservation there too. Last Friday, the Supreme Court deferred the question of AMU's minority status to a new bench. In a majority verdict headed by the then Chief Justice of India (CJI) D Y Chandrachud, the bench laid down tests for considering the issue of AMU's minority status. The 4:3 majority judgment authored by Chandrachud said, "The view taken in Azeez Basha (1967 verdict) that an educational institution is not established by minority if it derives its legal character through a statute, is overruled." (PTI)

Dhrupadi Asamiya Bhasha award

He has published numerous literary essays, short stories, novels, books and articles to his credit. He was conferred with the Sahitya Akademi award in 1997 for his short stories collection Andhar Nizara Mukh and was honoured by the Mohan Chandra Sahitya Sabha in 1970 for Chinta aru Charcha. Saikia was also conferred the Sahitya Akademi Fellowship, the highest honour conferred by the Sahitya Akademi on the most distinguished Indian writers.

Zero-error entrance tests: Education

and MoE Joint Secretary Govind Jaiswal. The committee was also been tasked with examining the existing security protocols related to the setting of the papers and other processes for various examinations and making recommendations to enhance the robustness of the system.

"The report mainly focuses on strengthening the NTA. There are recommendations to make the examination centre selection process foolproof, addressing previous loopholes in the system. Recommendations have also been made regarding the type of examination to be conducted and the necessary dos and don'ts to ensure effectiveness," Pradhan said.

The committee proposed a gradual transition to online tests, a hybrid model with digitally transmitted question papers, and a multi-stage NEET-UG format to lessen students' stress and improve evaluation accuracy. It also recommended streamlining subject options in CUET to emphasise general aptitude and core subjects and increasing permanent staffing at NTA to ensure consistent, secure exam processes. (PTI)

'Water conservation important

sustainable water resource management, underscoring the Centre's commitment to innovative water conservation. (PTI)

PSBs show robust performance in H1, business grows 11 pc: FinMin

NEW DELHI, Nov 12: The finance ministry on Tuesday said public sector banks (PSBs) have shown robust performance in the first half of the current fiscal year with a 26 per cent growth in net profit, increase in business and decline in non-performing assets (NPAs).

The aggregate business of 12 public sector banks (PSBs), including State Bank of India and Punjab National Bank, stood at ₹ 236.04 lakh crore during the April-September period, registering an 11 per cent year-on-year (YoY) growth.

During the first six months of FY25, credit and deposit portfolio grew 12.9 per cent and 9.5 per cent YoY, and stood at ₹102.29 lakh crore and ₹ 133.75 lakh crore, respectively.

The operating and net profit during the period was ₹1,50,023 crore (14.4 per cent YoY growth) and ₹

85,520 crore (25.6 per cent YoY growth).

The gross and net NPA stood at 3.12 per cent and 0.63 per cent, respectively, in September 2024, declining 108 bps and 34 bps YoY.

In a statement, the finance ministry said banking sector reforms and regular monitoring have addressed many concerns and challenges, and resulted in setting up enhanced systems and processes for credit discipline, recognition and resolution of stressed assets, responsible lending, improved governance, financial inclusion initiatives, technology adoption, etc.

"These measures have led to a sustained financial health and robustness of the banking sector as a whole, which is reflected in the current performance of the PSBs," the statement added.

PSBs have also shown significant progress in adopting new age

technologies like AI/cloud/blockchain, etc., upgrade of existing digital infrastructure, putting in place necessary systems/controls to tackle cyber security risks and taking multiple steps to provide best-in-class customer services, it said.

The ministry further said major banking reforms such as implementation of enhance access and service excellence (EASE), enactment of Insolvency and Bankruptcy Code (IBC), putting in place a robust governance framework, setting up of National Asset Reconstruction Company Ltd (NARCL), amalgamation of PSBs, among others, were undertaken in the last few years.

The review meetings chaired by Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman also facilitated deliberations on a range of current and emerging issues with the chief executives of PSBs. (PTI)

Factory output turns positive, rises 3.1 pc in Sept

NEW DELHI, Nov 12: India's industrial production expanded by 3.1 per cent in September after recording a contraction in the preceding month, as all three major segments -- mining, manufacturing and power generation -- showed improvement.

However, the growth in the Index of Industrial Production (IIP) during the month was lower than 6.4 per cent registered in September 2023. The factory output had turned negative in August at (-) 0.1 per cent, mainly on account of floods affecting mining operations in the different parts of the country.

According to the data released by the National Statistics Office (NSO), mining sector output grew by 0.2 per cent, manufacturing production by 3.9 per cent and electricity output by 0.5 per cent in the month of September 2024. In August, the mining sector output contracted by 4.3 per cent and power generation by 3.7 per cent. The growth in manufacturing too was muted at 1.1 per cent. "The IIP growth rate for the month of September 2024 is 3.1 per cent which was (-) 0.1 per cent in the month of August 2024," NSO said in a statement. During April-September 2024-25,

the IIP growth was 4 per cent lower than 6.2 per cent in the year ago. As per the use-based classification released by the NSO, the capital goods segment growth decelerated to 2.8 per cent in September 2024 from 8.4 per cent in the year-ago month.

Consumer non-durables output grew by 2 per cent against a growth of 2.7 per cent in September 2023.

Consumer durable goods production expanded by 6.5 per cent during the reporting month, up from one per cent in September 2023.

According to the data, infrastructure/construction goods reported a growth of 3.3 per cent in September 2024, down from a 10.1 per cent expansion in the year-ago period.

The data also showed that the output of primary goods rose by 1.8 per cent as against a growth of 8 per cent a year earlier. The expansion in the intermediate goods segment was 4.2 per cent. Commenting on the data, Aditi Nayar, chief economist, ICRA said that the IIP expanded by 3.1 per cent on a year-on-year basis in September 2024 after declining by 0.1 per cent in August 2024, amid a favourable base. (PTI)

Eastern India better insured to handle post-retirement blues than rest of country, says study

KOLKATA, Nov 12: People in Eastern India are better prepared to take on retired life than their counterparts in the country's North, South or West, thanks to their enhanced saving propensity for their future, a study reveals.

According to the findings of the fourth edition of the India Retirement Index Study (IRIS), conducted by Max Life Insurance Company in partnership with KANTAR, a marketing data and analytics company, East India outshone other regions, scoring an impressive 54 on the Retirement Index, significantly higher than North and South India, both at 48, and West India at 49, as well as the national average of 49.

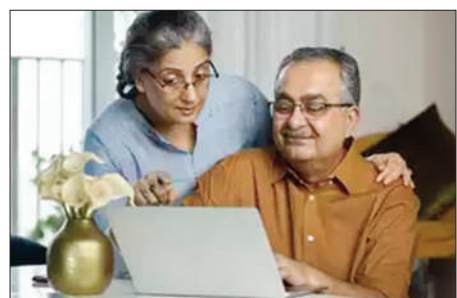
India retirement index is the degree to which Indians feel prepared for retired life on a scale 0 to 100. It is based on how prepared the country is for a healthy, peaceful and financially independent post-retirement life, surveyors explained. The survey, according to officials, is aimed at understanding the retirement readiness of urban India, with insights into awareness, aspirations and challenges of consumers during retirement and its planning.

The study further revealed that about 72 per cent of East Indians are investing specifically for retirement even as 82 per cent of the region's investors were confident about maintaining their health through retirement.

The corresponding retirement investment figures for West, North and South India stood at 66 per cent, 60 per cent and 58 per cent respectively, officials said.

The investment figures for retirement in the eastern region rose by a significant 5 per cent compared to 67 per cent last year and life insurance remained the preferred financial product, with 68 per cent choosing it for retirement security, the IRIS 4.0 study revealed.

Notably, East India also led in National Pension System (NPS) ownership, with nearly one in four holding an NPS account. Financial prod-



uct awareness among the respondents from the region was also high, with 97 per cent of individuals aware of life insurance and about 90 per cent having awareness of health insurance, the study found. The East India survey was conducted across six urban hotspots Ranchi, Jamshedpur, Patna, Cuttack, Guwahati and Kolkata during June-July this year amid respondents belonging to the age group of 25-65 years, officials said, while claiming that the country-wide survey was conducted across 28 cities.

The IRIS findings, highlighting a "strong shift in retirement readiness among the respondents in East India", claimed that around 56 per cent advocated for retirement planning before turning 35 years of age and that 94 per cent among those over 50 expressed regret for not starting earlier.

"Retirement planning is becoming increasingly important for Indians, especially given rising life expectancy. It's encouraging to see people in the region prioritizing financial stability, health, and emotional well-being by starting to plan early," said Rahul Talwar, EVP & Chief Marketing Officer, Max Life.

On the issues of retirement-related anxieties, the study finds that basic needs and child support decreased in the region with fewer people worried about meeting basic requirements (62 per cent) and children's futures (64 per cent).

Health awareness, the study claims, remains strong in the East with 82 per cent of respondents confident about staying healthy through retirement. An increase in regular health check-ups also demonstrated a proactive approach to health management, the findings stated.

However, despite the robust emotional security expressed by people in the region, with nearly 95 per cent respondents expressing confidence in the support of family and friends during retirement, feelings of loneliness persisted among a significant section with some 64 per cent of people expressing concerns about it, and 76 per cent sharing worries about changing environmental factors, such as global warming and pollution, which could affect retired life.

In East India, one in every four individuals still feels that during retired life, they will have to depend on other family members, the IRIS data claimed. The survey also revealed that as many as one in every three East Indians prioritized medical needs and children's future in their retirement plans with an overwhelming majority of respondents wishing to live close to their children post-retirement, reinforcing the importance of familial support even within nuclear households.

"The findings offer a deeper understanding of evolving retirement needs and priorities, and we believe they will inspire a more proactive approach to holistic retirement planning across the country," Talwar maintained.

These findings, officials believe, will guide the insurance sector to create tailored, innovative solutions that address both the financial and health aspects of retirement. "Moving forward, our focus will be on building more awareness around early planning, enhancing retirement-specific products, and driving initiatives that foster comprehensive well-being—financial, physical, and emotional—during the golden years," Talwar added. (PTI)

ACYPA inaugurates new office in Chandrapur

HT Correspondent

BOKAJAN, Nov 12: The office of the Bokajan Regional Committee of the Anti-Corruption Youth Power of Assam was opened at Chandrapur here in the presence of Bijoy Boro, president of the Bokajan Regional Committee of the Anti-Corruption Youth Power of Assam. Guluk Das, secretary of the central committee, ACYPA, inaugurated the office.

The president of ACYPA Karbi Anglong, Citra Boruah, stated that their office was previously located at the Bokajan CCI Gate, but due to certain encumbrances, they had to relocate.

Secretary of Karbi Anglong, Sarsing Tisso, president of the Khatkhati Press Club, Anand Terang; and others attended the inauguration of the ACYPA office.

Two injured in collision

HT Correspondent

MARGHERITA, Nov 12: On Tuesday morning, a fully loaded Max pickup vehicle carrying illegal peak posts from the Ledo Maulang area collided at the Nagchuri illegal coal mine located in 1 Number Malu village of Ledo, under Margherita Police Station in Tinsukia district.

Two people driving the vehicle were seriously injured and were taken to Tinsukia Civil Hospital for treatment.

Experts convene in Diphu for agriculture discussion

HT Bureau

DIPHU, Nov 12: An agriculture development officer (ADO) meet and cluster meeting for agriculture extension assistants (AEA) was held in the conference hall of the Agriculture Department in Diphu.

A team of scientists, including Dr GK Chowdhury, former director (Crops) at the Ministry of Agriculture, government of India, and now senior consultant at the International Crops Research Institute for the Semi-Arid Tropics (ICRISAT); Dr MM Kalita, former director of Agriculture; Dr Suryakanta Khandei, senior associate scientist at the International Rice Research Institute (IRRI); Dr Moses Shyam, scientist at ICRISAT; and Dayamoy Singha, chief scientist of AAU-Zonal Research Station, Diphu, along with the district agriculture officer (DAO), sub-divisional agriculture officer (SDAO), additional director of agriculture (ADA) (Hills), ADOs, AEAs, and other agricultural staff, were present to discuss Jhum cultivation and other agriculture-related issues.

On Monday, the team of scientists also visited Jhum cultivation areas in Kaipani, Rongmongve, where they observed black gram and maize demonstration areas under the Department of Agriculture.

The team also interacted with local farmers and observed various types of local crops and seeds preserved by the farmers.

Dima Hasao officials visit Bodoland to learn from cooperative models

HT Bureau

GUWAHATI, Nov 12: A 13-member delegation from the Cooperation Department of Dima Hasao, Haflong, and Board Members of Large Area Multi-Purpose Societies (LAMPS) C S Ltd is on a two-day visit to Bodoland.

The objective of the visit is to study and gain insights from the successful cooperative societies and business models in Bodoland. Led by Irene Lahong, SRCS (A), the delegation includes key officials and board members. Their itinerary comprises visits to the offices of the Addl. Registrar of Co-operative Societies cum CHD, Kokrajhar, and DRCS, Chirang, as well as several cooperative societies in the Bodoland Territorial Region (BTR), such as the Refinery Consumer C S Ltd, Dhalgaon, Pearl Cultivation Center at Ghoshkata, and various Primary Agricultural Credit Societies (PACS).

Jayanta Kherkatary, CHD, Co-

operation of BTC, warmly welcomed the delegation and provided insights into the department's initiatives to strengthen the cooperative movement in the region under the leadership of BTC Chief Executive Member Pramod Boro and BTC Executive Member Ukil Muchahary. He highlighted successful projects like pearl cultivation, multi-cropping, and model PACS etc.

The delegation from Dima Hasao expressed their appreciation for the warm hospitality and the opportunity to learn from Bodoland's cooperative success stories. They plan to apply the knowledge gained from this visit to enhance the cooperative movement in their own region. They also extended their gratitude to E M i/c Cooperation, North Cachar Hills Autonomous Council, Samsing Terang, and principal secretary, North Cachar Hills Autonomous Council, T T Daulagup, for facilitating this visit.

State declares paid holiday for by-election voting



HT Bureau

GUWAHATI, Nov 12: In a bid to promote democratic engagement, the Assam government has declared November 13, 2024, a paid holiday for employees in five key assembly constituencies holding by-elections. This proactive measure, approved by the Governor and issued by the Labour Welfare Department, allows employees across various sectors to cast their votes without financial loss.

The paid holiday will apply to a wide range of workplaces, including factories, tea plantations, commercial and contractor establishments, amusement venues, industries, workshops, and banking institutions within

the Dholai (SC), Sidli (ST), Bongaigaon, Behali, and Samguri constituencies. The government's notification underscores its commitment to ensuring high voter turnout by removing barriers for employees who wish to participate in the democratic process.

This initiative by the Assam government reflects a strong commitment to fostering active civic engagement, affirming the right to vote as a vital part of the state's democratic fabric. By enabling employees to exercise their voting rights without sacrificing a day's pay, Assam is leading by example in supporting democratic values and citizen participation.

Chirang set for Sidli by-election amid tight security

Polling personnel deployed, 217,000 voters to cast ballots as Sidli elects a new representative

HT Correspondent

KOKRAJHAR, Nov 12: The by-elections to five assembly constituencies in Assam, including the 31 Sidli LAC in Chirang district, are set to take place on Wednesday amidst tight security arrangements.

Polling parties, equipped with necessary materials like EVMs (Electronic Voting Machines) and VVPATs (Voter Verifiable Paper Audit Trail), departed on Tuesday from Kajaigaon centers to their designated polling stations to ensure a fair and smooth by-election. In Sidli LAC, voting will take place in 273 polling stations across the constituency, where nearly 217,000 voters will exercise their democratic rights.

A total of 273 polling stations have been established in Sidli, 33 of which have been marked as critical due to heightened sensitivity. To maintain order and security, the district administration has taken extra precautions in these areas.

The Sidli constituency has an electorate of 2,17,183 individuals,



comprising 1,07,894 male voters, 1,09,283 female voters, and 4 third-gender voters. To facilitate the voting process, a dedicated team of 1,224 polling officers has been appointed to ensure a smooth and efficient election process.

Notably, the by-election in Sidli LAC was necessitated following the resignation of MLA Joyanta Basumatary, who was elected to the Lok Sabha in the recently concluded Parliamentary elections from the Kokrajhar HPC constituency.

Three candidates are in the fray to contest the by-election in Sidli LAC: Nirmal Kumar Brahma of UPPL, Sanjiv Wary of Congress, and Siddha Kumar Basumatary of the BPF party.

The election campaigns of various parties in support of their candidates concluded on Monday evening, and the fates of the candidates will be sealed in the EVMs on Wednesday.

The district administration of Chirang and election authorities have fully prepared necessary

strategies and arrangements to conduct the election in a free and fair manner. A strong security vigil across the LAC has been kept, as voting will start at 7:00 am.

"Polling personnel and security officials have arrived at their respective polling stations with polling materials this afternoon to ensure a fair and smooth by-election," said a senior election official in Chirang.

The ruling United People's Party Liberal has expressed confidence in a victory for its candidate, Nirmal Kumar Brahma, backed by the NDA alliance, expecting a significant margin of votes in Sidli LAC as people from various communities rally in support. The UPPL and NDA are hopeful of winning all contesting constituencies in Assam in these by-elections.

Meanwhile, the Opposition BPF and Congress parties have also expressed optimism about securing a mandate in the elections.

The counting of votes will take place on November 23.

Review meeting held in Guwahati to discuss progress of SBM-G



HT Bureau

GUWAHATI, Nov 12: A pivotal review meeting of the Swachh Bharat Mission-Grameen (SBM-G) in the North-Eastern (NE) region was held on Tuesday in Guwahati, chaired by minister of Jal Shakti, CR Patil, ministers of state for Rural Sanitation from Sikkim, Manipur, and Mizoram, secretary, Department of Drinking Water and Sanitation (DDWS), Ashok Kumar Kaluram Meena, along with senior colleagues – secretaries and mission directors from the state. The event highlighted the region's commendable progress while addressing challenges to sustain the sanitation outcomes achieved under SBM-G Phase II.

The review showcased the strides made by the North-Eastern states, with 51 percent of villages achieving ODF Plus Model status. Sikkim emerged as a trailblazer with 100 percent coverage, followed by Mizoram (86 percent), Tripura (80 percent), and Assam (74 percent). The minister lauded these achievements, stating, "The North-East, despite its unique challenges, exemplifies resilience and innovation in sanitation. With collective efforts, we can achieve

Sampoorna Swachhata by March 2025."

The meeting identified areas requiring immediate attention, including: Sustainable solid and liquid waste management (SLWM); functionality of WASH assets like community sanitary complexes and plastic waste management units; fund utilisation and submission of pending utilisation certificates to unlock tied grants; effective faecal sludge management (FSM) policies aligned with urban sanitation strategies.

The minister and secretary, DDWS, emphasised targeted solutions to address these gaps: Expedite the processing of pending individual household toilet (IHHL) applications within 15 days; conduct monthly District Water and Sanitation Mission (DWSM) meetings to ensure progress monitoring; leverage community engagement through self-help groups, youth, and local organisations for awareness and behaviour change; prepare for World Toilet Day 2024 under the campaign 'Hamara Shauchalay: Hamara Samman'.

Secretary, DDWS, highlighted, "The convergence of resources and collaboration among states and local bodies is key to sustaining SBM-G's impact. The North-Eastern states are setting an example for the rest of the country in community-driven sanitation models."

Participants were encouraged to adopt innovative waste management practices while integrating traditional approaches. States were also urged to strengthen training for retrofitting and sustainable asset management, ensuring that all created assets are fully functional and impactful.

With the target of achieving ODF Plus Model status for all villages by March 2025, the review reiterated the importance of timely action and focused strategies. The minister concluded, "Let us ensure the progress achieved over the past decade is not only sustained but elevated, making the North-East a shining example of rural sanitation for the nation."

Guv attends diamond jubilee celebrations of Sainik School Goalpara

HT Bureau

GUWAHATI, Nov 12: Governor Lakshman Prasad Acharya graced the diamond jubilee celebrations of Sainik School Goalpara on Tuesday, congratulating everyone on this remarkable milestone of 60 years at a function held at the school premises in Goalpara.

Speaking on the occasion, Governor Acharya said, "Established in 1964, Sainik School Goalpara has been a pillar of educational excellence and national values, preparing countless cadets to serve Mother India." The Governor expressed pride in the school's commitment to national values and its glorious history. He acknowledged the vision of VDK Krishna Menon, the then Defence minister of India, who conceived the idea of Sainik Schools in 1961. He also hailed the efforts of Prime Minister Narendra Modi in strengthening the foundation of



Indian defence and the Indian Army through innovation, modernization, and self-reliance.

The Governor also congratulated and praised the teaching fraternity of Sainik School Goalpara for leading the way and producing competent human resources who have represented the country in the armed forces, engineering services, medical services, and sports and have been conferred with meritorious awards. Praising the school's alumni, Governor Acharya observed, "You represent Sainik School Goalpara in every corner of our country, carrying

forward its ideals, values, and legacy; you are playing an impressive role in ensuring that the flag of the school always flutters high." He thanked the students, teachers, staff, and parents for their dedication and commitment in shaping the school's roadmap.

Considering its rich legacy, the Governor also expressed hope that Sainik School Goalpara will continue to inspire generations to come, serving the country with full passion and dedication. He stated that he has complete confidence that the school will continue to be a beacon of hope for countless students eager to serve the motherland.

Lieutenant General (retd) RP Kalita, Air Marshal (retd) AK Gogoi, principal of the Sainik School YS Parmar, teachers and staff, students, and their parents were also present at the diamond jubilee function.

National seminar on 'Philosophy, Science, and Ethics' kicks off at KKHSOU

HT Bureau

GUWAHATI, Nov 12: The three-day ICPR (Indian Council of Philosophical Research) sponsored National Seminar on 'Philosophy, Science, and Ethics: Indian and Western Perspectives' commenced with a grand inaugural session at the City Campus of the University on Tuesday, at 10:30 am. The seminar opened with an inaugural speech by Prof Nripendra Narayan Sarma, who highlighted the contributions of KKHSOU as an Open University in shaping the educational landscape of the region, standing alongside conventional universities. He also paid tribute to the legacy of the distinguished Indologist and scholar, Prof KK Handiqui, after whom the university is named.

Following this, Dr Bhaskar Bhattacharyya, the convener of the national seminar, provided an insightful overview of the seminar's theme, emphasising its significance in contemporary discourse. Prof Soumendra Patnaik, former vice-chancellor of Utkal University and guest of honour, spoke on the foundational gaps in Western philosophy and emphasised the relevance of Indian systems of knowledge. He advocated for a synthesis of Western and Eastern philosophies, highlighting the unique contributions of Indian philosophy in this integration.

The keynote address was delivered by Prof RC Pradhan (retd) from the University of Hyderabad. Prof Pradhan captivated the audience by posing three pivotal questions of our times: "Is Science

enough? Is Ethics possible? And, Is Philosophy equipped to address moral and ethical crises?" He urged the attendees to reflect deeply on these inquiries as a pathway to meaningful answers.

