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PM Modi graces first-ever Bodoland Mohotsov mega event

HT Bureau

GUWAHATI, Nov 15: The first-ever Bodoland Mohotsov has begun at the SAI Indira Gandhi Indoor Stadium in New Delhi with a two-day program scheduled on Friday.

The event was organised by the All Bodo Students Union (ABSU), Bodo Sahitya Sabha, Dularai Bodo Harimu Afad, and Gandhi Hindustani Sahitya Sabha in association with government of Bodoland Territorial Region (BTR).

The Prime Minister of India, Narendra Modi graced the occasion as chief guest amidst presence of huge crowd of participation from different areas of Bodoland Territorial Region, Assam, and neighbouring states of the country.

During the occasion, Prime Minister Narendra Modi hailed the people of the Bodo community for eschewing violence and taking up the path of peace after the historic Peace Accord of 2020,



saying that forests in parts of Assam which once served as "hideouts" are now becoming medium to fulfil the "high ambitions" of the youth.

Addressing the inaugural ceremony of the first Bodoland Mahot-

sav here, the Prime Minister also said that after the Bodo Peace Accord, the Bodoland region has witnessed a "new wave of growth".

After witnessing long years of violence with many generations getting (CONTD. ON PAGE-2)

₹ 2,200 cr Assam online trading scam prime accused located at Siliguri AJRS Marketing case kingpin arrested

NEW DELHI, Nov 15: The CBI has made a fresh arrest in the ₹ 2,200 crore online trading scam in Assam, officials said on Friday.

The accused Gopal Paul was arrested from a hideout in Siliguri in connection with the AJRS Marketing case, one of the 41 cases related to the scam being investigated by the agency, a CBI spokesperson said in a statement.

"The Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI) has taken over the investigation of 41 cases in Assam concerning various unregulated deposit schemes, following a recommendation by the government of Assam," the spokesperson said.

The investigation was earlier carried out by Assam Police which had already arrested prime actors in the case. Paul remained absconding.

The agency had taken over cases



from the state police in the last week of October.

"Since taking charge, the CBI has accelerated its probe, conducting fresh searches across 92 locations in five states. These searches have led to the seizure of 24 mo-

bile phones, 18 desktops, seven hard drives, and 11 laptops," the statement said. The agency has successfully traced databases containing details of depositors who were deceived into investing in these unregulated deposit schemes.

"In one particular case involving AJRS Marketing Pvt. Ltd., CBI has apprehended the primary accused, who had been evading authorities since the registration of the FIR. He was located at a hideout in Siliguri, where incriminating evidence was also recovered," the spokesperson said.

The online trading scam in the state came to light in the last week of August when investors, who had put in huge amounts of money in the stock company of 29-year-old Deepankar Barman, alleged that he had not paid them due returns and his office has been closed since August 21.

The state police had arrested Barman, Bishal Phukan, actor Sumi Bora and her husband among others. Around 18 people have been arrested in the case so far, officials said. (PTI)

Alumni meet held by KSA at Diphu

HT Bureau

DIPHU, Nov 15: The former Karbi Students Association (KSA) leaders and members have come together in an alumni meet at Sarsing Teron (Langkung Habe) Memorial Town Hall here on Friday, taking time to celebrate the joy and share their past experiences.

The meet was organised under the initiative of James Hanse as chairman and Bireshor Hanse as convener.

Sharing the history associated with the KSA and the autonomous state movement in the late 80s, the CEM said, "In 1986, I was still a student and was involved in the autonomous state movement and in the KSA as well. During that time the two movement organisations, the Autonomous State Demand Committee (ASDC) and Karbi Anglong & NC Hills Autonomous State Demand Committee (KAANCHASDCOM), were rivals. As I was under the leadership of Keshop Terang and the ASDC leaders were against us."

He added, "When the KSA got split, we were in Diphu defending the KSA central executive committee office. There were scuffles between the leaders of the two factions of the KSA and I was also victimised."

The CEM also recalled the opposition from ASDC in one of the gatherings at Dongkamukam during the autonomous state movement. He also reiterated his participation in the hunger strike in New Delhi, 'rail roko' and other agitational programmes. He was one of the leaders in KSA West Karbi Anglong Sub-Centre, Ronghang said.

Advising the KSA to be an independent organisation, the CEM said, "KSA should be a non-political organisation. I have never misused KSA for my political benefit. I always advised the KSA leaders to be independent and not to be under the dictate of any political party. The ASDC and CPI (ML) have their own KSA wings. But the KSA - Inglongpho has so far maintained neutrality and kept check and balance. KSA - Inglongpho is bold enough to point out the mistakes of the government and I appreciate them for this."

Speaking of the Autonomous State movement, the CEM urged people to support the Autonomous State (CONTD. ON PAGE-2)

Scindia criticises Congress for overlooking tribal contribution

AGARTALA, Nov 15: Union Minister Jyotiraditya Scindia on Friday criticised the Congress for overlooking the significant contributions of the tribal community in India's fight for independence.

Speaking at a programme marking the birth anniversary of tribal freedom fighter Birsu Munda, the DoNER and communications minister called the tribal leaders "heroes not only for the tribal community but for the entire nation."

"Birsu Munda fought a decisive battle against British rule and made the ultimate sacrifice for Bharat Mata. He is a hero to 140 crore people in India, not just the janajati (tribal) community," Scindia said, asserting that India's history would be incomplete without acknowledging the tribal contributions to the freedom struggle.

Taking aim at the Congress, Scindia claimed that the tribals were neglected under its rule and their historical contributions were forgotten.

"When Congress was in power, the tribals were disconnected from the nation's growth, and their role in the free-



dom movement was ignored," he added.

The Union minister praised Prime Minister Narendra Modi for rectifying this historical injustice.

"A major change occurred in 2014 when Modi became Prime Minister. Modiji began giving due recognition to tribal leaders by making them ministers, governors, and public representatives," Scindia said.

The minister highlighted the election of Droupadi Murmu, India's first tribal President, as a significant milestone. "The Congress opposed her election, but the people supported Modi's choice, and Murmuji became the President. Congress's opposition to her election was

nothing more than an attempt to diminish the contribution of the tribal community," he alleged.

Scindia also praised Modi's initiatives for the welfare and development of tribals, noting the launch of the JANMAN Yojana with an outlay of ₹ 24,000 crore, aimed at developing 12,000 tribal-dominated villages.

"The PM visited Birsu Munda's birthplace and launched a comprehensive welfare programme for the janajati community," he said.

Under Modi's leadership, Scindia pointed out that the number of Eklavya Model Residential Schools had increased from 10 to 500, and one lakh houses had been built for the tribal community to ensure that no one remains without a roof.

Scindia urged the tribal community to join India's journey of development from 2014 to 2047. "The Prime Minister envisions a Viksit Bharat (developed India) and Vishwaguru (global leader) by 2047, and every minister and public representative is working towards making this vision a reality," he added. (PTI)

Seaplane lands for first time in Assam

GUWAHATI, Nov 15: A seaplane landed at Pandu Ghat in Guwahati on Friday after a successful flight from the city airport, making it the first such plane to land in Assam. The addition of seaplanes to the state's transport network is expected to boost connectivity and tourism, Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma said.

"Earlier today, a seaplane successfully landed at Pandu Ghat on the banks of Brahmaputra, marking the first river landing in Eastern India, which will open new chapters of connectivity in a riverine state like Assam," Sarma said in a post on X.

"A dawn of new possibilities in the Tourism & Intercommunication of Assam. This morning, participated in an 'Amphibian Airplane' demonstration in Guwahati by M/s De Havilland Canada in collaboration with the Ministry of Civil Aviation," state tourism minister Jayanta Malla Baruah, who took the flight, posted on the micro-blogging site. Taking off from LGBI Airport and landing at Pandu Ghat, this brief yet remarkable journey showcased the immense potential of seaplanes in enhancing Assam's tourism, he



said. "I am optimistic that future collaborations will create unique experiences for tourists and further strengthen Assam's tourism sector," he added.

Talking to reporters at Pandu Ghat later, Baruah said, this is a special day for Assam. "It is the first time that a seaplane has landed in our state," he said.

Almost all tourism sites of the state are located near water bodies, like Kaziranga, Umrangso, and Majuli. These can be connected by seaplanes, he added. The minister said it will take six to 12 months to make the seaplanes operational. (PTI)

ASI caught red-handed in Hailakandi while accepting bribe

HT Bureau

GUWAHATI, Nov 15: An assistant sub-inspector (ASI) was caught red-handed by the Directorate of Vigilance and Anti-Corruption, Assam (DVAC), while accepting a bribe of ₹ 5,000 in Hailakandi on Friday, according to an official statement.

The ASI, identified as Khurshed Ali, was posted at the Abdullahpur Patrol Post in Hailakandi district.

According to the statement, the arrest followed a complaint received by the DVAC, alleging that Ali had demanded ₹ 5,000 as a bribe from the complainant in exchange for providing relief in a criminal case.

Unwilling to pay the bribe, the complainant approached the DVAC to take necessary legal action against the accused public servant.

"Accordingly, a trap was laid on November 15, 2024, by a team from the Directorate of Vigilance and Anti-Corruption, Assam, near Abdullahpur Patrol Post, under Lala Po-



lice Station, Hailakandi district. ASI Khurshed Ali was caught red-handed immediately after accepting ₹ 5,000 as a bribe from the complainant. The tainted bribe money was recovered from his possession and seized in the presence of independent witnesses," the statement read. A case has been registered at the ACB police station under Section 7(a) of the Prevention of Corruption Act, 1988 (as amended in 2018), the statement added.

"Necessary legal follow-up actions are underway," it concluded.

NEHU VC on leave till end-Nov

SHILLONG, Nov 15: Amid ongoing protests by students, faculty members and non-teaching staff, North Eastern Hill University (NEHU) vice-chancellor Prof Prabha Shankar Shukla has gone on leave until November 29.

The move comes after a wave of unrest on campus, with students demanding his removal over his alleged failure to dismiss the university's "incompetent" registrar and assistant registrar.

In an email to the university registrar, Shukla announced that he would take earned leave starting November 17, citing "unavoidable circumstances."

He also handed over his responsibilities to Prof N. Saha, the senior-most professor at the university. The leave follows a decision by the Union ministry of education to (CONTD. ON PAGE-2)

Contributions of tribals to freedom movement ignored: PM

JAMUI, Nov 15: Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Friday charged previous Congress governments in the country with trying to undermine the contributions of tribal leaders to the freedom movement "so that only one party and one family got away with the credit".

He made the remark, without mentioning the opposition party or the Nehru-Gandhi family by name, in the Jamui district of Bihar, addressing a function organised on the 150th birth anniversary of legendary freedom fighter Birsu Munda, which was marked by the launch of tribal welfare projects worth more than ₹ 6,000 crore.

Modi asserted that he worshipped the 'Adivasi Samaj' and his government took the decision to celebrate Munda's birth anniversary as 'Jan-

jaatiya Gaurav Divas' (the day of glory for tribals) because the community never got its due.

"Tribals have played their role in preserving the country's cultural heritage since times immemorial. It was the 'Adivasi Samaj' that helped the evolution of Lord Rama from a prince to a god," said the PM.

"Tribals also played a significant role in the struggle for Independence. But the previous governments deliberately tried to suppress this fact so that all credit was given to one party and one family," alleged Modi, who spoke in the presence of BJP allies like chief minister Nitish Kumar and Union minister Chirag Paswan. He said, "If only one party and one family were to be given credit, who would remember Birsu Munda and Tilka Manjhi (an 18th-

century Santhal leader)?"

The PM underscored that his government was taking steps for the upliftment of tribals, like declaring districts with a high population of the community as 'aspirational'. "We are committed to ensuring better education, health and job opportunities ('padhai, kamai aur dawaai') for tribals. To this end, the budget for tribal welfare has been raised to ₹ 1.25 lakh crore by my government. Earlier, it was a meagre ₹ 25,000 crore," he said.

In his speech that lasted about 30 minutes, the PM also thanked Nitish Kumar for offering "full support" when "a tribal woman" Droupadi Murmu was made the presidential candidate by the BJP-led NDA. Earlier, in his brief speech, Kumar, whose JD(U)'s (CONTD. ON PAGE-2)

NGT issues notice to authorities over mysterious elephant deaths



NEW DELHI, Nov 15: The National Green Tribunal has sought responses from the Union Ministry of Agriculture and Farmers Welfare, Wildlife Institute of India and others on the issue of the "mysterious deaths" of 10 elephants in Madhya

Pradesh's Bandhavgarh Tiger Reserve that have been linked to Kodo millet poisoning.

The National Green Tribunal (NGT) had taken suo motu (on its own) cognisance of a media report regarding the deaths.

The tribunal noted the report according to which "initial investigations indicated the cause of mysterious deaths to Kodo millet contamination" and samples had been sent for further analysis to two labs -- the Indian Veterinary Research Institute (IVRI) in Uttar Pradesh's Bareilly and a forensic lab in Madhya Pradesh's Sagar.

"The news item highlights that Kodo millet is a staple food in many parts of India, known for its high dietary fibre and mineral content. However, when contaminated with mycotoxins, it can be susceptible to fungal contamination, particularly during the monsoon season, when the crop is harvested in damp conditions, it can cause severe health issues in (CONTD. ON PAGE-2)

NEW DELHI, Nov 15: India on Friday said unilateral trade measures in the name of climate action are "discriminatory, harm multilateral cooperation" and go against the principles of the UN climate change convention.

Making an intervention in the presidential consultations on 'unilateral measures' at COP29 in Baku, India said this is a matter of global concern that needs urgent consideration to ensure the development pathways of developing countries are not constricted.

Other groups of developing countries, including the G77, the largest bloc representing over 130 nations at the UN climate talks, and Like-Minded Developing Countries also registered their strong opposition on the issue.

However, developed countries,



particularly the European Union, argued that the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) is not the right platform to discuss this issue, as it is already being addressed by the World Trade Organization.

India said restrictive unilateral measures force developing and

low-income nations to bear the costs of transitioning to low-carbon economies, undermining climate finance commitments from developed nations, which have historically benefited from industrialisation and contributed the most to greenhouse gas emissions. "They effectively will result in

the reversal of climate finance mobilised by the developed countries. It is like asking the victim to pay for the remedy," it said.

"Any unilateral measures in the name of climate change responses are discriminatory towards developing countries and detrimental to multilateral cooperation. They violate principles of equity and CBDR-RC and the UNFCCC provisions," it said.

India further said unilateral trade measures discriminate against countries seeking to industrialise through export-led growth by raising the cost of exports.

If the goal is to reduce global carbon emissions, climate policies must focus on offering concessional finance and building the capacity of countries to address both mitigation (CONTD. ON PAGE-2)

India to clock 7.2 pc growth in 2024

RBI to hold interest rates steady this year: Moody's

NEW DELHI, Nov 15: Moody's Ratings on Friday forecast a 7.2 per cent GDP growth for India in 2024, saying the Indian economy is in a sweet spot, but inflation risks may prompt the RBI to retain a relatively tight monetary policy this year.

Moody's said that despite the near-term uptick, retail inflation should moderate toward the Reserve Bank's target in the coming months as food prices ease amid higher sowing and adequate food grain buffer stocks. The retail inflation scaled to a 14-month high of 6.21, breaching the RBI's upper tolerance limit, on a sharp jump in vegetable prices. The agency said sporadic food price pressures continue to inject volatility in the disinflation trajectory.

"Potential risks to inflation from heightened geopolitical tensions and extreme weather events underscore the RBI's cautious approach to policy easing. Although the central bank shifted its monetary policy stance to neutral while keeping the repo rate steady at 6.5 per cent in October, it will likely retain relatively tight monetary policy settings into next year, given the fairly healthy growth dynamics and inflation risks," Moody's said.

The RBI's interest rate-setting monetary policy committee is



scheduled to meet next month, and with inflation ruling high, it is unlikely that the RBI would cut benchmark interest rates.

In its Global Macro Outlook 2025-26, the US-based rating agency said household consumption is poised to grow, fuelled by increased spending during the ongoing festive season and a sustained pickup in rural demand.

Additionally, rising capacity utilization, upbeat business sentiment and the government's continued thrust on infrastructure spending should support private investment.

India's real GDP expanded 6.7 per cent year-over-year in the second quarter of 2024, driven by a revival in household consumption,

robust investment and strong manufacturing activity. There are indications of a steady economic momentum in the July-September quarter as well.

"... from a macroeconomic perspective, the Indian economy is in a sweet spot, with the mix of solid growth and moderating inflation. We forecast 7.2 per cent growth for calendar year 2024, followed by 6.6 per cent in 2025 and 6.5 per cent in 2026," Moody's said.

Sound economic fundamentals, including healthy corporate and bank balance sheets, a stronger external position, and ample foreign exchange reserves also bode well for the growth outlook, it added.

The global economy, Moody's

said, has shown remarkable resilience in bouncing back from supply chain disruptions during the pandemic, an energy and food crisis after the Russia-Ukraine war began, high inflation and consequent monetary policy tightening.

"Most G-20 economies will experience steady growth and continue to benefit from policy easing and supportive commodity prices. However, post-election changes in US domestic and international policies could potentially accelerate global economic fragmentation, complicating ongoing stabilization," said Madhavi Bokil, Senior Vice President at Moody's Ratings and author of the report.

Moody's said trade tensions and geopolitical stresses, particularly between the US and China, are primary risks to the global macroeconomic outlook.

Potential long-term geoeconomic fragmentation could complicate global trade and financial connectedness.

Increasing trade protectionism, together with a push in several large economies to strengthen their domestic industries, make external demand a less reliable source of growth, Moody's said, adding economies with robust domestic drivers of growth will experience greater resilience and stability. (PTI)

Mercedes-Benz India to raise prices by up to 3% from 2025: CEO

NEW DELHI, Nov 15: German luxury carmaker Mercedes-Benz on Friday said it will hike prices of its vehicles in India by up to 3 per cent on its entire model range in the portfolio from January 1, 2025, citing a rise in input costs, inflationary pressures and higher operational expenses.

Prices of Mercedes-Benz cars in India will be revised by ₹2 lakh for the GLC to ₹9 lakh for the top-end Mercedes-Maybach S 680 luxury limousine, Mercedes-Benz India said in a statement.

The combination of rising input costs, inflation, and higher operational expenses has been exerting considerable pressure on Mercedes-Benz India's business operations and the company has been absorbing the rise in operational cost since the last three quarters, it added. "Over the past three quarters, we have been facing increased pressure on our cost structure primarily driven by escalating material cost, fluctuating commodity pricing, increased logistics expenses and inflationary cost," Mercedes-Benz India Managing Director & CEO Santosh Iyer said.

He further said, "While we have been absorbing these cost pressures by optimising our operational costs and driving higher efficiencies, the overall bottom line is getting impacted, considering the current challenges. To ensure the sustainability of our business, we have decided for a nominal price correction." This price correction will apply to those vehicles currently not in stock, offering price protection for all existing and future bookings until December 31, 2024, Iyer said.

"Flexible financing options from Mercedes-Benz Financial Services will ensure optimal total cost of ownership for our customers," he added. Currently, Mercedes-Benz India sells a range of vehicles with prices starting from ₹45 lakh for the A-Class to ₹3.6 crore for the G63 SUV. (PTI)



PM should set up panel on urban infra development in major cities: KP Singh

NEW DELHI, Nov 15: Real estate doyen K P Singh has urged Prime Minister Narendra Modi to set up a high-powered cabinet rank committee to prepare a blueprint for the development of urban infrastructure in all major cities that can support USD 5 trillion economy.

The urban master planning should not be for a short-term but for 100 years, the 95-year-old Singh said in an interview with PTI on the occasion of the launch of his second book 'Why the Heck Not?'. His autobiography 'Whatever the Odds' was released by Jack Welch, the former Chairman and CEO of GE, in November 2011.

Singh, the Chairman Emeritus of realty major DLF, described the current state of urban infrastructure as "horribly wrong" and said there was a need for "drastic steps" as India is growing and soon going to become the third largest economy in the world.

Referring to traffic mess in cities including IT city Gurugram which he built and high pollution level, Singh said these are large issues and "it needs attention in my view of the highest person in the country".

"So, you plan in advance, well knowing India is a democracy and growth is going to take place. Therefore, what urban infrastructure is necessary in advance for the growth, here that is not happening," he rued.

"Unless drastic actions are taken" the problem cannot be solved," he said.

Singh said there is a need to change the thinking process which he said remains "myopic" since the 1950s.