Prof Nani Gopal Mahanta, vice-chancellor of Gauhati University and the chief guest, emphasised the importance of intuition in knowledge production and stressed the need to conduct empirical research within an ethical framework. Drawing upon the teachings of the revered Vaishnavite Saint Sankardeva, he highlighted the saint's vision of divine omnipresence in the spiritual realm—a perspective he noted is often overlooked in Western philosophy.

The inaugural session concluded with a presidential address by Prof Rajendra Prasad Das, vice-chancellor of KKHSOU. Prof Das extended a warm welcome to the distinguished guests and all attendees, commending the convener, chairperson, and the entire team for organising a seminar of profound contemporary relevance. He highlighted the importance of the seminar's theme in today's times and praised the efforts of those involved in bringing it to fruition. The session concluded with a vote of thanks delivered by Prof Pranjit Bora, the registrar (i/c) of the University.

The event drew a significant gathering of eminent scholars, intellectuals, faculty members, research scholars, and students from across the country, enriching the seminar's vibrant atmosphere and fostering meaningful exchanges.

Sonitpur district launches four-day training for Grade-III staff

HT Correspondent

TEZPUR, Nov 12: A four-day training programme with a special focus on office procedures, finance, and accounts began on Tuesday at the conference hall of the District Commissioner's Office, Sonitpur, for Grade-III employees of the Sonitpur district.

Organised by the Assam Administrative Staff College in collaboration with the district administration, the training was formally inaugurated by district commissioner Ankur Bharali. Inaugurating the important four-day training programme, the DC emphasised the significance of the training, especially in the context of rapid digitalisation of government services. He encouraged participants to gain as much knowledge as possible during the program, noting that a solid understanding of work concepts would enhance service delivery to the public. He emphasised the value of staying updated on the latest rules and regulations in government service, including online platforms like the RTPS portal. Bharali also urged resource persons to keep the sessions interactive, reinforcing the government's focus on transparency and accountability in service delivery.

Hafaluting Bornamghar braces for 70th Raas Festival

10-day spiritual celebration to feature new Kirtan-ghar inauguration, traditional events & cultural performances

HT Correspondent

SIVASAGAR, Nov 12: The Hafaluting Bornamghar in Charing is a much-revered and venerated place of worship for millions of Vaishnavites who visit it annually, especially during the Raas festival in the Assamese calendar month of Kati (November). It serves as a spiritual center for people from over 26 villages in the region, spanning from Amguri in the south to Gaurisagar in the north. The president of the 70th Raas Kriya Mahotsav Committee 2024, and MLA of Amguri LAC, Pradip Hazarika, will host the Dharma Dhawajia to inaugurate the 10-day festival from November 14 to November 23. Chief minister Himanta Biswa Sarma will officially open the festival by in-



augurating the newly constructed Kirtan-ghar on November 14. The chief minister will be accompanied by Bimal Bora, minister of Cultural Affairs, Commerce, and Industry, and Padmasree Hemoprova Chutia of Moran. The annual Raas festival will be observed on November 15, with Gautam Goswami of Bijay Mahara Satra inaugurating the Tipeswar

Saikia and Nityananda Saikia Suwarani Raas Mancha.

Legend has it that in 1954, one (late) Binanda Khanikar of nearby Na-pam Gaon was returning home alone after school one afternoon along a narrow, muddy lane on the isolated Mas Khuwa Chapori. Along the way, he suddenly saw a small boy and girl emerge from the bushes, playing blissfully in the

open. Hypnotised by the sight, he lost track of time and returned home only when the dancing duo disappeared and darkness set in. He reported the incident to his parents, who believed it was something divine. After many similar incidents, the villagers decided to establish a Naamghar at the deserted location, clearing an enormous termite mound (Uice Hafalu), which led to the creation of the Hafaluting Bornamghar.

Jagadish Gogoi, secretary, Nagen Hazarika, president of Hafaluting Bornamghar aru Kala Kristi Kendra, and Jadav Saikia, committee secretary, have urged devotees to participate in the celebrations throughout the festival. A Bhaona competition organised alongside the festival will com-

mence on November 16, with 13 troupes from various places across the state taking part. The Krishnakanta Goswami Memorial Stage will be inaugurated by Jintu Bora, ADC, Dibrugarh. Sunadhar Baruah Suwarani Mancha will be inaugurated by Jorhat MP Gaurav Gogoi on the evening of November 18. Tuniram Nath Suwarani Mancha will be inaugurated by Akhil Gogoi, MLA, Sivasagar, on November 19. Ganesh Khanikar Suwarani Mancha will be inaugurated by Sushanta Borgohain, MLA, Thowra, and Ghanakanta Gogoi Suwarani Mancha by Debabratt Gogoi, MLA, Nazira. Finally, Gangeswar Chutia Suwarani Mancha will be inaugurated by Jogen Mohan, minister of Disaster Management and Revenue.



HT Correspondent

GOSSAIGAON, Nov 12: The 31st Battalion of the Sashastra Seema Bal Gossaigaon on Monday celebrated its 20th Raising Day at the Battalion headquarters with pomp and gaiety, marked by various activities fostering camaraderie, joy, and a sense of community among the members and their families.

The program commenced with the unit performing religious rituals with the blessings of four Dharam gurus, praying for peace, prosperity, and tranquility among the soldiers and people of the surrounding community. Chiranjib Bhattacharjee, commander, 31 Bn SSB Gossaigaon, extended his warm wishes to all personnel and

their families.

The presence of distinguished guests, including Dr E Chouba Singh, commandant (Vet), 6 Bn SSB Ranigul, Dr Sumya Halder, CMO, 6 Bn SSB Raniguli, GM Thang Zem, CO, CISE, NTPC Salakati Kokrajhar, Mridul Shihare, IAS, SDO Gossaigaon, Ananda Basumatary, president, UPPL Gossaigaon, Dr Sunil Kumar Paul, chief scientist, KVK Gossaigaon, Bhanu Singh, DFO Gossaigaon, and media persons from Gossaigaon Press Club, including Mohd Hafizul Islam, added to the significance of the event, making the 20th Raising Day celebration a memorable and cherished occasion.

QUOTE OF THE DAY

It always seems impossible until it's done
-Nelson Mandela

Trump's foreign policy and India

New US President-elect Donald Trump's foreign policy in 2017 already hinted at his interest in a more assertive Indo-Pacific Strategy (IPS), deviating from the previous administration's European-centric approach. While maintaining traditional ties with NATO, Trump prioritized building alliances in Asia, motivated by his focus on countering China's economic expansion and geopolitical influence. Unlike previous American leaders, Trump's stance was clear and uncompromising—China was not only a competitor but a threat to US dominance, both economically and militarily. One unique factor in Trump's policy shift is his personal rapport with Prime Minister Narendra Modi. The two leaders share an ideological affinity, particularly in their approach to nationalism and economic self-reliance. Trump's administration would see numerous influential positions occupied by individuals of Indian descent, further strengthening this South Asian alliance. India's geographic and economic significance, coupled with the Bay of Bengal's vast mineral wealth, provides a strategic advantage for the US in exerting influence across the region. By aligning more closely with India, Trump sought to establish a powerful counterbalance to China in the Indian Ocean and beyond. Trump's "America First" policy fundamentally reshaped US foreign policy to emphasize domestic economic interests. The Indo-Pacific region, through which around 70% of global trade flows, became crucial to this agenda. As a key player in securing international sea lanes, India emerged as a valuable ally for the United States. With a strong naval presence in the Indian Ocean, India will be the US's main partner of its influence in the region to counter a massive Chinese military presence in South China Sea and Indian Ocean.

Under Trump, this partnership with India is expected to deepen, as Washington increasingly viewed New Delhi as a vital anchor for security and stability in Asia. Trump's second term would likely be more assertive than his previous "soft" approach, with increased American support for India in military and strategic sectors. For both countries, this partnership holds the potential to act as a substantial deterrent to China's geopolitical ambitions and solidify the US-India alliance as a cornerstone of the Indo-Pacific strategy. Trump's re-election, however, would create ripples in the South Asian political landscape, particularly for Bangladesh. While some analysts claim that a second Trump presidency would have minimal impact on Dhaka-Washington relations, there are clear indications that such assumptions could be grossly wrong.

Trump's administration may also seek to forge alliances with non-state actors like the Arakan Army in Myanmar, potentially enabling support for the creation of a Christian state in the South Asian region. Such developments could have destabilizing consequences for Bangladesh, potentially drawing it deeper into the complex interplay of regional politics and US strategic interests. The US-India relationship, characterized by both military collaboration and economic synergy, is a powerful counterweight to China's ambitions in the Indo-Pacific. Trump's policies have set the stage for a new chapter in US-South Asia relations, where India is not only a friend but a partner in safeguarding stability and promoting mutual prosperity across the region. For these reasons, New Delhi appears poised to replace London as America's preferred ally, underscoring the significance of the Indo-Pacific region in today's geopolitical landscape.

Key themes and goals of COP29

COP29, also known as the 29th Conference of the Parties, is a major international event focusing on climate change and environmental issues. This conference is part of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC), which brings together world leaders, scientists, activists, and policymakers to address urgent global environmental challenges. This year's COP29 is being held in Baku, Azerbaijan, and aims to continue building on the progress made in previous conferences. Its goal is to set new targets and encourage all countries to step up their efforts to combat climate change, with a particular focus on achieving net-zero emissions.

The conference highlights how climate change is impacting every corner of the globe, with effects such as rising sea levels, extreme weather events, and biodiversity loss. These environmental changes are not only impacting natural ecosystems but are also having profound effects on human health, agriculture, and economies worldwide. Nations participating in COP29 are tasked with discussing policies to limit global temperature increases, reduce greenhouse gas emissions, and find sustainable ways to support communities that are already feeling the effects of climate change.

One of the main issues being discussed at COP29 is climate finance. Many developing countries, which are often the most vulnerable to climate impacts, need financial support to implement climate change adaptations and reduce their emissions.

Healthier nations, historically responsible for a significant share of emissions, are encouraged to provide funding for this purpose. This financial assistance can help developing countries invest in clean energy projects, enhance their infrastructure to withstand climate impacts, and transition away from fossil fuels.

The focus of COP29 also extends to protecting biodiversity, which is crucial for maintaining the balance of ecosystems. Climate change has been accelerating the loss of species and habitats, threatening the resilience of natural systems. Efforts to combat climate change are closely



linked to protecting biodiversity, as preserving forests, oceans, and other ecosystems can help absorb carbon dioxide, one of the primary greenhouse gases. The delegates at COP29 are discussing strategies to protect these ecosystems and promote reforestation, marine conservation, and sustainable land use.

Another key topic at COP29 is the transition to renewable energy sources. Fossil fuels such as coal, oil, and natural gas are major contributors to global warming, as burning these fuels releases carbon dioxide and other pollutants into the atmosphere. Transitioning to renewable energy sources like wind, solar, and hydropower is essential for reducing emissions and slowing the pace of climate change. However, this transition is challenging, as it requires significant investments in infrastructure, changes to existing energy systems, and the development of new technologies.

The concept of "net-zero emissions" is central to the discussions at COP29. Net-zero means balancing the amount of greenhouse gases emitted with the amount removed from the atmosphere, effectively reducing a country's carbon footprint to zero. Many countries have set net-zero targets, with some aiming for 2050 or even sooner.

Achieving net-zero requires not only reducing emissions but also investing in technologies and practices that can capture and store carbon. Examples of such technologies include carbon capture and storage (CCS) systems, which can trap carbon dioxide, produced by industrial processes and prevent it from entering the atmosphere.

The urgency of addressing cli-

mate change has led to growing youth activism and public demand for action. Around the world, young people are calling for more aggressive measures to protect the planet for future generations. Their voices are influencing policies and pushing leaders to make bold commitments. At COP29, these youth activists are present, advocating for ambitious climate targets and holding leaders accountable for their promises.

They are also highlighting the importance of climate education, emphasizing that awareness and knowledge about climate issues are essential for inspiring change.

In addition to international negotiations, COP29 is also a platform for sharing success stories and innovations from around the world. Many countries are already taking steps to reduce their emissions and adapt to climate impacts. For example, some nations have developed early warning systems for extreme weather events, while others are investing in sustainable agriculture practices to enhance food security. These examples provide valuable insights and inspiration for other countries looking to implement similar solutions.

Adaptation is a major theme at COP29. While reducing emissions is critical, it is equally important to help communities adapt to the inevitable impacts of climate change. Adaptation measures include building flood defenses, creating drought-resistant crops, and developing strategies for managing water resources. These efforts are especially crucial for countries that are already experiencing the effects

of climate change, such as increased flooding, heatwaves, and crop failures. By investing in adaptation, countries can improve their resilience and reduce the vulnerability of their populations.

One of the challenges at COP29 is balancing economic growth with environmental sustainability. Many developing countries rely on industries that are carbon-intensive, such as manufacturing and agriculture, for economic development. Transitioning to cleaner industries may be costly and challenging for these nations. Therefore, there is a need for policies that support economic growth while promoting sustainable practices. This could include providing incentives for businesses to adopt greener technologies or supporting research and development in sustainable agriculture.

Technology plays a vital role in the fight against climate change. Innovations in renewable energy, transportation, and waste manage-

ment are essential for reducing emissions and promoting sustainability. For instance, electric vehicles (EVs) are becoming more popular as a cleaner alternative to gasoline-powered cars.

Advances in battery technology are making EVs more efficient and affordable, helping reduce transportation-related emissions. Similarly, improvements in solar and wind energy technologies are making these renewable sources more accessible and cost-effective. At COP29, countries are encouraged to invest in these technologies and share their advancements with others.

Public awareness and participation are crucial for the success of climate action. Without widespread understanding and support, it is challenging to implement policies that may require changes in lifestyle and consumption habits. Education campaigns and community programs can help people understand the importance of reducing their carbon footprint, conserving energy, and supporting sustainable practices. At COP29, leaders are discussing ways to engage the public and encourage more environmentally friendly behaviors.

Indigenous communities and

their knowledge are also important considerations at COP29. Indigenous peoples have long been stewards of the land and possess valuable insights into sustainable practices. Their traditional knowledge can complement scientific research, offering practical solutions for conservation and land management. Including Indigenous perspectives in climate discussions helps ensure that climate solutions are culturally relevant and respectful of traditional ways of life.

The impacts of climate change are not felt equally across the world. Some regions are more vulnerable than others, with small island nations and low-lying coastal areas facing the threat of rising sea levels. These communities risk losing their homes and livelihoods, making climate action a matter of survival. COP29 emphasizes the need for climate justice, ensuring that vulnerable populations receive the support they need to cope with climate impacts. This includes financial assistance, technology transfer, and capacity-building initiatives to help these communities adapt and thrive.

The path forward after COP29 requires ongoing commitment and collaboration. Climate change is a global issue that cannot be solved by any one country alone. International cooperation is essential, as countries must work together to meet their climate targets and share resources. COP29 serves as a reminder of the need for unity and solidarity in the fight against climate change. By working together, nations can create a more sustainable and resilient world for future generations.

COP29 is a critical opportunity for countries to demonstrate their commitment to the Paris Agreement and show that they are serious about addressing climate change. The decisions made at this conference will shape the future of our planet and determine whether we can limit global temperature increases and protect the environment. With each passing year, the urgency of climate action becomes more apparent, and the stakes are higher than ever. COP29 is a chance for world leaders to take meaningful action and create a brighter, more sustainable future for all.

Quality of education in rural Assam

By: Himangshu Ranjan Bhuvan

The quality of education in rural Assam is a topic that demands close attention due to the significant disparities between urban and rural areas. Assam, with its vast expanse of villages and rural landscapes, presents unique challenges in delivering quality education to its population. While strides have been made over the years, the current situation reveals significant gaps that must be addressed to ensure that children in these areas receive an education that equips them for the future. Understanding these issues requires a comprehensive look at the social, economic, and infrastructural factors that define the educational landscape of rural Assam.

In rural Assam, schools are often the primary source of formal education for children. However, the physical infrastructure of these schools is frequently inadequate. Many schools operate with poorly maintained buildings, insufficient classrooms, and a lack of basic amenities such as clean drinking water, electricity, and proper sanitation facilities. These conditions create an environment that is not conducive to learning. Students are often crammed into small, overcrowded classrooms, with little access to the materials they need to succeed. For many students, this is their first introduction to formal education, and the quality of their learning experience is severely hampered by these substandard conditions.

Teacher shortages are another significant issue in rural schools. While urban areas may have a more robust pool of qualified teachers, rural schools often struggle to attract and retain skilled educators. The lack of trained teachers means that many schools operate with a limited staff, resulting in a situation where one teacher is responsible for teaching multiple grades or subjects. This not only affects the quality of instruction but also leads to teacher burnout and high absenteeism.

In some cases, schools may even rely on teachers who are not properly qualified or trained, further diminishing the standard of education. For students, the lack of consistent, quality instruction leads to significant gaps in their learning, which become more apparent as they progress through their educational journey.

One of the key issues affecting the

quality of education in rural Assam is the socio-economic background of the students. Many children in these areas come from families living below the poverty line. These families often prioritize survival and economic stability over education, which leads to irregular attendance and high dropout rates. For many children, particularly in agricultural communities, the expectation is to help with farming or other labor activities rather than attend school regularly. This results in an unstable learning environment, where children attend school sporadically, missing out on critical parts of their education. The constant disruption in schooling makes it difficult for children to keep up with their peers, leading to frustration and eventual disengagement from the educational process.

Another important factor to consider is the curriculum. The curriculum in rural schools is often designed with a uniform approach that does not take into account the specific needs and challenges of rural communities. The content of the curriculum may be irrelevant to the lives of rural students, particularly those who come from farming or tribal backgrounds. For these students, the knowledge they gain in school may seem disconnected from the realities of their daily lives, making it difficult for them to see the value in education. This disconnect between the curriculum and the students' experiences contributes to low levels of engagement and motivation among rural children.

The language of instruction in rural schools also presents a challenge. While Assamese is the predominant language of instruction in most schools, many students come from households where tribal languages or dialects are spoken. This language barrier can make it difficult for children to fully comprehend lessons, particularly in the early years of schooling. The lack of bilingual education or mother-tongue instruction further alienates these children, making it harder for them to excel academically. This language divide is a significant contributor to the poor educational outcomes in rural areas, as students struggle to understand lessons that are not delivered in a language they are comfortable with.

In addition to these structural and socio-economic challenges, rural schools in Assam also suffer from a lack of adequate resources. Basic educational materials such as text-

books, notebooks, and writing instruments are often in short supply. Many schools do not have access to libraries or laboratories, which are essential for a well-rounded education. This lack of resources severely limits the opportunities for students to engage in hands-on learning or to explore subjects like science and technology, which are critical for their future development. Without access to these materials, students are confined to rote learning and memorization, which stifles creativity and critical thinking.

Technology, which has the potential to bridge some of the educational gaps in rural areas, is also largely absent from rural schools in Assam. While urban schools may have access to computers, the internet, and other digital learning tools, these resources are virtually nonexistent in rural schools. The digital divide between urban and rural areas is stark, and it exacerbates the existing inequalities in the education system. For students in rural areas, the lack of access to technology limits their exposure to new ideas and information, putting them at a disadvantage when compared to their urban counterparts.

Despite these challenges, there are initiatives in place aimed at improving the quality of education in rural Assam. Government schemes such as Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan (SSA) and Rashtriya Madhyamik Shiksha Abhiyan (RMSA) have been instrumental in increasing enrollment rates and improving infrastructure in some rural areas. These programs focus on providing universal access to education and improving the learning environment in government schools. However, the implementation of these programs has been uneven, and many rural schools still lack the resources and support needed to make significant improvements. Corruption, mismanagement, and delays in the disbursement of funds have also hindered the progress of these schemes, limiting their impact on the ground.

Community involvement is another factor that could play a significant role in improving the quality of education in rural Assam. In many rural areas, parents and community members are not actively engaged in the educational process. This lack of involvement is partly due to the low levels of literacy among parents, who may not see the value in education or feel equipped to support their children's learning. Encouraging greater community participation in

schools, through parent-teacher associations or community-led initiatives, could help bridge the gap between schools and the communities they serve. When parents and community members are involved in their children's education, they are more likely to support their attendance and encourage them to succeed.

Addressing the quality of education in rural Assam will require a multi-faceted approach. Improving infrastructure is a critical first step, ensuring that schools have the basic amenities needed to provide a safe and conducive learning environment. Equally important is the need to address the shortage of qualified teachers by offering incentives to attract skilled educators to rural areas and providing ongoing professional development to improve the quality of instruction. The curriculum also needs to be re-evaluated to ensure that it is relevant to the lives of rural students, taking into account their socio-economic backgrounds and cultural experiences. In addition, greater investment in educational resources, including textbooks, technology, and extracurricular activities, is essential to providing a more holistic education for rural children.

Ultimately, improving the quality of education in rural Assam is not just about increasing literacy rates or achieving enrollment targets. It is about ensuring that every child, regardless of their background or where they live, has access to an education that equips them with the skills and knowledge they need to succeed in life. This will require a concerted effort from the government, educators, and communities to work together towards a shared goal of providing high-quality education for all.

Without this commitment, the children of rural Assam will continue to face significant barriers to achieving their full potential, and the state as a whole will struggle to realize its development goals. By recognizing the specific challenges that rural communities face and tailoring educational policies and programs to meet their needs, Assam can create a more inclusive and equitable education system. This, in turn, will help to close the gap between rural and urban areas, ensuring that every child has the opportunity to receive a quality education, regardless of where they live. (The writer is Editor in Chief of the Assamese E-Magazine SAMPROTIK)

Chief Justice Chandrachud: A tenure of progress and contention

By: Dipak Kurmi

As Chief Justice DY Chandrachud's tenure concluded on November 10, 2024, his impactful decisions are being scrutinised for the lasting influence they have had on India's legal and social landscape. Appointed as the 50th Chief Justice of India on November 8, 2022, Chandrachud participated in more than 700 judgments during his judicial career, authoring, concurring, and dissenting in significant cases. His tenure stands out as one of the most dynamic in recent years, marked by transformative judicial reforms, pivotal rulings, and a steadfast commitment to constitutional rights. His focus on reshaping the judiciary to be more accessible, transparent, and technologically progressive was notable, although it was not without controversies and criticisms.

A major theme of Chief Justice Chandrachud's time in office was his commitment to individual rights and democratic principles, particularly the right to free speech and dissent. Under his leadership, the Supreme Court often reinforced the importance of these fundamental rights, especially in cases involving allegations of government overreach. His stances on sedition laws and colonial-era restrictions showcased his dedication to curbing state-imposed censorship and protecting civil liberties.

Chandrachud was a proponent of modernising the judiciary, advancing digitalisation and the use of virtual court proceedings to enhance accessibility. His push to streamline court processes and address case backlogs was part of a broader effort to make justice more efficient and inclusive, particularly for underprivileged communities. His vision of a technologically adept judiciary laid a foundation that future Chief Justices can build upon.

Despite these advancements, the issue of case pendency remained significant, with nearly 83,000 cases still pending in the Supreme Court as of August 2024. This issue, though not en-



tirely within his control, highlighted the challenges of the Indian justice system.

One of the most significant rulings during his tenure involved the contentious matter of electoral bonds. The Supreme Court under Chandrachud ruled poll bonds to be illegal, addressing the problematic nature of anonymous political donations. While this verdict exposed the flawed premise of donor anonymity, it did little to alter the status quo, as political parties, both major and minor, continued to benefit from such funds despite the ruling.

Chief Justice Chandrachud also faced scrutiny over his handling of certain politically sensitive cases, particularly those related to state surveillance and alleged abuses of power. His perceived reluctance to prioritise these cases led some to question his willingness to confront government authorities. This criticism cast a shadow over his otherwise resolute stance on judicial independence. Efforts to bring transparency to the collegium system - a long-standing point of contention - were met with mixed reactions, suggesting that comprehensive reform in this area remained incomplete.

A particularly long-standing case during his tenure was the question of the minority status of Aligarh Muslim University (AMU). The Supreme Court's seven-decade-long legal entanglement over AMU's status, originating from a 1967 decision that struck down its minority classification, continued to pose challenges. The recent 4:3 majority ruling by a seven-judge bench clarified principles supporting AMU's minority status but left the ultimate decision pending before a regular bench,

prolonging the university's wait for a definitive resolution. This drawn-out process highlighted the broader issue of delayed legal clarity in the Indian judicial system.

Chandrachud's legacy also reflects the challenges inherent in balancing bold reforms with institutional continuity. While he championed changes to modernise and improve the judiciary, he may have refrained from "rocking the boat" too much in some cases.

The high expectations associated with his tenure - being the son of a former Chief Justice - were not wholly met, as critics argue that the judiciary's role in curbing state power and upholding democratic norms fell short in certain areas.

Despite these criticisms, Chandrachud's commitment to progressive interpretations of the law, technological modernisation, and judicial accessibility represents significant contributions to India's legal landscape. However, his term also serves as a reminder that judicial change often encounters inherent limitations, whether due to systemic inertia or external pressures.

In conclusion, Chief Justice DY Chandrachud's tenure will be remembered as a period marked by substantial advancements and enduring challenges. His focus on rights-based judgments, judicial independence, and technological innovation has left a blueprint for future leaders of the judiciary. Yet, the unresolved issues and criticisms that emerged during his time reflect the complex realities of leading the Supreme Court in a nation marked by deep social, political, and institutional divides. (The writer can be reached at dipakkurmipltd@gmail.com)

Conditions of employment for women in India gradually worsening

By: Dr. Gyan Pathak

Due to declining scope of job opportunity in the organised and formal sector, women workers in India have been increasingly trying hard even to find a place in the unorganised and informal sectors sans social security. Periodic Labour Force Survey (PLFS) 2023-24 for the period of July 2023 - June 2024 shows that their participation in the non-agriculture informal sector has been rising and stood at 61.2 per cent as against 58.4 per cent in 2021-22 on the usual status basis.

During this period, percentage of women engaged in the informal sector on usual status basis rose from 55 per cent in the urban areas in 2021-22 to 56.5 per cent in 2023-24. In rural areas, it rose from 61.6 per cent to 65.5 per cent.

Working conditions for women workers were also very bad with 57.3 per cent of them had no written job contacts even when they were engaged as regular wage or salaried employees. In urban areas, 59 per cent of female workers and in rural areas 54.6 per cent had no written job contracts.

Percentage of regular/salaried female employees not eligible for paid leave were 45.9 per cent in 2023-24, more than 43.5 per cent in 2022-23. The deterioration was more pronounced in the rural areas where it rose from 41.9 per cent in 2022-23 to 47.1 per cent in 2023-24. In urban areas, it rose from 44.6 per cent to 45.2 per cent during this period.

The average earning for the female casual workers were much less than the male workers in all the four quarters of the survey year (July to June). Female workers earned ₹ 293 in the first three quarters per day, which rose to only ₹ 306 per day in the last quarter. As against this, male casual labours earned ₹ 439 in the first quarter, ₹ 451 in the second and third quarter and ₹ 459 in the fourth quarter.

In the fourth quarter, female workers in the urban areas earned ₹ 364 per day and in rural areas ₹ 299 per day, while male workers earned ₹ 537 and ₹ 444 respectively.

As for the self-employed women are concerned, they earned ₹ 5803 per month in the last quarter as against ₹ 16,723 earned by male workers in the 4th quarter of the assessment

year. In urban areas self-employed women earned ₹ 8492 per month as against ₹ 23480 per month by their male counterpart. In rural areas, female self-employed workers earned ₹ 5218 as against ₹ 14564 per month by males.

Female labour force participation rate (FLFPR) on CWS (current weekly status) was still only at 27.1 per cent in 2023-24, which was 23.7 per cent in 2022-23, and only 20.5 per cent in 2021-22. In urban areas FLFPR was 20.8 per cent and in rural areas it was 29.6 per cent in 2023-24.

Female workers population ratio (FWPR) in 2023-24 on CWS basis was only 25.7 per cent - in urban areas 19 per cent and in rural areas 28.4 per cent.

The data for percentage distribution of female workers in usual status basis shows that in 2023-24, self-employed female workers were 67.4 per cent - 42.3 per cent in urban areas and 73.5 per cent in rural areas. Out of these self-employed women 30.7 per cent were own account worker and employer while 36.7 per cent were helper in household enterprise.

Own account female workers and employer in 2023-24 in

urban areas were 28.5 per cent while only 13.8 per cent were helper in household enterprises. These figures for rural areas were 31.2 per cent and 42.3 per cent respectively.

It was a very pathetic condition for female workers that only 15.9 per cent of them were in regular wages / salaries - 49.4 per cent in urban areas and only 7.8 per cent in rural areas. Female casual labour in India were 16.7 per cent in 2023-24 - 8.3 per cent in urban areas and 18.7 per cent in rural areas.

PLFS 2023-24 shows that 64.4 per cent female workers were engaged in agriculture, 0.1 per cent in mining & quarrying, 11.6 per cent in manufacturing, 0.2 per cent in electricity and water etc, 3.7 per cent in construction, 6.1 per cent in trade, hotel and restaurant, 1.1 per cent in transport, storage and communications, and 13 per cent in other services.

Unemployment rate among female workers on CWS basis was 5 per cent in 2023-24 - in urban areas it was 8.7 per cent and in rural areas it was 3.9 per cent.

The current PLFS (2023-24), however, does not present the other aspects of women labour

and workforce in the country, such as Army, Navy and Air Force employed only 3.97%, 6% and 13.69%. A Rajya Sabha reply in 2023 said that total number of women judges in the Supreme Court and High Courts were 3 and 111, respectively. This is about 10% and 14% of the total number of judges appointed in both the judicial bodies, respectively.

Women in police force in 2020 were 10.3 per cent. In 2023, there were 14 per cent women in parliament and only 9 per cent in state assemblies. MSMEs employ 20 per cent women while 20.5 per cent women own MSMEs.

Highest share of women is in agriculture at 63 per cent, while among MNGREGA workers 57 per cent are women. A total of 53 per cent women workforce are in unorganised sector. A NITI Aayog report says that 80 per cent of rural women are engaged in agriculture and their total share in agriculture work is 63 per cent.

It is therefore imperative that India must focus on encouraging women in getting quality, salaried and regular jobs, if the country really wants to empower women. (IPA Service)

Melinda Gates is the icon of women empowerment and fighter for the cause of deprived

By: Kunal Bose

When two individuals - a woman and a man - take the vow, they understandably do so in the hope of sharing common interests apart from remaining faithful to each other till death do them part. The global experience is that contrary to their original pledge to remain partners in all pursuits, as time passes by more and more couples in developed and developing countries are drifting apart leading to divorce.

Mercifully, far more people get married every year than divorced. Who is not aware of the saying, which continues to gain in currency that half of all marriages in the US end in annulment. A bit of exaggeration there since only 43 per cent of first marriages will fail leading to dissolution. But when it comes to second and third marriages, dissolution rates are horrifyingly large at 60 per cent and 73 per cent, respectively.

Why only third! For someone like media mogul Rupert Murdoch (93) age is not a bar for new romance or a new marriage. Not many were surprised when earlier this year in June; Murdoch married for the fifth time, tying the knot with Elena Zhukova (67), a Russian born retired molecular biologist. Murdoch, who finally ceded control of News Corp and Fox News at 92 in favour of his son Lachlan, was engaged immediately before his fifth marriage to conservative radio host Ann Lesley Smith but that was not solemnised. In life as in work, Murdoch is in a class of his own.

In the Forbes 'Billionaires 2024' list, Rupert along with his family has a net worth of \$19.5 billion making him the hundredth richest in the world. The power and authority that comes with the ownership of the world's most influential media group - The Times, The Sunday Times and The Sun, all in the UK and Wall Street Journal and Fox News - has allowed Rupert to indulge in all the quirks. For the kind of Rupert Murdoch with enormous money and social power, indulgence in peccadilloes leading to marriage break-ups is not uncommon. But their behavioural pattern has no relevance for others.

Here we are to discuss giving the example of the celebrity couple Bill and Melinda Gates, who after 27 years of marriage called it a day in May 2021, how parting of ways after a long union could prepare ideal condition for the estranged partners to make their own weather.

What must be said at the outset is that Melinda Gates who has nicely transitioned into Melinda French Gates following the divorce has all through been a substantial person - a bachelor degree in computer science from Duke University topped up by an MBA - being initiated early in public service when at a Catholic school in Dallas. The spirit of service that the Catholic nuns instilled in Melinda became stronger as she went through different phases of life being a professional, wife, mother of three children, co-chairing Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation (BMGF) and finally her own investment and charitable firm Pivotal Ventures.

Both Bill and Melinda have all through believed dating back to their pre-marriage days that they have too much wealth, which must be given away among carefully chosen targeted groups in poor countries. She like Bill being a voracious reader, Melinda must have been aware of the enormous work that Professors Amartya Sen and Jean Dreze have done backed by extensive field studies that investment in women by way of education, health and pregnancy planning is an effective way to raise whole communities out of poverty.

This we have seen happening in Kerala and also in Bangladesh, thanks to relentless efforts by Grameen Bank founder Muhammad Yunus (disenfranchised by dethroned prime minister Sheikh Hasina to settle political score but who

now is chief adviser to the interim government) to encourage women to borrow for productive purposes.

A long article on Melinda that Time has published in its July 15 issue gives credit to her for BMGF's growing engagement with gender equity and women's health. These besides, the foundation's other major involvement includes climate, education, water and agriculture. While she was cochair at the foundation, Melinda made it an inviolable practice that anyone making a presentation for any new programme to be approved must convince that it would "provide dignity, equity, and access to tools and funding for all the people they were working with."

Sensible people will never say much about reasons for marriage dissolutions. But in this particular case, Bill's affair with a Microsoft employee, which became a subject of internal investigation and his meetings with serial sex trafficker and paedophile Jeffrey Epstein must have left Melinda devastated. She told Belinda Luscombe of Time: "Getting a divorce is a horrible thing. It's just painful. It's awful when you realize you need one." She thereafter wanted "horrible thing" to be toned down to "hard thing."

What is remarkable is the way Melinda addressed the three crucial issues of "me, the kids and the foundation" and ensure that these "pieces remain intact" while negotiating the heart-wrenching subject of becoming single. Her divorce and then after three years her leaving the foundation are not to end her involvement in philanthropy activities with unwavering focus on women empowerment in all areas from politics to business to media and technology.

For most people it would be a big challenge to transition from being cochair of the foundation with an endowment of \$75.2 billion and which has given away around \$76 billion in the past 24 years to running her own Pivotal Ventures bringing to play the comparatively modest sum of \$23.8 billion, including her own \$11.3 billion and the \$12.5 billion that she received from the foundation for philanthropic work, as divorce settlement.

Melinda claims to be not bothered by what looks like inevitable downsizing of work for her in the wake of funds to play with shrinking. Unwaveringly she tells Time: "I don't see it honestly as a downsizing. I was just ready to be able to have full decision-making control about where all the funds go." The causes that she wants to support becomes clear the way she is distributing the first billion since dropping the Gates surname.

Two subjects that more recently got her goat are women's constitutional right to abortion, which the US Supreme Court overturned by reversing its five-decade old decision (Roe versus Wade) and need for federal policy on family medical leave. She is very vocal about using her resources "in a huge way" to promote the two causes. Interestingly she admits she is influenced in upholding the causes by her daughters. On abortion right abrogation, Melinda has this to say: "To see that my granddaughters will have fewer rights than I do? That doesn't make any sense." Abortion and health are conjoined in many cases.

Finally, will there be an occasion at any time in future of Bill and Melinda collaborating in philanthropic work? The answer to this is anybody's guess. But Gates has this to say in a written statement to Time: "I'm grateful to Melinda for all her contributions to the Gates Foundation, where she was instrumental in shaping our strategies and initiatives. I'm certain she will have a huge impact through her future philanthropic work. I'm impressed with many of the grants she's already announced for women's health and economic empowerment, and hope we have the opportunity to collaborate again in the future." (IPA Service)

The cyber world poses a threat to the safety and dignity of women

By: Priyanka Saurabh

The rise of artificial intelligence-generated content has further aggravated the challenges faced by women in the digital space, leading to new forms of online harassment and privacy violations. This has called for urgent action by both tech companies and governments. Today, when threats to women in the cyberspace have multiplied, there is no safe haven left where they can hide or a heavily guarded area where they can sit and wait for the cyber threats that threaten their dignity to end. A global survey has revealed that 60 per cent of girls and women have faced harassment on social media platforms, and about 20 per cent of them have either said goodbye to social media or reduced its use due to this.

Similarly, UN Women has found that 58 per cent of women and girls worldwide have been subjected to some form of online abuse. These include trolling, stalking, doxing, and other forms of online predatory behavior based on gender, which are emerging as new threats of the digital age. Artificial intelligence is being used to create deepfake videos and images

that target women with fabricated content that is often sexual or defamatory in nature. U.S. Vice President Kamala Harris faced deepfakes depicting her in false and harmful contexts during her campaign for the 2024 presidency. Artificial intelligence tools spread false narratives or misogynistic content designed to undermine the character and credibility of women, particularly targeting women in leadership roles. Nikki Haley was a victim of manipulated images and fake news during the Republican primaries. Women face a disproportionate level of objectification and sexually explicit content online, amplified by artificial intelligence's ability to create realistic fake content.

Explicit photos of Italian Prime Minister Giorgia Meloni created by artificial intelligence circulated widely on social media. Deepfakes and altered images created by artificial intelligence violate women's privacy, often resulting in significant reputational damage and mental distress. Bangladeshi politician Rumin Farhana was targeted with deepfake content ahead of elections. Steps to mitigate the problem by tech companies and governments. Companies should invest in advanced ar-

tificial intelligence detection systems to proactively flag and remove harmful content before it is widely disseminated, with human monitoring to prevent errors. Meta (Facebook) recently announced artificial intelligence tools to combat deep fakes, but their implementation remains inconsistent. Platforms must provide clear accountability measures and report how they handle flagged content with transparent audits of their moderation policies.

The EU Digital Services Act (2022) mandates digital platforms to report content moderation actions. Tech companies need to ensure that algorithms are designed in a way that reduces gender bias and prevents misuse of artificial intelligence tools for harmful purposes. The Google artificial intelligence principles highlight the responsible use of artificial intelligence, but more implementation is needed. Governments should enact data protection laws and create specific legal provisions to address the misuse of AI-generated content, including deepfake-specific laws.

India's Information Technology (Intermediary Guidelines and Digital Media Ethics Code) Rules 2021 provide a frame-

work for content moderation but lack stringent AI-specific regulations. Governments should establish AI ethics boards and frameworks that mandate ethical AI development, with a focus on preventing gender-based discrimination. The EU's Artificial Intelligence Act aims to regulate high-risk AI systems, especially in media and surveillance. Governments should launch public awareness campaigns to identify and report deepfake content, particularly targeting vulnerable groups.

India's National Cybercrime Reporting Portal facilitates easy reporting of cybercrimes involving AI-generated content. Tech companies should be held accountable through monetary penalties if they fail to remove harmful content within a stipulated time frame. The GDPR in the European Union allows for heavy fines on companies that fail to protect users from data misuse. A proactive, multilateral approach between governments, tech firms, and civil society will ensure the creation of safer digital spaces for women, promote ethical AI development, and ensure robust online security. (The author is a Research Scholar in Political Science, poet, freelance journalist, and columnist)

Pollution affects Beauty

By: Shahnaz Husain

India's air pollution levels are rising; the seasonal spike combined with pollutants emitted by factories, cars, construction materials and seasonal agriculture practices like crop stubble burning is intensifying the air pollution crisis in the country this season like in previous years.

Living in a bustling city offers countless opportunities, but it comes with a price - pollution. And urban lifestyles can take a toll on your skin.

The rising air pollution has become a buzzword nowadays and is affecting the normal functioning of life due to toxic air and a heavy blanket of smog.

Living in a bustling city offers countless opportunities, but it comes with a price - pollution. And urban lifestyles can take a toll on your skin. As an urban dweller, it's crucial to understand the effects of air pollution and make informed choices to protect and rejuvenate your skin

Pollution breaks down collagen and oxidizes the lipid layer in the skin, which impairs skin-barrier function. Smog particles are generally too large to penetrate the skin, but they can disturb the barrier, resulting in dehydration, sensitivity, uneven skin tone, dullness, acne, and premature aging. Airborne pollutants on human skin can contribute to skin cancer, skin aging, atopic dermatitis, skin discoloration, eczema, psoriasis, and can be absorbed through the skin into the body, causing a wide range of diseases.

Skin of women living in a city is more likely to age 10 per cent faster than those living in rural areas. Airborne pollutants on human skin can contribute to skin aging, atopic dermatitis, skin discoloration, eczema, psoriasis, and acne

and can be absorbed through the skin into the body, causing a wide range of diseases. While pollution takes a toll on the environment and health but it also affects natural beauty very adversely. Pollution breaks down collagen and oxidizes the lipid layer in the skin, which impairs skin barrier function.

Highly toxic air containing smoke, soot, acid, and other pollutants severely affects the skin by draining away skin moisture which leads to allergies and pigmentation spots on the forehead and cheeks on dry and rough skin.

The toxic haze hanging in the sky causes uneven skin tone, accelerated ageing, wrinkles, and black spot on the face

For many living in big cities like in Metropolitan cities it is completely unavoidable so it is matter of reducing exposure, repairing the damage and protecting it as much as possible.

Among the other organs of the body, the skin is also one of the first to bear the brunt of air pollutants, which not only attack the skin's surface but also lead to an accumulation of toxins. In fact, they are potent skin irritants. There are both long and short-term effects of pollutants. Chemical pollutants cause oxidation damage and this can lead to the manifestation of premature ageing signs on the skin, like wrinkles, loss of elasticity, dark patches, spots, etc. Chemical pollutants also disrupt the normal balance of the skin and scalp, leading to problems like dryness, sensitivity, rashes, acne, irritation or allergic reactions, dandruff, and related conditions. They also make the skin and hair dull, lacking vitality. All of us who live and work in urban areas need protective beauty care, whether we are housewives or working women. Of course, for working women, the job may involve traveling

long distances to work. The skin is thus more exposed to the pollutants in the air.

Cleansing of the skin assumes more importance in order to get rid of the impurities and pollutants that are deposited on the skin. If you have dry skin, use a cleansing cream or gel. Deep clean the skin at night, neutralize it with antioxidants and create a barrier with sunscreen. Include antioxidants in your diet and skincare regime. Citrus fruits contain Vitamin C, E, and limonene which lower the risk of cancer and protect your skin from damage. Avoid cleansers containing Sodium lauryl sulphate and sodium laureth sulphates or denatured alcohols as they dry out the skin and can damage our skin barrier over time.

Use skincare rich in antioxidants. Pamper your skin with sheet masks or hydrating overnight masks to repair the damage.

For oily skin, cleansing milk or face wash may be used. For oily skin, also use a facial scrub after cleansing. Look out for products with ingredients like sandalwood, eucalyptus, mint, neem, tulsi, aloe vera, etc., when you buy cleansers. The anti-toxic and tonic properties of such ingredients have helped in clearing the skin congestion and eruptions that result from exposure to chemical pollutants.

Aloe vera, for example, is also a powerful moisturizer and an anti-oxidant. So are ingredients like apricot kernel oil, carrot seed, wheatgerm oil, etc. the skin needs to be protected. If the skin is prone to eruptive conditions like acne, pimples, or rash, it should be protected with specialized creams that not only protect but also reduce oiliness and deal with the problem.

After cleansing, wipe the skin with a rose-based skin tonic or rose water, to com-

plete the cleansing process and refresh the skin. Soak cotton wool in chilled rose water and tone the skin with it, patting briskly. It also improves blood circulation to the skin's surface and adds a glow. Green tea also makes a good skin toner. If there is a rash or eruptions, add a little rose water to the sandalwood paste and apply it to the face. Wash off with plain water after 15 minutes.

Anti-pollution cosmetics help to provide protection and reduce the damage caused by environmental effects. These are basically "cover creams" that form a barrier between the skin and pollutants. Sandalwood protective cream is very useful to protect the skin from environmental effects. It forms a transparent protective cover. Sandalwood soothes the skin and protects it from irritative reactions and eruptive conditions. It suits all skin types and increases the skin's moisture retention ability too.

The hair also needs frequent washing if one regularly travels long distances for their work. Pollutants also collect on the scalp. Shampoo, hair rinses, serums, and conditioners help to restore normal balance if they contain ingredients like amla, Brahmi, Triphala, bhringaraj, and henna. They also coat the hair and form a protective cover. Mix one teaspoon each of vinegar and honey with one egg. Massage the mixture lightly into the scalp. Leave on for half an hour and then wash the hair. Rinse well with water.

Or, give the hair hot oil therapy. Heat pure coconut oil and apply it to the hair. Then dip a towel in hot water, squeeze out the water and wrap the hot towel around the head, like a turban. Keep it on for 5 minutes. Repeat the hot towel wrap 3 or 4 times. This helps the hair and scalp absorb the oil better. Leave the oil on

overnight and wash your hair the next day.

The impurities and pollutants can also affect the eyes, causing burning or redness. The eyes should be washed with plain water several times. Soak cotton wool pads in chilled rose water and use them over the eyes as eye pads. Lie down and relax for fifteen minutes. This really helps to remove fatigue and brightens the eyes.

If one is also exposed to cold weather, poor diet, a lack of sleep, or simply stress, as many of us are. In the presence of any of these factors along with pollution, the quality of the skin can become further diminished.

To brighten the skin and even skin tone, I recommend products containing Vitamin C to be used in conjunction with richer creams. Deeply moisturizing creams can truly help repair and hydrate the skin.