Thinking small and managing shortages will not help, he asserted.

In his book, he said there is a need to focus on rapid development of urban infrastructure, including roads, sewage lines and water supply.

"To build a resilient nation and to ascend a USD 5 trillion, we must wield our collective might to fortify the foundation of our cities. We must focus on rapid urban infrastructure development. The declining state of our cities is akin to a ticking time bomb signalling their devastation," Singh said in



his book, co-authored with Aparna Jain and published by Penguin.

He appealed to the prime minister to intervene to correct the situation.

"With a clarion call, I beseech our Honourable Prime Minister Narendra Modi to urgently convene a high-powered cabinet ranking committee, composed of farsighted planners and developers from the private sector in every major city, along with environmentalists of repute, all of whom should possess the experience or capability of envisioning India 100 years from now," Singh said.

The members in the committee must work with the foresight of Edwin Lutyens, who planned what is known as New Delhi almost a century ago, he added.

"These futurists, planners and a collective of individuals with wisdom and experience should then craft an enduring blueprint of the urban infrastructure development of at least all the major metro cities of India that will last a century," Singh suggested.

The PMO should ideally monitor the committee monthly, with the PM personally overseeing it once a quarter, he added.

Singh said the committee findings should also be made public regularly so that people are informed of plans that will fortify their children's lives through the development of India's urban infrastructure.

"Our cities are crumbling, and why? Because urban infrastructure has neither planned nor kept up with the growth of cities. Because of illegal encroachments and settlements. Because no one is being held responsible. It all gnawed at

me. When I envisioned a new city, it wasn't just about bricks and concrete. It was a dream for a sprawling metropolis, a blueprint for future generations," he pointed out in the book.

During the interview, Singh spoke about his decision to leave an army posting in 1961 to join DLF, a company started by his father-in-law, Chaudhary Raghendra Singh, in 1946.

He not only revived DLF Ltd but made it the largest publicly listed real estate company in India.

Singh spoke about challenges in the acquisition of land and getting approvals from the government for development of real estate projects.

The DLF Chairman Emeritus, however, asserted he never paid any bribe and rather used industry chambers and media to convince political leadership and bureaucrats that what DLF intended to do was for the public interest.

Singh also emphasised the importance of planning for retirement and sharing wealth with children when they are young as well as extended family.

DLF has developed some of the most well-known residential colonies in Delhi such as Model Town, Rajouri Garden, South Extension, Greater Kailash, and Hauz Khas.

Singh stepped down as the chairman after more than five decades in that position, in June 2020. DLF is now run by his son Rajiv. His contributions to the wider community and nation-building have won him numerous international and national awards, including the Padma Bhushan in 2010. (PTI)

Shah said. With Donald Trump winning the US presidential elections, "we are optimistic about his promise to stabilise the geopolitical landscape and strengthen the US economy, which will support a revival in trade, business, and supply chains, ultimately boosting global demand for gems and jewellery", he added.

According to the GJEPC data, exports of gold jewellery also increased by 8.8 per cent to USD 1,124.52 million (₹9,449.37 crore) in October 2024 compared to USD 1,033.61 million (₹8,603.33 crore) during the year-ago month. Exports of polished lab-grown diamonds grew by 1.27 per cent to USD 138.12 million (₹1,160.70 crore) in the previous month compared to USD 136.38 million (₹1,135.16 crore) recorded in October last year. (PTI)



tober. Notably, the export of cut and polished diamond grew 11.32 per cent compared to October 2023. We are optimistic that this trend will continue, especially with the approaching holiday season in the West, which will likely drive

further demand for gems and jewellery.

Furthermore, the Council is making concerted efforts to expand into new markets while strengthening demand in existing ones, GJEPC chairman Vipul

UK Treasury chief says she's not satisfied by paltry third-quarter economic growth

LONDON, Nov 15: Britain's Treasury chief Rachel Reeves said Friday that she is "not satisfied" by official figures showing the British economy's rebound from recession slowed down sharply in the third quarter of the year, with most sectors stagnating.

The Office for National Statistics said growth during the July to September period was just 0.1 per cent. That was lower than the 0.5 per cent recorded in the previous three-month period and below market expectations for 0.2 per cent. The statistics agency said overall output in September actually shrank, a development that has further fueled accusations from critics of the new Labour government that its pessimism dragged the economy down in its first few weeks in office. On coming to power in July for the first time in 14 years, the government described its economic inheritance from the former Conservative administration as the bleakest in decades, requiring urgent action to fix the public finances. The Conservatives' Treasury spokesperson, Mel Stride, sought to pin the blame for the slowdown on the new government, saying the deterioration in business and consumer confidence was a direct result of it "talking the economy down."

Reeves used the budget to raise taxes sharply, mainly on business, as well as increasing spending on public services, such as the state-run National Health

Service, and borrowing on investments.

"Improving economic growth is at the heart of everything I am seeking to achieve, which is why I am not satisfied with these numbers," Reeves said following Friday's figures. Prime Minister Keir Starmer has said raising economic growth is his government's number one priority over the next five years. Since the global financial crisis in 2008-9, the British economy has underperformed relative to previous years and actually slipped into a modest recession in 2023.

The Resolution Foundation think tank said the British economy has been a "rollercoaster" over the past year and that its medium-term performance has been "staid and stagnant" As a result of the third-quarter slowdown, the think tank said the UK has fallen below the US at the top of the growth leaderboard of the Group of Seven leading industrial economies.

"This all serves to highlight that the gov't's mission to renew strong economic growth is both extremely hard, and absolutely necessary," said Simon Pittaway, the think tank's senior economist. One factor hobbling the economy, many economists say, is Britain's departure from the European Union in 2020, which has made trade more difficult. Though the post-Brexit trade agreement between the two sides ensured there would be no tariffs placed on goods, exporters are finding life tough. (AP)

Contd. from Page 1.

Contributions of tribals to

support is critical for the BJP's survival in power at the Centre, had said that he considered his two short-lived alliances with the RJD-Congress combine as "a mistake that I shall never repeat".

Modi also said that he was impressed with the fact that Murmu, while she was the governor of Jharkhand, "always discussed with me the problems faced by the most backward communities among tribals, about whom the previous governments never cared".

"Today, we have launched PM Jan Man Yojana, for targeted growth of the most backward tribals, a scheme involving Rs 24,000 crore. The credit for the scheme also goes to Murmu, whose election to the highest constitutional office is a matter of pride for not just the BJP, but the entire NDA," he said.

"We can also never forget what we owe to the value system inherited from the tribals. Their environment-friendly way of life has come to characterise India, making it a shining example for the world to follow in an era marked by anxieties about climate change," he added.

Modi said the tribals also had an admirable "traditional system of medicine" and his government, while recognising these, was making efforts to help the community by setting up 700 Eklavya schools across the country.

"Our government has also taken steps to preserve the cultural heritage of tribals. Several artists from the community have been conferred with Padma awards. A museum named after Birsa Munda has been set up in Ranchi," pointed out the PM.

Highlighting the areas of concern, he underscored the high prevalence of sickle cell anaemia among the tribal population and spoke of "a massive nationwide campaign launched a year ago" under which 4.5 crore people have been screened.

"We are also trying to ensure that Adivasi families do not feel compelled to travel long distances for healthcare needs. To this end, a large number of Ayushman Aarogya Mandirs are being set up," said Modi. (PTI)

Modi graces first-ever

consumed in the bloodshed, the Bodo community is celebrating a festival after so many decades, Modi said. "You have scripted new history," the Prime Minister told the large gathering of people from the Bodo community at the event held at the SAI Indira Gandhi Sports Complex here.

Modi also was treated to a folk dance performed by a large number of artists. (With inputs from PTI)

NEHU VC on leave

launch an investigation into the university's alleged mismanagement and administrative issues. The probe will be led by former UGC chairman Prof D P Singh and includes Prof Dilip Chandra Nath, former VC of Assam University. The committee has been given 15 days to submit its report.

The protests, which included a hunger strike lasting over 10 days, have significantly impacted the functioning of NEHU, which has nearly 5,000 students. Several students were admitted to the hospital due to the protest, and university students' union leader Sandy Sohtun was recently admitted for health complications.

Additionally, the VC's residence was vandalised by unidentified assailants earlier this week, though no injuries were reported. (PTI)

NGT issues notice to

both humans and animals, including liver damage, kidney problems and gastrointestinal issues," said a bench of NGT chairperson Justice Prakash in an order dated November 12. The bench, also comprising judicial member Justice Arun Kumar Tyagi and expert member Afroz Ahmad, said the discovery of such contamination is concerning, as it poses a risk to wildlife and livestock that may come into contact with the crop. "The above matter indicates a violation of the Forest Conservation Act and the Environment Protection Act and the news item raises substantial issues relating to compliance with the environmental norms," the tribunal said.

It impleaded as parties or respondents the secretary of the ministry of agriculture and farmers welfare, directors of the Wildlife Institute of India and IVRI, Madhya Pradesh's principal chief conservator of forest and chief wildlife warden and the district magistrate of Umaria.

"Issue notice to the above respondents for filing their response/reply by way of affidavit before the Central Zonal Bench of the Tribunal at least one week before the next date of hearing (on December 12)," the tribunal said. (PTI)

Unilateral trade measures

and adaptation, it said. Trade measures related to climate change need to be assessed for their potential impact on equitable and just transitions, in the context of sustainable development and efforts to eradicate poverty, the country said.

Any trade-related climate policy should consider its effect on equitable and just transitions, sustainable development, and poverty eradication, it added.

The COP29 opening plenary was significantly delayed on Monday as developed and developing countries debated whether to make "unilateral trade measures", such as the European Union's Carbon Border Adjustment Mechanism (CBAM), an agenda item.

China, on behalf of the BASIC group of countries, submitted a proposal to the UN climate body last month requesting that this year's COP address the issue of unilateral trade measures.

The CBAM is the EU's proposed tax on energy-intensive products, such as iron, steel, cement, fertilisers, and aluminium, imported from countries like India and China.

The tax is based on carbon emissions generated during the production of these goods. Both the United Kingdom and the United States are at different stages of imposing their versions of this mechanism in due course.

The EU has earlier argued that this mechanism creates a level playing field for domestically manufactured goods, which must adhere to stricter environmental standards, and help curb emissions from imports.

Finance minister Nirmala Sitharaman last month termed CBAM "unilateral and arbitrary" and said such measures could potentially harm India's industries and disrupt the balance in international trade.

According to the Delhi-based think tank Centre for Science and Environment (CSE), CBAM will impose an additional 25 per cent tax on carbon-intensive goods exported from India to the EU. This tax burden would represent 0.05 per cent of India's GDP. (PTI)

Alumni meet held by

movement led by KANCHASDCOM. The CEM said, "It is not the ASDC nor CPI (ML) or BJP, but the autonomous state movement led by Ajit Timung and Sing Timung under the banner of KANCHASDCOM, KSA, KARSA and KRA. Political parties first think for their benefit, but leaders like Ajit Timung and Sing Timung have dedicated their whole lives to the cause of Autonomous State. They are genuine leaders and people should support them."

The CEM appreciated the initiative taken by persons like James Hanse, Bireshor Hanse, and his team for organising the alumni meet, where all the former KSA members after a separation of many years could come together to enjoy, celebrate and share past experiences.

The CEM also informed that during the three-day 73rd Karbi Anglong Day celebration commemorating the creation of erstwhile North Cachar and Mikir hills district, on November 16, 17, and 18 here at Taralango, the chief minister of Meghalaya, Conrad Sangma will be invited as the chief guest. "We have block - I and block - II interstate border issues with Meghalaya, which need to be resolved. For this we are inviting the chief minister of Meghalaya Conrad Sangma," the CEM said.

Delegates from the sixth scheduled autonomous councils of Northeast India, i.e. Garo Autonomous Council, Khasi Autonomous Council, Jaintia Autonomous Council, Chakma Autonomous Council, Tripuri Autonomous Council and Hmar Autonomous Councils have also been invited to showcase their culture and tradition.

Among the alumni attending the meet were the Chief Executive Member (CEM) of Karbi Anglong Autonomous Council (KAAC), Tuliram Ronghang; District Commissioner of Karbi Anglong, Nirola Phangchopi; ACS; Executive Member (EM), KAAC, Madhuram Lekthe; Member of Autonomous Council (MAC) Johnny Timung; Karbi Anglong and Dima Hasao Autonomous State Demand Committee (KADHASCOM) president Ajit Timung, general secretary Sing Timung and many prominent figures associated with the KSA.

The alumni meet was presided over by James Hanse, convener of the Alumni Meet. For KSA leaders and members who have achieved in various fields were felicitated with an appreciation letter from the organiser. Among them, the CEM and DC Nirola Phangchopi also received appreciation letters for their achievement in their respective fields. A souvenir 'Inglongpho' brought out by the organiser was also released on the occasion.

Gems, jewellery exports rise 9.18% in Oct on high diamond demand: GJEPC

MUMBAI, Nov 15: India's gems and jewellery exports grew by 9.18 per cent to USD 2,998.04 million (₹25,194.41 crore) in October due to revival in demand for cut and polished diamond, the Gem and Jewellery Export Promotion Council (GJEPC) said on Friday.

The overall exports stood at USD 2,746.09 million (₹22,857.16 crore) during the corresponding period of previous year, GJEPC said in a statement.

CPD (cut and polished diamond) exports went up by 11.32 per cent during October this year to USD 1,403.59 million (₹11,795.83 crore) from USD 1,260.91 million (₹10,495.06 crore) recorded in the same month a year ago.

"This is a welcome relief for our industry, as we've experienced export growth of 9.18 per cent in Oc-



tober. Notably, the export of cut and polished diamond grew 11.32 per cent compared to October 2023. We are optimistic that this trend will continue, especially with the approaching holiday season in the West, which will likely drive

further demand for gems and jewellery.

Furthermore, the Council is making concerted efforts to expand into new markets while strengthening demand in existing ones, GJEPC chairman Vipul

Janjatiya Gaurav Divas observed across State honouring Birsa Munda

HT Correspondent

DIBRUHARH, Nov 15: Prime Minister Narendra Modi, from Jamui district in Bihar, inaugurated the celebration of the 150th birth anniversary of Dharti Aaba Bhagwan Birsa Munda as the nation came together to observe 'Janjatiya Gaurav Divas'.

Union minister of Ports, Shipping & Waterways, Sarbananda Sonowal, joined PM Narendra Modi from the playground of Dinjoye Tea Estate in Chabua, Dibrugarh.

In Dibrugarh, heartfelt tributes were paid to Bhagwan Birsa Munda and other prominent tribal leaders at the Dinjoye Tea Estate playground in Chabua. The event, led by Union minister Sarbananda Sonowal, featured the ceremonial distribution of 'bhumi patta' and Ayushman Health Insurance Cards to several tribal beneficiaries. The celebration showcased the vibrant cultural heritage of various ethnic tribal communities.

Speaking on the occasion, Union minister Sarbananda Sonowal said, "Bhagwan Birsa Munda, the heroic revolutionary and pride of India's tribal communities, symbolises self-respect, sacrifice, and courage. His life and legacy continue to inspire strength, unity, and resilience. On his birth anniversary, we honour his role in uniting tribal societies against British colonial rule, embodying the spirit of self-reliance and inclusive growth for generations. To commemorate the great sacrifice made by tribal communities for nation-building, the entire country has come together to celebrate 'Janjatiya Gaurav Divas' on this pious day."

Our Haflong correspondent adds:

Dima Hasao district proudly commemorated 'Janjatiya Gaurav Divas' on Friday, coinciding with the 150th anniversary of the revered leader, Dharti Aaba Birsa Munda. In line with the rest of the country, Dima Hasao district witnessed the inauguration of various schemes worth ₹ 6,900 crore, presided over by Prime Minister Narendra Modi through a live telecast from Jamui in Bihar. The celebration marked a significant step towards honouring tribal heritage and fostering inclusive development for all communities in Dima Hasao.

Mohet Hojai, chairman of the North Cachar Hills Autonomous Council, highlighted various components of the new initiatives aimed at uplifting tribal communities. Speaking about Birsa Munda's lasting contributions to tribal recognition and rights, Hojai emphasised the necessity of enhancing public awareness and ensuring governmental schemes reach the most underserved residents. He reflected on the district's challenges, urging all departments to collaborate for the comprehensive upliftment of tribal populations.

District commissioner Simanta Kumar Das also addressed the gathering, drawing parallels between the struggles of the legendary Birsa Munda and ongoing efforts for tribal rights and freedoms. He underlined the importance of maintaining cultural identity and preserving the unique aspects of local communities. Furthermore, he called on all departments to identify gaps in development and work earnestly to elevate Dima Hasao to one of the top five districts in the state.

As part of the celebrations, five deserv-



ing individuals from each of the district's five blocks were honored with certificates under the Pradhan Mantri Awas Yojana (PMAY) for rural housing, presented by dignitaries in attendance.

Birsa Munda was a prominent tribal leader and freedom fighter who played a crucial role in India's struggle against British colonial rule. Born on November 15, 1875, in Ulihatu, Jharkhand, Birsa Munda is remembered for his significant contributions to the tribal community and his efforts to resist British oppression.

The event was graced by the esteemed presence of NCHAC secretary Partha Jahari, Haflong Municipal Board chairman Ripa Hojai, additional deputy commissioner James Aind, and a host of officials, civil society members, and students.

Our Tezpur correspondent adds: The Sonitpur district administration, in collaboration with the Sonitpur District Tribal Sangha, commemorated 'Janjatiya Gaurav Divas' on Friday, marking the

150th birth anniversary of Birsa Munda, the legendary tribal freedom fighter from Jharkhand. Observed nationwide, the day in Sonitpur began with the lighting of a ceremonial lamp and the laying of floral tributes in front of Dharti Aaba Bhagwan Birsa Munda's portrait.

Tezpur LAC MLA Prithiraj Rava graced the event as the guest of honour and highlighted Birsa Munda's revolutionary contributions. He spoke about the unity and shared heritage of Assam's ethnic communities and tribes, commemorating the historical journey of assimilation in the northeast. District commissioner Ankur Bharali, in his welcome address, acknowledged the central and state governments' recent initiatives in spotlighting the nation's unsung freedom heroes. He noted that these efforts foster awareness and encourage the preservation of unique cultural identities. He also mentioned the Dharti Aaba Janajatiya Gram Utkarsh Abhiyan (DA-

JGUA) launched by the Prime Minister on October 2, 2024. Keynote speaker Professor Prasanta Boro of Rangapara College spoke on the significant role of constitutional rights in empowering tribal communities and shaping their identity within India's nation-building efforts.

The event included a felicitation ceremony for family members of Sonitpur's freedom fighters Maniram Kachari, Lerela Kachari, and Ratan Kachari. In support of local farmers, agricultural equipment was distributed to six farmers under the Integrated Tribal Development Project (ITDP) Tezpur and the Agriculture Department. Representatives from the Agriculture, Health, and Women & Child Development departments also provided an overview of various initiatives benefiting the Scheduled Tribes (ST) community.

Key attendees included district development commissioner Lakhinandan Saharia, co-district commissioner of Dhekiajuli Dyotiva Bora, ADCs Kabita Kakati Konwar and Twahir Alam, joint director of Health Services Dr Rupak Barua, chairperson of Sonitpur District Tribal Sangha Horen Mili, along with heads of various departments and representatives from tribal, student, and youth organisations. It is noteworthy that in 2021, the Indian government designated Birsa Munda's birth anniversary as 'Janjatiya Gaurav Divas' during the 'Azadi Ka Amrit Mahotsav' to honour tribal contributions to India's heritage and progress, fostering unity in diversity.

Similarly, Tezpur University also commemorated 'Janjatiya Gaurav Divas', celebrated on the birth anniversary of

Bhagwan Birsa Munda, a tribal leader and freedom fighter whose legacy continues to inspire. The University also honoured the unsung tribal heroes of India's freedom struggle, particularly those from Northeast India. The University recalled Sikhna Jawhla, a Bodo freedom fighter who fought against the British during the late 18th century, Kamala Miri, who participated in the Quit India Movement, and Bhimbor Deori, a freedom fighter from the Deori community. The event, organised by the Centre for Inclusive Development, was attended by the vice-chancellor of the University, Prof Shambhu Nath Singh.

Highlighting the contribution of Birsa Munda and other tribal leaders to nation-building, the vice-chancellor said that the tribal population of the northeastern region of the country, with their distinct socio-cultural and socio-economic status, has played an important role in the development of the country. "I join the nation in saluting these tribal leaders for whose supreme sacrifice we are living a free life today," Prof Singh remarked.