Use an air purifier with a humidifier at home and the workplace to lessen the effects of pollution. Humidifiers make the air breathable and maintain the room's humidity.

Eat your greens, Vitamin C rich foods, jaggery and drink loads of fluids rich in antioxidants. Antioxidants can neutralize the effects of pollutants. Lemon, orange, amla, green vegetables, grapefruit, tomatoes and potatoes are some examples of Vitamin C rich foods. My advice is while rely on healthy eating, drinking water, and regular exercise to keep your skin healthy. Making the right choices about our skincare regimen is an equally or even more important part of a successful beauty routine. It's a rough deal for your skin, but there are plenty of ways to care for it in the face of pollution. (The author is an international fame beauty expert and is called the Herbal Queen of India)

The Biden administration last month called on Israel to 'surge' more food and other emergency aid into Gaza, giving it a 30-day deadline that was expiring on November 12

Aid groups say Israel misses US deadline to boost humanitarian help for Gaza

JERUSALEM, Nov 12: Israel has failed to meet United States demands to allow greater humanitarian access to the war-ravaged Gaza Strip, where conditions are worse than at any point in the 13-month-old war, international aid organisations said on Tuesday.

The Biden administration last month called on Israel to "surge" more food and other emergency aid into Gaza, giving it a 30-day deadline that was expiring on Tuesday. It warned that failure to comply could trigger U.S. laws requiring it to scale back military support as Israel wages war against Hamas in Gaza and Hezbollah in Lebanon.

Israel has announced a series of steps toward improving the situation. But U.S. officials recently signaled Israel still isn't doing enough, though they have not said if they will take any action against it.

Israel's new foreign minister, Gideon Saar, appeared to downplay the deadline, telling reporters on Monday he was confident "the issue would be solved." The Biden administration may have less leverage after the reelection of Donald Trump, who was a



staunch supporter of Israel in his first term.

Tuesday's report, authored by eight international aid organizations, listed 19 measures of compliance with the U.S. demands. It said Israel had failed to comply with 15 and only partially complied with four.

An Oct. 13 letter signed by Secretary of State Antony Blinken and Defense Secretary Lloyd Austin called on Israel to, among other things: allow a minimum of 350 truckloads of goods to enter Gaza each day; open a fifth crossing into the besieged territory; allow people in Israeli-imposed coastal tent camps to move inland ahead of the winter; and ensure access for aid groups to hard-hit northern Gaza.

It also called on Israel to halt legislation that would hinder the operations of the

U.N. agency for Palestinian refugees, known as UNRWA.

Despite Israeli steps to increase the flow of aid, levels remain far below the U.S. benchmarks. The promised fifth crossing was set to open Tuesday, but residents remain crammed in the tent camps and access for aid workers to northern Gaza remains restricted. Israel also has pressed ahead with its laws against UNRWA.

"Israel not only failed to meet the U.S. criteria that would indicate support to the humanitarian response, but concurrently took actions that dramatically worsened the situation on the ground, particularly in Northern Gaza," the report said. "That situation is in an even more dire state today than a month ago."

The report was co-signed by Anera, Care, MedGlobal,

Mercy Corps, the Norwegian Refugee Council, Oxfam, Refugees International and Save the Children.

U.S. State Department spokesman Matthew Miller last week said Israel had made some progress, but needs to do more to meet the U.S. conditions. "What's important when you see all of these steps taken is what that means for the results," he said.

Israel launched a major offensive last month in northern Gaza, where it says Hamas militants had regrouped. The operation has killed hundreds of people and displaced tens of thousands. Israel has allowed almost no aid to enter the area, where tens of thousands of civilians have stayed despite evacuation orders.

Aid to Gaza plummeted in October, when just 34,000 tons of food entered, or less than half the previous month, according to Israeli data.

U.N. agencies say even less actually gets through due to Israeli restrictions, ongoing fighting, and lawlessness that makes it difficult to collect and distribute aid on the Gaza side.

In October, 57 trucks a day

entered Gaza on average, according to Israeli figures, and 81 a day in the first week of November. The U.N. puts the number lower, at 37 trucks daily since the beginning of October.

COGAT, the Israeli military body in charge of humanitarian aid to Gaza, said the drop in the number of aid trucks in October was due to closures of the crossings for the Jewish high holidays and memorials marking the anniversary of the Oct. 7, 2023, Hamas attack that triggered the war.

"October was a very weak month," said an Israeli official, who spoke under condition of anonymity in line with military briefing rules. "But if you look at the November numbers, we are holding steady at around 50 trucks per day to northern Gaza and 150 per day to the rest of Gaza."

Aid distribution is also being hampered by the U.N. and other agencies' failure to collect aid that entered Gaza, leading to bottlenecks, and looting from Hamas and organized crime families in Gaza, he said. He estimated as much as 40% of aid is stolen on some days. (AP)

Israeli strikes set off explosions in Beirut suburbs, kill 14 Palestinians in Gaza



DEIR AL-BALAH (GAZA STRIP), Nov 12: Israeli airstrikes hit a cafeteria and a home in Gaza, killing at least 14 people, medical officials said. In Lebanon, warplanes struck the capital Beirut's southern suburbs on Tuesday after the military ordered a number of houses there to evacuate.

The new bombardment on both fronts comes on the verge of a deadline set by the United States for Israel to dramatically ramp up humanitarian aid allowed in Gaza or risk possible restrictions on US military funding. A group of eight international aid agencies said in a report on Tuesday that Israel has failed to meet the US demands. In Lebanon, large explosions shook Beirut's southern suburbs — an area known as Dahiyeh where Hezbollah has a significant presence — soon after the Israeli military issued evacuation orders for 11 houses there.

There was no immediate word on casualties. The military said the houses contained Hezbollah installations, but the claim could not be independently confirmed.

Late Monday night, a strike hit the village of Ain Yaacoub in northern Lebanon, killing at least 16 people, the Lebanese civil defence said. Four of the killed were Syrian refugees, and there were another 10 people wounded. There was no immediate Israeli military comment on the strike.

Israel has been carrying out intensified bombardment of Lebanon since late September, vowing to cripple Hezbollah and put a stop to more than year of cross-border fire by the

Lebanese militant group onto northern Israel. At the same time, Israel has continued its campaign in Gaza, now more than 13 months old, triggered by Hamas' October 7, 2023 attack on southern Israel.

An Israeli strike late Monday hit a makeshift cafeteria used by displaced people in Muwasi, the centre of a "humanitarian zone" that Israel's military declared earlier in the war.

At least 11 people were killed, including two children, according to officials at Nasser Hospital, where the casualties were taken. Video from the scene showed men pulling bloodied wounded from among tables and chairs set up in the sand in an enclosure made of corrugated metal sheets. Another strike early on Tuesday hit a house in the urban Nuseirat refugee camp in central Gaza, killing three people including a woman, according to al-Awda Hospital, which received the casualties. The strike also wounded 11 others, it said. The Israeli military had no immediate comment on the strikes.

Hours earlier, the Israeli military announced a small expansion of the humanitarian zone, where it has told Palestinians evacuating from other parts of Gaza to take refuge. Hundreds of thousands of displaced Palestinians are sheltering in sprawling tent camps in and around Muwasi, a largely desolate area of dunes and agricultural fields with few facilities or services along the Mediterranean coast of southern Gaza. Israeli forces have also been besieging the northernmost part of Gaza since the beginning of October, battling Hamas fighters it says regrouped there.

With virtually no food or aid allowed in for more than a month, the siege has raised fears of famine among the tens of thousands of Palestinians believed still sheltering there.

An October 13 letter signed by US Secretary of State Antony Blinken and Defense Secretary Lloyd Austin gave Israeli 30 days to, among other things, allow a minimum of 350 truckloads of goods to enter Gaza each day. (AP)

Suspected attack by Yemen's Houthi rebels sees explosions near ship in Red Sea

DUBAI, Nov 12: A suspected attack by Yemen's Houthi rebels saw multiple explosions strike near a vessel travelling through the Red Sea on Tuesday, though no damage was immediately reported by the ship, authorities said.

The attack comes as the rebels continue their months-long assault targeting shipping through a waterway that typically sees \$1 trillion in goods pass through it a year over the Israel-Hamas war in the Gaza Strip and Israel's ground offensive in Lebanon.

The Houthis have insisted that the attacks will continue as long as the wars go on, and the assaults already have halved shipping through the region.

A vessel in the southern reaches of the Red Sea, about 130 kilometers (80 miles) southwest of the rebel-held port city of Hodeida, reported the attack, the British military's United Kingdom Maritime Trade Operations center said.

No one was wounded on board in the blasts, and the ship was continuing on its journey, the UKMTO added.

The Houthis didn't immediately claim the attack. However, it can take the rebels hours or even days before they acknowledge one of their assaults.

The Houthis have targeted more than 90 merchant vessels with mis-

siles and drones since the war in Gaza started in October 2023. They seized one vessel and sank two in the campaign, which also killed four sailors.

Other missiles and drones have either been intercepted by a U.S.-led coalition in the Red Sea or failed to reach their targets, which have included Western military vessels as well.

The rebels maintain that they target ships linked to Israel, the U.S. or the U.K. to force an end to Israel's campaign against Hamas in Gaza. However, many of the ships attacked have little or no connection to the conflict, including some bound for Iran.

The Houthis have shot down multiple American MQ-9 Reaper drones as well.

The last Houthi maritime attack came Oct. 28 and targeted the Liberian-flagged bulk tanker Motaro. Before that, an Oct. 10 attack targeted the Liberian-flagged chemical tanker Olympic Spirit.

It's unclear why the Houthis' attacks have dropped, though they have launched multiple missiles toward Israel as well. On Oct. 17, the U.S. military unleashed B-2 stealth bombers to target underground bunkers used by the rebels. U.S. airstrikes also have been targeting Houthi positions in recent days as well. (AP)

North Korea ratifies major defence treaty with Russia



SEOUL, Nov 12: North Korea ratified a major defense treaty with Russia stipulating mutual military aid, the North's state media reported on Tuesday, as the U.S., South Korea and Ukraine say North Korea has sent thousands of troops to Russia to support its war

against Ukraine.

Russia had completed the ratification of the treaty last week after it was signed by Russian President Vladimir Putin and North Korean leader Kim Jong Un in June. It is considered both countries' biggest defense deal since the end of the Cold War.

The Comprehensive Strategic Partnership treaty will take effect when both sides exchange documents on the ratification, the state-run Korean Central News Agency said.

North Korea ratified the treaty through a decree signed Monday by the country's president of state affairs, KCNA said, using one of Kim's titles.

North Korea's rubber-stamp parliament, the Supreme People's Assembly, has the right to ratify treaties but Kim can unilaterally ratify major ones, according to South Korea's Unification Ministry.

The treaty requires both countries to use all available means to provide immediate military assistance if either is attacked. Some observers speculate the treaty's ratification in both countries could signal North Korea could formally enter the Russia-Ukraine war soon.

According to U.S., South Korean and Ukrainian intelligence assessments, up to 12,000 North Korean troops have been sent to Russia likely as part of the June treaty. Last week, Ukrainian officials said Ukraine and North Korean troops engaged in small-scale fighting while Ukraine's army fired artillery at North Korean soldiers in Russia's Kursk border region.

North Korea's troop dispatch threatens to escalate the almost three-year war. South Korea, the U.S. and their partners also worry about what Russia could give North Korea in return. Possible Russian transfer of sensitive technology to enhance North Korea's already-advancing nuclear and missile programs would be an alarming development for the U.S. and its allies.

North Korea and Russia have been significantly strengthening their military and other cooperation. South Korea's spy agency said last month that North Korea had sent more than 13,000 containers of artillery, missiles and other conventional arms to Russia since August 2023 to replenish its dwindling weapons stockpiles. (AP)

Bangladesh's ICT chief prosecutor writes to IGP over Interpol red notice for Sheikh Hasina, others

DHAKA, Nov 12: Chief Prosecutor of Bangladesh International Crimes Tribunal (ICT) Md Tajul Islam has written to Inspector General of Police Md Moinul Islam, seeking action to issue a red notice through Interpol for ousted Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina and her aides, a media report said on Tuesday.

The chief prosecutor sent the letter to the Inspector General of Police on Tuesday, Bangla language daily Prothom Alo reported, citing sources at the tribunal.

The development comes two days after Law Affairs adviser Asif Nazrul on Sunday said Bangladesh will seek Interpol's assistance in repatriating Hasina from India and other "fugitives" to face trial for alleged crimes against humanity.

Hasina and her party leaders face accusations of ordering brutal suppression of the Anti-Discrimination Students Movement, resulting in numerous casualties during the July-August protests.

The movement later intensified into a large-scale uprising, forcing Hasina to flee to India on August 5. According to the interim government led by Chief Adviser Muhammad Yunus, at least 753 people were killed

and thousands injured during the protests, which it termed crimes against humanity and genocide.

Over 60 complaints of crimes against humanity and genocide have been filed against Hasina and her party leaders with the ICT and the prosecution team till mid-October.

Officials said a Red Notice is not an international arrest warrant but rather a global request for law enforcement agencies to locate and provisionally arrest a person pending extradition, surrender, or similar legal action. Interpol member countries enforce Red Notices according to their national laws.

The ICT was originally formed by the Hasina-led Awami League government in March 2010 to try the perpetrators of the crimes against humanity committed during the 1971 Liberation War.

It later formed ICT-2, and at least six Jamaat-e-Islami and leaders of Hasina's arch-rival Khaleda Zia's BNP party were executed following the judgments of the two tribunals. The tribunal remained dormant since mid-June after its chairman retired.

The interim government reconstituted the tribunal on October 12. On October 17, the



tribunal issued arrest warrants against Hasina and 45 others, including her son Sajeeb Wazed Joy and several of her former cabinet members. The interim government had earlier said that Hasina and several of her cabinet colleagues and Awami League leaders would be tried in this tribunal.

However, Chief Adviser Yunus in an interview with the UK-based Financial Times newspaper last month said his government would not immediately seek Hasina's extradition from India, an approach seen as preventing diplomatic tensions between the two countries. (PTI)

EU top diplomat nominee strongly backs Ukraine and underlines China's links to the war

BRUSSELS, Nov 12: The European Union must back Ukraine against Russia for as long as it takes and persuade the United States that its strategic interests in China are tied up in the outcome of the war, the woman nominated as the bloc's top diplomat for the next five years said on Tuesday.

Questions have been raised about whether the 27-nation EU's commitment to Ukraine would remain firm with Russia appearing to have an edge in the war, which began on Feb. 24, 2022, and following the reelection of Donald Trump, who has vowed to end the conflict as U.S. president.

"Ukraine's victory is a priority for us all. The situation on the battlefield is very difficult," Estonia ex-Prime Minister Kaja Kallas told EU lawmakers during a hearing she must pass to be appointed as



foreign policy chief.

"That is why we must keep on working every day. Today, tomorrow and for as long as it takes and with as much military, financial and humanitarian aid as needed," she said, and added that "this must be underpinned by a clear path for Ukraine to join the European Union."

Kallas underlined China's more covert role in the conflict.

"Without China's support to

Russia, Russia would not be able to continue its war with the same force. China needs to also feel the higher cost," she said, suggesting that sanctions should be considered.

Many EU leaders and representatives have long insisted that the bloc must wear itself off its security dependence on the United States, regardless of who is in power in Washington. The belief is that the U.S. is increasingly fo-

cused on its growing rivalry with China.

But Kallas noted: "If (the) U.S. is worried about China, or other actors, then they should also be worried about how we respond in Russia's war against Ukraine, because we see how Iran, North Korea, China, more covertly, and Russia are working together."

The 47-year-old Estonian politician, who is set to take over the top EU post from Spain's Josep Borrell, played down concerns about Trump, saying: "we are not the ones who are electing the president for our partners. So we need to work with all the administrations."

Kallas said that she has always met with U.S. representatives from both sides and has already been in contact with people close to Trump, notably Vice President-elect JD Vance. (AP)

35 killed, 43 injured as man rams car into crowd in Chinese city

BEIJING, Nov 12: Thirty-five people were killed and 43 others injured when a 62-year old man rammed his car into a crowd in China's Zhuhai City on Monday, official media reported on Tuesday. Zhuhai is currently hosting China's prestigious airshow.

The 62-year-old driver, a divorced man identified as Fan, rammed his car at around 7:48 pm Monday, when citizens were exercising at the sports centre in Zhuhai City, about 2,200 kms south of Beijing, state-run Xinhua news agency quoted Zhuhai public security bureau as saying.

He was detained soon after the incident, Xinhua said. It was, however, not immediately clear whether it was an accident or an attack. Chinese President Xi Jinping has urged all-out efforts to treat the people injured in the car ramming case and also demanded punishing the perpetrator in accordance with the law, the Xinhua added.

While reports of the incident are widely censored in the official media, videos posted on X showed distressing visuals of bodies lying on the street with people crying for help. (PTI)

Policeman arrested for facilitating suicide attack in Pak's Peshawar in 2023

PESHAWAR, Nov 12: A Pakistani policeman has been arrested for facilitating a lethal suicide bombing in the country's restive northwestern Peshawar city in 2023, which killed over 100 people, mostly policemen.

Inspector General of Police Akhat Hayat Khan Gandapur on Tuesday confirmed that Muhammad Wali alias Umar, a police constable from Peshawar, was the "main facilitator and target killer" of the January 30, 2023, attack in a high-security Police Lines area.

More than 100 people, including 86 policemen were killed in the attack while 223 others were injured.

The provincial police chief said Wali was arrested in an intelligence-based operation from Jamil Chowk on Ring Road, Peshawar district. Wali, who confessed to facilitating the bombing, escorted the bomber, an Afghan national, into the Peshawar Police Lines area. (PTI)

Pentagon secrets leaker Jack Teixeira set to be sentenced, could get up to 17 years in prison

BOSTON, Nov 12: A Massachusetts Air National Guard member who pleaded guilty to leaking highly classified military documents about the war in Ukraine is expected to be sentenced in federal court on Tuesday.

Prosecutors have argued that Jack Teixeira should be sentenced to 17 years in prison, saying he "perpetrated one of the most significant and consequential violations of the Espionage Act in American history."

"As both a member of the United States Armed Forces and a clearance holder, the defendant took an oath to defend the United States and to protect its secrets — secrets that are vital to US national security and the physical safety of Americans serving overseas," prosecutors wrote. "Teixeira violated his oath, almost every day, for over a year." Teixeira's attorneys will argue that US District Judge Indira Talwani should sentence him to 11 years in prison. In their sentencing memorandum, they acknowledged

that their client "made a terrible decision which he repeated over 14 months." "It's a crime that deserves serious consequences," the attorneys wrote. "Jack has thoroughly accepted responsibility for the wrongfulness of his actions and stands ready to accept whatever punishment must now be imposed."

Teixeira, of North Dighton, Massachusetts, pleaded guilty in March to six counts of the willful retention and transmission of national defence information under the Espionage Act. That came nearly a year after he was arrested in the most consequential national security leak in years.

The 22-year-old admitted that he illegally collected some of the nation's most sensitive secrets and shared them with other users on the social media platform Discord.

When Teixeira pleaded guilty, prosecutors said they would seek a prison term at the high end of the sentencing range. But the defence wrote that the 11 years is a "serious

and adequate to account for deterrence considerations and would be essentially equal to half the life that Jack has lived thus far."

His attorneys described Teixeira as an autistic, isolated individual who spent most of his time online, especially with his Discord community. They said his actions, though criminal, were never meant to "harm the United States." He also had no prior criminal record.

"Instead, his intent was to educate his friends about world events to make certain they were not misled by misinformation," the attorneys wrote. "To Jack, the Ukraine war was his generation's World War II or Iraq, and he needed someone to share the experience with."

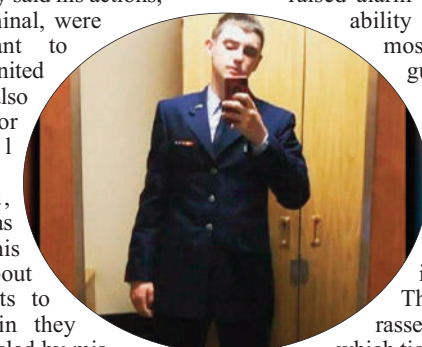
Prosecutors, though, countered

that Teixeira does not suffer from an intellectual disability that prevents him from knowing right from wrong. They argued that Teixeira's post-arrest diagnosis as having "mild, high-functioning" autism "is of questionable relevance in these proceedings." The security breach

raised alarm over America's ability to protect its most closely guarded secrets and forced the Biden administration to scramble to try to contain the diplomatic and military fallout.

The leaks embarrassed the Pentagon, which tightened controls and disciplined members found to have intentionally failed to take required action about Teixeira's suspicious behaviour.

Teixeira, who was part of the



North Eastern Hill University Non-teaching Staff Association (NEHUNSA) extends full support NESO writes to Union education minister demanding sacking of NEHU VC

SHILLONG, Nov 12: The North East Students' Organisation (NESO) on Tuesday urged Union education minister Dharmendra Pradhan to intervene in the North Eastern Hill University (NEHU) crisis and sack Vice-Chancellor P S Shukla as demanded by the students to protect the overall interests of the students of the NE region.

The NESO is a conglomeration of eight students' bodies from all NE states.

"We have formally written to the Union Education minister backing the demands of the students of the university to sack Vice-Chancellor P S Shukla," NESO chairman Samuel B Jyrwa told PTI.

He said the intervention of the Union Education minister in this regard would ensure that the "quality of education in the region and the country is not compromised," he said.

Meanwhile, the ongoing indefinite hunger strike launched by the students of the university under the banner of the NEHU Students' Union (NEHUSU) and the KSU NEHU Unit continued which affected the functioning of NEHU.

The NESO blamed Shukla for the decline in the university's rankings. Prior to PS Shukla's term as VC, NEHU was consistently ranked within the top 60 universities nationally. However, under his leadership, the university's ranking has plummeted to range between 100-150, they claimed.

The VC on Monday convened a meeting of the university Executive Committee (EC) via virtual mode.



A source close to the VC said that the EC had formally okayed a proposal to probe into the appointment of registrar and deputy registrar whose "competence" was questioned by the students and the faculty.

Meghalaya chief minister Conrad Sangma has also briefed the Union Education minister on the imbroglio at NEHU.

"Briefed the Honble Minister Education @dpradhanbjji on the ongoing situation in NEHU and urged him to find an amicable solution to this issue," the chief minister had posted on X on November 10.

On the other hand the non-teaching staff under the banner of the North Eastern Hill

University Non-teaching Staff Association (NEHUNSA) has extended their full support to the ongoing indefinite hunger strike protest led by the students' union (NEHUSU) for demanding the immediate resignation of the incumbent vice chancellor Prof P S Shukla.

The decision was taken at its emergent general body meeting held here recently.

NEHUNSA president Dr WR Synrem said, "NEHUNSA does not want to see that the university should be a training ground for the appointed officers. On the other hand, we expect that officers holding high posts should be guiding the staff in accordance with the rules passed by the Government of India."

He alleged that since the joining of the current Vice Chancellor, all work in the university has been disturbed due to the lack of administrative and academic knowledge. As non-teaching employees who are directly involved in administrative duties are greatly frustrated due to the delay in the movement of files, the outcome of which is a delay in processing the regular works in the university, he added.

"It seems that the Vice Chancellor has come to this university to learn, which is not expected of the executive head," Dr Synrem said.

Stating that the interview for the statutory post(s) of the university was conducted in Guwahati, whereby the Vice Chancellor cited that it was due to the urgent need to fill these positions, the president of the associa-

tion said, "But to our utter disbelief, the Controller of Examination which was included in the interview, was allowed to join 6 (six) months after the offer of appointment was made to him."

"Recently, a deputy registrar was appointed who has no knowledge of correct English, despite the University's medium of instruction being in English. This has also affected the day to day working of the administration," he added.

Further, Dr Synrem informed that the condition of the road on the campus is in a dilapidated condition, which was never the case since the inception of the university. This issue too has been discussed with the Vice Chancellor repeatedly, but no action has been taken till date.

He said that the quarters allotted to the employees are never maintained by the university and the occupants have to shell out from their own pockets for any minor or major repairs despite their House Rent Allowance (HRA) being deducted every month.

Street lights, which are very important during the night, are not functioning, hence compromising the security and safety of the residents, including the students.

Moreover, Dr Synrem informed, "Recently, as per the RTI reply received, it clearly states that Compassionate Appointment in Government of India offices has never been discontinued; however, the university is yet to notify the same." (With inputs from PTI and NNN)

NIA summons Tripura man in Al-Qaeda case Raids across multiple states



HT Correspondent
AGARTALA, Nov 12: The National Investigation Agency (NIA) has served a notice to a resident of Sonamura Sub-division of Tripura's Sepahijala and asked him to appear before the NIA in Ahmedabad of Gujarat by November 21.

Speaking on the matter Tripura Police confirmed it and said that the NIA has conducted raid in various areas of Tripura in connection with the activities promoted by some Bangladeshi nationals as part of terror group Al-Qaeda's conspiracy.

"Yesterday a team of NIA raided Kauchar Ahamed's residence in Tetaiya Mura under Sonamura sub-division of Tripura's Sepahijala District. During the raid he wasn't home, so the team proceeded to Jatrapur Police Station. Later, he arrived with relatives, was interrogated, and issued a notice to appear on November 21 at 11 AM in Ahmedabad", said the police.

Meanwhile, in a statement NIA said that on Monday they conducted extensive simultaneous searches at multiple locations across the country in connection with the activities promoted by some Bangladeshi nationals as part of terror group Al-Qaeda's conspiracy to destabilise India.

The crackdown at nine locations, linked with individuals suspected of supporting and funding the activities of the proscribed terrorist organisation Al-Qaeda, started early in the morning in the

states of Jammu and Kashmir, Karnataka, West Bengal, Bihar, Tripura and Assam.

"The searches led to the recovery of incriminating documents showing detailed banking transactions, digital devices including mobile phones, and other evidence related to terror funding activities. As per NIA investigations, the suspects whose premises were raided are sympathisers of a Bangladesh-based Al-Qaida network. The searches were part of NIA's ongoing investigations into a 2023 case pertaining to a conspiracy orchestrated by Bangladesh-based Al-Qaida operatives in collaboration with the arrested individuals. The conspiracy was aimed at propagating Al-Qaida's terrorist activities and radicalising gullible youths in India", it said.

In November last year, NIA had filed a chargesheet against five accused, including four Bangladeshi nationals, identified as Mohd. Sojibmiyan, Munna Khalid Ansari Munna Khan, Azarul Islam Jahangir or Aakash Khan, Abdul Latif @Mominul Ansari.

The fifth accused, Farid, is an Indian national. NIA investigations into their antecedents had revealed that the accused had procured forged documents to carry out their activities covertly.

"They were actively involved in radicalising and motivating vulnerable Muslim youth in India, spreading Al-Qaida's violent ideology, collecting funds, and transferring these funds to Al-Qaida", it added.

3.5 magnitude earthquake jolts Sikkim

GANGTOK, Nov 12: A mild earthquake measuring 3.5 magnitude jolted some parts of Sikkim on Tuesday afternoon, officials said.

There was no report of any damage to property or loss of life, they said. "EQ of M: 3.5, On: 12/11/2024 14:00:36 IST, Lat: 27.29 N, Long: 88.46 E, Depth: 5 Km, Location: Gangtok, Sikkim," the National Centre for Seismology said in a post on X.

The epicentre of the mild earthquake was located 16 km west of Gangtok at a depth of 5 km, they said. (PTI)

Mizoram slapped fine of ₹ 50,000 for not filing compliance report



NEW DELHI, Nov 12: The National Green Tribunal has imposed a fine of ₹ 50,000 on the state of Mizoram for not complying with its repeated directions to file a compliance report about solid and liquid waste management.

The green body is monitoring the status of compliance by all the states and union territories regarding solid and sewage management.

In its order dated November 5, a bench of NGT Chairperson Justice Prakash Shrivastava noted that the tribunal had directed the state to file a fresh six-monthly compliance report in March but the state's advocate did not file the report despite stating that it would be submitted.

The bench also comprising judicial member Justice Arun Kumar Tyagi and expert said, "There is complete non-compliance of the repeated directions of the tribunal. Hence, we impose a cost of ₹ 50,000 upon the state of Mizoram which is to be deposited with the registrar general of the tribunal within two weeks."

It directed the state's environment secretary to remain virtually present on February 13.

"Let the next report be filed by the Chief Secretary of Mizoram at least one week before the next date of hearing," the tribunal said. (PTI)

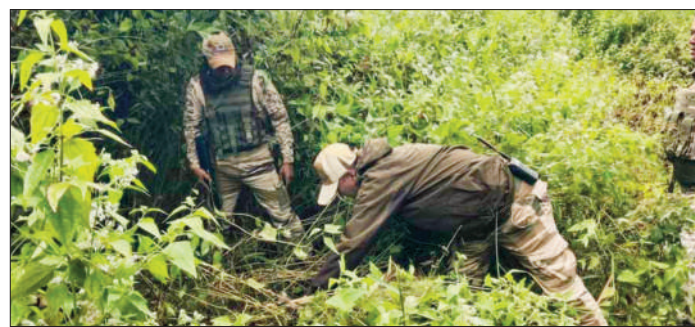
Bodies of two Meitei men recovered in Manipur's Jiribam

IMPHAL, Nov 12: Bodies of two elderly men belonging to the Meitei community were recovered on Tuesday morning in Manipur's Jiribam district where a gunfight between suspected militants and security forces broke out a day before, police said.

Operations are underway to trace three women and three children, who have been reported missing since the violence erupted in Jiribam on Monday, IGP (operations) I K Muivah said.

The bodies of the two men - Laishram Balen and Maibam Kesho - were detected in debris during a search operation in Jakuradhor Karong area where a few shops were set on fire by suspected militants on Monday, another senior officer said.

"The two elderly men belonging to the Meitei community died after the insurgents torched a few shops in Jakuradhor Karong area," he



said. The Jiribam district administration imposed prohibitory orders to avoid any untoward incident in the area, the officer said.

A shutdown has been observed since 5 am on Tuesday in Kuki-Zo majority areas in the hills to protest against killing of suspected insurgents in the gunfight with security personnel, another police officer said.

The Kuki-Zo Council called for a total shutdown in the hill areas of

the state from 5 am to 6 pm on Tuesday to express their "collective grief and solidarity who were brutally shot dead".

The police had said 10 suspected militants were killed in the fierce gunfight with security forces on Monday after insurgents in camouflage uniforms, armed with sophisticated weapons, fired indiscriminately at a police station and an adjacent CRPF camp in Jiribam district. However, a senior

officer had put the toll at 11. Two CRPF personnel also sustained injuries during the heavy exchange of fire at Borobekra, and the condition of one of them was stated to be critical, another officer said.

The situation in Jiribam remained calm but tense on Tuesday morning with policemen patrolling at vulnerable points, he said.

Following the incident, fresh violence was reported from multiple places in Imphal Valley where armed groups from the two warring sides engaged in exchanges of fire, the state police said.

Locals and security forces recovered several improvised mortar shells in two villages of Imphal West district this morning, another officer said. Operations were continuing to flush out militants, and reinforcement teams, consisting of Assam Rifles, and CRPF, have been deployed in disturbed areas, he added. (PTI)

Off-campus write shop on development strategy held in Kohima

HT Correspondent
DIMAPUR, Nov 12: The National Institute of Rural Development and Panchayati Raj (NIRDPR)-North Eastern Regional Centre (NERC) conducted an off-campus write shop on development strategy for the northeastern states, its priority areas, concerns, and the way forward at the State institute of Rural Development in Kohima on Tuesday.

Representatives from 15 departments of the region participated in the workshop. In his inaugural address, director, NIRDPR-NERC, Dr R Murugesan said the write shop will cover the broader indices of development core sectors of the rural economy, connectivity, infrastructure and services, health and nutrition, skill development and employment, rural industries, banking and tourism sector.

Briefing on the course on development strategy, Dr MK Shrivastava, assistant professor, NIRDPR-NERC, said the prime objective of the write shop is to formulate a calibrated strategy for the development of the state with a focus on rural areas. This will help in identifying the competitive ad-



vantages of sectors and products, determining the gaps and setting priorities, paving the way for action plans assessing risk factors and bringing together different institutions to take initiatives to enhance rural connectivity for raising the standard of the people.

He noted that despite northeastern states being endowed with natural resources and a vibrant cultural identity, the region struggles with issues like weak infrastructure, limited access to markets, and social inequalities. The conflict like the one in Manipur adds to the difficulty, he added. Shrivastava said development is a process that creates growth, progress

and positive change in economic, environmental, social and demographic component without damaging the resources of the environment. He asserted that sustainability development is important for development because it can help reduce poverty, improve resource efficiency, and make communities more resilient.

In order to uplift the economy, Shrivastava said, focused efforts are required, taking into account both strengths and weaknesses to develop a sustainable development strategy that will enable the state to utilise its rich natural resources and other resources in a sustainable way.

Three B'deshis held

HT Correspondent
AGARTALA, Nov 12: The Government Railway Police (GRP) detained three Bangladeshi nationals at Agartala Railway Station on Monday evening while they were en route to Delhi. Speaking on the matter, GRP Officer-in-Charge Tapas Das stated that the three individuals were detained at the station based on a tip-off.

Tiger's Mouth), Walong and adjoining features in the easternmost parts of Arunachal Pradesh, the Army spokesperson said.

The route, tracing a historic path through the beautiful landscapes of Arunachal Pradesh, symbolises the Indian Army's commitment to fostering unity and promoting adventure tourism in border areas, the spokesperson said.

Each halt was an opportunity for the riders to connect with the local communities, highlighting the strength, resilience and solidarity that define the spirit of the region, and promote national integration, he said.

The motorcycle expedition is a part of the month-long celebrations that started on October 17 to mark the 62nd anniversary of the Battle of Walong fought during the 1962 Sino-Indian War. (PTI)

Army motorcycle team completes expedition in Arunachal

Participants navigated mountainous trails and endured varying weather conditions

ITANAGAR, Nov 12: The Indian Army's motorcycle expedition team completed a three-day journey covering 550 km across the scenic and rugged terrain of eastern Arunachal Pradesh to commemorate the Battle of Walong, an official said on Tuesday.

The expedition was flagged in at the Walong War Memorial on Monday, where riders paid tribute to the courage and sacrifices of soldiers who fought in the 1962 Battle of Walong, the defence spokesperson said.

The expedition, including 20 riders from the Indian Army and local adventure enthusiasts, began from Dibang Valley in the north-eastern state on November 9 and traversed through Roing, Tezu, vibrant village of Hayuliang and finally reached their destination at



Walong in Anjaw district.

Along the rugged and challenging route, participants navigated mountainous trails and endured varying weather conditions, embodying the resilience of the soldiers who once defended India's north-eastern frontier.

The expedition was organ-

ised to honour the soldiers who fought for the nation during the 1962 Sino-India conflict and commemorate the Battle of Walong, the spokesperson said.

The fierce Battle of Walong unfolded in the unforgiving terrain of Kibithu, Nanti Tri Junction (famously known as

No. e.DME/RP/2024/556041/1

EDUCATIONAL NOTICE

APPLICATION FOR FMG'S & NON FMG'S FOR UNDERGOING ONE YEAR RURAL POSTING UNDER NATIONAL HEALTH MISSION, ASSAM

In continuation to this Directorate earlier notice vide No. e.DME/RP/2024/556041, dated 19/09/2024, in connection to application from candidates who are permanent resident of Assam, who have passed their MBBS degree from outside the state of Assam (FMG's & Non-FMG's) and who are otherwise eligible as per "The Medical Colleges of Assam (Regulation of Admission into Post Graduate Degree and Diploma courses) Rules, 2021 (Amended upto date) and are willing to undergo one year Rural Posting under National Health Mission, Assam, that the last date of submission of application form for undergoing one year Rural Posting under National Health Mission, Assam is hereby extended upto **16th November, 2024**.

The application form for undergoing one year Rural Posting under National Health Mission, Assam will be available in the official website of this Directorate www.dme.assam.gov.in

However, candidates those who have already submitted their application form for undergoing one year Rural Posting under National Health Mission, Assam vide this Directorate earlier notice as mentioned above, need not submit again.

Duly filled in application form along with the following information/documents must be submitted in the **Drop Box** which will be available in the office of the undersigned (2nd floor, near Room No. 5) on or before **16th November, 2024**, during office hours by hand. No further application will be considered by this office after the last date of submission (i.e. **16th November, 2024**). Applications sent via Post/ E-mail to the office of the DME, Assam or NHM, Assam shall not be accepted.

The following are the list of documents to be submitted along with the application.

1. Permanent Residence Certificate of Assam.
2. ADHAAR Card.
3. MBBS Marksheet.
4. Internship Completion Certificate.
5. AMC/MCI Registration Certificate.
6. MBBS Pass Certificate.
7. Screening Test score card for FMG's.

Sd/-

Janasanyog /D/8610/24/13-Nov-24

Prof. Director of Medical Education, Assam

No.CHD/UDD/11/Mushalpur/SOPD/2024-25/2617

Dated Kokrajhar the 6th November/2024

PRESS NOTICE INVITING TENDER

The Council Head of Department, Urban Development Department, BTC, Kokrajhar invites bid for the following works under SOPD for the year 2024-25.

Group No.	Name of Schemes	Bid cost (Rs.)	Tender Value (Rs.)
Group 1	Construction of Crematorium at Belgun Pather (Sinsban), Mushalpur.	600.00	18,00,000.00
Group 2	Construction of Brick Boundary wall around Dumping Ground at Jiyaguri Village, Mushalpur.	300.00	10,00,000.00
Group 3	Levelling and raising of new office compound of Urban Development Office, Mushalpur.	300.00	7,00,000.00
Group 4	Repairing and renovation of market shed with earth filling at Mushalpur Biweekly market and Bathounpun weekly market, Mushalpur.	400.00	11,00,000.00

Last date of submission of completed tender is 26.10.2024 (up to 2:00 PM) and will be open on the same day. The detail tender documents may be obtained from the office of the undersigned during office hours till 25.10.2024.

N.B.: The bill of contractor will be paid only after receiving the fund from BTC.

Sd/- CHD,

Urban Development Department
BTC, Kokrajhar

IPR(BTC)-2023-24/849

Yogi Adityanath warns against division in Maharashtra

'EK HAI TO SAFE HAI'

AMRAVATI, Nov 12: Uttar Pradesh Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath on Tuesday amplified his Hindu unity pitch at the Maharashtra hustings by improvising the 'Batenge to Katenge' phrase with 'Ek Hai To Safe Hai' caution.

Adityanath, who addressed a public meeting at Achalpur in Amravati for the November 20 assembly polls, accused the opposition Maha Vikas Aghadi of turning Maharashtra into a "base for love jihad and land jihad," warning that the western state should not become a "laboratory" (for such practices).

The UP CM drew sharp contrasts between the NDA alliance led by Prime Minister Narendra Modi and the MVA bloc comprising the Shiv Sena (UBT), Congress, and NCP (SP).

Referring to the historical division of India, Adityanath said, "Because you were divided, this country was divided, and Hindus were killed because they were divided. That is why I have come to tell you: don't get divided. 'Ek hai toh safe hai'."

He also revisited the Ayodhya issue, asserting that Hindus faced 500 years of humiliation because they were divided.

"We were divided, and that is why we suffered. 'Hum bate the isliye kate the' (Since we were divided, we fell)," the seer-turned-politician said.

Adityanath praised the resolution of the Ayodhya dispute, crediting Prime Minister Modi's leadership since 2014 and his own tenure as Chief Minister of Uttar Pradesh, which began in 2017, for the issue's eventual resolution.

"The Congress never wanted to resolve the Ayodhya issue, which was finally resolved in 2019 under Modi's leadership," he added.

Adityanath said the new Bharat under PM Modi works for "sabka saath and sabka vikas" and guarantees everyone's safety and progress.

"Don't make the mistake of Lok Sabha elections in Amravati. If you are divided again, the puja for Lord Ganesh will be attacked and lands here will be captured in the name of love and land jihad. The safety of women will be in jeopardy," he said.

In the 2024 general elections, the Congress won the Amravati constituency by defeating BJP nominee Navneet Rana by around 20,000 votes.

Adityanath said in Uttar Pradesh, there was no such issue as "love jihad" or "land jihad."

Right-wingers and BJP leaders describe love jihad as a conspiracy by Muslim men to lure Hindu women into marriage and force them to convert. They claim that land jihad implies the capturing of land by members of the Muslim community.

Adityanath also emphasised the strong stance of the UP government on protecting women and the poor.

"Anyone who poses a danger to the safety of daughters or dares to capture land belonging to the poor and the government, 'Yamraj' will be ready to cut their tickets," Adityanath added. (PTI)

Everyone in 'Maha Vikas Aghadi' fighting for driver's seat: PM Modi

Criticises Maha Vikas Aghadi's struggle for control, calls for BJP-led government

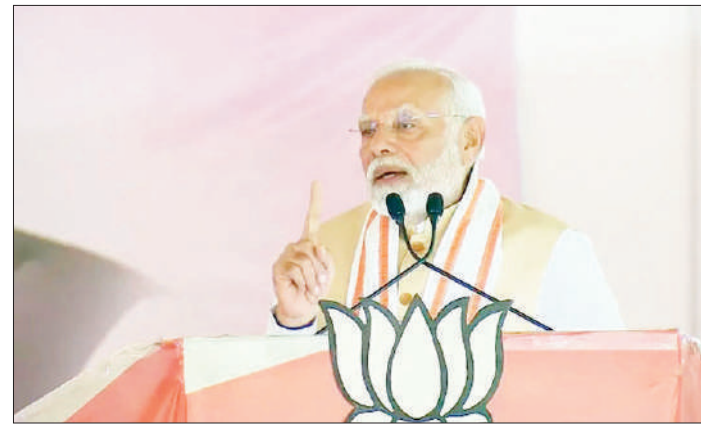
SOLAPUR, Nov 12: Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Tuesday said there is constant infighting within the opposition Maha Vikas Aghadi alliance in Maharashtra, with everyone fighting for the driver's seat.

"You all are seeing how there is a stampede in the Aghadi. There is a tug-of-war going on in the Aghadi for the post of chief minister," Modi said, addressing a rally in Solapur for the November 20 state assembly elections.

"One party remains busy the whole day in declaring its leader as the chief minister, while other parties and Congress remain busy in rejecting its claim," Modi said.

"Those whose condition is like this before the elections, they can never give a stable government to Maharashtra," he said.

"For decades, the Congress governed the country but left many issues unresolved. They kept people preoccupied with various problems. This has become their typical work culture," he said.



As a result of this approach, the farmers in Maharashtra have suffered for many years, Modi said. "In this region, Congress and its allies failed to address irrigation issues effectively. In contrast, we have focused on resolving these problems. Thanks to our efforts, the water table in several villages in Solapur is now rising," he said.

Modi said the BJP-led Mahayuti government in Maharashtra completed projects which were delayed for decades. "Your love and blessings are a perennial source of my energy," he said.

Maharashtra needs the Mahayuti government and only a stable government will be able to make long-term policies for the state, he said. "The Mukhyamantri Majhi Ladki Bahin Yojana for women is on everyone's lips. The opposition has lost sleep over it," Modi said. (PTI)

Akhilesh Yadav criticises BJP, supports UP student's protest



LUCKNOW, Nov 12: People are out on the streets because they have rejected the BJP, which kept them preoccupied with the struggle for livelihood so that it could carry out its communal politics, Samajwadi Party chief Akhilesh Yadav said on Tuesday.

Jobs will only be created when the BJP is ousted, he said. Yadav's remarks come amid protests by aspirants in Prayagraj over the decision of the Uttar Pradesh Public Service Commission (UPPSC) to conduct the Review Officer (RO) and Assistant Review Officer (ARO) and Provincial Civil Service (PCS) preliminary exams on different dates.

"If the BJP had governed with the same intensity with which it is running the bulldozer of injustice, today its members wouldn't have to hide in their homes, fearing the anger of students," he said.

"For years, either vacancies are not released, or the examination process is delayed. The BJP has distracted students from their studies and forced them to protest in the streets," the former Uttar Pradesh chief minister wrote in a post on X.

Aspirants laid siege to the UPPSC headquarters in Prayagraj on Monday, even as a large posse of police personnel tried to disperse them.

Policemen deployed in and around the office tried to stop the students from reaching gate number two but

the large crowd jostled its way through, raising slogans against the Commission.

"They got lathi charged, and jobs are still not in their agenda. We don't want a useless government," Yadav said, and claimed that the educated, employed middle class was no longer swayed "emotionally by the BJP." "Now even the parents, who were once victims of the BJP's false propaganda on WhatsApp groups, have realised how the BJP exploited them emotionally to gain and maintain its power," he said in the post.

"Now these people are also rejecting the BJP's divisive communal politics and embracing 'positive politics' that unite. No one is willing to remain a mental slave of the BJP anymore," he asserted.

"Jobs will come only when the BJP goes," he added. The politician allied with the INDIA bloc also declared the Yogi Adityanath government's "bulldozer policies," saying the backlash it caused has made BJP leaders cower in their homes.

BJP flags have been removed from the houses, shops, establishments, and vehicles of its members, he claimed. "The time for BJP's negative politics and false narratives is over," he said.

UP Deputy Chief Minister Keshav Prasad Maurya said students' concerns were "serious and important." "All competent officials should listen to the demands of the students sensitively and find a quick solution. Ensure that the precious time of the students is not spent in agitation but in their preparation. The pending cases in the court should also be resolved quickly so that the future of any student does not remain in the dark," Maurya said in a post on X.