Dr Rajeev Doley, director of the Centre for Inclusive Development, in his address, said that because of the northeast's ethnographic diversity and cultural richness, scholars have termed this region as 'miniature India' or an 'anthropological museum'. A number of events celebrating the occasion are being organised, which will continue until November 26, 2024, coinciding with Constitution Day. A speech competition titled 'The Role of Tribals in India's Growth with Special Reference to Assam' was also organised on the occasion.



Surendra Singnar from Karbi Anglong receives the National Smashing Talent Award 2024 in Literature, presented by US Art Gallery, Nalbari. Honored for his works 'Tranquil Thirsts', 'The Joy of Fall', and 'The Seeds in the Hills', the event took place at Nalbari College Auditorium and was inaugurated by Nalbari DC Varnali Deka on Friday.

Raj Bhavan celebrates Jharkhand Foundation Day

HT Bureau

GUWAHATI, Nov 15: As part of the 'Ek Bharat Shreshtha Bharat' initiative, Raj Bhavan Assam celebrated the foundation day of Jharkhand in the conference hall of Raj Bhavan here on Friday. The celebrations aimed to promote unity in diversity across the country.

Coinciding with the occasion, Janajatiya Gaurav Divas was also observed. Rich floral tributes were paid by the officers and staff of Raj Bhavan to the portrait of freedom fighter Bhagwan Birsa Munda, a legendary tribal leader from Jharkhand.

OSD, Chancellor's Secretariat, Kabita Deka, spoke on the occasion. She said that the celebrations highlight the importance of unity in diversity in India, acknowledging the contributions of various states and union territories to the country's growth and development. She added that the day has been observed as Jharkhand Foundation Day, celebrating the state's rich cultural heritage, unique traditions, and contributions to India's progress.

Representatives from Jharkhand also spoke on the occasion.

Haflong and Margherita celebrate Guru Nanak Gurpurab

HT Correspondent

HAFLONG, Nov 15: Guru Nanak Gurpurab, also known as Guru Nanak's Prakash Utsav and Guru Nanak Jayanti, was celebrated with great fervour and joy in Haflong, the headquarters of the Dima Hasao district on Friday. This sacred Sikh festival commemorates the birth of the first Sikh Guru, Guru Nanak Dev Ji, the founder of Sikhism.

The day-long celebration commenced at the Haflong Gurdwara with prayers, kirtan, and ardas (devotional prayers). People from various communities joined the Sikh congregation to mark the occasion. A highlight of the celebration was the 'Guru Ka Langar', a community meal served to all attendees, symbolising equality and selfless service.

The event witnessed the presence of notable dignitaries, including Ripa Hojai, chairperson of the Haflong Municipality Board. She was honoured with the highest Sikh distinction, the 'Saropa', in

recognition of her participation. Addressing the gathering, Hojai reflected on the teachings of Sikh Gurus, emphasising their timeless messages of peace, unity, and service to humanity.

The Sikh faith celebrates Gurpurabs, or anniversaries of the 10 Sikh Gurus, as moments of prayer and festivity. Sri Guru Nanak Dev Ji, born on April 15, 1469, in present-day Nankana Sahib, Pakistan, is revered as the pioneer of Sikhism, whose teachings continue to inspire millions worldwide.

Nirmal Singh, secretary of Sri Gurdwara Singh Sabha Haflong, and the Sikh community extended heartfelt wishes for peace, unity, and prosperity among all communities and tribes in the Dima Hasao district.

Our Margherita correspondent adds: Guru Nanak, the founder of the Sikh religion, whose 555th birth anniversary was celebrated on Friday at Sri Gurdwara Singh Sabha Margherita, was honoured with a grand ceremony.

More than 500 people from Margherita co-district, irrespective of caste, creed, race, language, and religion, attended the programme.

The programme began with the hoisting of the Nishan Sahib (Sikh religious flag) by the Sri Gurdwara Singh Sabha Managing Committee, Margherita, followed by kirtan paath, ardas, and langar.

Bahadur Singh stated that, like every year, this year as well, Sri Gurdwara Singh Sabha Margherita celebrated the 555th Guru Nanak Jayanti with great fervour and harmony.

Guru Nanak, the founder of the Sikh religion, was born on April 15, 1469, at Nankana Sahib, Pakistan. His teachings are very simple. According to Guru Nanak, there is only one God, all human beings can have direct access to God without any rituals, and he condemned the caste system, vehemently speaking against it. Every human being is equal, irrespective of caste, creed, race, language, and religion, said Bahadur Singh.

ALMDB distributes four ambulances to social organisations

HT Correspondent

HOJAI, Nov 15: The Assam Linguistic Minority Development Board (ALMDB), government of Assam, provided four ambulances to different social organisations of Assam at Nehru Stadium in Guwahati on Thursday. Two units of Purvottar Pradeshia Marwari Yuva Manch, namely Hojai and Mankachar, received one ambulance each, while one ambulance each was provided to Bharat Seva Ashram Sangh, Hojai, and Rajyog Education and Research Foundation, Hojai.

Notably, an ambulance distribution ceremony was organised, where Shiladitya Dev, chairman of the Assam Linguistic Minority Development Board, handed over the keys to the representatives of these NGOs. Talking to our correspondent, Shiladitya Dev apprised everyone of the developmental works undertaken by the ALMDB under his leadership. He said that under the leadership of chief minister Himanta Biswa Sarma, Assam is witnessing massive development. He further appealed to the social organisations to properly maintain the ambulances and carry forward their social endeavours.

Pankaj Jalan, provincial president of PPMYM, thanked the state government and ALMDB for providing the ambulances. He said that since its inception, social service has been the first and foremost priority of Purvottar Pradeshia Marwari Yuva Manch.

Kavach 4.0 set to revolutionise train safety

HT Bureau

GUWAHATI, Nov 15: Indian Railways is accelerating the deployment of the advanced Kavach 4.0, an automatic train protection system, across 10,000 locomotives and over 14,375 route kilometres (RKM) of tracks nationwide. Bids for the installation of the Kavach system have already been invited. Out of the total 14,375 RKM, bids have been opened for installation on 1,105 RKM, with the remaining bids set to be opened by the end of November 2024.

Additionally, Indian Railways has invited tenders for the installation of Kavach systems on 10,000 locomotives, with the financial bids currently under evaluation. Furthermore, all locomotives where lower versions of Kavach were installed will be upgraded to the Kavach 4.0 system.

In the NF Railway zone, approximately 1,966 RKM, spanning from Malda Town to Dibrugarh, has been identified for the implementation of Kavach. In 2024-25, Indian Railways has sanctioned the installation of the Kavach system on over 30,000 RKM. Of this, bids for 14,375 RKM have been invited. Indian Railways also plans to invite bids for an additional 17,000 RKM in 2025-26, with up to 30,000 RKM planned for 2026-28.

The advanced Kavach 4.0 system was approved by the Research Designs and Standards Organisation in July 2024. After successful trials, the implementation of Kavach 4.0 was completed on a 108 km section between Kota and Sawai Madhopur in the West Central Railway. Trials are also underway on the 84 km Ahmedabad-Vadodara section in the Western Railway. To enhance safety and efficiency in train operations, Indian Railways is planning for a faster rollout of Kavach on almost all major routes of its network by 2030.

In recent years, Indian Railways has undertaken several measures to reduce train accidents. By rolling out Kavach 4.0, Indian Railways is committed to making rail travel even safer for passengers. This initiative is part of a larger plan to strengthen the railway network and boost safety measures across the country's rail infrastructure.

AMCH wins 'Best Multidisciplinary Research Unit' award

HT Correspondent

DIBRUGARH, Nov 15: In a significant achievement, Assam Medical College, Dibrugarh, was honoured with the 'Best Multidisciplinary Research Unit' (MRU) award at the DHR-ICMR Health Research Excellence Summit 2024, held in New Delhi on Thursday. The award recognises the institution's exemplary contributions to medical research and innovation. The award was presented by Anupriya Patel, minister of State for Health and Family Welfare of India, in the presence of esteemed dignitaries including Dr Rajiv Bahl, secretary to the government of India, Department of Health Research and director general of the Indian Council of Medical Research (ICMR), and Dr VK Paul, member of NITI Aayog. Dr Reema Nath, vice-principal of Assam Medical College, received the award on behalf of the institution. The selection of Assam Medical College was based on a set of criteria, which included the number of research projects initiated per year, the number of indexed publications produced annually, the average contingency expenditure per year, the project completion rate, and adherence to patent guidelines, diagnostic processes, multi-centre, extra-mural, or international funding.

This focus is crucial as non-communicable diseases (NCDs) account for 74 percent of global deaths, with chronic respiratory diseases (CRDs) like COPD significantly impacting health outcomes, especially in India. COPD is the most prevalent yet underdiagnosed respiratory condition, affecting around 55 million Indians and ranking as the second leading cause of death in the country, according to the Global Burden of Disease Study 2019.

Speaking on the importance of lung function testing, Dr Farjana Begum, pulmonary & sleep medicine specialist from Guwahati, said, "Early diagnosis and treatment are vital for effective management of

Margherita Journalists Association celebrates 22nd Foundation Day

HT Correspondent

MARGHERITA, Nov 15: The 22nd Foundation Day of the Margherita Journalists Association was celebrated in Margherita on Friday.

A delegation of the Margherita Journalists Association distributed fruits among the sick patients at Margherita Civil Hospital in the morning to coincide with the foundation day.

It is to be noted that the Margherita Journalists Association has been playing a significant role in society since its formation on November 15, 2002 at Adarsha Hindi Vidyalaya, Bargaolai.

Following this, an intimate talk program was held at the meeting hall of the Ledo Central Namghar, where veteran journalist, eminent litterateur, noted educationist, social worker, and renowned artist of the Ledo region, Jagat Changmai, was felicitated with a traditional Assamese chheng chador, Assamese phoolam gamosa, and a commemorative memento. The talk program was presided over by Ram Prasad Ambedkar, president of the Margherita Journalists Association. The event was attended by Kailash Kumar Gupta, president of the All Assam Bhojpuri Parishad Central Committee; Chandra

Gautam, president of the Ledo Xakha Xahitya Xabha; noted singer Babita Chowdhury; Ledo Junior College professor Dipanwita Biswas; and members of the Margherita Journalists Association.

Rana Jyoti Neog, general secretary of the Margherita Journalists Association, in his speech, said that the association was formed on November 15, 2002 at Adarsha Hindi Vidyalaya, Bargaolai, in the presence of Ram Prasad Ambedkar, Biswajit Sengupta, Rajiv Ningkhoo, Kisan Lama, Mohan Chetry, Amit Das, Partho Pratim Goswami, Pabitra Borgohain, and Sunil Gurung. Since its formation, the members of the Margherita Journalists Association have not only written news but also engaged in various social activities, earning the association widespread recognition. Even now, all social activities are conducted under the banner of the Margherita Journalists Association, said Rana Jyoti Neog.

Jagat Changmai said, "In the year 1974, I came to Ledo, and in 1988, I started journalism at Dainik Janambhumi, a popular newspaper of Assam. In 1993, I began writing for The Sentinel and Natun Dainik, newspapers of Assam."

World COPD Day 2024 highlights early lung health awareness

HT Bureau

GUWAHATI, Nov 15: As part of World COPD Day 2024, health experts are emphasising the importance of knowing and understanding lung health, in line with this year's theme, 'Know Your Lung Function'.

This focus is crucial as non-communicable diseases (NCDs) account for 74 percent of global deaths, with chronic respiratory diseases (CRDs) like COPD significantly impacting health outcomes, especially in India. COPD is the most prevalent yet underdiagnosed respiratory condition, affecting around 55 million Indians and ranking as the second leading cause of death in the country, according to the Global Burden of Disease Study 2019.

Speaking on the importance of lung function testing, Dr Farjana Begum, pulmonary & sleep medicine specialist from Guwahati, said, "Early diagnosis and treatment are vital for effective management of



chronic respiratory diseases like COPD and in preventing further complications. Spirometry, a lung function test that measures the amount of air the lungs can hold and how quickly you can exhale, is crucial for diagnosing COPD early, before the severity of the condition further escalates. Unfortunately, many individuals in India only recognise the signs of COPD when a family member has experienced

it, often dismissing early symptoms as aging, the common flu, or a smoker's cough. Patient education is therefore essential. Reliable resources for information, like the new Breathefree website, play a key role in engaging the public in the mission to improve lung health in India, empowering individuals to take proactive steps in managing their respiratory health."

Highlighting the critical role of

awareness in managing COPD, Dr Smitakshi Medhi, consultant pulmonologist, Guwahati, explained, "The goal of COPD management is to slow disease progression and reduce the decline in lung function. With almost two-thirds of COPD cases undiagnosed and only one-fifth receiving proper inhalation treatment, as per a large multicenter rural population-based study conducted in 2022 in India, increasing awareness can save lives. Bronchodilator inhalers are key to managing COPD, helping patients breathe easier, while pulmonary rehabilitation programs can significantly improve quality of life. In fact, for certain patients struggling with correct inhalation technique, nebulized treatment can be considered. Nebulization is another effective way to help patients manage their condition. Raising awareness about available treatment options is crucial to ensuring more patients receive timely and appropriate care and support, ultimately leading to

better outcomes and improved lung health."

Chronic Obstructive Pulmonary Disease (COPD) is a lung condition caused by the inhalation of irritants, like cigarette smoke, leading to irreversible airway inflammation and breathing difficulties. Common symptoms include a persistent cough with sputum, breathlessness, and fatigue.

World COPD Day 2024 serves as a global call to action to raise awareness about COPD and highlight the importance of early lung care. Creating a supportive ecosystem for patients and their families is essential for better health outcomes. Initiatives like Breathefree, which provide both physical and digital resources, including the newly relaunched Breathefree website, assist patients throughout their journey—from screening to treatment adherence. These resources play a crucial role in helping patients improve their lung health and overall quality of life.

Delhi pollution: Action needed

Air pollution in the National Capital of India is neither a new phenomenon nor the Graded Response Action Plan (GRAP). Every year at this season, air quality in Delhi turns severe, and in some places severe plus. A Commission for Air Quality Management (CAQM) is in place. The Supreme Court of India intervenes, Parliament of India makes laws, so called all-powerful leaders lead the centre and in Delhi government. However, nothing works, year after year. City almost chokes these days. Residents awoke to dense smog with severe air pollution levels, and from 8 AM on November 15, GRAP-3 measures are in place. However, posturing of the Centre, the State, the Supreme Court and the ruling political establishments on the issues have always been great. Very grandiloquent generating great hope among citizens, which is ultimately frustrated. Air quality was severe on November 14 in 30 of 36 monitoring stations, with an average AQI 418. Anand Vihar recorded severe plus AQI 473, and in some places it was reaching severe plus, such as at AIIMS, as per Central Pollution Control Board (CPCB) data.

Authorities and ruling political establishments hide their failure behind blame game, and just make defective legal provisions, that too remain unimplemented and thereby ineffective. For example, the Union Ministry of Environment, Forest & Climate Change (MoEF&CC) came out with a set of guidelines in 2017, that is popularly known as GRAP. The Commission of Air Quality Management (CAQM) has been entrusted with the responsibility for implementing the plan. Delhi turning into a gas chamber today clearly shows that the Action Plan is not effective, whatsoever the reasons may be. It demands revamping the GRAP, and implementing it strictly and on time. There is also a need to take strong action against those who violate the provisions. There must not be only blame games. There must not be any eyewitness.

The toothless laws were framed only to show that the government was working. However, the reality was otherwise. The Supreme Court had pointed out that the laws were enacted without creating required machinery for implementation. At that time the city was placed under GRAP-II measures, though Delhi has clearly fallen into Stage III of severe air quality. Though in some places, air pollution has reached severe plus stage-4 that requires GRAP-4 level response, Delhi government has put the city under GRAP-3 measures. Under GRAP-3, all private construction and demolition work is banned, along with non-essential mining operations. This aims to reduce pollution from dust. Delhi metro will be operating 20 additional trips in addition to the 40 trips already in place. It aims to reduce vehicular pollution on roads. Public transport is being promoted, and BS-III petrol and BS-IV diesel vehicles are restricted from the roads. To save school children from pollution, all primary schools has been closed and classes were being held online. BJP on the other hand has slammed the AAP government in Delhi and alleged AAP has been playing with the citizen's health, and not tackling internal pollution sources, apart from stubble burning in Punjab. However, BJP does not mention Haryana's stubble burning also responsible for Delhi pollution since BJP rules there.

'Minority status' and partition of the country

By: Er. Rajesh Pathak

If the term 'secular' that the Constitution of India contains, why there be the question of the provision of the term like 'minority' in that. In the article 299 of the draft of Constituent Assembly it was once mentioned there the rights of minority, but not the term like 'secular'. After the partition of the country when the Muslims got Pakistan for themselves article 299 was abolished, and the term 'secular' added there of in the Constitution.

As Sardar Ballabh Bhai Patel then said that when the Muslim as a community so well-knit that they have so much power to bring about partition of the country in face of all the counter resistance, how could they be treated as deprived or a weaker section of a community needing the benefits as a minority from the State. Now, thereby, the question like the provision of minority right to them gets to be null and void.

It is therefore question persists as how could that the Waqf Board be granted the status of a government body just for the religious activities of a community? And, why should the government bear the expenditure of whatever that the Waqf do, paying nothing in return from the revenue it generates from the properties spread all over the country? Is there any such Board constituted for Sikhs, Christians, Buddhists, Hindus or any religious community by secular dispensation of the country?

It's because of this discriminatory provision that a 1500 years old Hindu temple in Tamil Nadu has been declared the property of Waqf property. And the Hindu caretakers of the temple are not even informed prior to the action. Now they are hanging about here and there with their document, and now being told to go to challenge the development in Waqf Tribunal. Notably, so happened when in Tamil Nadu Muslim community had reached not before 700-800 years back. Now the Hindus of the country want to know as to how 1500 years old place of their temple could get to have become the property of the Muslims!

However, this is not an isolated case of its kind. Gurdwara built in 1947 in Yamuna nagar was likewise declared by Waqf Board to have come up in its land.

The Court also gave the decision in favour of Waqf Board. When the situation went out of control the local administration made the provision of a separate land to be allotted for mosque. *(The author is a columnist who can be reached at rajeshpathakbpl@rediffmail.com)*

Celebrating the evolving role of the Press in strengthening democracy

By: Zahid Ahmed Tapadar

On the 16th of November, we commemorate National Press Day, a day dedicated to recognizing the pivotal role of the press in sustaining the principles of democracy. This day is not only a celebration of the press's contributions but also a reaffirmation of our collective commitment to a free, responsible, and ethical media landscape. The theme for this year's National Press Day, "Changing Nature of the Press," highlights the evolving challenges and opportunities in today's media environment, urging us to reflect on the responsibilities that come with the power of the press.

The Press as the Fourth Estate

The press, often hailed as the Fourth Estate, plays an indispensable role in democratic governance. It acts as a watchdog, scrutinizing government actions and ensuring transparency and accountability. By providing accurate and timely information, the media empowers citizens to make informed decisions and participate actively in the democratic process. It fosters public debate and discussion, which are essential for a healthy democracy.

In a world where information is power, the press serves as a bridge between the government and the public, ensuring that the voices of ordinary citizens are heard. It challenges the status quo, highlights social injustices, and brings to light stories that would otherwise go unnoticed. This vital role makes the press not just an observer but an active participant in the democratic process.

The Press in India's Freedom Struggle and National Awakening

The role of the press in India's independence movement was nothing short of revolutionary. Newspapers and journals like Kesari, The Hindustan Times, and Amrita Bazar Patrika became powerful tools for awakening national consciousness and mobilizing the masses against colonial rule. The press was instrumental in spreading the ideals of freedom, unity, and self-reliance, often facing censorship and persecution by the British authorities. The fearless writings of journalists and freedom fighters not only exposed the atrocities of the colonial regime but also inspired the people of India to join the fight for independence. In this way, the media became the voice of the voiceless, galvanizing support for the freedom movement and playing a crucial role in shaping the nation's destiny.

The Synergy Between Govt and Media

A harmonious relationship between the government and the media is vital for national progress. The government relies on the media to disseminate information about policies, programs, and initiatives to the public. In turn, the media requires access to accurate information to report effectively. This mutual respect and cooperation help build a well-informed society.

However, this relationship must be balanced to ensure that the press remains independent and free from undue influence. A free press is essential for holding those in power accountable, but it also requires responsible journalism to avoid sensationalism and misinformation. By maintaining this delicate balance, the press can continue to play its critical role in nation-building.

Adapting to the Digital Age: Opportunities

and Challenges

The advent of new media has revolutionized the way information is disseminated and consumed. Digital platforms, social media, and online news portals have expanded the reach of journalism, allowing for instant communication and broader audience engagement. The internet has democratized information, enabling citizen journalism and giving rise to new voices that challenge traditional media narratives.

However, the rise of new media also brings challenges. The rapid spread of misinformation and fake news can distort public perception and create societal divisions. The pressure to generate clicks and views often leads to sensationalism, overshadowing responsible journalism. Moreover, the anonymity of online platforms can lead to the spread of harmful content without accountability. These challenges call for a renewed commitment to ethical journalism in the digital age.

Upholding Ethical Journalism: A Call to Action

In this fast-paced and ever-evolving media landscape, maintaining high ethical standards is crucial. Issues such as biased reporting, where news is skewed to favour certain viewpoints, can undermine public trust. Similarly, unethical practices like sensationalism, the spread of misinformation, and intentional reporting to serve specific agendas can distort public perception and fuel societal tensions.

To support the democratic framework, the media must adhere to stringent ethical standards. Fact-checking, verification, and responsible reporting are fundamental to credible journalism. Upholding these values ensures that the media remains a

trusted source of information and continues to play its crucial role in society.

Journalists are the custodians of truth, and their dedication to seeking the truth and providing balanced perspectives enriches our democratic fabric and strengthens our nation. It is imperative that media organizations and journalists prioritize accuracy over speed, and integrity over sensationalism. By doing so, they uphold the trust that society places in them.

Empowering the Press: Government Support and Initiatives

Recognizing the significant contributions and the often-challenging conditions under which media professionals work, both the Government of Assam and the Government of the Bodoland Territorial Region have been actively implementing various welfare schemes aimed at enhancing the skills and well-being of media personnel. These initiatives include training programs, financial support, and resources to ensure that journalists can carry out their responsibilities effectively, even in challenging environments.

Furthermore, the Government of BTR is committed to further empowering the press and is planning to introduce several new schemes specifically tailored for the media professionals of the region. These upcoming schemes focus on skill development, capacity building, and ensuring the safety and welfare of journalists, thereby strengthening the media landscape in BTR. By investing in the welfare and professional growth of media personnel, these initiatives support the press while contributing to the larger goal of fostering a free, responsible,

and resilient media sector.

The introduction of skill development workshops, insurance schemes, and grants for media projects are some of the planned initiatives that aim to uplift the media community in the BTR. These programs will not only provide financial stability but also ensure that journalists have the necessary tools and training to adapt to the rapidly changing media landscape.

The Role of Press in Nation-Building

The press is more than a medium of information; it is the cornerstone of democracy. It gives voice to the voiceless, holds the powerful accountable, and shines a light on issues that matter to society. The media's role in nation-building extends beyond reporting the news; it involves shaping public opinion, advocating for social change, and driving national development agendas.

As we celebrate National Press Day, we must acknowledge the contributions of journalists who risk their lives to report the truth. In conflict zones, disaster areas, and places where freedom of the press is under threat, journalists continue to uphold the principles of free and fair reporting. Their courage and dedication deserve not just recognition but also support from all sections of society.

Saluting the Guardians of Democracy

On this National Press Day, we salute all media professionals for their dedication and service. Let us continue to support their efforts in upholding the principles of a free and fair press. As we embrace the changing nature of the press, we must also ensure that the core values of journalism—truth, integrity, and responsibility—remain steadfast.

The changing forms of media: Dynamics of mass media freedom and credibility in India



has become faster, more interactive, and more accessible, with real-time updates available at the swipe of a screen. However, these benefits come with complex challenges, including information overload and the rapid spread of misinformation.

Changing dynamics of mass media freedom

Media freedom, an essential pillar of any democracy, ensures that journalists and news organizations operate without undue influence or coercion. In India, freedom of the press is enshrined in Article 19(1)(a) of the Constitution, which guarantees the right to free speech and expression. Yet, this freedom is subject to reasonable restrictions under Article 19(2) in the interests of sovereignty, public order, and morality.

Over recent years, press freedom in India has been a subject of intense debate. The nation's ranking in the World Press Freedom Index has seen a decline, often cited as evidence of increasing constraints on journalists and media houses. The challenges range from political and corporate pressures to physical threats faced

by reporters, particularly those who cover sensitive topics such as corruption, environmental issues, and social justice.

The rise of digital media has added another layer of complexity. While it democratizes content creation and empowers independent voices, it also exposes journalists to heightened risks of online harassment and cyberbullying. Furthermore, social media platforms, often driven by algorithms prioritizing engagement over accuracy, can amplify sensationalism and polarizing narratives.

The credibility question

As media evolves, so does the question of credibility. The proliferation of online content and user-generated information has democratized reporting but also blurred the lines between professional journalism and amateur content creation. The consequence is a crisis of credibility where discerning truth from opinion, and factual reporting from misinformation, becomes increasingly challenging.

The surge of "fake news" has emerged as a formidable issue. Stories crafted with misleading

headlines, doctored images, and half-truths often spread faster than verified news, impacting public perception and fueling misinformation. To combat this, media houses have begun investing in fact-checking teams and collaborations with third-party verification agencies. However, the sheer volume of content makes comprehensive oversight difficult.

Media credibility is also closely tied to ownership patterns. The concentration of media ownership among a few powerful entities raises concerns about potential biases and conflicts of interest. Proprietary media often walks a tightrope between editorial independence and the financial interests of their stakeholders. Such scenarios have led to the perception that certain segments of the media landscape may prioritize sensationalism or agendas over balanced reporting.

Striving for balance: Freedom, ethics, and accountability

The contemporary media environment necessitates a renewed commitment to journalistic ethics and accountability. While the digital age has brought freedom to publish and disseminate news, it also mandates a higher degree of responsibility. Ensuring that content meets ethical standards without infringing on press freedom is a delicate balancing act.

Regulatory bodies such as the Press Council of India play a crucial role in this dynamic. Although they lack the enforcement power to mandate compliance, they act as a moral compass, providing guidelines to uphold journalistic integrity.

Additionally, evolving mechanisms like the Digital News Publishers Association (DNPA) and new amendments in the Informa-

tion Technology Rules aim to monitor digital content while fostering transparency and accountability.

Path forward: Reinforcing public trust

Reinforcing public trust in media requires a multifaceted approach. Journalistic training programs must emphasize ethics, fact-checking, and source verification. Media organizations need to prioritize independent and investigative journalism that holds power to account. Simultaneously, fostering a culture where audiences are more media-literate can empower citizens to critically evaluate the news they consume.

The government, too, has a role in ensuring press freedom by protecting journalists from undue influence and harassment while promoting an open environment where the media can thrive without fear of reprisal. Any regulation should strike a careful balance, avoiding excessive constraints that could stifle free speech.

The media in India stands at a pivotal crossroads. The confluence of rapid technological advances and shifting socio-political dynamics has reshaped how news is produced, disseminated, and consumed. As these changes unfold, the principles of freedom, credibility, and ethical reporting must remain at the forefront of the media's mission. National Press Day serves as an opportunity to reflect on these themes, emphasizing the need for a resilient, transparent, and trustworthy media that continues to play its role as the "fourth estate," upholding democracy and empowering citizens. *(The writer can be reached at dipakkurmigpltd@gmail.com)*

By: Er. Prabhat Kishore

In a democracy, such as ours, the existence and growth of any business eventually depends, not only on the public support in purchasing its products and services, but more importantly on the sanction of the general public.

Legislatures, who enact law governing and regulating business, are elected by, and represent, the public. The management of public companies derives their power from and owes their tenure to the shareholders, who are members of the general public. Its employees are recruited from the public and live amongst the public.

Therefore, it is only good business policy to practice 'Public Relations' to inform, to educate, to persuade, through effective communication, and create understanding and obtain the willing co-operation of various public of business.

The skills and techniques to create and develop mutual understanding are provided by public relations (PR) practitioners. But first, it is essential to define the objectives having been agreed, on which a PR programme can be drawn up. These may be both long term and short term but, as John Maynard Keynes once said, "in the long term all of us will be dead." So, it is necessary to define the perspective of the long-term.

Some form of research is necessary both before the PR programme is drawn up and when a PR campaign has gathered momentum. In most business enterprises top management consists of wise people but there is no fun in flying blind when one can use a reader. Research is a word that seems to frighten many people. It conjures visions of long beard intellectuals working away in the backrooms on problems of no conceivable practical significance. Many people discount the value of research and say they prefer to rely on their own judgement.

In this connection, there is much truth in the story of the man who, when gives the results of research, say 'It is true', 'When it has been proved beyond doubt that it is true, he says, 'It has no practical value'. When it has been shown to have distinct practical possibilities, he says, 'The research has only proved what was already known.'

Public Relations is essentially an art of persuasion and in order to influence people, it is obviously helpful to know as much as possible about the way in which people think and the manner in which they react to particular circumstances. There is also urgent need for research into the results of public rela-

tions actively. Too little is known about the effects of PR programmes on public attitudes and public action.

In discussing the place of PR in any organisations, one important point has to be noted it relates to the nature and functions of PR, as contrasted with those of other departments such as production, finance, marketing, personnel etc. While all the latter departments are largely concerned with the respective spheres responsibility PR tends to flow over the whole gamut of business and management. From this point of view PR has been called an extended arm of management. Each department or aspect of business and industry has its specific PR problems and tasks, and those have to be tackled by PR with the top man of each department and top management.

If, therefore, an organisation takes its PR responsibilities seriously, then the PR men must be given the status and position they deserve. Public relations must have full and continuing access to the top management if it has to succeed in its job. Not because PR men are anything special, but because PR is ultimately the responsibility of the top management.

Too many organisations misuse or waste their PR men e.g. in employing PR men as organisers of VIP hospitality and travel. This is not the job of public relations, or perhaps only a small part of PR. A good PR man represents the management and communicates the policies, problems and performances to the public on the one hand, and feeds back the socio-economic and political trends and public opinion to the top management and counsel them on possible lines of action, on the other.

Therefore, fearlessness and objectivity are essential qualities in PR practitioners. And top management must create the necessary environment for such attitudes. A PR man that feeds the management with what if like to hear, viz., the glory and greatness of the organisation, is doing himself and his company little good. All this underlines the importance of selection of PR man in regard to their abilities to counsel wisely; use effectively all the techniques of communication and their personnel and personality attributes. Good PR men can do the company a great deal.

The difference is considerable, and top management must recognise this and pay more attention to the recruitment and training of PR men, and create the necessary environment for good PR men to practice their skills and techniques.

For its day-to-day existence and functioning, a business has to be reckoning with its public. Each firm has to plan its com-

munications programme by carefully assess in the relative importance of its key public, the messages that it wishes to convey, the selection of the specific media through which its key groups could be reached most effectively and economically. In the present Indian context one of the most important segments of any business public is government. In our country, government is at the driver's seat of the economy, and any business is dependent for its existence functioning and growth on govt. policies and action, and therefore, must communicate effectively with government in the case of a large public or private undertaking. Communications with government assume even greater importance for a number of reasons. Firstly, because the company is accountable to govt.

Secondly, because government is run not only ministers but by a large number of officials at various levels in the ministries and developments, many of whom may influence a decision. Lastly, government, in its turn, is answerable to Sansad and the public. Communications with MPs is also very important since parliamentary proceedings receive such wide publicity. It is to the interest of any company to communicate with MPs and tell them about its performance and problems.

Large public and private undertakings are always in the news and are under the searchlight of public scrutiny and attention. In spite of the fact that the Doordarshan, private electronic channels and Cinema have a wider audience than the press, public opinion in Bharat is largely influenced and moulded by what is read in the press.

There is, of course, no obligation on any organisation to have any dealings with the press, but since the activities of all large companies, both in the public and private sectors, affect the public interest, the press will publish reports and comments irrespective of whether they have received a company's co-operation or not. Communicating with the press, or press relations is, therefore, of vital importance in the interests of any company's PR department.

Press relations are essentially a two-way operation. It is the link between the organisation and the press and vice-versa. On one hand, the organisation supplies information and news for publication, and initiates comments, articles and features, on the other hand, reports in the press show that the public thinks about it. *(The author is a technocrat and educationist. He studied Journalism and Mass Communication at Patna University who can be reached at prabhatkishore65@gmail.com)*

Raas in Assam: A tribute to Lord Krishna

By: Satyabrata Borah

The Raas festival, celebrated in Assam, is one of the state's most culturally rich and significant events. Assam, a northeastern state of India, is known for its diverse traditions and vibrant cultural practices. Among these, the Raas festival stands out, blending elements of spirituality, community participation, art, and heritage. The celebration of Raas is largely connected to the tales of Lord Krishna, drawing its roots from Hindu mythology. Though celebrated widely in the state, the festival is especially important in places like Majuli, the river island in the Brahmaputra, and Barpeta. The festival reflects the devotion of the people of Assam to Lord Krishna and is also a significant event that brings people together, spreading the message of unity, love, and respect.

Raas is celebrated primarily in the form of Rasleela, a dance drama that recounts the life stories of Lord Krishna. The stories often depict scenes from his life, including his playful interactions with the gopis, or cowherd girls, in Vrindavan. These narratives are expressed through drama, music, and dance performances, captivating audiences with their vibrancy and spirituality.

The Rasleela performances typically focus on key events from Lord Krishna's life, such as his childhood, his friendship with the gopis, and his fight against evil forces. These performances showcase devotion and love for the divine, bringing to life the tales of Krishna's charm, valor, and wisdom. Performers, young and old, prepare for months to give their best, making the festival a grand spectacle of dedication and celebration.

Majuli, one of the main centers for celebrating the Raas festival, holds a special place in Assamese culture and history. Majuli is a river island on the Brahmaputra River, and it is famous for its Vaishnavite monasteries known as "sattras." These sattras were established by the 15th century saint and reformer, Srimanta Sankaradeva, who propagated Vaishnavism in Assam. Through his teachings, he encouraged worship through music, dance, and drama rather than through rituals and sacrifices. This ideology became the foundation of the Raas festival in Majuli.

During the Raas festival, Majuli becomes a vibrant and lively place, attracting visitors from various parts of Assam and beyond. The sattras take on a central role in organizing the festival, preparing their disciples and performers, arranging religious activities, and conducting prayers for Lord Krishna.

In Majuli, the festival takes on a deeply spiritual atmosphere. People gather in large numbers at the sattras to witness Rasleela performances. The sattras also prepare colorful decorations, and the whole area takes on a festive appearance. The monks and disci-



ples spend weeks practicing and preparing, with some young boys even performing female roles in the plays. This tradition has been passed down through generations, making the Raas festival an enduring cultural event. The Rasleela is performed at night, lit by traditional lamps, creating an atmosphere filled with devotion and reverence. The night sky, with its stars shining down on the island, adds to the divine feel of the occasion.

In addition to Majuli, Barpeta is another important place for the Raas festival in Assam. Barpeta is home to a famous sattra established by Madhavdev, a disciple of Srimanta Sankaradeva. In Barpeta, Raas festival celebrations are also marked by Rasleela performances and various religious activities.

The sattra at Barpeta plays an essential role in promoting the teachings of Sankaradeva and spreading his message of devotion to Lord Krishna. During the festival, locals and visitors from other regions come to participate and enjoy the performances. Barpeta's sattra is known for preserving traditional dance forms and music associated with Vaishnavism, and it serves as a vital link in keeping the cultural heritage alive.

One of the most exciting aspects of the Raas festival is the sense of community and togetherness it brings to the people. People from all walks of life gather to witness and participate in the festival.

For many people in Assam, the Raas festival is a way to connect with their cultural roots, to learn about and appreciate the rich history and traditions of their ancestors.

It also provides an opportunity for the younger generation to learn about these traditions, ensuring that they are passed on to future generations. The festival promotes harmony and peace, creating an environment where everyone comes together, irrespective of caste, creed, or social status.

Apart from its religious significance, the Raas festival also showcases the artistic and creative side of Assamese culture. The costumes worn during the Rasleela performances are elaborate and beautiful, often showcasing traditional Assamese attire. The makeup and jewelry used by the performers add a touch of grandeur to the event.

Artisans and craftsmen also play an important role, creating intricate props and decorations for the performances. The masks used

in certain scenes, especially those depicting mythical creatures or demons, are a unique feature of the performances. These masks are often made of bamboo and are hand-painted, reflecting the traditional craft skills of the people. In this way, the festival also becomes a platform for artists to display their talent and keep traditional art forms alive.

The Raas festival is also marked by processions and various cultural programs. Some areas organize grand processions where idols or images of Lord Krishna are carried around the village or town. These processions are accompanied by music, drums, and the chanting of hymns, creating an atmosphere of joy and devotion.

In some places, people also organize fairs and stalls, selling local handicrafts, sweets, and other items. This gives the festival a carnival-like feel, allowing people to enjoy various activities along with the religious aspects.

It becomes a time for families to come together, for children to play and have fun, and for everyone to immerse themselves in the festive spirit.

The Raas festival in Assam is also significant for its contribution to preserving and promoting Assamese literature and music. The songs sung during the Rasleela are often based on Assamese folk tunes, incorporating local musical instruments such as the dhol, pepa, and taal. These instruments have been an integral part of Assamese music and are associated with its folk traditions.

The songs often tell stories from the Bhagavad Gita and other sacred texts, helping to keep alive the ancient stories and teachings. The festival thus becomes an important occasion for the people to connect with their religious and cultural heritage.

Raas is not just a festival; it is a way of life for many people in Assam. For some, it is a time to seek blessings from Lord Krishna, while for others, it is a time for family and friends. The joy and excitement associated with the festival are evident as people prepare weeks in advance. They make special food, decorate their homes, and wear new clothes.

For the people of Assam, Raas is more than just an annual celebration. It is an opportunity to renew their faith, to celebrate the life and teachings of Lord Krishna, and to come together as a community. (The author can be reached at satyabratorah12@gmail.com)

Majuli's Rash Utsav: Tradition and spirit

By: Himangshu Ranjan Bhuyan

Majuli, the largest river island in the world located in the heart of the Brahmaputra River in Assam, holds a unique place as a cradle of Assamese culture and spirituality. The island, enriched by centuries of tradition, has served as a profound spiritual and cultural nexus. At the heart of Majuli's vibrant identity is the famed Raas Utsav, a celebration that transcends mere festivity to become a powerful expression of devotion, art, and heritage. This festival, woven into the social and spiritual fabric of the island, stands as a testament to the region's resilience, creativity, and commitment to preserving its centuries-old traditions.

Raas Utsav, rooted in the Vaishnavite traditions introduced by the 15th-century saint-reformer Srimanta Sankardev, embodies the essence of devotion and communal harmony. Sankardev's teachings, which merged bhakti (devotion) with a deep sense of social reform, laid the foundation for the religious and cultural ethos of Majuli.

His establishment of the Satra institutions - a unique monastic system that serves both religious and educational functions - created a network that safeguarded the teachings and practices of neo-Vaishnavism, a faith movement that emphasized devotion to Lord Krishna as the central tenet.

It is within this spiritual and historical context that the Raas Utsav takes place, representing the artistic culmination of Majuli's devotion to Krishna. The Raas Utsav is celebrated during the full moon of Kartik Purnima, usually in November, commemorating the divine tales of Lord Krishna, particularly the Raas Leela - his enchanting dance with the gopis in the sacred groves of Vrindavan.

This portrayal is far more than a simple performance; it is a deeply revered enactment that captures the divine love and transcendental connection between the mortal and the divine. The island bursts into an array of vibrant performances that weave together dance, drama, and music to tell the epic stories of Krishna's life, drawing in thousands of devotees and visitors from across the globe.

What sets the Raas Utsav apart is its unique blend of art forms and the way it encapsulates the Assamese tradition. The plays are performed in ananta xtras, open-air amphitheatres attached to the Sattras, and showcase a remarkable confluence of indigenous performing arts.

The performers, often monks and disciples of the Sattras, prepare months in advance, practicing intricate dance sequences, traditional songs, and acting that closely follow the ancient scripts laid down by Sankardev and Madhavdev, his principal disciple. The costumes, crafted painstakingly by hand, glitter with elaborate details meant to evoke divine characters in their most resplendent forms.