Bahujan Samaj Party chief Mayawati wondered if the state was so hard up that it could not hold exams on a same date. "Stopping paper leaks and reliability of exams are important issues, for which conducting exams at one time is necessary. The government should pay attention to this," she said on X. (PTI)

Rajasthan: All set for assembly bye-elections, BJP looks to overcome LS poll setback

JAIPUR, Nov 12: The stage is set for by-elections on seven assembly seats in Rajasthan on Wednesday, which will have no bearing on the health of the BJP government but are a crucial test for the party and its leaders as they look to leave behind the disappointing Lok Sabha poll performance in the state. Apart from the BJP and the Congress, Hanuman Beniwal's Rashtriya Loktantrik Party (RLP) and Rajkumar Rathore's Bharat Adivasi Party (BAP) have also fielded candidates as they face the challenge of defending their strongholds. The seven seats going to the poll are: Jhunjhunu, Dausa, Deoli-Uniara, Khinvsar, Chorasri, Salumber and Ramgarh. Votes will be cast on November 13 and the results will be declared on November 23.

As many as 69 candidates -- 10 female and 59 male -- are in the fray in the seven constituencies. A total of 1,915

polling booths have been set up. Of the seven seats, four were held by the Congress, and one each by the BJP, Bharat Adivasi Party (BAP), and the Rashtriya Loktantrik Party (RLP).

The Jat-dominated Khinvsar seat will witness a triangular contest with the BJP's Revant Ram Danga up against the Congress' Ratan Chaudhary and the RLP's Kanika Chaudhary, the wife of party chief Hanuman Beniwal.

Revant Ram Danga contested the assembly election on this seat last year but lost to Beniwal by 2,059 votes. The seat fell vacant after Hanuman Beniwal got elected to Lok Sabha this year. Danga was a close aide of Hanuman Beniwal but later parted ways and joined the BJP after being neglected. This seat is witnessing a high-pitched campaign with the leaders of all three parties carrying out extensive canvassing.

Why has Centre neglected Maharashtra's sugar industry: Cong asks PM Modi

NEW DELHI, Nov 12: The Congress hit out at Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Tuesday asking him as to why Maharashtra's Chakan industrial area is witnessing a mass exodus of manufacturing units and why has the Centre "neglected" the state's sugar industry.

Ahead of Modi's Pune visit, Congress General Secretary (In-charge, Communications) Jairam Ramesh posed three questions to the PM including why the BJP has ignored the Dhangar community's demand for ST status.

"Pune's Chakan industrial area is currently witnessing a mass exodus of manufacturing units due to problems caused by poor road infrastructure. Despite ongoing roadwork, basic issues of traffic congestion and potholes continue to plague the area," Ramesh said in his post on X.

This has not only caused frequent traffic jams but also a worrying increase in the number of accidents, and the absence of traffic police at important junctions has only exacerbated the problem, the Congress leader said.

This has led to disruptions in production schedules as the movement of raw materials to factories and the transportation of finished goods have been severely hampered, Ramesh said.

"Even after repeated complaints to the Pune police, and many meetings with officials from the Maharashtra Industrial Development Corporation (MIDC), no meaningful progress has been made. Now, around 50 manufacturing units have relocated to other states like Gujarat, Karnataka and Andhra Pradesh," Ramesh said.

Is the Mahayuti government doing anything to stop this mass exodus of manufacturing units from Pune, he asked.

"What does the non-biological PM have to say about all the jobs that have been lost due to his government's negligence?" the Congress leader said.

He further asked why has the BJP ignored the Dhangar community's demand for ST status.

The Dhangar community, which constitutes almost 9 per cent of Maharashtra's population, has been denied ST status for years but in vain, he said.

"Effects of caste-based marginalisation are evident from the Dhangars' poor performance on Human Development Index indicators, but they have received no support from the Mahayuti government," Ramesh said.

Last year, Maharashtra CM Eknath Shinde made vague commitments about studying other states'

methodologies to address their demands for reservation but no meaningful progress has been made, he said.

The Congress has consistently promised to conduct a nationwide caste census to ensure that every backward community in India is able to access the opportunities they deserve, he said.

What is the PM doing to ensure the wellbeing of the Dhangar community and why have the BJP and their allies ignored the plight of the Dhangars, Ramesh asked.

Accusing the Centre of neglecting Maharashtra's sugar industry, he said that expecting a shortage in sugar production this year, the Central government has imposed a blanket ban on the production of ethanol because of which millers in Maharashtra are sitting on stocks worth at least ₹ 925 crore.

The Centre's predictions, however, are flawed as the per acre yield of sugarcane has actually increased by over 15%, Ramesh argued.

"Now, sugar mills find themselves in a fix - in addition to the financial burden imposed by this ban, they are also worried about the fire hazard posed by their existing stocks of ethanol and spirits, which are incredibly combustible materials," he said.

Neither has the Centre's reactionary policy helped the farmers - the greater-than-expected supply of sugarcane has lowered prices for the crop, especially given the drop in demand due to the ethanol ban, he said.

"Is the non-biological PM going to take responsibility for this disastrous shift in policy? Does the BJP have any plans to rectify the problems they have created for the sugar industry?" Ramesh said.

Earlier in the day, Ramesh posed three other questions to the PM ahead of his rallies in Chimur and Solapur and asked why has the BJP "diluted" Adivasis' forest rights in Maharashtra.

In 2006, the Congress had passed the revolutionary Forest Rights Act (FRA) which granted Adivasis and forest-dwelling communities legal rights to manage their own forests, and economically benefit from forest produce they collect, he pointed out.

"The BJP government, however, has obstructed the implementation of the FRA, depriving millions of Adivasis of its benefits. Only 52% (2,06,620 claims) of the 4,01,046 individual claims filed have been granted, and land titles distributed cover only 23.5% (11,769 sq. km) of the 50,045 sq. km eligible for community rights," Ramesh said in his post on X. (PTI)

Delhi BJP demands probe into discom financial irregularities

NEW DELHI, Nov 12: The Delhi BJP on Tuesday submitted a memorandum to Lieutenant Governor VK Saxena, calling for an investigation into alleged financial irregularities in the power distribution companies, or discoms.

A BJP delegation, led by party's Delhi president Virendra Sachdeva, accused the Aam Aadmi Party government of helping the discoms score undue financial gains. No immediate reaction was available from the AAP on the accusation.

"We have met the LG and demanded an inquiry into the role of Arvind Kejriwal and the AAP government in providing windfall gains to the discoms in Delhi and seeking recovery of the Delhi gov-



ernment utilities with the power distribution companies," Sachdeva said.

He alleged that AAP leaders received kickbacks from the power companies and questioned why the Kejriwal-led government did not revoke the licence of the private companies that have consistently reported losses.

"It is a strange irony that all three power discoms sell electric-

ity at the same rates, purchase it at the same rates, and supply it through the same Transco network, yet one consistently makes a profit while the other two continue to operate at a loss," the BJP leader said.

New Delhi BJP MP Bansuri Swaraj last week pointed out that the losses of the two discoms were categorised as regulatory assets, now exceeding ₹ 21,000 crore.

She criticised the private firm managing the discoms, suggesting that consistent financial losses signal mismanagement and potential collusion with the AAP government.

Swaraj said that the Delhi government owes power generation companies ₹ 26,638 crore due to delay in payments. (PTI)

Mahayuti, MVA steer clear of Maratha quota issue

JALNA, Nov 12: Despite Jalna in Maharashtra being 'ground zero' of the Maratha quota agitation, political bigwigs have avoided the contentious issue during their poll campaigns here, shifting focus to women-centric welfare schemes.

While the ruling Mahayuti leaders have been highlighting the government's Ladki Bahin scheme, the opposition Maha Vikas Aghadi (MVA) has also promised financial assistance to women under the Mahalaxmi scheme, if voted to power after the November 20 polls to the 288-member state assembly.

The Maharashtra legislature in February this year unanimously passed a bill providing 10 per cent reservation for the Maratha community in education and government jobs.

However, activist Manoj Jarange has held multiple hunger strikes at Antarwali Sarathi village in Jalna to seek Maratha quota under the Other Backward Classes (OBC) category.

In the nearby Wadigodri village, OBC activists have also held agitations seeking an assurance from the government that their quota will not be affected in view of the Maratha reservation demand.

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

Chief Minister Eknath Shinde on Monday addressed two election rallies in the district where he criticised the MVA and Uddhav Thackeray's Shiv Sena (UBT), but refrained from commenting on the Maratha or OBC reservation issues.

The CM in his speeches highlighted the Ladki Bahin scheme, while accusing the MVA of opposing it. (PTI)

Rahul, Priyanka aim to boost Wayanad tourism

Gandhi siblings pledge to make Wayanad a top tourist spot

NEW DELHI, Nov 12: Congress leader Rahul Gandhi on Tuesday said Priyanka Gandhi Vadra and he have taken it up as a mission to make Wayanad a top tourist destination in Kerala, as he posted a video of himself experiencing Kerala's longest zipline located in the district. The leader of opposition in the Lok Sabha shared the video on his YouTube handle in which he is seen interacting with workers of an adventure park in Wayanad on Monday along with his sister Priyanka Gandhi, who is contesting the Wayanad Lok Sabha by-



"But the reality is tough. The recent landslide has left tourism hanging by a thread, and livelihoods are really suffering — from shopkeepers to homestay owners and the adventure park team, everyone is working hard just to keep things going," the former Congress chief said.

Hearing their stories, Rahul Gandhi said he felt both deep concern for their struggles and immense admiration for their

resilience. "This is more than politics for me; the people of Wayanad have truly won a place in my heart. Priyanka and I have taken it up as a mission to make Wayanad a top destination in Kerala," he said.

Wayanad embodies the best of India -- breathtaking landscapes, vibrant culture, and unmatched resilience, Rahul Gandhi said.

"Let's rediscover the magic within our own country and show

the world what India has to offer. For the people of Wayanad, I'm here, now and always," he said.

In the video, both Rahul Gandhi and Priyanka Gandhi talk about the issues faced by the people due to tourism being hit in Wayanad following the devastating landslides.

Rahul Gandhi joined his sister Priyanka Gandhi on the last day of the bypoll campaign for the Wayanad Lok Sabha seat on Monday and promised to transform the hill district into a "world class" tourist destination.

Congress general secretary Priyanka Gandhi is the UDF candidate contesting in the November 13 bye-election for the hill constituency.

This was the second time Rahul Gandhi participated in the election campaign for her sister. He had previously joined the campaign on October 23 when she arrived in Kalpetta to file her nomination.

The Wayanad bypoll was necessitated after Rahul Gandhi vacated the seat following his victory in Raebareilly in the recent parliamentary elections. (PTI)

Priyanka Gandhi makes electoral debut in Wayanad Bypoll

WAYANAD (KERALA), Nov 12: Congress general secretary Priyanka Gandhi Vadra, in her maiden electoral contest in Kerala's Wayanad Lok Sabha bypoll on Wednesday, faces a key test not only to hold onto the party's stronghold but also to widen the victory margin her brother, Rahul Gandhi, achieved in the last two elections.

During the nearly month-long, high-voltage campaign, Priyanka has relied heavily on her brother's tenure as Wayanad MP and his popularity in the constituency to boost her prospects, frequently highlighting the "love and affection" he has for the people of Wayanad and how they supported him during challenging times.

Rahul, who is the Leader of the Opposition in the Lok Sabha, has also joined her at public meetings and roadshows in the constituency on several occasions, urging the people of Wayanad to show her the same support they gave him.

Meanwhile, her rivals, LDF's Sathyan Mokeri and NDA's Navya Haridas, are hoping that Priyanka's lack of electoral experience will discourage voters from choosing her. Mokeri has a history of contesting from the Wayanad LS seat in 2014 and reducing the victory margin of then UDF candidate to 20,000.

The LDF and NDA campaign also focused on pointing out that Rahul allegedly rarely came to the constituency after his win from there in 2019 and that he abandoned them after his win in 2024.

Both political fronts have claimed that Priyanka too will follow in her brother's footsteps.

The LDF and NDA are also of the view that Rahul won in the general elections held in April as the people thought he would be the next prime minister, which would not be the case this time round.

Priyanka has answered the LDF and BJP's statements questioning her experience by pointing out that she has been active in politics for 35 years, since 1989, when she campaigned for her father, Rajiv Gandhi.

She also said that she would keep coming to Wayanad if she wins from here, till the people tell her not to come there so frequently.

The Congress leader further contended that she was a "fighter" and would fight for the interests of the people of Wayanad on every platform.

The constituency, which Rahul won this year with a victory margin of over 3.5 lakh votes, was vacated by him following his success in the Rae Bareilly LS seat also, necessitating a bypoll in Wayanad. (PTI)

ED raids in Jharkhand, West Bengal in illegal Bangladeshi infiltration case

RANCHI, Nov 12: The Enforcement Directorate on Tuesday raided multiple locations in poll-bound Jharkhand apart from West Bengal in a money laundering investigation linked to alleged illegal infiltration of Bangladeshi nationals, official sources said.

A total of 17 places are being covered in the two neighbouring states by the Ranchi office of the federal probe agency, a day before the first phase of polling in Jharkhand. Visuals of CRPF personnel positioned outside a hotel located on Bariatu Road in Ranchi and a resort in the city were captured by press teams as ED teams scoured for documents, ledger entries and financial records inside.

The agency had in September filed a case under the Prevention of Money Laundering Act (PMLA) to probe an instance of alleged infiltration and trafficking of some Bangladeshi women into Jharkhand leading to the generation of alleged slush funds.

Prime Minister Narendra Modi and other BJP leaders have accused the state government of aiding such infiltration leading to the altering of the



demographic landscape of the tribal-dominated areas of Santhal Pargana and Kolhan regions during the recent poll campaign.

Uttar Pradesh Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath on Monday accused the ruling JMM-led coalition of converting Jharkhand into a 'dharmashala' for Rohingyas and Bangladeshi infiltrators.

Union Home Minister Amit Shah announced in Seraikeela on Monday that a committee would be formed, if

BJP is voted to power in Jharkhand, to identify and drive out infiltrators from the state besides reclaiming land grabbed by them.

The first phase of the Assembly polls is slated for 43 constituencies on Wednesday, while the second for 38 seats will be held on November 20. The ECIR (enforcement case information report) filed by the federal agency under various sections of the PMLA stems from a Jharkhand Police FIR filed at the Bariyatu police

station in the state capital Ranchi in June.

The police FIR, filed on the complaint of a Bangladeshi woman who allegedly infiltrated into the country from along the India-Bangladesh border with the help of touts to find work, has named around six women as accused who were arrested following a raid at a local resort.

The woman who filed the complaint escaped from a similar guest house and reached the police station. Police also recovered a "fake" Aadhaar card from one of these women. Police pressed multiple IPC sections like 420 (cheating), 467 (forgery of valuable security), 468 (forgery for purpose of cheating), 471 (using as genuine a forged document) and 34 (common intention) in the FIR.

It also slapped section 12 of the Passport Act (knowingly furnishing any false information or suppressing any material information with a view to obtaining a passport or travel document) and 14A of the Foreigners Act (penalty for entry in restricted area) in the complaint.

The FIR quoted the woman com-

plaintain saying they were trafficked into India from Bangladesh allegedly for prostitution by luring them in the name of getting a job in beauty salons.

ED sources had earlier said the agency will investigate the "entire gamut" of infiltration from across the eastern borders, including Bangladesh, into Jharkhand including in the tribal districts of Santhal Pargana and Kolhan.

Prime Minister Modi, while addressing a poll rally a few months ago, accused the Jharkhand government of encouraging Bangladeshi and Rohingya infiltration for vote bank politics and criticised it for "rampant corruption".

The prime minister asserted that these infiltrators pose a significant threat to the state by altering the demographic landscape of the Santhal Pargana and Kolhan regions.

Modi accused the JMM of "supporting infiltrators" and claimed that "illegal immigrants from the neighbouring country have managed to gain influence over the ruling party in the state." (PTI)

2 PMJAY beneficiaries die after angioplasty; Gujarat gov orders probe

AHMEDABAD, Nov 12: The Gujarat government on Tuesday ordered a probe into the death of two persons, enrolled under the Ayushman Bharat health insurance scheme, after they underwent angioplasty at a private hospital in Ahmedabad.

The relatives of the two persons alleged the hospital kept everyone in the dark and conducted the procedure in a haste to raise medical bills under the government scheme.

The Ayushman Bharat-Pradhan Mantri Jan Arogya Yojana (PMJAY) provides free health insurance of up to ₹ 5 lakh per year to the needy people.

The two persons - Nagarbhai Senma (59) and Mahesh Barot (45) - died soon after the angioplasty procedure along with stent placement was performed on them at the Khyati Multispecialty Hospital in Bodakdev area of the city on Monday.

After learning about the deaths, their relatives rushed to the hospital and sought justice from the government, claiming both the men were healthy and the hospital man-

agement performed angioplasty in a haste to raise medical bills with the government under the PMJAY scheme.

Gujarat Health Minister Rushikesh Patel said, "The alleged incident at the Khyati Hospital is very serious. I have ordered an immediate inquiry by the State Anti-Fraud Unit (SAFU) of PMJAY. If there is any substance in the allegations or evidence of medical negligence, severe action will be taken against the hospital and the doctors involved."

A preliminary probe by the authorities suggested the hospital had arranged a free medical check-up camp at Borisana village in Kadi taluka of Gujarat's Mehsana district on Sunday.

After the camp, the hospital brought 19 villagers to its facility here saying they will have to undergo angiography, Patel said.

"After doing angiography, they performed angioplasty on seven of them and also put a stent. Of these seven, two died soon after the surgery on Monday. This is nothing but criminal negligence," the minister said. (PTI)

SC ensures govt-supported medical care for vegetative-state man after parents plead for euthanasia

NEW DELHI, Nov 12: The Supreme Court has come to the help of the distraught parents of a 30-year-old man, who has been in a permanent vegetative state for over 11 years following a severe head injury, by ensuring government-supported medical care and assistance for him.

The parents, who had slipped into poverty due to the expenses being incurred during the prolonged treatment and care of their son Harish Rana and were unable to sustain it any more, had moved the top court against a Delhi High Court order refusing them a nod for passive euthanasia for their son. In an order passed on his last working day, Chief Justice D Y Chandrachud perused a report of the Union Ministry of Health and Family Welfare and approved its plan to provide medical and other care to the bed-ridden Rana.

Justice Chandrachud-led bench had said it was not the case of passive euthanasia as he was not on a ventilator or other mechanical support to sustain life and rather, was being fed through a food pipe.

Instead of allowing passive euthanasia, which is not permissible in this case, it would explore the possibility of shifting him to a government hospital or a similar place for treatment and care, it had said.

Passive euthanasia is the intentional act of letting a patient die by withholding or withdrawing life sup-

port or treatment necessary for maintaining life. The apex court had agreed with the findings of the high court, which refused to constitute a medical board to consider the parents' plea that their son be allowed to undergo passive euthanasia.

On August 20, the bench issued a notice to the Centre to explore alternative solutions for his care and this was followed by a status report submitted by the Ministry of Health and Family Welfare, detailing three care options for Rana.

The ministry, in the report filed on November 8, said, "Consequent upon all the efforts made by the central government in compliance with the instructions given by the Supreme Court on 20 August 2024, the following viable solutions have emerged for consideration :

(i) Home care of Shri Harish Rana with assistance from the Government of Uttar Pradesh as under: a. Regular Physiotherapist's visit; b. Regular Dietician's visit; c. Medical Officer on call d. Nursing care provision at home e. Availability of all required medicines and consumables free of cost.

"If home care is not feasible, shifting of Rana to District Hospital, Noida, Sector-39 for ensuring availability of proper medical care considering his health condition, the ministry said, adding support from NGOs, if deemed fit, may also be considered. (PTI)

Draft bill on integrated water resource management authority circulated among states

NEW DELHI, Nov 12: A draft model bill proposing setting up of an Integrated Water Resources Management Authority which will be responsible for developing water security plans from villages to cities, groundwater management and floodplain management has been circulated to all states, a senior official said on Tuesday.

Rakesh Kumar Verma, Additional Secretary, Department of Water Resources said to achieve water security as part of the vision for Viksit Bharat, the government has proposed the Integrated Water Resources Management Authority (IWRM) at the state level, which will coordinate and integrate efforts of multiple water-related departments and agencies.

"A draft model bill has been circulated to all the states. This state IWRM authority, under the overall supervision of an IWRM council headed by chief minister, has been vested with various regulatory powers to set

the direction of water sector development," he said at the inaugural session of the 10th Water Innovation Summit organised by the Confederation of Indian Industry (CII) and Triveni Water Institute.

"It will be responsible for developing water security plans from villages and cities to districts and state level, groundwater management, floodplain management and river conservation zones," he said.

The official said a new draft National Water Data Policy is another significant step in this direction.

The Ministry of Jal Shakti also has a national strategy for accelerating innovation in the water sector.

"This policy aims to make innovation a driving force for transformational change in the water sector to achieve water security for all. Its mission is to create open collaboration opportunities and enabling platforms for public-private partnership across the water sector to drive innovation," he said. (PTI)

Suspended Kerala IAS officers face serious charges

THIRUVANANTHAPURAM, Nov 12: The suspension orders issued by the Kerala government against two IAS officers, K Gopalakrishnan and N Prashant, cite violations of service rules and serious indiscipline, alleging that the former's action sowed disunity within the All India Service Cadre, while the latter's conduct undermined the public image of the state's administrative machinery.

Gopalakrishnan was suspended for creating a religion-based WhatsApp group for government officials, and Prashant faced action for publicly criticising a senior IAS officer on social media.

In the suspension orders issued late Monday night, the government made it clear that the act of both civil service officers amounted to grave indiscipline and violation of various sections of the All India Service Conduct Rules, 1968.

The order said that it has come to the notice of the government that a WhatsApp group was created recently, of which Gopalakrishnan, Director of Industries, was stated to be the administrator of the said group.

The order, issued by Chief Secretary Sarada Muraliedharan, further stated that a police inquiry revealed that there was no evidence indicating that the mobile phone of Gopalakrishnan was hacked, as claimed by the officer.

It is also revealed that a repeated factory reset of the mobile phone



was done by the officer himself before submitting his phones for forensic examination, according to the order.

"The Government, prima facie, is of the view that the said WhatsApp group created by Gopalakrishnan K was intended to foment division, sow disunity and break the solidarity within the cadres of the All India Services in the State," it said.

It was also prima facie found to be creating communal formations and alignments within the cadres of the All India Services, the order added.

Meanwhile, in a separate order placing Agriculture Special Secretary N Prashant under suspension, the government accused the officer of making "derogatory statements" on social media against A Jayathilak IAS, Additional Chief Secretary, Finance Department.

As per the order issued by the

Chief Secretary, these remarks amount to grave indiscipline and that such remarks undermine the public image of the administrative machinery in the state.

The remarks, prima facie, also have the potential of creating divisiveness and disaffection in the Indian Administrative Service in the state that can also affect service to the public, it said.

The government, in the order, also stated that these remarks were unbecoming of an officer borne in the cadre of the Indian Administrative Service.

Chief Minister Pinarayi Vijayan on Monday ordered the suspension of the officials based on the report he received from the Chief Secretary.

While Gopalakrishnan was the Director of Industries and Commerce, Prashant held the responsibility of Special Secretary in the Department of Agriculture Devel-

opment and Farmers' Welfare. Prashant recently took to Facebook to accuse A Jayathilak, the Additional Chief Secretary, of "orchestrating baseless" news reports against him.

In his post, Prashant alleged that Jayathilak had become a "special reporter" and was working to undermine him by spreading unfounded allegations through the media.

Prashant, who previously served as Kozhikode District Collector and in other top posts, is popularly known as "Collector Bro" and had earlier posted on Facebook to refute the allegations against him.

Regarding the allegations against Gopalakrishnan, the Kerala police conducted an investigation following his complaint that his WhatsApp account was used to create religion-based WhatsApp groups. The Thiruvananthapuram city police carried out an investigation and submitted a report to the state police chief.

Amid reports quoting the police suggesting that the IAS officer's phone was not hacked, Thiruvananthapuram City Police Commissioner Sparjan Kumar stated that it remains unclear whether the device was compromised, as it had been 'reset.'

In the controversial WhatsApp group, officers from various communities were added, and the group was labelled as a Hindu community group. (PTI)

Army's Northern Commander reviews operational preparedness of troops in Jammu; GOC visits Kishtwar

JAMMU, Nov 12: Army's Northern Commander Lt Gen M V Sudhindra Kumar on Tuesday visited the White Knight Corps here to review the operational preparedness of troops, the military said. The visit of the General Officer Commanding-in-Chief of Udhampur-based Northern Command to the 16 corps headquarters came amid intensified anti-terror operations especially in the remote forest areas of Kishtwar district where a Junior Commissioned Officer and two Village Defence Guards were killed by terrorists in two separate incidents in the past five days. In a related devel-

opment, the general officer commanding of White Knight Corps Lt Gen Navin Sachdeva later visited Kishtwar sector to review the ongoing counter-terror operations. In a post on X, Army's Northern Command said Lt Gen Kumar visited the White Knight Corps, also known as XVI corps, to review the operational preparedness.

"The Army Cdr (commander) exhorted all ranks to maintain the highest standards of professionalism and alertness in anti terrorist operations," the post read.

Security officials said the massive

search operation in Keshwan, Kuntwara and adjoining forest areas in Kishtwar district entered the sixth day on Tuesday to track down and neutralise a group of holed up terrorists responsible for recent killings.

A Junior Commissioned Officer (JCO), Naib Subedar Rakesh Kumar of the Army's 2 Para, was killed and three other soldiers injured in a gunfight with the terrorists in Keshwan forest on Sunday, while two VDGs - Nazir Ahmed and Kuldeep Kumar - were abducted and shot dead in nearby Kuntwara forest on Thursday evening. (PTI)

Thousands of devotees visit Jagannath temple Puri

PURI, Nov 12: Thousands of devotees on Tuesday visited the Shree Jagannath temple here on the occasion of 'Panchuka', the last five days of the holy month of Kartik, amidst tight security measures, officials said.

While at least 30 platoons (1 platoon comprise 30 personnel) of security forces were deployed to man the crowd, the Shree Jagannath Temple Administration was allowing the devotees the enter the 12th-century shrine only through the 'Singhadwar' (Lion's) Gate, they said.

"As there is a huge rush of devotees on the occasion of Panchuka, the last five days of the holy month of Kartik, the administration allowed entry into the shrine only through the Singhadwar and exit by three other gates. We seek the cooperation of servants and devotees for smooth conduct of Panchuka," SJTA chief administrator Arabinda Padhee said.

Puri Collector Sidharth Shankar Swain said that the administration has also raised barricades and 'Bada Danda' (grand road in front of the temple) has been declared a no-vehicle zone from municipal market square.

The collector said lifeguards and

fire services personnel have been deployed on the five km stretch of sea from Chakratirtha to Swargadwar to prevent any drowning incident on the beach as a large number of devotees take holy dip in the sea on the occasion of Panchuka.

Though Panchuka is celebrated for five days every year, this time it is confined to four days as per the almanac. The people of Odisha usually refrain from eating non-vegetarian food during Kartik month.

During the Panchuka, the devotees worship Goddess Lakshmi and Lord Narayan. Married women also worship Goddess Vrundavati, the wife of the demon Jalandhara, in the form of the sacred tulsi plant, praying for the long life of their husbands.

During the Panchuka, Lord Jagannath is adorned in different Beshas (attires). Lord Jagannath is adorned in Laxmi-Narayan Bhesa on the first day of the Panchuka (Tuesday). Laxmi-Narayan Bhesa will be followed by Bankachuda Beshas, Tribikrama Beshas and Laxminrusingha Beshas. On the last day of Panchuka the Lord gives darshan to devotees in Rajarajeswar Beshas (Golden attire). (PTI)

Manoj Mitra, a playwright who used laughter as a weapon to focus on bitter issues

KOLKATA, Nov 12: Bengali theatre personality Manoj Mitra, who died on Tuesday at the age of 86 in Kolkata, was known mainly for writing and directing farces and fantasies to highlight social and political issues.

His plays also underscored the struggle of the oppressed common man.

A legendary actor, he immortalised the character of Banchharam in Tapan Sinha's 1980 film 'Banchharam Bagan' (The Garden of Banchharam). This dark comedy on the oppression of the peasants by the zamindars was adapted from a play by Mitra.

Mitra had around 100 one-act and full-length plays to his credit besides film scripts.

His major full-length plays include 'Narak Guljar' (The Great Hell), 'Aswathama', 'Chakrabanga Madhu' (Honey from Broken Hive), 'Mesh O Rakhsh' (The Lamb and the Monster), 'Galpo Hekim Saheb' (Tale of a Hekim), 'Rajdarshan' (Visiting the King), 'Alokanandar Putra Kanya' (Alokananda's Son and Daughter), 'Sajano Bagan' (Decorated Garden), 'Chhayar Prashad' (The Palace of Shadows) and 'Jene



Shune Bish' (Poison, Knowingly).

Partition of the country, Naxalite movement of Bengal, tyranny of the ruling class, religious fundamentalism and other major issues were highlighted in Mitra's plays.

Among his key one-act plays are 'Mrituyr Chokhe Jal' (Tears in the Eyes of Death), 'Chokhe Angul Dada' (The Fault Finder), 'Ami Madan Bolchhi' (Hello I am Madan), 'Takshak' and others.

According to academican and translator Mousumi Roy Chowdhury, in Mitra's plays, conscience

has a major role.

"Not strictly restricted to an instrumental moral sense, conscience here is used in the larger sense of consciousness that reaches beyond the closures and binaries of the regulating norms of the political theatre," Roy Chowdhury said in an anthology of plays translated by her.

He also acted in more than 80 films including Satyajit Ray's classics 'Ghare Baire' (Home and the World, 1984) and 'Ganashatru' (An Enemy of the People, 1989). Mitra also worked on projects of Tapan

Sinha - 'Adalat O Ekti Meye' (The Court and a Woman, 1982) and 'Wheel Chair' (1995).

After the 1984 superhit potboiler 'Shatru' (Enemy) in which he essayed the role of a notorious leader, Mitra got a chance to act in Bollywood films. He, however, rejected that proposal apprehending that it would impact his involvement in theatre.

Mitra was born December 22, 1938, in a village in Khulna district of undivided Bengal. His father was a government officer.

Interestingly, though plays were enacted at his family home during the festive days of Durga puja, children were not allowed to watch them. Backdrops, props, costumes and other articles associated with the staging of plays stored at home kindled his passion for plays. Mitra permanently came to India from East Pakistan at the age of 12. He cleared his MA in Philosophy in 1960.

During the college and university days, he wrote short stories and plays. However, after his play 'Mrituyr Chokhe Jal' earned him first prize at a statewide competition, he focused only on this field. His acting prowess mesmerised veteran actors

of that time as the 21-year-old youth effortlessly metamorphosed into an elderly man in 'Mrituyr Chokhe Jal'.

Also in the film 'Banchharam Bagan', adapted from his play 'Sajano Bagan' (1977), he essayed the role of the 90-year-old protagonist when Mitra was in his 40s. He bagged the Filmfare Award for Best Actor for the movie. (PTI)

MODIFICATION AND CONSTRUCTION OF NEW FOB

Tender Notice No. EL-TRD-NFR-LMG-OHE-MOD24R; dated: 09-11-2024. E-tenders are invited by the undersigned for the following works:

Tender No: EL-TRD-NFR-LMG-OHE-MOD24R. Name of work: TRD modification of existing OHE including slewing, erection in connection to dismantling of Old FOB over line no. 485 and construction of new 12m wide FOB over six (06) nos. of Line at Lumding Station under 'AMRIT BHARAT STATION SCHEME'. Advertised Value: ₹1,22,28,960.77. Earnest Money: ₹2,11,200.00. E-tender will be closed at 15:00 hrs. on 05-12-2024. The complete information with the tender document of above e-tender is available on website www.irpds.gov.in

SE DEETRD & GSI/Lumding NORTHEAST FRONTIER RAILWAY "Serving Customers with a smile"

We love to tell stories about invisible women: 'House of Spoils' co-director Danielle Krudy

NEW DELHI, Nov 12: The protagonist in supernatural film "House of Spoils" is simply called Chef and director duo Bridget Savage Cole and Danielle Krudy say the idea behind the naming the profession of the character was all about reclaiming her identity. "House of Spoils", also penned by Cole and Krudy, is streaming in India on Prime Video. The movie follows an ambitious chef, played by Oscar winner Ariana DeBose, who opens her first restaurant — a farm-to-table affair on a remote estate — where she battles kitchen chaos, a dubious investor, crushing self-doubts — and the powerful spirit of the estate's previous owner, who threatens to sabotage her

at every turn. "We love to tell stories about invisible women and women in the background. Witches are also invisible women who don't concede as much... There are so many women who just have a job that are defined by their job and don't get seen. "Letting Chef just embody that identity fully and reclaim it felt exciting to us," Krudy told PTI in a virtual interview. As they developed the story, Cole said they slowly knew they wanted the movie to be a "spooky tale". "We started with this idea of a chef who is getting inspired by the presence of something else on this property where she is trying to make a restaurant and from there we just tried to

tell the best story..." she added. Cole, who along with Krudy made her directorial debut with 2019's black comedy thriller "Blow the Man Down", said "House of Spoils" is a film about a person's relationship to their work. "We have both lived in periods when we felt defined by our work. So, it felt right to let her (Chef) be defined by her work in this film. There are so many other things we ascribe to women's stories, that we expect from them. "We wanted to focus on this and make it about trying to do something hard, trying to find her voice as a creator. It made sense to us to pull back and make it as archetypal and simple as possible," she said. As the character of Chef

faces creative block and management lapses in the kitchen, she also starts seeing the food infested with bugs and mould. The film is replete with images of immaculately decorated platters with fine-dining fare juxtaposed with the ones of spoilt dough and insects running off a plate. Asked if this culinary contrast was a conscious decision, the filmmakers said it was part of the creative process. "This is a movie about a chef trying to find her own nightmare scenario specifically. A chef's nightmare is going to look different from someone else's so that's why mould and the rotting food felt so specific to this world," Cole said. (PTI)



NEVER PLAYED A FEEL GOOD CHARACTER BEFORE 'VIJAY 69': CHUNKY PANDAY



MUMBAI, Nov 12: Actor Chunky Panday says he loved working on "Vijay 69" as it gave him a chance to break his image as a comedic actor through an emotional role. The film, starring Anupam Kher in the title role, follows the journey of Vijay, a 69-year-old man, who defies societal expectations by training for a triathlon and refusing to let age limit his ambitions. In "Vijay 69", written and directed by Akshay Roy, Panday plays the role of Kher's friend. "A slice-of-life kind of feel-good film is something that I've never done before, and this is the first time I got a chance to play a role like this. I was a little confused in the beginning. I did want to play it a little over the top and do it in my commercial way, but they both (Kher and Roy) kind of handheld me and told me 'Take it easy, calm down,'" the actor told PTI. Panday said he got stereotyped in light-hearted roles primarily due to his character in "Apna Sapna Money Money" and "Houseful" franchise. "Some people even call me a comedian and I love that. I love making people laugh. But then I played the villain but what I really want to play and I think I'm going to get a chance in this film is to play an emotional character. In 'Vijay 69', I've got to do that," he said. "Vijay 69", also starring Mihir Ahuja, is currently streaming on Netflix. The actor is looking forward to reprise his character of Aakhri Pasta for "Houseful 5", which features a bevy of stars such as Akshay Kumar, Riteish Deshmukh, Abhishek Bachchan, Chitrangada Singh, Jacqueline Fernandez, and Nargis Fakhri among others. (PTI)

VETERAN ACTOR MANOJ MITRA DIES AT 86

KOLKATA, Nov 12: Famous Bengali theatre personality Manoj Mitra, known for writing and directing farces and fantasies to highlight social and political issues, died at a hospital here on Tuesday due to old-age related ailments, family sources said.

Mitra was 86. According to a doctor, Mitra breathed his last at around 8.50 am on Tuesday. "He was admitted to the hospital on November 3 with several illnesses. His condition kept on deteriorating and today at around 8.50 am he left us," the doctor told PTI. The octogenarian was earlier admitted to hospital on September 20 with breathing issues, imbalance of sodium and potassium among other health-related issues, doctors said. He was discharged from the hospital on September end. West Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee expressed her grief over the passing away of Mitra and described it as an irreplaceable loss to Bengali cinema and theatre.



"Saddened by the demise of the famous actor, director and playwright, 'Banga Bibhushan' Manoj Mitra today morning," she posted on X. "He had been a leading personality in our theatre and film worlds and his contributions have been immense. I convey my condolences to his family, friends and admirers," she added. West Bengal Education Minister and actor-theatre personality Bratya Basu in a social media post traced the illustrious career of Manoj Mitra and offered his deep condolences to the bereaved family and his countless followers. Veteran playwright and actor Arun Mukhopadhyay described his contemporary Manoj Mitra as a leading light in a unique genre of Bengali theatre which was populist entertaining and yet had social message. He was also equally versatile in group theatre which is also called 'anyo dharar natok', Mukhopadhyay said. (PTI)

4 I used to think 'Wow, I am starting out with Yash Chopra'. I used to imagine he would say 'You are so good, I will take you in my next film' but no such thing happened. They saw a show where I used to play a different role in every episode. They offered me this role (in 'Veer-Zaara'). I was confused whether I should do it or not. To be on the sets of Yash Chopra was a dream come true. That grandeur, love and affection... The film's first shot was my first shot too. Yash ji, Shah Rukh ji, everyone was there. I was nervous.

- Divya Dutta



Working with Yash Chopra was a dream come true: Divya Dutta on 20th anniversary of 'Veer-Zaara'

MUMBAI, Nov 12: Actor Divya Dutta has fond memories of working with Yash Chopra on "Veer-Zaara", which celebrates its 20th release anniversary on Tuesday.

Dutta played Shabbo, the confidant and house help of Zaara (played by Preity Zinta) in the 2004 movie, fronted by Zinta and Shah Rukh Khan's as lovers divided by borders.

The film, which re-released in theatres last week, is a cross-border love story of Veer Pratap Singh (Khan), an Indian Air Force officer, and Zaara Hayat Khan (Zinta), the daughter of a Pakistani politician.

Dutta said the late Yash Chopra is still her "most favourite filmmaker".

"The romance and nuances he showed in his films, no would be able to do that ever. I came into the industry through a talent hunt and Yash Chopra was one of the judges.

"I used to think 'Wow, I am starting out with Yash Chopra'. I used to imagine he would say 'You are so good, I will take you in my next film' but no such thing happened," the actor told PTI in an interview.

It took her another seven years to work in a Yash Chopra film with "Veer-Zaara". Dutta still remembers the day she got a call from the office of Aditya Chopra, who wrote the film's script.

"They saw a show where I used to play a differ-

ent role in every episode. They offered me this role (in 'Veer-Zaara'). I was confused whether I should do it or not. To be on the sets of Yash Chopra was a dream come true. That grandeur, love and affection...

The film's first shot was my first shot too. Yash ji, Shah Rukh ji, everyone was there. I was nervous.

"It feels surreal that the thing you imagined is happening at that moment is real or not. You have to pinch yourself, you're also nervous. But he (Yash Chopra) was such a loving person," she recalled.

Their mentor-mentee bond continued even after the release of the film, which went on to become one of the most successful movies of the year with its chartbuster music.

"Even after 'Veer-Zaara' released, he (Yash Chopra) used to say 'Bacche! Come to the office whenever you feel like'. And I used to go to the office to meet him. I used to talk to him about everything," she said.

The actor said both Yash Chopra and Amitabh Bachchan, who did a guest appearance in "Veer-Zaara", remember people's birthdays despite their legendary status.

"They are always the first ones to wish you. And I think that's what made Yash Chopra who he was. That's what makes Mr Bachchan who he is," she said.

Dutta revealed that she was initially sceptical about taking on the character of Shabbo, which is widely regarded as her breakthrough role in Hindi cinema.

"Yash uncle and Aditya told me that 'We wouldn't have asked you to do the role if it was not special'. I was scared I did not want to be stuck in a certain image," the actor said, admitting that similar offers came her way post the success of the film but she turned them down.

"Veer-Zaara" also starred Rani Mukerji, Hema Malini, Boman Irani, Kirron Kher, Anupam Kher, Manoj Bajpayee, and Zohra Sehgal. (PTI)

Alcaraz struggles with stomach issue in loss to Ruud at ATP Finals and Zverev beats Rublev

TURIN (ITALY), Nov 12: Carlos Alcaraz struggled with a stomach issue and looked far from the player who won two Grand Slams this year while losing to Casper Ruud 6-1, 7-5 at the ATP Finals. It marked Ruud's first victory over Alcaraz in five career meetings, and the result could make it difficult for Alcaraz to advance from the round-robin stage at the season-ending event for the top eight players.

"I didn't feel well on court," Alcaraz said. "A few days before coming here, I got sick at home. ... This morning, I feel uncomfortable in the stomach."

In the same group, Alexander Zverev began his bid for a third ATP Finals title by beating Andrey Rublev 6-4, 6-4.

The top two finishers from each group advance to the semifinals. On Sunday, top-ranked Jannik Sinner and U.S. Open finalist Taylor Fritz beat Alex de Minaur and Daniil Medvedev, respectively, in the other group.

Alcaraz won the French Open and Wimbledon to boost his career total to four Grand Slam titles. But he also struggled at the Paris Masters recently and dropped behind Zverev to No. 3 in the rankings this week.

"I have no experience playing on indoor courts," Alcaraz said. "I'll be a really good player on indoor courts, I'm sure about it. But I think it's about time, about getting experience. ... A lot of players are better than me on indoor court."

Ruud reached the 2021 semifinals and 2022 final in his first two

appearances at the finals. But he has struggled recently, too, losing his first or second match in his last seven events.

"I'm not full of confidence," Ruud said. "A match like today might be able to change it."

Alcaraz was broken when he served for the second set at 5-4.

Alcaraz led 25-16 in winners but committed 26 unforced errors to Ruud's 10.

Ruud converted all four of his break points while Alcaraz was just one of six in that category.

"I'm tired mentally," Alcaraz said. "Obviously a lot of matches, really tight schedule, really demanding year with not too many days off."

Zverev, who won the finals in 2018 in London and 2021 in Turin, extended his winning streak to six matches following a title run at the Paris Masters.

Rublev is making his fifth consecutive appearance at the finals but hasn't won a match at the event since 2022.

Zverev served nine aces and dropped only 10 points on his serve in 10 service games.

"He served wide 220 (kph) on the deuce side," Rublev said. "Normally everybody serves slice and it's 190. He find(s) a way to serve 220 wide on the deuce side. It's not easy."

"Even if you catch the direction, when the flat serve comes 227, slice serve comes 219, 215, it's tough to just see the ball."

Before the Zverev-Rublev match, Sinner received the trophy for finishing the year at No. 1 in the rankings. (AP)

Deepika's brace hands India 3-2 win over South Korea

RAJGIR (BIHAR), Nov 12: Striker Deepika converted a penalty stroke three minutes from the final hooter to lead India to a tense 3-2 win over South Korea in the women's Asian Champions Trophy, here Tuesday.

India raced to a 2-0 lead in the first half through goals from Sangita Kumari (3rd minute) and Deepika (20th, 57th) before Korea mounted a strong comeback in the third quarter and drew parity with goals from Yuri Lee (34th) and skipper Eunbi Cheon (38th).

The match headed for an exciting finish with both teams pushing for that deciding goal and it was Deepika, who scored from the spot to seal India's second consecutive victory in the tournament.

India had defeated Malaysia 4-0 in their tournament-opener on Monday. The hosts will next play Thailand on Thursday.

In the first match of the day, minnows Thailand held Japan to a 1-1 draw, while reigning Olympic silver medalist China defeated Malaysia 5-0 to register their second consecutive win.

The Indians started from where they left on Monday and continued to play attacking hockey from the onset.

India's dominance can be gauged by the fact that the Koreans didn't have a single shot at the Indian goal in the first two quarters.

India, on the other hand, attacked the Korean defence relentlessly and created chances which resulted in two field goals. It didn't take long for the Indians to surge ahead as they



opened the scoring in the third minute through Sangita.

Neha Goyal initiated the move and passed it on to Navneet Kaur, who found Sangita inside the circle. The striker beautifully received the ball, sidestepped her marker and then found the back of the net with a fine reverse hit.

India kept up the pressure on the Korean defence and their efforts bore fruit in the 20th minute when Deepika slammed one home from close range from Beauty Dung Dung's pass

from the right flank.

A minute later Preeti Dubey's reverse hit was saved by an outstretched right leg of Korean goalkeeper Seoyeon Lee.

In the 24th minute, Sangita came tantalisingly close to scoring her second goal of the day, but her push from a Deepika pass went just wide of the post.

If the first half belonged to India, Korea came out all guns blazing after the change of ends and secured back-to-back penalty corners in the 34th minute and Lee pulled one back

for her side from a rebound.

Motivated by the goal, the Koreans put pressure on the Indian defence and four minutes later secured a penalty stroke after an Indian defender unnecessarily brought a Korean striker inside the circle. Skipper Cheon stepped up and made no mistake to level the scores.

Penalty corner conversion continued to haunt the Indians as they failed to make use of the eight set pieces they secured in the match -- four consecutively in the 39th minute.

In the last match also India earned as many as 11 penalty corners but converted just three.

Held to a 2-2 draw, the Indians decided to throw numbers upfront and mounted raids after raids on the Korean citadel and in the process secured penalty corners in quick succession but they lacked variation from the set pieces and the efforts were mostly one dimensional.