The Raas Leela performances in Majuli are unique because they use local materials to create larger-than-life backdrops and props. Bamboo, clay, and jute are crafted into detailed scenes that transform the stage into a mythical realm. Artisans on the island are deeply skilled in this craftsmanship, keeping alive the practice of traditional Assamese art and handicrafts.

The aesthetic beauty of these performances lies not just in their visual grandeur but in the spirituality that infuses every move, every beat of the drum, and every note sung. It is said that in Majuli, Raas Utsav is not merely a spectacle; it is a way for the community to collectively remember and embody their devotion to Krishna, to feel connected to a divine past that resonates with the present.

Majuli's Sattras play an essential role in organizing the Raas Utsav, acting as cultural custodians. These Sattras are more than places of religious observance; they are vibrant centers of education and artistic expression.

Monks and laypeople alike contribute to the preparations, illustrating the collaborative spirit that defines the island's social structure. Sattriya dance, recognized as one of India's classical dance forms, is integral to the festival. Developed and preserved by the monks of these Sattras, Sattriya dance was initially created as a medium to enact religious stories and was meant to be performed solely within the confines of the monasteries.

Over time, however, it evolved and expanded into a broader expression of art that became accessible to the general public. During the Raas Utsav, the dance takes on a heightened significance, embodying a sacred continuity of practice.

The importance of Raas Utsav goes beyond the confines of religious and cultural life; it also supports Majuli's local economy and sustains its identity in the face of environmental challenges. Majuli, cradled between the mighty Brahmaputra and its tributaries, is a landscape that is both beautiful and vulnerable. The island faces the persistent threat of erosion due to the river's currents, which

claim large sections of land year after year.

Despite this existential threat, the islanders' devotion to their traditions has not waned but has instead intensified as a means of reinforcing their connection to their land and heritage. Raas Utsav, therefore, serves as both a reminder of the island's fragility and an assertion of its cultural fortitude.

Every year, the festival draws tourists, researchers, and devotees from around the world, which boosts local businesses and provides economic relief to the island's inhabitants. The influx of visitors necessitates logistical planning, creating temporary marketplaces, and additional lodging facilities, which translates into employment opportunities and revenue.

However, this increased attention also brings challenges related to maintaining the island's ecological balance. The strain on resources, from water to waste management, underscores the need for responsible tourism that respects the island's limited capabilities. Yet, despite these concerns, the festival continues to be a beacon of hope and resilience for Majuli, showing that its cultural depth can be a source of both pride and sustainability.

The Raas Utsav is marked by a sense of inclusivity and collective spirit. People from various walks of life participate, breaking barriers of social and economic status. The preparation for Raas Utsav is itself a unifying force. Villagers and artisans collaborate to create the stunning tableaux that serve as backdrops, contributing their skills to make the festival an immersive experience. The spirit of sharing and cooperation is deeply felt, as families open their homes to visitors, sharing stories, meals, and memories. This aspect of the festival reinforces the sense of community that is essential to Majuli's way of life.

The music that accompanies Raas Leela performances is steeped in the tradition of Borgeet, another contribution by Srimanta Sankardev. These devotional songs, composed in classical ragas, add an emotional and spiritual depth to the enactments.

The melodies, accompanied by traditional instruments such as the khol, taal and flute, elevate the performances from simple dramatic renditions to a transcendent experience that stirs the hearts of the participants and audience alike. The audience, whether devout locals or fascinated travelers, often finds themselves swept up in the shared spiritual fervor, their chants and exclamations joining the rhythms of the performance

in a collective chorus.

In examining Raas Utsav, one cannot overlook its importance in reinforcing the cultural education of the younger generation. The festival acts as a living classroom, teaching children and young adults the value of their heritage, traditional art forms, and the principles of bhakti that lie at the heart of Assamese culture. Participation in the performances or simply being part of the preparations instills a sense of responsibility and pride among the youth, fostering a generational continuity that ensures the festival's survival.

Majuli's Raas Utsav holds universal appeal, transcending religious boundaries to evoke themes of love, divine connection, and the triumph of the human spirit. For visitors, witnessing the Raas Utsav can be a transformative experience, offering a glimpse into a community that thrives on shared beliefs and a collective sense of purpose. For the people of Majuli, the festival is more than a celebration; it is a profound reminder of their history, their resilience in the face of environmental and social challenges, and their unwavering commitment to cultural preservation.

Despite modern influences and the occasional pressure to adapt to contemporary tastes, Majuli has managed to keep Raas Utsav relatively untouched by commercialization. This resistance to change has helped maintain the festival's authenticity, allowing it to remain a deeply spiritual and culturally significant event.

Yet, the pressures of climate change and development present an ongoing challenge. The delicate balance between sustaining traditional practices and adapting to new realities is one that Majuli continues to navigate.

In essence, Majuli's Raas Utsav is a profound celebration that exemplifies the island's cultural richness, religious devotion, and artistic legacy. It is an event where faith and art converge, where history is re-lived, and where a community's spirit shines through even the darkest uncertainties. The festival stands as a testament to the enduring power of tradition and the human capacity for resilience, offering lessons that resonate far beyond the river island's shores.

Through the Raas Utsav, Majuli not only preserves its heritage but also invites the world to witness and partake in its sacred dance of devotion and cultural pride. (The writer is Editor in Chief of the Assamese E-magazine SAMPROTİK. He can be reached at himangshur1989@gmail.com)

Rasakreeda: A secret doctrine of devotion

By: Lalit Nath

Raas is derived from the Sanskrit word 'Rasa,' meaning essence, nectar, divine bliss, divine feeling, or a form of spiritual satisfaction. The word 'Rasa' has multiple symbolic meanings in Sanskrit, especially used in classical dance and music to convey joyful experiences. The term 'Leela' refers to dance. In the fifth section, 13th chapter, 62nd verse of the Vishnu Purana, the concept of 'Leela' is explained as the application of pure and unswayed devotion toward God:

"Yatra Yogeshwarah Krishno, rasamandalamanditah Tatra sarvamapi pritya, bhaktiruktam prayacchati "

In reality, Rasleela is understood as a symbol, not just as Krishna's dance with the Gopis, but as a representation of the path to the liberation of the soul.

The renowned commentator on the Srimad Bhagavatam, Shridhar Swami, explains the profound spiritual meaning of Rasleela in his work, Bhagwat Bhavartha Deepika. He describes Krishna's Rasleela not only as a divine act but as a sacred practice of devotion, love and liberation:

"Naitatsamacharejjatu, man-asapi hyanishvarah Vinashyatyacharanmohad, yatharudrodbhijam visham "

One should never perform such an action, not even in thought, if one is mortal. Acting

in ignorance, a person is destroyed, just as poison arising from the ocean destroyed Rudra. Shridhar Swami also wrote:

"Rasa kreedang rasonam bahu nartakeekto nriya vishe-shastang kreedam."

Meaning, the circular dance performed with many dancers filled with joy and emotion is called Rasakreeda.

Rasleela is a significant spiritual dance, created by a combination of music, dance and emotions, performed in a circle with the participation of many individuals

In classical Sanskrit literature, particularly in the Harivamsa of the Mahabharata, there is a mention of a similar dance form. It was an ancient dance where one man danced in a circle surrounded by many Gopis. From the commentator's explanation in Harivamsa, it is clear that the dance performed by one man with many women is Rasakreeda:

"Ekasyapungso Bahubhi Stribhih Kriyanam Saiv Rasakreeda."

Shridhar Swami further explains in his Bhagwat Bhavartha Deepika:

"Anonyabyatishakta Hastanange Streepung Sangay-atang Mandali Rupenabhromatam Nriyavin-odo Raasonam," meaning the dance performed in a circle by men and women holding hands and enjoying the dance together is called Raas. This indicates the



spiritual and cultural significance of the dance, symbolized by the Gopis dancing in a circle, which was also known as 'Hollis' and 'Chalkiya.' Therefore, Hollis and Raas can be seen as synonymous.

After Harivamsa, the Vishnu also describes Rasleela in detail. It mentions that Lord Krishna Himself performed the Raas dance with the Gopis:

"Shri Krishnashu Pariprthāh Sarvām Sametya Yamanārāju Te, Reme Ramanīya Bhūte Shri Bhagavan Sattama."

This verse describes that Lord Krishna, along with the Gopis, enjoyed the dance, where He is perceived in His highest form. The Agni Purana, Yagya Purana, Kurma Purana, and Padma Purana also mention Krishna's life and the significance of Rasleela.

The Srimad Bhagavatam is the most detailed account of Rasleela, where sage Vyasa describes the greatness of Krishna's divine acts in the tenth section:

"Krishnasthu Yauvanāh Drṣṭā, Nīṣṭ Chandramāse Vānam. Śāradīm cha Nīṣāh Rāmāyām, Manasācakra Ratih Prati."

In this verse, the autumn night, with the soft moonlight falling over the forest, captivates Krishna's mind. He experiences deep joy and love in that atmosphere, as the Gopis' love for Him is free from illusion and they are blessed by Him.

This divine dance guides the devotee towards divine knowledge, righteousness and liberation. The connection between Krishna and the Gopis reflects purity of heart.

"Enam Virahitam Prajanyapiyam Yugāpāthi, Stut Bhaktyushcha Kreedām Kriyamāṇāḥ Pūṇām Svagunānugām."

This verse shows Krishna's deep love and dedication toward the Gopis. Krishna provides them the opportunity to connect with Him in the purest devotion, leading them to liberation from the bondage of illusion. This divine act represents liberation from Maya and the essence of true devotion.

"Anṛptamīdam Rājān Param Guhyam Cha Sobhānam, Śvapeyānu Kīrtयेयām Krishṇasya Pāramātmānah."

In this verse, the Rasleela is described as the ultimate spiritual knowledge. Through devotion and the connection with Krishna, the devotee perceives the glory of the Supreme Soul.

The one who listens to and chants this divine narrative attains pure devotion and experiences the depth of God's love. This verse unveils the secret teachings of spiritual devotion.

"Ya Imām Puruṣo Rājān Kīrtयेyēt Sudhīh, Raasleelā Pranayen Śuddharbhaktir Nirantare."

The greatness of Rasleela is understood through hearing and chanting. Listening to this divine story leads to the development of devotion, purifying the heart and allowing the devotee to experience God's love. Krishna's Rasleela teaches the path to feeling God's presence through devotion.

"Na Tathā Mama Paṇṇagaṇāḥ Śrīyā Vignāya Sattamaḥ, Yathā Gaṇārḍhya Kāntām Sarvāsām Me Priyam Priyam."

In this verse, Krishna expresses the depth of His love for the Gopis, saying that even His eternal consort Lakshmi cannot fully understand the depth of His love.

The love of the Gopis, beyond illusion and infinite, is a supreme form of selfless devotion. The Rasleela of Srimad Bhagavatam is not just a spiritual dance; it is a profound path of devotion and liberation. Krishna's pure love and the selfless devotion of the Gopis show the ultimate goal of human life.

The verses related to Rasleela suggest that through devotion, the feeling of oneness with Krishna leads to spiritual

liberation.

The Gopis' love is an embodiment of complete surrender, freeing them from the bonds of Maya. Rasleela, as an ideal, encourages devotees to rise in their spirituality and walk the path of pure devotion.

From both cultural and spiritual perspectives, Rasleela represents a unique symbol of divine knowledge. Through Krishna's devotional songs and dances, it becomes a great practice to explore humanity, love and spirituality. This divine act helps understand the true meaning of devotion, shining light on the ultimate goal of life.

Devotion is an inner feeling that brings light and comfort to the heart. Through devotion, we build a deep connection with God. Rasleela brings life to devotion and provides the right perspective. Through devotion, we gain the strength to move forward in our pursuit of life's purpose.

Thus, the Rasleela of Srimad Bhagavatam is not just a dance experience, it is a symbol of the eternal truth of the universe. It is a divine arrangement that fills the hearts of devotees with God's love, revealing the direction of life's purity, love, and liberation. The feeling of unity with Krishna leads the devotees on a path of new knowledge, where true joy and satisfaction are found. (The author can be reached at lalinmath784@gmail.com)

Trump committed to peace in both the Middle East and Eastern Europe

Trump vows to end Russia-Ukraine war

WASHINGTON, Nov 15: US President-elect Donald Trump has said his administration will focus on ending the Russia-Ukraine war, as he lamented the killing of people in the conflict.

He also said his administration will also work on bringing peace to West Asia.

"We're going to work on the Middle East, and we're going to work very hard on Russia and Ukraine. It's got to stop," Trump said during a gala for the America First Policy Institute held at his Mar-a-Lago estate on Thursday.

This was his first major speech and public appearance after his stunning electoral victory in the

November 5 presidential elections.

"Russia and Ukraine's got to stop. I saw a report today. Thousands of people over the last three days were killed. Thousands and thousands of people were killed. They happened in towns, we're going to work it," he said.

The President-elect has consistently said his priority is to end the war and stem what he characterises as a drain on US resources, in the form of military aid to Ukraine.

Meanwhile, Lisa Curtis, who served as deputy assistant to



Trump in his previous term and National Security Council senior director for South and Central Asia from 2017 to 2021, said the war in Ukraine needs to end in a

way that does not encourage other nations to invade their neighbours illegally.

"President (elect) Trump has in the past talked more favourably

about (Russian) President (Vladimir) Putin than most US presidents.

He has also talked about trying to end the war between Russia and Ukraine. We haven't seen yet how he's going to do that," Curtis said.

"I would just simply say that it needs to be done in a way that Russia faces some consequences for its actions," Curtis told PTI in an interview.

It needs to be done in a way that Russia doesn't try to do the same thing two or three years down the line, she said.

"It needs to be done in a way that doesn't encourage other US

adversaries to try to illegally invade their neighbour's territory," said Curtis, who is currently a Senior Fellow and Director of the Indo-Pacific Security Programme at Center for a New American Security think-tank.

Some of Trump's top advisors were present at the Mar-a-Lago event. He praised Tesla owner Elon Musk and Indian-American entrepreneur Vivek Ramaswamy, who are tapped to lead the Department of Government Efficiency (DOGE) in his second term.

Trump also praised Hindu-American Tulsi Gabbard, his pick for Director of National Intelligence. (PTI)

Japanese Princess Yuriko dies at 101

TOKYO, Nov 15: Japanese Princess Yuriko, the wife of wartime Emperor Hirohito's brother and the oldest member of the imperial family, has died after her health deteriorated recently, palace officials said. She was 101.

Yuriko died on Friday at a Tokyo hospital, the Imperial Household Agency said. It did not announce the cause of death, but Japanese media said she died of pneumonia.

Born in 1923 as an aristocrat, Yuriko married at age 18 to Prince Mikasa, the younger brother of Hirohito and the uncle of current Emperor Naruhito, months before the start of World War II.

She has recounted living in a shelter with her husband and their baby daughter after their residence was burned down in the US fire bombings of Tokyo in the final months of the war in 1945.

Yuriko raised five children and supported Mikasa's research into ancient Near Eastern history, while also serving her official duties and taking part in philanthropic activities, including promotion of maternal and child health. She outlived her husband and all three sons.

Her death reduces Japan's rapidly dwindling imperial family to 16 people, including four men, as the country faces the dilemma of how to maintain the royal family while conservatives in the governing party insist on retaining male-only succession.

The 1947 Imperial House Law, which largely preserves conservative prewar family values, allows only males to take the throne and forces female royal family members who marry commoners to lose their royal status.

The youngest male member of the imperial family, Prince Hisahito - the nephew of Emperor Naruhito - is currently the last heir apparent, posing a major problem for a system that doesn't allow empresses.

The government is debating how to keep succession stable without relying on women.

Prime Minister Shigeru Ishiba, visiting South America to attend the Asia Pacific Economic Cooperation and Group of 20 summits, issued a statement expressing "heartfelt condolences".

"I cannot help but feel saddened to hear of the loss. I extend my heartfelt condolences along with other Japanese citizens," Prime Minister Shigeru Ishiba said in a statement.

Yuriko had lived a healthy life as a centenarian before suffering a stroke and pneumonia in March. She enjoyed exercise in the morning while watching a daily fitness program on television, the Imperial Household Agency says. She also continued to read multiple newspapers and magazines and enjoyed watching news and baseball on TV.

On sunny days, she sat in the palace garden or was wheeled in her wheelchair. Yuriko was hospitalized after her stroke and had been in and out of intensive care since then. Her overall condition deteriorated over the past week, the Imperial Household Agency said. (AP)

Party of Sri Lanka's new Marxist-leaning President wins majority in parliament



COLOMBO, Nov 15: The party of Sri Lanka's new Marxist-leaning President Anura Kumara Dissanayake has won a majority in parliament, according to official election results on Friday, providing a solid mandate for his program for economic revival.

Dissanayake's National People's Power Party won at least 123 of the 225 seats in parliament, according to partial results released by the Elections Commission.

The Samagi Jana Balawegaya, or United People's Power Party, led by opposition leader Sajith Premadasa had 31 seats.

Dissanayake was elected president on Sept. 21 in a rejection of traditional political parties that have governed the island nation since its independence from British rule in 1948.

But he received just 42% of the votes, fueling questions over his party's outlook in Thursday's parliamentary elections. But the party received large increases in support less than two months into his presidency.

In a major surprise and a big shift in the country's electoral landscape, his party won the Jaffna district, the heartland of ethnic Tamils in the north, and many other minority strongholds.

The victory in Jaffna marks a great dent for traditional ethnic Tamil parties that have dominated the politics of the north since independence.

It is also a major shift in the attitude of Tamils, who have long been suspicious of majority ethnic Sinhalese leaders. Ethnic Tamil rebels fought an unsuccessful civil war in 1983-2009 to create a separate homeland, saying they were being margin-

alized by governments controlled by Sinhalese.

According to conservative U.N. estimates, more than 100,000 people were killed in the conflict.

Veeragathy Thanabalasingham, a Colombo-based political analyst, said northern voters chose the NPP because they could not find a local alternative to traditional Tamil political parties, with which they were disillusioned.

"The Tamil parties were divided and contested separately, and as a result the Tamil people's representation is scattered," he said.

Of the 225 seats in parliament, 196 were up for grabs under Sri Lanka's proportional representative electoral system, which allocates seats in each district among the parties according to the proportion of the votes they get.

The remaining 29 seats — called the national list seats — are allocated to parties and independent groups according to the proportion of the total votes they receive countrywide.

The election comes at a decisive time for Sri Lankans, as the island nation is struggling to emerge from its worst economic crisis, having declared bankruptcy after defaulting on its external debt in 2022.

The country is now in the middle of a bailout program with the International Monetary Fund, with debt restructuring with international creditors nearly complete.

Dissanayake said during the presidential campaign that he planned to propose significant changes to the targets set in the

IMF deal, which his predecessor, Ranil Wickremesinghe, signed, saying it placed too much burden on the people. However, he has since changed his stance and says Sri Lanka will go along with the agreement.

Sri Lanka's crisis was largely the result of economic mismanagement combined with fallout from the Covid-19 pandemic, which along with 2019 militant attacks devastated its important tourism industry. The pandemic also disrupted the flow of remittances from Sri Lankans working abroad.

The government also slashed taxes in 2019, depleting the treasury just as the virus hit. Foreign exchange reserves plummeted, leaving Sri Lanka unable to pay for imports or defend its currency, the rupee.

Sri Lanka's economic upheaval led to a political crisis that forced then-President Gotabaya Rajapaksa to resign in 2022. Parliament then elected Wickremesinghe to replace him.

The economy was stabilised, inflation dropped, the rupee strengthened and foreign reserves increased under Wickremesinghe.

Nonetheless, he lost the election as public dissatisfaction grew over the government's effort to increase revenue by raising electricity bills and imposing heavy new income taxes on professionals and businesses as part of the government's efforts to meet the IMF conditions.

Voters were also drawn by the NPP's cry for change in the political culture and an end to corruption, because they perceived the parties that ruled Sri Lanka so far caused the economic collapse.

Dissanayake's promise to punish members of previous governments accused of corruption and to recover allegedly stolen assets also raised much hope among the people.

Jeewantha Balasuriya, 42, a businessman from the town of Gampaha, said he hopes Dissanayake and his party will use their resounding victory to rebuild the country.

"People have given them a strong mandate. I am hopeful that the NPP will use this mandate to uplift the country from the present pathetic situation," he said.