But the Indians got a chance in the 57th minute in the form of a penalty stroke, which Deepika converted with ease. (PTI)

Players believing in our style of play is the key, says Manolo Márquez

HYDERABAD, Nov 12: Indian football team head coach Manolo Márquez on Tuesday said it is critical for his players to follow a synchronised approach while representing the country, in order to start getting results in the international arena.

The Indian senior men's national team began its training camp ahead of the friendly match against Malaysia on November 18 in Hyderabad.

With the Indian Super League going into a break with the start of the November FIFA international window, the Blue Tigers checked into the city on Monday and will have a total of six days of training sessions before the match.

"We were supposed to play two games last month but due to external reasons, Lebanon couldn't come. For people, more games is better. But it's difficult to train the day before and after the match. We need to train tactically as well."

"I feel it's necessary to prepare for not just the game against Malaysia but the official matches which will come in March," Márquez said.



Márquez had a rough start to his coaching stint with the national team as India were held 0-0 by Mauritius in September and beaten 0-3 by Syria in the Intercontinental Cup, also in Hyderabad.

His boys put up an improved showing, especially in the second half, against Vietnam in a 1-1 draw last month in Nam Định.

The Spaniard has continued the trend of calling up new players in each FIFA window so far. This

time, Hmingthanmawia Ralte, Vibin Mohanan, Irfan Yadwad and Thoiba Singh Moirangthem earned their first national team call-ups. The latter was a last-minute arrival after Anirudh Thapa suffered an injury during the match between Mohun Bagan Super Giant and Odisha FC on Sunday.

Since taking charge in July, Márquez's priority has been to utilise the friendly matches and training sessions to find the best

group of players for the 2027 AFC Asian Cup Qualifiers, scheduled to start in March 2025.

"It's true that we want to check some new players. But obviously it's impossible to change the whole group and call 40 players in March. It's true that we are finding the group. It means that we have maybe 14, 15, 16 players who will be there, but we don't know exactly. And there are a lot of players who can get there," the coach said.

"Obviously, it's still four months, and the situation can change with a lot of things unfortunately with injuries and the players' domestic form. But, I repeat again, as a coach you need to find the group which can play the style that we want."

"I am fully focussed on the Malaysia match at the moment. In a way, it's a dangerous game because the players are in the middle of the fight for the ISL and this is just one friendly game in November, and the next camp will be in four months."

"But I am very confident in this group and I feel we will have a good performance next Monday," said Márquez. (PTI)

After ODI success, Rizwan eyes T20I series win in Australia

KARACHI, Nov 12: Pakistan's white-ball captain Mohammad Rizwan is confident of winning the upcoming T20 international series in Australia and is also eyeing a whitewash of the home team.

The Pakistan team led by Rizwan surprised everyone by winning a one-day series in Australia for the first time since 2002, after the Australian team management decided to rest five of their senior players for the decider in Perth.

The Australian team has come under criticism from its former players for resting the players in a crucial match while Cricket Australia CEO Nick Hockley has also expressed disappointment at the results.

Pakistan's white-ball coach Jason Gillispie has said that it was disappointing to note that CA had not promoted the Pakistan-Australia series enough.

Rizwan said if the Pakistan team played like a unit it had every chance of whitewashing

Australia in the T20 series.

"It is fine we have celebrated the ODI series win because no one expected us to win in Australia. But at the same time all the players must remember they are ambassadors of Pakistan and behave appropriately at all times on tour," Rizwan told the players in a dressing room pep talk released by the Pakistan Cricket Board on Tuesday.

"I think we must all strive to win big titles like the World Cups and Champions Trophy to show everyone what Pakistan cricket is capable of," he added.

Rizwan said that it was time for the team to create new records in whichever country they toured in future.

"Records of not winning somewhere which have stood for years must be ended," he added.

He said as a captain he consulted with every player and officials in the team to get clarity before making any decision. (PTI)

Skeet marksman Bhavtegh strikes gold in World University Shooting



NEW DELHI, Nov 12: Young Indian skeet shooter Bhavtegh Singh Gill added a second gold to the country's tally, taking the top-podium finish with superb marksmanship in the World University Shooting Championship here on Tuesday.

The air pistol mixed team of Palak Gulia and Amit Sharma had struck the first gold on Sunday. On a day when India also won three more individual bronze medals through women's 25m sports pistol exponent Simranpreet Kaur Brar, Yashasvi Rathore (women's skeet, and Abhay Singh Sekhon (men's skeet), 21-year-old Gill, one of the budding skeet marksmen with four international medals in the junior category, shot 58 in the final to take the top podium spot. He overcame a strong challenge from Cyprus' Petros Englezoudis, who had to settle for silver, while another Indian, Sekhon took the bronze.

Sekhon had earlier topped the qualification round shooting 122 out of 125, while Gill had made it to the six-shooter final placed fourth, tallying 119/125.

Yashasvi Rathore in women's skeet clinched the bronze medal with a score of 38, while Italy's Giada Longhi took the gold (52) and Slovakia's Adela Supekova bagged the silver.

Yashasvi had earlier finished the qualification round in second place scoring 114/125, while Giada was a class apart notching up 119. In 25m sports pistol, Simranpreet shot 30 in the eight-shooter final to finish third and add another bronze.

Korea's Kim Minesso (35) and France's Fournie Heloise (34) took the gold and silver respectively. As many as 220 shooters from across 23 countries are competing in the championship. The event is being hosted by Manav Rachna International Institute of Research and Studies. (PTI)



DUBAI, Nov 12: Matteo Manassero quit golf five years ago at the age of 26, tormented by a sport that gave him so many highs but was no longer making him feel happy. On Sunday, he could punch a ticket to play across the Atlantic on the lucrative PGA Tour and be back in the big time, where so many think his game belongs. The 31-year-old Italian will look to cap his career revival this week by becoming one

of 10 players from the European tour to be eligible to claim dual membership and a PGA Tour card for the 2025 season.

The season-ending World Tour Championship starts on Thursday in Dubai and only an unlikely turn of events will deny Rory McIlroy from being crowned as the European tour's best player for a sixth time, leaving him two off Colin Montgomerie's record haul.

There will be more suspense elsewhere, though, notably in that race for those PGA Tour cards — a structural tweak created in 2022 in the wake of the so-called strategic alliance between the European tour and PGA Tour in the face of mounting pressure from the breakaway LIV Golf series. The presence of Manassero in the 10-man list, as it stands, only elevates the interest levels. Blessed with a smooth swing and a deft touch, Manassero was a golfing prodigy, winning the British Amateur in 2009, the silver medal at the British Open for low amateur the same year, and also becoming the No. 1 amateur in the world.

By 2013, he'd won four events on the European tour — including the BMW PGA Championship, the flagship event on the tour, to move into the world's top 25. Then came the career dip, which plunged him into self-doubt and ultimately retirement — albeit for only a few months while he assessed where to go with his life. He eventually decided to give golf another go, beginning his rebuild on the lowly Nordic Golf League and the Alps Tour, which is on the third tier of European golf. His talent shone through and last year he sealed a return to the European tour with a win at the Jonsson Workwear Open in March being universally cele-

brated in the golf fraternity.

That helped to put him in a strong position to claim the end-of-season bonus of a PGA Tour card, and he headed to Dubai in fifth place among non-exempt players, behind Thriston Lawrence, Rasmus Hojgaard, Paul Waring — the winner in Abu Dhabi last week — and Niklas Norgaard. Jesper Svensson, Thorbjorn Olesen, Rikuya Hoshino, Sebastian Söderberg and Jordan Smith make up the list, though the tour says any non-exempt player in the 50-man field can, statistically, break into the top 10.

Robert MacIntyre is living proof of how life-changing that can be. He was one of the 10 to claim a PGA Tour card after last year's World Tour Championship and he has blossomed, winning two big PGA events — the Canadian Open and the Scottish Open — and rising to a career-high 15th in the world in August. He is No. 16.

"Career-changing, 100%," MacIntyre said on Tuesday. "I've now got to the top level of professional golf, the top 25% of professional golfers."

"You can then pick your schedule and you're in all the major events and you're in all the top events you can play in and you can pick and choose, and that's where you want to be."

"I think," MacIntyre added, "the majority of golfers out here have got that dream, as well."

If Hojgaard secures his PGA Tour card, he will join his twin brother Nicolai in the United States. Lawrence leads that list of PGA Tour hopefuls but has other things on his mind. The South African is the only player who can prevent McIlroy from winning the Race to Dubai title — formerly the Order of Merit — and join the late Seve Ballesteros on six.

Lawrence has to win — nothing less is good enough — and then needs McIlroy to finish tied for 11th or lower.

"Rory has been an idol for me since growing up as a youngster," the 27-year-old Lawrence said, "and being able to clinch it this week would be the cherry on the cake for myself."

The smart money, however, is on McIlroy, who has shown extraordinary consistency in collecting a win — at the Dubai Desert Classic in January — as well as four runner-up finishes and three more top fives in his 12 European tour events this season. "Rory is held to a higher standard than pretty much everybody else in the world of golf," Tommy Fleetwood said. "But, I think he's shown amazing golf again this year, and he's shown why he's one of the best to ever do it." (AP)

3rd T20I: India eye batting revival against SA at Centurion

CENTURION, Nov 12: Indian batting line-up needs to get its mojo back against a resurgent South Africa to regain the lost ground on rather unfamiliar SuperSport Park conditions when the two teams clash the third T20I here Wednesday.

Since 2009, India have played only one T20I at this venue, which they lost by six wickets in 2018 and have only one survivor from that squad in this side -- Hardik Pandya.

Along with that unfamiliarity factor, India will also grapple with the ordinary form of their batters, particularly when the pitch here is touted to be similar to the one at Gqeberha -- quick and bouncy.

In the second T20I, India batters struggled against South African pacers upfront, getting restricted to 124 for six, and Centurion has similar characteristics.

The problem starts from the top -- more precisely with Abhishek Sharma, whose extended lean run with the bat has now snowballed into a serious concern. He is in desperate need of a good outing here before the management thinks of juggling the combination.

Even now, they can think of giving the job of partnering Sanju Samson at the top to Tilak Varma

and bring in Ramandeep Singh in the middle to add more muscle to the unit.

However, the senior batters like skipper Suryakumar Yadav, Pandya and Rinku Singh too cannot absolve themselves of the blame entirely for India's struggles.

Both Suryakumar and Rinku have shown only fleeting images of their prowess here while Pandya made 39 in the second match but he consumed 45 balls for it.

In fact, the power-hitter took 28 balls to find his first boundary and, again, could not find the ropes between balls 39 and 45.

So, these three batters will have to chip in more to support in the in-form Samson or to carry India to a strong total even when the Kerala man has a vapid day.

Similarly, pacers Arshdeep Singh and Avesh Khan had two contrasting games. Arshdeep returned with figures of 1 for 25 at Durban, but in the second game he had stats of 1 for 41.

The left-arm pacer's third and fourth overs which went for 28 runs -- including four fours in an over against Tristan Stubbs -- made a deep impact on the low-scoring match.

So, they will be eager to



change the script here, unless the management looks at other options such as Yash Dayal or Vysakh Vijaykumar.

However, the efforts of Varun

Chakravarthy, who bagged a maiden wicket in the previous match, and Ravi Bishnoi over the last two matches have been outstanding and the spinners will be looking for an

encore in the third match to hand back the advantage to India.

The expected bounce and pace on the pitch here will be an encouraging factor as well for the

Indian duo.

From a batting perspective, South Africa too face a similar issue as senior pros skipper Aiden Markram, David Miller and Heinrich Klaasen are yet to fire in this series.

They required runs from less-pedigreed batters Tristan Stubbs and Gerald Coetzee to get over the line in the second contest, and the Proteas will certainly cherish a heftier contribution from their veterans, especially against Indian spinners.

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), Otneil Baartman, Gerald Coetzee, Donovan Ferreira, Reeza Hendricks, Marco Jansen, Heinrich Klaasen, Patrick Kruger, Keshav Maharaj, David Miller, Mhlangi Mpongwana, Ngaba Peter, Ryan Rickelton, Andile Simelane, Lutho Sipamla, Tristan Stubbs.

Match starts at 8.30pm IST. (PTI)

Jorhat Premier League Jorhat Super Giants clinch championship title



HT Correspondent

JORHAT, Nov 12: Jorhat Super Giants clinched the champion's title in the inaugural Jorhat Premier League played in the ground of Jorhat Stadium on Tuesday.

Jorhat Super Giants defeated Jai Hind Warriors by 5 runs in the final match. Elected to bat first, Jorhat Super Giants collected 98 runs in the stipulated 20 overs by losing 9 wickets. On the other hand, Jai Hind Warriors were able to collect only 93 runs at the loss of 8 wickets in the stipulated 20 overs. Manash Kachari (Jorhat Super Giants) bagged the 'Man of the Match' title, while Dipu Saikia of Jai Hind Warriors was adjudged the 'Man of the Series' title. Partha Pratim Bora of Jai Hind Warriors won the 'Best Bowlers' title and Anuj Rai of Radiant Strikers bagged the 'Promising player's award. The league was organised by cricketers of Jorhat in collaboration with City Boy's Club and Jorhat District Sports Association.

Olympic medalist withdraws from elections

PARIS, Nov 12: Sarah Ourahmoune, a silver medalist at the 2016 Olympic Games, has withdrawn her bid to become president of the French boxing federation, saying she has been the target of vicious racist and sexist attacks.

In an open letter published this week, Ourahmoune said she found herself at the receiving end of insults that went beyond anything she could have imagined in the buildup to next month's election.

"Words like the token Arab", the federation's "cleaning lady", or even the (expletive) of...", she wrote on social media. "Not to mention anonymous messages of unprecedented and deeply shocking violence." Ourahmoune had been campaigning on a joint bid alongside the current president, Dominique Natio.

Another female boxer, the 2016 Olympic lightweight champion Estelle Mossely, is also a candidate.

"I never thought I'd be attacked like this because of my origins or simply because I'm a woman," Ourahmoune said.

"My decision to step down has cost me enormously, because it seems to contradict everything I stand for on a daily basis: courage, resilience, the ability to fight in hostile environments, to push back the limits of what is possible, and to defend equality, diversity and gender balance." (AP)

Shami to return to competitive cricket; pacer to play for Bengal against MP in Ranji Trophy



KOLKATA, Nov 12: Premier India pacer Mohammed Shami will make his much-anticipated return to competitive cricket after a hiatus of nearly a year through Bengal's Ranji Trophy match against Madhya Pradesh in Indore from Wednesday, announced Cricket Association of Bengal.

Shami, who has been out of action since the 2023 World Cup final on November 19 due to an ankle injury and the subsequent surgery, will aim to prove his fitness in a real match situation after undergoing intense rehabilitation at the BCCI Centre of Excellence in Bengaluru.

"In a major boost to Indian cricket and the Bengal Ranji Trophy team, star pacer Mohammad Shami will make a comeback into competitive cricket for Bengal against

Madhya Pradesh in the Ranji Trophy Elite Group C match in Indore starting on Wednesday," CAB secre-

tary Naresh Ojha said in a statement.

Ojha said Shami will spearhead the Bengal pace bowling unit and the Indian thinktank in Australia too will closely follow Shami's outing.

India have opted for a largely untested pace attack for the Border-Gavaskar Trophy with rookies such as Akash Deep, Harshit Rana, Nitish Kumar Reddy and Prasad.

Krishna backing senior pros Jasprit Bumrah and Mohammed Siraj.

Mukesh Kumar, Navdeep Saini, and Khaleel Ahmed are in the reserves, but all of them come with minimal exposure to Test cricket.

There was intense speculation surrounding Shami's inclusion in the Indian squad to tour Australia but skipper Rohit Sharma struck down such thoughts saying he did not prefer taking an "undercooked" senior pacer Down Under.

Shami had played a big role in India's historic 2-1 Test series victory in 2018-19 against Australia, claiming 16 wickets at an average of 26.18.

Instead, Shami focused on regaining optimum fitness at the NCA and he also bowled at full tilt at nets while India bowling coach Morne Morkel kept a close watch.

The nearly one-hour session took place at the M Chinnaswamy Stadium in Bengaluru after India's first Test against New Zealand last month. Later Shami also said during a promotional event that he was feeling "100 per cent" about his fitness and bowling levels.

Shami was also impressive during his outing for India in the ODI World Cup last year. The 34-year-old was the top wicket-taker in the ICC showpiece with 24 wickets in seven matches at an average of 10.70.

Since then, he was out of action with an Achilles tendon injury on his right leg, for which the pacer underwent surgery in March. (PTI)

TURIN (ITALY), Nov 12: Ace Indian tennis player Rohan Bopanna and his Australian men's doubles partner Matthew Ebden started their ATP Finals campaign on a losing note, suffering a straight-set defeat in a group stage match.

Bopanna and Ebden were defeated by the Italian duo of Simone Bolelli and Andrea Vavassori 2-6, 3-6 in just 56 minutes here on Monday. The Indo-Australian pair had defeated their opponents in this year's Australian Open final.

Bolelli and Vavassori, the fourth seeds, dominated from the outset, breaking their rivals in the second game.

A double fault by the Indo-Australian pair in the eighth game allowed the Italians to secure another break of serve, further thwarting any hopes of a comeback.

Buoyed by the local support, Bolelli and Vavassori continued their domination in the second set as well, taking the crucial break in the fourth game.

Bopanna, who is appearing in the tournament for the fourth time, and Ebden, struggled to match their Italian opponents, failing to earn even a single break point throughout the match.

The serving woes added to their



difficulties, as they won only 58% of points (19 out of 33) on their first serve and 47% (7 out of 15) on their second.

In contrast, the Italians were far more efficient, winning 89% of points on their first serve (31 out of 35) and 83% on their second (5 out of 6).

Additionally, Bopanna and Ebden committed two double faults, both of which led to breaks

of serve.

The defeat marked Bopanna and Ebden's third consecutive defeat to the Italians this year.

Bopanna and Ebden lie fourth in the Bob Bryan Group. They will take on top seeds Marcelo Arevalo of El Salvador and Croatian Mate Pavic in their next group game on Wednesday.

They had reached the semifinals in the last edition. (PTI)

Perth pitch to have really good pace and bounce: Curator cautions India ahead of first Test



PERTH, Nov 12: India will be accorded a tough welcome to Australia as the Optus Stadium pitch for the opening Test of the Border-Gavaskar Trophy has been prepared to offer "good bounce and pace" true to the tradition of the fiery tracks in Perth.

India will enter the Perth Test, beginning from November 22, without playing any practice match as the visitors had cancelled an intra-squad side game that was scheduled to be played behind closed doors from November 15 to 17.

Now, India will focus on centre-wicket training at the nearby WACA stadium, where Australia will also polish their skills.

"This is Australia, this is Perth... I'm setting ourselves up for really good pace, really good bounce and really good carry," Western Australia Cricket head curator Isaac McDonald told 'ESPNews'.

McDonald is trying to prepare a pitch that has similar traits of the one that he readied for the first Test against Pakistan in December last year.

In that match, Pakistan were bundled out

for 89 in the second innings as the Aussies celebrated a massive 360-run victory.

The pitch too had developed cracks as that match wore on and batters like Marnus Labuschagne copped blows on their hands.

Overall, the three Aussie pacers -- Pat Cummins, Josh Hazlewood and Mitchell Starc -- grabbed 12 of the 20 Pakistan wickets.

More recently, Pakistan pacers Shaheen Shah Afridi, Naseem Shah and Haris Rauf tore through Australian line-up, bowling the hosts out for 140 in the third ODI here.

McDonald said he is looking to leave some grass on the pitch to make it a bit spicier.

"It's (10 mm) a good starting point. Ten millimetres was pretty comfortable with the conditions that we had (last year) and that held the conditions together nicely for the first few days. Live grass on the pitch is speed.

"Both bowling units (Australia and Pakistan) were pretty rapid last year and hoping for much the same this year (for India match)," he added. (PTI)

Asian Champions Trophy India beat South Korea 3-2 in women's hockey



RAJGIR (BIHAR), Nov 12: India beat South Korea 3-2 to register their second consecutive win in the women's Asian Champions Trophy hockey here on Tuesday.

India raced to a 2-0 lead in the first half through goals from Sangita Kumari (3rd minute) and Deepika (20th) before Korea mounted a strong comeback in the third quarter and drew parity with goals from Yuri Lee (34th) and skipper Eunbi Cheon (38th).

But the match was far from over as Deepika scored from the spot in the 57th minute to eke out a close win for India.

India had defeated Malaysia 4-0 in their tournament opener on Monday. The hosts will next play Thailand on Thursday.

In the first match of the day, Thailand held Japan 1-1, while reigning Olympic silver medalists China defeated Malaysia 5-0 to register their second consecutive win in the tournament. (PTI)

Australian opener McSweeney braces for 'unique' Bumrah challenge

25-year-old South Australian will partner Usman Khawaja at the top

ADELAIDE, Nov 12: Australia opener Nathan McSweeney, who is set to debut against India in the Border-Gavaskar Trophy, said he has been preparing for the "unique" challenge of facing star pacer Jasprit Bumrah.

McSweeney was drafted into the Australia squad after a slew of impressive performances in the Sheffield Shield tournament and in the recent 'A' series against India.

The 25-year-old South Australian will partner Usman Khawaja at the top in the series opener in Perth and during the upcoming five-Test series.

"There's probably not (much) I can do to replicate how Bumrah bowls. Obviously, he's got a unique action. He's one of the best bowlers in the world.

"So, it's going to be hard to mimic that. I'm just looking forward to all of that and I can't wait," McSweeney told SEN.

McSweeney, who captained the Australia A side in the 2-0 series win against India A, said he has been watching the bowling clips of Indian quicks including Bumrah and Mohammed Siraj to be mentally ready for the task.

"I'll definitely dive a lot deeper into it when I get to Perth. I've looked at a few clips of what they're bowling attack stacks up like. I'm just trying to visualise how I'm going to go about it. Facing a new bowler can be a slight challenge to just pick up their action," he said.

"I've got a whole week before I head off to Perth, so, I can get mentally ready and I guess it starts now in preparation to hopefully start really well," he added.

However, a quiet confidence runs through the young batter ahead of the



important series.

"In the last month or so I really feel like I'm batting the best I ever have. I think I'm the best I've ever been prepared to take this opportunity, so hopefully I can do that.

"No doubt there's plenty of learning and experiences that I haven't experienced yet and I'm looking forward to learning all about the challenges of Test cricket and challenging my game against the very best," he said.

McSweeney will step into the shoes of David Warner, who retired from international cricket after the home Test

series against Pakistan in January this year, and the Adelaide man realises the enormity of the job.

The right-hander has a plan for it.

"Being an opening batter, it's making sure I'm leaving the ball well and making the bowlers are bowling to me. Then being ready and positive to score when they miss is as simple as I want to make it.

"If I'm reacting well and doing those things well, hopefully, it equates to me spending time in the middle and chipping away at the scoreboard," he said. (PTI)