He expressed confidence that Dissanayake and his party would curb corruption and mismanagement and establish law and order, which he said were vital for resuscitating the economy. (AP)

N Korea tests exploding drones as Kim calls for mass production

SEOUL, Nov 15: North Korea tested exploding drones designed to crash into targets and leader Kim Jong Un called for accelerating mass production of the weapons, state media said on Friday.

The country's latest military demonstration came as the United States, South Korea and Japan engaged in combined military exercises involving advanced fighter jets and a US aircraft carrier in nearby international waters, in a display of their defense posture against North Korea.

North Korea's official Korean Central News Agency published photos of Kim talking with officials near at least two different types of unmanned aerial vehicles.

They included those with X-shaped tails and wings that look similar to the ones the country disclosed in August, when Kim inspected another demonstration of drones that explode on impact.

The drones flew various routes and accurately struck targets, KCNA said. Its images showed what appeared to be a BMW sedan being destroyed and old models of tanks being blown up.

Kim expressed satisfaction with the weapons' development process and stressed the need to "build a serial production system as early as possible and go into full-scale mass production," noting how drones are becoming



crucial in modern warfare.

KCNA paraphrased Kim as saying drones were easy to make at low cost for a range of military activities.

The report didn't say if Kim spoke directly about rival South Korea, which the North Korean drones are apparently designed to target.

North Korea last month accused South Korea of sending its own drones to drop anti-North Korean propaganda leaflets over the North's capital of Pyongyang, and threatened to respond with force if such flights occur again.

South Korea's military has refused to confirm whether or not the North's claims were true.

Tensions in the region have escalated as Kim flaunts his advancing nuclear and missile program, which includes various nuclear-capable weapons targeting South Korea and intercontinental ballistic missiles that can potentially reach the U.S. mainland.

Kim is also allegedly sending military equipment and troops to Russia to support President Vladimir Putin's war on Ukraine, which raised concerns in Seoul that

he would get Russian technology in return to further develop his arsenal.

In addition to his intensifying nuclear threats, Kim has also engaged in psychological and electronic warfare against South Korea, such as flying thousands of balloons to drop trash in the South and disrupting GPS signals from border areas near the South's biggest airport.

South Korean officials say North Korea will be a key topic in a trilateral summit between South Korean President Yoon Suk Yeol, U.S. President Joe Biden and Japanese Prime Minister Shigeru Ishiba this week at the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation meetings in Peru.

South Korean Foreign Minister Cho Tae-yul and U.S. Secretary of State Antony Blinken met on the margins of the APEC on Thursday and discussed "strong concerns" over deepening ties between Pyongyang and Moscow, particularly the deployment of North Korean troops to support Russia's war against Ukraine, the U.S. State Department said. (AP)

South Korean opposition leader gets a suspended jail term for violating election law

SEOUL, Nov 15: South Korean opposition leader Lee Jae-myung was convicted of violating election law and sentenced to a suspended prison term on Friday by a court that ruled he made false statements while denying corruption allegations during a presidential campaign.

If it stands, the ruling could significantly shake up the country's politics by potentially unseating Lee as a lawmaker and denying him a shot at running for president in the next election. But Lee, who faces three other trials over corruption and other criminal charges, is expected to challenge any guilty verdict and it remains unclear whether the Supreme Court would decide on any of the cases before the presidential vote in March 2027.

Lee told reporters that he plans to appeal Friday's verdict at the Seoul Central District Court, which gave him a sentence of one year in prison, suspended for two years. Under South Korean law, Lee would lose his legislative seat and be barred from running in elections for five years if he receives either a penalty exceeding a 1 million won (\$715) fine for election law violations or any prison sentence for other crimes.

"There are still two more courts left in the real world, and the courts of public opinion and history are eternal," he said, apparently referring to plans to take the case to the Supreme Court. "This is a conclusion that's impossible to accept."

Lee, a firebrand liberal who narrowly lost the 2022 election to conservative President Yoon Suk Yeol, had steadfastly denied wrongdoing. Choo Kyung-ho, the



floor leader of Yoon's People Power Party, said the verdict showed that "justice was alive" and called for the judiciary to conclude the case swiftly.

The ruling drew intense media coverage and seemingly thousands of protesters. Surrounded by police lines, Lee's supporters and critics occupied separate streets near the court, shouting opposing slogans and holding signs that said "Lee Jae-myung is innocent" and "Arrest Lee Jae-myung." There were no immediate reports of major clashes.

Prosecutors indicted Lee in 2022 over charges that he made false claims related to two controversial development projects in the city of Seongnam, where he was mayor from 2010 to 2018, while campaigning as the presidential candidate for the Democratic Party.

One of the comments cited by prosecutors is related to suspicions that Seongnam city in 2015 changed the land-use designation to allow a housing project on a site previously preserved as green space due to lobbying by private developers.

Lee said during a parliamentary hearing in October 2021 that the city was instead "coerced" by the national government to make

the change to the site in the district of Baekhyeon-dong. Prosecutors say there's no evidence to back Lee's claim, which has been denied by the Ministry of Land, Infrastructure and Transport.

Prosecutors also cited a TV interview Lee gave in December 2021, when he said he didn't know a senior official at Seongnam city's urban development arm during his time as mayor. Lee spoke a day after the official was found dead amid an investigation into a property development project in the district of Daejeon-dong, which reaped huge profits for a small asset management firm and its affiliates and raised suspicions about possible corrupt links between them, city officials and politicians.

Prosecutors argued that Lee was lying to the public to distance himself from the controversies and improve his chances of winning the election. They had sought a two-year prison sentence for him.

The court found Lee guilty over the comments related to the Baekhyeon-dong project, saying it was clear that the city's decision to change the site's land-use designation wasn't based on demands by the land ministry. It ac-

quitted Lee on most of the charges related to his Daejeon-dong comments, citing a lack of evidence.

"When false information is distributed to voters during an election process, that could prevent voters from making proper choices and risks distorting the will of the people and damaging the function of the electoral system," the court said in a statement. "Such actions cannot be taken lightly."

The same court on Nov 25 will rule on another case against Lee. He is accused of suborning perjury by allegedly pressuring a Seongnam city employee to give false testimony in a different court case in 2019. The testimony was meant to downplay his 2003 conviction that, when as a lawyer, he had helped a TV journalist impersonate a prosecutor to secure an interview with then-Seongnam Mayor Kim Byung-ryang over suspected corruption in 2002.

While running for Gyeonggi Province governor in 2018, Lee claimed he had been wrongly accused over the incident, prompting prosecutors to indict him on a charge of making false statements during an election campaign. Lee was acquitted in 2019, partially based on the testimony of the city employee, who had worked as Kim's secretary and said he contemplated dropping charges against the journalist to make Lee the main culprit of the incident.

Prosecutors indicted Lee on the perjury charges in October last year, presenting transcripts of telephone conversations that they said showed Lee persuading the employee to testify in court that he was framed. (AP)

Shanghai, Tokyo, New York, Houston spew most greenhouse gas of world cities

BAKU (AZERBAIJAN), Nov 15: Cities in Asia and the United States emit the most heat-trapping gas that feeds climate change, with Shanghai the most polluting, according to new data that combines observations and artificial intelligence.

Seven states or provinces spew more than 1 billion metric tons of greenhouse gases, all of them in China, except Texas, which ranks sixth, according to new data from an organisation co-founded by former US Vice President Al Gore and released Friday at the United Nations climate talks in Baku, Azerbaijan.

Nations at the talks are trying to set new targets to cut such emissions, and figure out how much rich nations will pay to help the world with that task.

Using satellite and ground observations, supplemented by artificial intelligence to fill in gaps, Climate Trace sought to quantify heat-trapping carbon dioxide, methane and nitrous oxide, as well as other traditional air pollutants worldwide, including for the first time in more than 9,000 urban areas.

Earth's total carbon dioxide and methane pollution grew 0.7% to 61.2 billion metric tons with the short-lived but extra potent methane rising 0.2%. The figures are higher than other datasets "because we have such comprehensive coverage and we have observed more emissions in more sectors than are typically available," said Gavin McCormick, Climate Trace's co-founder.

Shanghai's 256 million metric tons of greenhouse gases led all cities and exceeded those from the nations of Colombia or Norway.

Tokyo's 250 million metric tons would rank in the top 40 of nations if it were a country, while New York City's 160 million metric tons and Houston's 150 million metric tons would be in the top 50 of country-wide emissions. Seoul, South Korea, ranks fifth among cities at 142 million metric tons.

"One of the sites in the Permian Basin in Texas is by far the No. 1 worst polluting site in the entire world," Gore said. "And maybe I shouldn't have been surprised by that, but I think of how dirty some of these sites are in Russia and China and so forth. But Permian Basin is putting them all in the shade."

China, India, Iran, Indonesia and Russia had the biggest increases in emissions from 2022 to 2023, while Venezuela, Japan, Germany, the United Kingdom and the United States had the biggest decreases in pollution.

The dataset — maintained by scientists and analysts from various groups — also looked at traditional pollutants such as carbon monoxide, volatile organic compounds, ammonia, sulfur dioxide and other chemicals associated with dirty air. Burning fossil fuels releases both types of pollution, Gore said.

This "represents the single biggest health threat facing humanity," Gore said.

Gore criticised the hosting of cli-

mate talks, called COPs, by Azerbaijan, an oil nation and site of the world's first oil wells, and by the United Arab Emirates last year.

"It's unfortunate that the fossil fuel industry and the petrostates have seized control of the COP process to an unhealthy degree," Gore said. "Next year in Brazil, we'll see a change in that pattern. But, you know, it's not good for the world community to give the No. 1 polluting industry in the world that much control over the whole process."

Brazil President Luiz Inacio Lula da Silva has called for more to be done on climate change and has sought to slow deforestation since returning for a third term as president. But Brazil last year produced more oil than both Azerbaijan and the United Arab Emirates, according to the U.S. Energy Information Administration. At a press conference Friday by the Alliance of Small Island States, it's Chair, Cedric Schuster, said the negotiating bloc feels the need to remind everyone else why the talks matter.

"We're here to defend the Paris agreement," Schuster said, referring to the climate deal in 2015 to limit warming to 1.5 degrees Celsius (2.7 Fahrenheit). "We're concerned that countries are forgetting that protecting the world's most vulnerable is at the core of this framework." (AP)



Kuki groups demand inquiry, claim victims were village defenders

Protests in Manipur over Jiribam deaths

CHURACHANDPUR, Nov 15: Hundreds of people hit the streets in Manipur's Churachandpur district on Friday, demanding justice for those killed in a gunfight with the security forces in Jiribam.

The rally, organised by the Kuki women organisation for Human Rights, began at the Koite Play-ground around 11 am.

With placards denouncing the CRPF, hundreds of people from different walks of life marched to the 'Wall of Remembrance', a memorial for the Kuki people killed in the ethnic violence in the state since May last year.

Ten suspected militants were killed in the gunfight with security forces after insurgents attacked the Borobekra police station in Jiribam district on Monday, according to police. However, a senior state government official had put the toll at 11.

Addressing the gathering before the rally began, Kuki Students' Or-



ganisation (KSO) vice president Minal Gangte demanded a judicial inquiry into the incident.

He claimed that those killed were "tribal volunteers" who were protecting their villages and innocent people.

At the end of the rally, a memorandum addressed to the National

Human Rights Commission and Union home minister Amit Shah was submitted to additional deputy commissioner Seiminthang.

Similar rallies were also held in Kangpokpi district and Moreh in Tenuoupp district.

More than 200 people have been killed and thousands rendered

homeless in ethnic clashes between Imphal Valley-based Meiteis and adjoining hills-based Kuki-Zo groups since May last year.

Ethnically diverse Jiribam, which was largely untouched by the clashes in Imphal Valley and the adjoining hills, witnessed violence after the mutilated body of a farmer was found in a field in June this year.

Countering the claims of the Kuki-Zo groups that those killed in Jiribam were village volunteers, the state police said that a huge number of arms and ammunition were found at the spot after the gunfight was over.

Three women and three children who lived in a relief camp have been missing since the gunfight, with Meitei organisations alleging that they were kidnapped by the retreating militants. Police said a search was underway for them. (PTI)

Central allocation quadruples for Northeast in 10 years, says Scindia

HT Correspondent

AGARTALA, Nov 15: Union Minister for Development of North Eastern Region (DoNER), Jyotiraditya Scindia, highlighted the unprecedented development in the Northeast under the Narendra Modi-led Central Government.

Speaking at a press conference in Agartala on Friday, Scindia emphasised that fund allocation for the region has increased fourfold over the last decade compared to the UPA era.

"The Prime Minister envisions the Northeast as India's growth engine. Over the past ten years, the region has witnessed remarkable progress. The budget allocation for the Northeast has jumped from ₹ 24,000 crore under the UPA regime to approximately ₹ 1,03,000 crore today. This demonstrates the government's commitment to regional development," Scindia said.

He noted that infrastructure projects in the region have

gained significant momentum.

"In the last 65 years, about 10,000 km of National Highways were built. However, post-2014, more than 5,000 km of highways have been constructed under the current government. Rail connectivity, once limited to just three states, is set to expand to all Northeastern states within the next 2-3 years. Similarly, in the aviation sector, the number of airports has grown from nine to 17, ensuring improved connectivity for the region," he stated.

Tripura, in particular, has made remarkable strides under Chief Minister Manik Saha's leadership. Scindia shared key economic data showcasing the state's growth trajectory.

"Tripura's Gross State Domestic Product (GSDP) has risen to nearly ₹ 90,000 crore, with per capita GDP increasing by 15%. The state's per capita income now stands at ₹ 1,06,000. During the Congress-led UPA government

(2004-2014), Tripura received ₹ 8,900 crore as tax development. In the last decade under PM Modi, this has surged to ₹ 47,160 crore—a fivefold increase. Similarly, Grant-in-Aid funds for Tripura have risen from ₹ 31,285 crore (2004-2014) to ₹ 62,000 crore (2014-2024)," he said.

Scindia also outlined the progress made under the 4G saturation project, which aims to enhance digital connectivity across the region.

"Tripura will see the installation of 119 mobile towers under this project, of which 90 are already operational. The remaining towers are expected to be completed by June. This initiative is part of a ₹ 500 crore package for Tripura, Mizoram, and Meghalaya," he informed.

The minister reaffirmed the government's dedication to ensuring holistic development across the Northeast, making it a critical contributor to India's growth story.

Union Minister praises tribal communities for respecting nature

SHILLONG, Nov 15: Civil aviation minister Kinjarapu Rammohan Naidu on Friday praised the tribal communities for their deep respect for nature and their invaluable knowledge in protecting the environment. Speaking at the event to mark the Janjatiya Gaurav Diwas in Meghalaya, Naidu emphasised that the world could learn a lot from the tribal communities, particularly in Meghalaya, where nature conservation is deeply ingrained in their culture.

Janjatiya Gaurav Diwas is being celebrated across the country to mark the beginning of the 150th birth anniversary celebrations of revered tribal leader Bhagwan Birsa Munda. He shared his personal experience of visiting the sacred grove in Mawphlang, a town 25 km from Shillong, describing it as an enlightening experience.

"The people of Meghalaya have a strong connection to nature, and this is something the world can learn from. There is great knowledge within the tribal communities that can provide solutions to some of the most pressing environmental challenges the world is facing today," Naidu said. (PTI)

Vehicle scanners at entry points to combat drug trafficking in Meghalaya

SHILLONG, Nov 15: All vehicles entering Meghalaya will be subjected to go through a scanning machine as the state intensifies its fight against the drug trafficking.

Informing this after a state level meeting of the Drug Reduction Elimination & Action Mission (DREAM) on Friday, minister in-charge social welfare, Paul Lyngdoh announced the government's decision to install vehicle scanning machines at Ri Bhoi and East Jaintia Hills districts, which are two entry points to the state of Meghalaya within the next six months.

"We discussed the need to install scanning vehicles at the entry points to the state of Meghalaya meaning from Ri Bhoi and East Jaintia Hills districts. So, one such vehicle will be installed within the next 6 months. The installation also requires trained manpower to handle equipment and to immediately detect any suspicious movement," he said.

The minister said, "These scanning machines will be installed at all entry points to check all vehicles. All vehicles will go through the screening (machines)."

Lyngdoh also informed that the meeting has also resolved to further strengthen the anti-narcotic task force (ANTF) for tackling the drug trafficking in the state.

"We have asked the DG to make a proposal of the required manpower that can be dedicated to the ANTF in order to further enhance our efforts to tackling drugs effectively," he said while adding, "Drug trafficking, which is a major threat to the state of Meghalaya in view of our proximity to the main drug market, which is in Myanmar and also the fact that the state has a long transit route, which passes right from Ri Bhoi district up to East Jaintia Hills district."

"We discussed the strategy and action plan. However, some of the points of the action plan cannot be shared publicly because that will compromise on confidentiality and therefore, the capacity of us to



effectively curb and eradicate drug trafficking," he added.

Further, the Social Welfare minister said that the Meghalaya Police Act, 2010 will be suitably amended to facilitate creation of improved facilities for volunteers, who are part of the village defence parties (VDPs).

"The number of VDP volunteers has also been fixed as 15 per party so as to ensure that in areas where population is less, we will be able to meet the required number," he said while informing that the steps are also taken to increase the remuneration for VDP volunteers.

On the setting up of fast track courts, Lyngdoh said, "We also have decided that there is this general complaint about cases taking very long and prosecution taking a toll on the complainants and witnesses so the state government would formally write through the chief minister and also discussed with our chief justice of the high court in order to facilitate the creation of a fast-track court, which will trial cases on a day-to-day basis."

On the demands put forth by a particular organisation, the social welfare minister however said that the government will do its duty, but it will not work under duress.

"It is not the concern of just one organisation. We are committed to eradicating narcotics and drugs in the state of Meghalaya. We know our duty and responsibility. We will not work under duress. This is an elected government that has a commitment and an agenda. We do not work just because some-

body has or is pushing us with their points," he said.

"We appreciate all suggestions, but we will work as I reiterate; we will not work under duress. In fact, HYC was part of a meeting held yesterday at the instance of the mission director of the DREAM project," he added.

Lyngdoh also admitted the importance of sharing of information with the other NE states and said, "The DG has been asked to initiate action in that regard."

The minister informed, "We have tasked the mission director with collection of updated information. And in fact, this is an ongoing process. We have to keep updating but the fact that there has been more instances of seizures of drugs and arrests of suspected persons means that we have intensified our efforts on the ground."

Emphasizing the need to end the drug supply chain, Lyngdoh said, "We are ready to support the setting up of rehabilitation centres (provided land is being provided). However, we have to end the supply chain. Unless we go to the root of the problem, which is how do we make sure that the supply chain is cut, then we will only have more and more rehab centres and there will be more and more drug users. Then we will reach a point where there will not be sufficient space for drug users because everyone has become an addict. Therefore, the strategy now is that while we offer those services of rehabilitation and deaddiction, we will have to concentrate more on policing". (NNN)

Shillong hosts first-ever aviation summit in NE

SHILLONG, Nov 15: Meghalaya Chief Minister, Conrad K Sangma inaugurated the 6th Helicopter & Small Aircraft Summit 2024 at Courtyard, Marriott, Shillong. He inaugurated the 6th Helicopter & Small Aircraft Summit 2024 on Thursday.

The summit organised by Pawan Hans Ltd and FICCI and supported by the Ministry of civil aviation, Government of India and the Government of Meghalaya is an initiative to expand the scope of the helicopter as well as small aircraft sector across the country.

In his address, chief minister, Conrad K Sangma, thanking the Ministry of Civil aviation for having chosen Shillong to host this summit said it is a privilege to host an aviation summit in the state of which is the first of its kind in the North East, India.

"I would like to further endorse that Shillong is the right place to hold such a summit because our terrain requires the use of small aircrafts and helicopters for air travel and other socio-economic activities," he said.

He further said that when it comes to connectivity and its issues that the North-Eastern Region faces, particularly Meghalaya, air travel plays a very important role in achieving the wide gamut of goals that the state is striving towards.

"I would like to stress that we should not limit our perspective to the role of air connectivity within the North-Eastern States of India alone but look at its potential in the entire South Asian region. A flight from Shillong to Dhaka is less than 30 minutes, Shillong to Bangkok would be roughly 1 hour 15 minutes and certain capitals of many countries in SouthEast Asia are closer than our national Capital. It takes two and a half hours to travel to Delhi, but it is shorter for us to travel from Shillong to Vietnam, Laos, Cambodia, Burma, Nepal, Bangladesh, Bhutan and many other locations. If we were to broaden our horizons to the entire Act East Zone, we would see the real potential in this entire exercise and can leverage this to our advantage to boost Tourism, Medical Assis-

tance, Trade, Logistics and other major socio-economic activities," he stated.

In relation to the development of aviation in Meghalaya, the chief minister said that the government is working aggressively to upgrade and optimise Tourism, Trade, Health Services and other sectors and suggested stakeholders to think on the lines of tourism circuits in the state to boost Tourism.

He urged all stakeholders involved to support in their area of expertise from investors, technical experts, service providers and the like.

"The Government will handhold in the initial stages and provide continued support to bring about a convergence in all sectors to achieve the goal of an efficient and vibrant aviation ecosystem in the state and the region," he added.

Speaking on the way forward, the chief minister said, "There is a wide gamut of aviation services which can be leveraged from delivering medicines to logistics which can be fine-tuned and implemented to bring change and transformation at the grass-root level".

In conclusion, he said, "I am excited for the UDAN Scheme version 5.5 for seaplanes and helicopters, as this scheme is one of the most important schemes in the Northeast. It would take us about 20 hours to travel by bus on the road from Shillong to other state capitals and now with the implementation of the UDAN Scheme travelling will become easier, saving precious time. I congratulate the Ministry of Civil Aviation particularly Shri Kinjarapu Rammohan Naidu, Hon'ble Union Minister of Civil Aviation, Government of India for his efforts to improve the Aviation landscape in the state and the country."

The event was attended by various stakeholders from the helicopter and small aircraft industry, including operators, OEMs, MRO providers, regulators, Financing & Leasing companies, and the representatives from different state governments. (NNN)



Senior cops in Jiribam to oversee search operation of the missing

IMPHAL, Nov 15: Senior officers of the Manipur Police have been sent to the Jiribam district to oversee the search operation for the six people who went missing from a relief camp following the gunfight between militants and security forces in Borobekra, officials said on Friday.

IG and DIG rank officers were in Jiribam to supervise and coordinate the efforts by the security forces to find the three women and three children, they said.

Imphal Valley-based civil society organisations have been alleging that the six missing persons were kidnapped by retreating militants after their attack at the Borobekra police station was thwarted by security forces.

Ten suspected militants were killed in the gunfight that followed the attack on Monday, according to the police. However, a senior state government official had put the toll at 11.

These six persons who went missing lived in a relief camp on the premises of the police station.

Candlelight vigils were held in Imphal and Jiribam on Thursday night, demanding the "immediate release" of the missing persons.

The demonstrators in Jiribam criticised the local politicians, including the MLA, alleging that they were not taking the initiative to find the missing persons.

A purported photo of the six missing persons has been viral on social media. Police said they had seen it but did not confirm whether they were kidnapped. (PTI)

Arunachal Guv highlights tribal communities role in nation-building

ITANAGAR, Nov 15: Arunachal Pradesh Governor Lt Gen K T Parnaik (Retd) on Friday underlined the critical role of tribal communities in nation-building, emphasising the importance of mutual respect and recognition of their rights, culture, and self-governance.

Speaking at the fourth Janjatiya Gaurav Diwas here, which commemorates the birth anniversary of tribal leader Bhagwan Birsa Munda, the Governor stressed that engaging tribal communities as active partners in development strengthens the nation by leveraging their resilience, knowledge, and unique strengths.

Parnaik praised Prime Minister Narendra Modi's vision for inclusive development and expressed confidence that this day would inspire citizens to contribute to the fields of education, health, employment, entrepreneurship, and livelihood opportunities for tribal communities. He also highlighted the importance of technocrats and businesses in preserving tribal art, culture, heritage, languages, and dialects, ensuring these rich traditions are celebrated and sustained.

The Governor elaborated on the vital role the tribal communities play in shaping the nation's identity. He noted that their preservation of cultural heritage, support for social cohesion, and contributions to economic and political processes enrich the country's diversity.

"Tribal communities maintain unique languages, customs, art, music, and sustainable practices, which not only add to India's cultural wealth but also offer innovative solutions in areas such as agriculture, medicine, and environmental conservation," he pointed out.

Parnaik emphasised that the communal values of tribal societies in Arunachal Pradesh, including mutual support, respect for elders, and collective decision-making, foster unity and stability.

"These principles are essential for building a harmonious and progressive society. Mechanisms like Ke-bang, used for conflict resolution within tribal groups, offer lessons for national peace-building frameworks," he added. Despite their significant contributions, the Governor acknowledged that many tribal communities continue to face challenges such as social discrimination, poverty, inadequate infrastructure, and limited access to education.

He stressed the need for inclusive policies, investments, and partnerships to address these issues, en-

abling tribal communities to further contribute to national progress.

Parnaik also drew attention to the importance of highlighting and preserving tribal heritage.

He said that Janjatiya Gaurav Diwas provides an opportunity to celebrate traditional crafts, textiles, and art forms, which boosts economic opportunities for artisans and small businesses. By showcasing tribal culture, regions can attract tourism, generating economic benefits while promoting their unique identity.

Parnaik added that Janjatiya Gaurav Diwas, initiated by Prime Minister Modi, honours the sacrifices and contributions of tribal communities to India's freedom struggle and nation-building efforts.

For the first time since independence, the nation is recognising and celebrating the art, culture, and history of tribal societies on a large scale, he said.

The Governor also paid tributes to Birsa Munda, a revered tribal leader from the Munda tribe of the Chhota Nagpur Plateau, describing him as a freedom fighter, people's leader, and national hero.

"Munda fought tirelessly for the rights of tribal communities, advocating for the preservation of their faith, culture, and traditions. He inspired his followers to reconnect with their roots and uphold tribal values, becoming a symbol of resilience and pride for tribal societies. His efforts during the British colonial era motivated many others to fight for their rights and freedom," Parnaik pointed out.

"Birsa Munda's vision and legacy remind us of the strength and spirit of India's tribal communities," Parnaik said, calling on people to honour the contributions of all tribal freedom fighters who sacrificed their lives for India's independence. The Governor urged the people, particularly tribal communities, to actively participate in the nation-building process.

While emphasising that observing Janjatiya Gaurav Diwas is more than just a celebration as it is an opportunity to acknowledge, support, and uplift tribal communities by recognising their history, struggles, and contributions. This day, he said, serves as a step toward creating a more inclusive society, celebrating India's diversity, and inspiring future generations to uphold justice, unity, and pride in the country's indigenous heritage. (PTI)

Indian Army to enhance facilities at Arunachal rehabilitation centres

Event held to aid rehab centres, promote a drug-free society

HT Correspondent

ITANAGAR, Nov 15: To promote good health and help youth affected by addiction reintegrate into society, Spear Corps Warriors organised an event in Arunachal Pradesh's Bordumsa and Changlang district to enhance facilities at local drug rehabilitation centers in Bordumsa, Gidding, and Goju.

The event was organised on Thursday in Arunachal Pradesh by the Indian Army.

The event emphasised the vital role these centers play in fostering a drug-free society through counseling, medical care, and vocational training, empowering individuals to overcome addiction.



Essential items, including sports equipment, billeting equipment and other essential commodities were provided to support

these centers and create a positive environment for recovery.

Over 300 youths and 10 rehabilitation center coordinators participated in discussions with teachers, and the Company Commander on the transformative impact of rehabilitation centers in promoting a healthier and more empowered society.

Attendees expressed their gratitude to the Indian Army for their commitment to social betterment.

The event concluded with a collective pledge by youth and locals to work towards a drug-free society, further strengthening the bond between the Indian Army and the local community, and showcasing its dedication to community welfare.

PM Modi 'dividing' society, will have no association with those allied with BJP: Sharad Pawar

Ajit Pawar had walked away with a majority of MLAs in 2023

PUNE, Nov 15: Senior opposition leader Sharad Pawar on Friday accused Narendra Modi of "dividing" the society as he slammed the prime minister's campaign speeches and asserted that popular "unrest" against the ruling alliance will help the MVA return to power in Maharashtra.

When asked about the possibility of a post-poll reunion with his estranged nephew Ajit Pawar, the senior leader emphasised that he will not have any truck with parties associated with the BJP.

In an interview with PTI, Pawar, considered the architect of the opposition Maha Vikas Aghadi (MVA) in Maharashtra, said the ruling Mahayuti has been using a "tremendous amount of monetary strength", including through cash transfer schemes, to influence the polls following its poor show in the state in the Lok Sabha polls.

But people will reject them, he said.

The four-term former Maharashtra chief minister and ex-Union minister was blistering in his criticism of Uttar Pradesh Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath, whose "batangain to katangain" slogan has drawn criticism from even some BJP leaders and allies like



Deputy Chief Minister Ajit Pawar.

The Nationalist Congress Party (SP) president said, "He (Adityanath) is known for these communal expressions. Why give him importance? I don't want to utter even one sentence about him. These are the people who wear saffron clothes and perpetrate communalism. They are doing a disservice to the nation."

Asked about Modi's extensive campaign in which he accused the opposition of dividing the society on caste lines and sought people's unity in favour of the ruling BJP-Shiv Sena-Nationalist Congress Party alliance, Sharad Pawar hit back.

"He is the prime minister. He is

saying certain things. What he says about our associates (allies) is very unfair. He himself is dividing the society. You can see his speeches over the past few days and the issues that he is raising for his political interests," he said.

Pawar said he has witnessed a great amount of "unrest" among people during his extensive campaign.

The prime minister has accused the Congress-Shiv Sena (UBT)-NCP (SP) alliance of seeking to divide society and pursuing appeasement politics, and has called for unity with his call for "ek hain to safe hain".

The Congress and former BJP ally the Uddhav Thackeray-led

Shiv Sena (UBT) have been particularly at the receiving end of his withering criticism.

Spearheading the MVA campaign and also making determined efforts to reclaim his party's standing in its strongholds, especially in western Maharashtra following the split in 2023, the 83-year-old Pawar expressed confidence in getting popular support in the election.

"People are very unhappy (with state government), particularly the farmers and the younger generation. Whenever they get an opportunity to cast their votes, they will favour people like us and our associates," he said while declining to make any assessment about the number of seats the MVA may win in the 288-member assembly.

To a question on whether he saw any possibility of him and his nephew coming together after the election, Sharad Pawar said he will have no association with those who are with the BJP.

"We have our own party. There are those who are associated with the BJP. The question doesn't arise even to discuss these things," he said.

Asked if he is ruling out any association with his nephew, Sharad

Pawar emphasised that he will have no truck with those who are with the BJP.

Ajit Pawar had walked away with a majority of the then undivided group of MLAs in 2023 to ally with the BJP.

The senior Pawar slammed the NCP leaders, who sided with his nephew and many of them now fighting the poll as part of the ruling coalition, as "traitors" and expressed confidence that people will serve justice in the November 20 election.

In his comments, Ajit Pawar too has been dismissive of any possibility of joining hands with his uncle.

However, in the state's political arena full of regional satraps with malleable ideology and fluid loyalty, the buzz about a post-poll realignment of forces depending on the nature of the verdict has never stopped.

To a question over the claim that the ruling alliance might have recovered some ground following its Lok Sabha loss by launching several welfare schemes, including 'Ladki Bahin', Sharad Pawar said the government resorted to this after realising people's unhappiness with its performance. (PTI)

Mahayuti masking poor report card in Maharashtra with 'batoge toh katoge' slogan: Pilot

CHHATRAPATI SAMBAHJINAGAR, Nov 15: The BJP and its allies in the ruling Mahayuti have nothing to show in their report card in Maharashtra, which is why they are using rhetoric like "batoge toh katoge", Congress leader Sachin Pilot said on Friday.

In an interview with PTI Videos, Pilot came up with his own slogan of "padoge toh badoge" (study and you will grow) to counter the saffron party's "divisive" rhetoric.

The Congress leader, who is deployed to look after the party's campaign in Marathwada for the November 20 assembly election, said he has found that the Maha Vikas Aghadi's manifesto and its five guarantees are much better than the ruling dispensation's pre-poll promises.

The MVA, comprising the Congress, Shiv Sena (UBT) and NCP (SP), has promised to conduct a caste-based census and remove the 50 per cent cap on reservations, ₹ 3,000 financial aid to women every month and free bus rides to women and waive off farm loans and provide a ₹ 25 lakh health cover to farmers.

The former Rajasthan deputy chief minister said the people of Maharashtra want to vote the same way they did during the Lok Sabha elections when the MVA managed to outperform the Mahayuti, consisting of the BJP, Shiv Sena and NCP.

"People have seen this govern-

ment here (in Maharashtra) and the BJP-led NDA government at the Centre. Ultimately, it is about the governance, getting jobs, security and the transparent function of a government. All those things are missing. We have come forward with a positive agenda. The MVA and Congress have put together a blueprint, which is holistic, futuristic and positive," he said.

Slamming the BJP's slogan, "batoge toh katoge" (you will perish if you are divided), he said, "This rhetoric is used when you (ruling parties) have underperformed or have no report card to show. I counter this by saying, 'padoge to badoge' (study and you will grow)."

Voters of this generation will not appreciate the politics of creating fear, polarising people and getting votes in the name of masjid and mandir.

Pilot said he is ready to debate with BJP leaders on issues like peace, harmony and development.

"Creating fear in people's minds shows that you (BJP) are on the back foot, and I think not only BJP leaders, anyone in the right mind will never appreciate such comments," he said.

The Congress leader said using historical figures like Maratha warrior king Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj and Mughal emperor Aurangzeb in campaigns shows a lack of ideas, courage and performance. (PTI)

Oppn on 'one-fifth of vacancies in UP Assembly, Council filled with kin of VIPs'

LUCKNOW, Nov 15: Following an expose by a leading English daily, according to which one fifth of the vacancies in Uttar Pradesh Assembly and Council were filled with kin of VIPs, the opposition parties have accused the BJP of 'parivarvaad' (dynastic politics), a charge that the ruling party has often hurled at the opposition.

According to an expose by The Indian Express at a time when aspirants of the Provincial Civil Services and Review Officers (ROs) and Assistant Review Officers (AROs) preliminary exams, of the 186 vacancies for the posts of ROs and AROs, 38 candidates who were selected had links with officials and politicians.

An estimated 2.5 lakh aspirants had applied for the post. Their tests were held in two rounds in 2020-2021 to fill up administrative posts in the UP Legislative Assembly and UP Legislative Council.

The newspaper report claimed that those who successfully made it to the coveted list included the then UP Speaker's PRO and his brother, a former minister's nephew, son of Legislative Council secretariat in-charge, four relatives of Legislative Assembly secretariat in-charge, son of Deputy Lokayukta, son and daughter of Department of Parliamentary Affairs in-charge and son of former OSD to two chief ministers.

When contacted, the then Speaker of the UP Assembly Hriday Narayan Dixit told PTI, "The matter is pending in the court and hence, it would not be appropriate for me to comment on this."

Principal Secretary to the UP Assembly Pradeep Dubey could not be contacted for comments despite repeated efforts.

Member of UP Legislative Council (MLC) of the Samajwadi Party (SP), Ashutosh Sinha told PTI, "The matter is pending in the court and it is all a matter of probe. But it seems that the BJP indulges in 'parivarvaad' (dynastic politics) when it comes to distribution of tickets during elections or when selecting candidates for jobs."

UP Congress leader Ashok Singh said, "The matter is pending in court and it should be fairly probed. All those guilty must be identified and given befitting punishment."

President of Rashtriya Kisan Manch, Shekhar Dixit, told PTI, "It seems that only 20 to 25 per cent of the wrongdoing has been caught. This is a clear-cut cheating with the aspirants, people and the entire society. This is certainly not beneficial for the country." Leader of Opposition in UP Assembly and former Speaker of UP Assembly Mata Prasad Pandey (of SP), said, "How can I comment on this issue, until I (myself) do not probe this issue. This is a matter which pertains to the Legislative Assembly and Legislative Council, on which much comments cannot be made. I will find out, and will speak whatever is appropriate." (PTI)

While Telangana is making history, Union govt 'failed' to host decadal population census: Congress

NEW DELHI, Nov 15: Hailing the cast survey underway in Telangana, the Congress on Friday said what the state government has achieved is all the more impressive when it is considered that the Centre has "failed" to host the decadal population census that was due in 2021.

Congress general secretary in-charge communications Jairam Ramesh said while Telangana is making history, the Union government has failed to honour a tradition that every government since Independence has upheld.

"A caste survey is not just a revolutionary step towards social justice, it is also an exercise that requires tremendous administrative competence. It is a mammoth task: in Telangana, it will involve 80,000 enumerators surveying 1.17 crore households across 33 districts," Ramesh said on X.

To survey each and every family -- amidst the diversity of cultures, landscapes, and economies -- requires the government to work in mission mode, right from the village and ward level to the CMO, he said.

"Some glimpses of this exercise in Nalgonda district, where over 55% of the population has already been surveyed. In

Miryalguda Municipality, officers have developed a GIS map of all 288 enumeration blocks, spread across 44 wards. This technology is bound to enable the Municipality to better plan for municipal services in the future," he said.

To ensure confidentiality of the filled-out schedules, officers in Nalgonda District have also procured cast-iron trunks to store them securely, he pointed out.

The integrity of the Caste Survey parallels that of the election process, Ramesh stressed. "What the Government of Telangana has achieved under the leadership of Chief Minister A Revanth Reddy and Deputy Chief Minister Bhatti Vikramarka Mallu is all the more impressive when we consider that the Union Government has failed to host the decadal population census that was due in 2021," he said.

The Congress last week asserted that a nationwide caste survey and the lifting of the Supreme Court's "arbitrary ceiling" of 50 per cent on reservations for Scheduled Castes, Scheduled Tribes, and Other Backward Classes are central to its vision for the country. (PTI)

'Madhubi Buch scandal' is not just insider trading: Rahul

NEW DELHI, Nov 15: Stepping up his attack on SEBI Chairperson Madhubi Puri Buch, Leader of Opposition in the Lok Sabha Rahul Gandhi on Friday alleged that India's economic framework is being hollowed out from within by a "cartel of corporate giants", enabled by those meant to guard the country's interests.

The former Congress chief said "the Madhubi Buch scandal" isn't just insider trading but is a revealing case of direct conflict of interest, where powerful regulators are entangled with the very corporations they're supposed to oversee.

Gandhi made the remarks in his post that accompanied a YouTube video, part of a series featuring him and Congress' media and publicity head Pawan Khera, in which the two leaders discuss various conflicts of interest allegations against Buch. There was no immediate reaction from Buch, who is facing conflict of interest allegations, on the video and the charges.

However, previously the SEBI chief has dismissed allegations of any wrongdoing.

In his post Gandhi said, "India's economic framework is being hollowed out from within by a cartel of corporate giants, enabled by those meant to guard the country's interests."

"The Madhubi Buch scandal isn't just insider trading; it's a revealing case of direct conflict of interest, where powerful regulators are entangled with the very corporations they're supposed to oversee," he said.

"In this episode, we uncover disturbing patterns in SEBI's leadership - how cozy financial ties and rental arrangements with key corporate players have turned watchdogs into allies of cronies," he said.

This is not mere oversight but a coordinated scheme to exploit loopholes, distort regulations, and prioritise corporate profit over public interest, all while ordinary Indians pay the price, Gandhi said.

"We are determined to expose these unethical dealings and reveal how India's institutions have been weaponised to protect privileged cronies. This isn't only about monopolies; it's about safeguarding democracy, fair competition, and the voice of every Indian against a system bent on silencing them," the Leader of Opposition in the Lok Sabha asserted.

In the over six-minute video, Khera briefs Gandhi about various conflict of interest allegations against Buch while travelling with him on a flight.

Khera talks about how the Congress exposed the claim that Agora Advisory Pvt

Ltd became 'immediately dormant' upon Buch joining SEBI.

She still holds a 99 per cent stake in it, and the company has actively provided consultancy/advisory services, including to Mahindra & Mahindra, Khera tells Gandhi in the video. He also tells Gandhi that Buch allegedly traded and also invested in Chinese funds.

Khera tells Gandhi that Buch rented a property to Carol Info Services Limited, an affiliate of Wockhardt Limited, from 2018 to 2024. Wockhardt reportedly has been under SEBI's investigation for cases including insider trading.

"What is a 'maharaja'. A maharaja is somebody who has full control of institutions, has full arbitrary power controls the legal and intelligence machinery and he does it not as a representative of the people but in his own interest," Gandhi says as the video shows a pictures of Prime Minister Narendra Modi meeting billionaire Gautam Adani. Gandhi also posted the video on X, and said, "Buch Hai Toh Syndicate Safe Hai."

The Congress and the Opposition has been targeting the government over conflict of interest allegations against Buch and demanding that she be removed from the post immediately. (PTI)

phased that development works and welfare of the poor were equally important.

The Union minister said many iron ore companies are setting up units in Gadchiroli which will create huge employment opportunities for residents of the district.

"Days are not far when Gadchiroli will become the most happy, prosperous and well to do district in Maharashtra," he told the gathering.

Gadkari opined that some people were spreading false propaganda that the BJP intends to change the Constitution.

"We will neither change Babasaheb's constitution nor let anyone change it," the BJP leader declared.

Assembly poll results will be declared on November 23. (PTI)

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Assembly poll results will be declared on November 23. (PTI)

Forest department creating hurdles in development of Gadchiroli district: Gadkari

GADCHIROLI, Nov 15: Union Minister and BJP leader Nitin Gadkari on Friday said days are not far when Gadchiroli will become the most prosperous area in Maharashtra and accused the forest department of creating hurdles in development of the Naxal-affected district.

Gadkari, on a campaign trail, noted many iron ore companies are starting operations in Gadchiroli and suggested giving priority to local residents in jobs in these ventures.

Addressing an election rally at Ashti in Gadchiroli district ahead of the November 20 state assembly polls, the former BJP president asserted his party will now allow any changes in the Constitution drafted by B R Ambedkar.

The Minister of Road Transport



and Highways was campaigning for BJP candidate Milind Narote (Ashti seat) and NCP nominee Babarao Atram (Aheri constituency).

Gadkari recalled the development works done by him in the impoverished district when he was

Maharashtra PWD minister (1995 to 1999) and when he moved to the Union Cabinet, where he was given the road transport and highways portfolio.

The Lok Sabha MP from Nagpur said before he became a Union minister in 2014, there was only

57-km-long national highway in Gadchiroli, but now its length has increased nearly 10 times to 541 km.

Gadkari said he had approved 35 projects worth ₹ 4,000 crore in the district. Also, a sum of ₹ 1,000 crore has been allotted for a 140-km-long road between Ashti and Sironcha.

The Union minister slammed the forest department for what he called creating hurdles in development of Gadchiroli which is located in the Vidarbha region in eastern Maharashtra.

He said forest and wildlife officers blocked various development projects in the name of forest conservation.

The BJP veteran insisted he is dedicated to the conservation of forests and environment, but em-



MUMBAI, Nov 15: Congress leader Ramesh Chennithala on Friday claimed Prime Minister Narendra Modi's election rallies in the state were not getting any response compared to the meetings of party leader Rahul Gandhi.

Addressing a press conference here, Chennithala said there were no listeners for PM Modi's rally in the city on Thursday.

"There were empty chairs everywhere at Shivaji Park. This proves that he (the prime minister) lies so much, and people don't want to listen," he alleged, claiming that Rahul Gandhi's rallies were attracting a lot of crowd.

The All India Congress Committee in-charge of Maharashtra said Rahul Gandhi will address rallies in Chimur (Chandrapur) and Dhamangaon (Amravati) on Saturday, while Priyanka Gandhi Vadra will be in Shirdi and Kolhapur.

He said Priyanka will address rallies in Gadchiroli and hold a roadshow in Nagpur on Sunday.

The opposition MVA, comprising the Congress, Shiv Sena (UBT) of Uddhav Thackeray and Sharad Pawar's NCP (SP), will take on the BJP-led Mahayuti in the November 20 assembly election. Chennithala also questioned why the BJP was not ready to undertake a caste census. Rahul Gandhi has advocated

for a caste census, saying the exercise will happen in the country and will show the injustice meted out to Dalits, OBCs and Adivasis.

The Congress leader said inflation was skyrocketing, there was unrest among people and unemployment. The MVA will get a clear majority in the election. There is a wave for a power change, he said.

Chennithala slammed the BJP for its slogans "batenge toh katenge" (we will perish if we are divided) and "ek hain to safe hain".

"It is the BJP that is dividing people. There is no unanimity among Mahayuti allies," he said.

Some leaders of the BJP have been using these slogans during their campaigns in the run-up to the state polls, even as the opposition parties criticised it for creating hatred and divisions in society.

Asked about BJP leader Ashok Chavan's allegation that Congress leaders attempted to finish his political career, Chennithala said, "The party gave him all posts. How can it finish him? It is Chavan who ditched the Congress."

The senior leader pointed out that in the past, PM Modi had accused NCP chief and Deputy Chief Minister Ajit Pawar of being involved in an irrigation scam and called Chavan a dealer, not a leader. (PTI)

Prez, PM, leaders pay tributes to tribal icon Birsra Munda on 150th birth anniversary

PATNA/NEW DELHI, Nov 15: President Droupadi Murmu, Prime Minister Narendra Modi and leaders across political parties on Friday paid tributes to tribal icon Birsra Munda on his 150th birth anniversary, which is celebrated as Janjatiya Gaurav Divas.

Birsra Munda, known as 'Dharti Aba' (father of the land), was born in Jharkhand on November 15, 1875. He had led the tribal uprising against the British and died at the age of 25 while in custody.

Modi took to social media, describing Munda as a national hero who sacrificed everything to protect the honour of the motherland. "Bhagwan Birsra Munda ji sacrificed everything to protect the honour and glory of the motherland. My deepest respects to him on the auspicious occasion of his birth anniversary," Modi posted on X.

The PM also greeted the people of Jharkhand on the state's foundation day, acknowledging the sacrifices of the tribal community in shaping the state and its development.

In another post on X, Modi said, "Many best wishes to all my brothers and sisters of Jharkhand on the foundation day of the state. This land irrigated by the struggles and sacrifices of the tribal community has always made the country proud. I wish that this state, full of natural resources, moves ahead at a fast pace on the path of development."



Addressing a rally in Bihar's Jamui, Modi charged previous Congress governments in the country with having tried to undermine the contributions of tribal leaders to the freedom movement "so that only one party and one family got away with the credit".

Modi asserted that he worshipped the 'Adivasi Samaj' and his government took the decision to celebrate Munda's birth anniversary as 'Janjatiya Gaurav Divas' (the day of glory for tribals) because the community never got its due.

"Tribals have played their role in preserving the country's cultural heritage since times immemorial. It was the 'Adivasi Samaj' that helped the evolution of Lord Rama

from a prince to a god," the PM said.

"Tribals also played a significant role in the struggle for Independence. But the previous governments deliberately tried to suppress this fact so that all credit was given to one party and one family," alleged Modi, who spoke in the presence of BJP allies like Chief Minister Nitish Kumar and Union Minister Chirag Paswan.

President Murmu, Vice President Jagdeep Dhankhar and Lok Sabha Speaker Om Birla offered floral tributes at the statue of Birsra Munda at the Prerna Sthal in Parliament complex.

Murmu emphasised Birsra Munda's pivotal role in India's freedom struggle and urged the na-

tion to draw inspiration from his legacy. Union Home Minister Amit Shah also marked the occasion by unveiling a statue of Birsra Munda in New Delhi and announcing that the entire year, until November 15, 2025, would be celebrated as Adivasi Gaurav Din.

"Birsra Munda's life can be divided into two parts - protecting tribal culture and making the supreme sacrifice for the nation's freedom. Even 150 years later, his story is remembered and revered," said Shah.

Union Minister of Housing and Urban Affairs Manohar Lal Khattar announced that the chowk outside Sarai Kale Khan ISBT in New Delhi has been renamed after Munda.

In various states, political leaders paid tributes to the tribal icon. Uttar Pradesh Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath praised Munda for his fight for "water-forest-land" and for his unwavering commitment to protecting the nation.

"Tributes to the immortal hero of the freedom struggle, promoter of forest culture and tribal identity," he posted on social media.

Congress leader Jairam Ramesh used the occasion to criticise the government's approach, accusing them of paying mere lip service to the cause of the Adivasi community while undermining their rights.

"The non-biological PM is in Jamui paying lip service to the

cause of Adivasis on this occasion, even as his government goes full throttle on attempts to deny Adivasis justice," Ramesh alleged.

In Goa, Chief Minister Pramod Sawant condemned the practice of religious conversions under the guise of education and healing, particularly targeting tribal communities.

"These practices which were started to convert tribals in the name of education or healing are continuing even after the country has become independent," Sawant said, addressing the state-level function to mark the 150th birth anniversary of tribal icon Birsra Munda at Sankhalim in North Goa.

Meanwhile, in Arunachal Pradesh, Governor Lt Gen K T Parnaik (Retd) emphasised the critical role of tribal communities in nation-building, stressing the importance of mutual respect, recognition of tribal rights, and their inclusion in development.

In Agartala, Union Minister Jyotiraditya Scindia also honoured Birsra Munda's legacy, accusing Congress of neglecting the contributions of tribal leaders in India's freedom struggle.

"Birsra Munda is a hero to 140 crore people, not just the tribal community. His sacrifices for Bharat Mata should be acknowledged as a part of India's history," said Scindia, reinforcing the need to recognize tribal leaders' roles in India's independence. (PTI)

Chhattisgarh: After 21 years, tribals plan to return to native place in Naxal-hit Abujhmad

RAIPUR, Nov 15: More than two decades after deserting their village due to Maoists, around 25 tribal families are planning to return to their native place in Chhattisgarh's Narayanpur district.

Nearly 100 members of these families had left their homes in Gaarpa village located in Abujhmad after Naxalite started targeting them in 2003. They were then settled on the outskirts of Narayanpur town on a tract of government land, where they took up agriculture for livelihood.

Now, 21 years after their desertion, these families recently visited their native place and have been planning to resettle there after police set up a camp there to facilitate development works and ensure security for local population.

Abujhmad, bordering Maharashtra's Gadchiroli district, was considered a Maoist fortress until recently. On October 4, security forces scripted their most successful anti-insurgency operation in Chhattisgarh by gunning down 31 Naxalites during an encounter in the area.

"Leaving the ancestral land was never easy. We had no option but to flee for the sake of our lives," 60-year-old Sukkum Nureti told PTI. Nureti's family was among the 25 families that left Gaarpa, about 50 km from the district headquarters, in April 2003. Nureti hails from the Abujhmaria community, a particularly vulnerable tribal group.

"Of the 80 families in the village, around 25 were followers of 'Gayatri Pariwar' and Naxalites objected to it. They threatened us with dire consequences if we did not quit following 'Gayatri Pariwar'. So we decided to leave the village," he said. Nureti said they always wanted to return.

"Now it seems our dream will come true as a police camp has been set up and things have started improving there," said Nureti, who has served as a member of Janpad panchayat in the past.

Nureti and others who had left the village visited Gaarpa last week and opened a Lord Shiv temple that had remained shut since 2003. "We are planning to resettle in the village as we have our farmland and homes there," he said.

Making significant inroads into Abujhmad, the Chhattisgarh police have set up security camps in Gaarpa, Kasturmeta, Mastur, Irakbhathi, Mohanti and Horadi villages in the past eight months. The Gaarpa camp came up on October 22.

According to police, the strategy of establishing these camps has pushed the Naxalites to a very limited area in the zone and facilitated development works in the region. Security camps in remote and Naxal-hit areas will help thousands of villagers avail the benefits of development works and welfare measures through Niyad Nellanar schemes, Narayanpur Superintendent of Police Prabhat Kumar said (PTI)

Delhi HC upholds man's seven-year jail term for sexually assaulting minor girl



NEW DELHI, Nov 15: The Delhi High Court has upheld seven years jail term of a man for sexually assaulting a seven-year-old girl, saying the victim's testimony inspired confidence and the convict has been unable to show that she was tutored.

The high court said while the court has to be sensitive in considering the statement of a child victim in sexual offence cases, the reality of the impressionable nature of children and the possibility of them being tutored cannot be ignored.

"At the same time, when the trial court has found the victim to be reliable and when the victim has stuck by her version throughout trial, mere apprehension of the appellant that the victim has been tutored is not enough to disregard the victim's evidence. "The said factor has to be established by either showing motive for false implication or through the evidence of the witness herself," Justice Amit Mahajan said in a recent verdict.

The high court dismissed a man's appeal challenging a trial court's judgement convicting him for sexually assaulting a

minor girl and sentencing him to seven-year imprisonment.

Regarding the sentence, the high court said the trial court has rightly appreciated the seriousness of the offence and taken into account that the victim was merely seven years old at the time of the incident while the accused was a grown man of 37 years of age. "This court finds the quantum of sentence to be proportional with the crime as has been committed by the appellant," it said.

The incident took place in December 2016 when the child was going to her landlord's room to get a matchbox and the accused dragged her into his room.

He molested her and also attempted to rape the minor, who was saved by her brother who came there searching her, the prosecution said.

On being confronted, the man fled the spot and a complaint was filed with the police by the girl's family.

The man contended that he was falsely implicated in the case on account of previous enmity with the victim's family.

The high court, however, said it was difficult to fathom as to why a young girl of merely seven years of age would make up such a story to falsely implicate the appellant.

"There can be no plausible explanation for a grown man to lay naked over a minor girl after robbing her of her underwear and jeans," it said, adding that minor discrepancies regarding the presence of door and curtain in the accused's room were not such that cast a doubt over the prosecution's case.

"The testimony of the witness inspires confidence and the appellant has been unable to show that the version of the victim is tutored. In such circumstances, the foundational facts stand proved by the prosecution through the evidence of the victim and her brother and the appellant has not been able to create any doubt....," the high court said. (PTI)

Kin of Palakkad 'honour killing' victim live under fear

PALAKKAD (KERALA), Nov 15: Kerala is often praised as a politically conscious state, but the story of 23-year-old Haritha in Palakkad reveals a darker fact—where the harsh realities of caste and economic disparity continue to deeply affect the lives of ordinary people.

Even after the culprits were sentenced to life imprisonment for the brutal murder of her husband Aneesh in the sensational Thenkurissi 'honour killing' case that shook the state in 2020, the fear of death still looms over Haritha and her in-laws family in Thenkurissi, Palakkad.

"We are still living under fear," Haritha, wife of the deceased Aneesh, told PTI.

The Palakkad District Additional Sessions Court recently sentenced Haritha's father Prabhukumar, the second accused in the case, and uncle Suresh Kumar, the first accused, to life term for the killing Aneesh, then 27-year-old, on December 25, 2020.

Haritha, who currently lives with her in-laws in Elamannam and spearheaded the legal battle to secure a severe punishment for the culprits—her own father and uncle—stated that she will continue her fight to ensure the accused receive the maximum sentence.

After hearing the verdict of life imprisonment given to the accused, Haritha broke down in tears in the corridor of the court.

Expressing dissatisfaction over the verdict, she said she had hoped for either a double life sentence or the death penalty.

Haritha said the family plans to pursue an appeal through the government.

Aneesh, a painter by profession, and Haritha had been in love since their school days, eventually marrying in 2020. However, Haritha's family opposed their relationship, angered by the fact that Aneesh came from a lower caste and a poor economic background.

According to the family and investigators, the shocking incident occurred on Christmas Day evening, just 88 days after their marriage, when Haritha's uncle, Suresh, and her father, Prabhukumar, brutally attacked and killed Aneesh with weapons near Manamkulambu LP School.

Both Prabhukumar and Suresh Kumar are currently in prison, but Haritha continues to live in fear, worried that they will kill her and Aneesh's family if they are released.

According to the family members of Aneesh, the culprits had threatened to finish

off Haritha too.

Though Haritha believed that her family would accept them one day, her family members broke her thali (the wedding chain) within three months after the marriage and murdered Aneesh, relatives said.

In light of these threats, Aneesh's father, Arumugham, now drives Haritha, who is pursuing a BBA degree, to her college in Koduvayur, located 10 km from their home. On her way back, Aneesh's mother, Radha, accompanies Haritha for added safety, they said.

On December 1, 2022, the state government sanctioned ₹ 10 lakh for Haritha's further studies. Relatives said Haritha wishes to pursue MBA after completing the degree and get a government job.

Currently, the family struggles to make ends meet with the income from Arumugham's painting job.

Aneesh's mother, Radha, a farm labourer said, "My son did nothing wrong other than loving her and bringing her into the home."

Responding to the queries related to the future of Haritha, she said they will approach the government requesting a job for her and filing an appeal against the trial court's verdict. (PTI)

MHA approves first all-women battalion in CISF

CHANDIGARH, Nov 15: The Union Ministry of Home Affairs has approved the establishment of the first all-women battalion of CISF, aimed at enhancing women's role in the central forces.

Central Industrial Security Force (CISF) has been a preferred choice for women who wish to serve the nation, constituting over seven per cent of the force at present.

The addition of a "Mahila Battalion" would encourage more aspiring young women across the country to join the force and serve the nation, a CISF official said on Friday. It will give a new identity to women in CISF.

The CISF headquarters has started preparations for the early recruitment, training and selection of locations for the headquarters of the new Battalion.

The training is being specially designed to create an elite Battalion capable of performing multifarious roles as commanders in VIP security and also security of airports and Delhi Metro Rail duties.

The proposal for the creation of all-women battalions in the Force was initiated in pursuance of the direction of the Union Home Minister on the occasion of the 53rd CISF Day function. (PTI)

ED seizes ₹ 8.8 crore from corporate office of 'lottery king' Santiago Martin

CHENNAI, Nov 15: The Enforcement Directorate on Friday seized ₹ 8.8 crore in cash from the corporate office of Chennai-based 'lottery king' Santiago Martin, officials said.

Martin was the single biggest donor to political parties with over ₹ 1,300 crore in now-scrapped electoral bonds.

The searches were carried out in multiple states as part of a money laundering investigation against the 'lottery king', officials said.

The action comes after the Madras High Court recently allowed the ED to proceed against Martin as the Tamil Nadu Police had decided to close the predicate or primary FIR against him and a few others and a lower court accepted this police plea.

Officials said at least 20 premises linked

to Martin, his son-in-law Aadhar Arjun and associates in Chennai and Coimbatore in Tamil Nadu, Faridabad in Haryana, Ludhiana in Punjab and Kolkata in West Bengal were being searched as part of a "comprehensive" action against his business empire.

A clutch of police FIRs have been taken into cognisance by the ED to initiate the latest action against Martin and his business network for lottery "fraud" and "illegal" sale of lottery. The agency searched him earlier too.

The federal agency last year attached assets worth about ₹ 457 crore in a case against Martin linked to an alleged loss of over ₹ 900 crore to the Sikkim government by fraudulent sale of the state lottery in Kerala.



Future Gaming Solutions India Pvt. Ltd. is the master distributor of Sikkim lotteries and the ED has been investigating Martin, known as 'lottery king' in Tamil Nadu, since 2019.

Martin recently made news after it came to light through Election Commission data that his company (Future Gaming) was the largest purchaser of now-scrapped electoral

bonds worth more than ₹ 1,300 crore, between 2019 and 2024, meant for donations to political parties.

The Madras High Court last month allowed the ED case against Martin and his linked people to go on as it set aside a lower court order which had accepted a closure report filed by the Chennai Police crime branch in a case related to the seizure of "unaccounted" ₹ 7.2 crore from his Chennai home.

His other companies include Martin Builders Pvt. Ltd. and Daison Land and Development Pvt. Ltd.

The ED had said earlier that these firms "acquired" immovable properties worth ₹ 19.59 crore from the loans and advances given by Martin and his family members. (PTI)

Dedicated freight corridor is 'jewel of Indian Railways': Vaishnav

NEW DELHI, Nov 15: Dedicated freight corridor is a very important infrastructure project of the Indian Railways which has made a positive impact on the country's logistics sector, Railway Minister Ashwini Vaishnav said on Thursday calling it "the jewel of Indian Railways".

Congratulating the office bearers of DFCCIL on the occasion of its 19th Foundation Day, Vaishnav said more than 350 goods trains are being operated on the corridor at present and this has improved the efficiency of logistics transportation in the country.

"The timings of cargo transportation have been reduced to half as compared to earlier. The speed of freight trains has made significant improvement. In every way, the DFC has played a crucial role to reduce the logistics cost in the country," Vaishnav said in a video message that was played during the celebration at Bharat Mandapam here.

Expressing hope that DFC would continue to serve the country, Vaishnav said that a good integra-

tion has taken place in the network of the Indian Railways.

"We have to take it further so that DFC can serve the country better," he added. The Dedicated Freight Corridor Corporation of India Ltd. (DFCCIL) commemorated its 19th Foundation Day celebrating nearly two decades of its service and initiatives for the country's rail freight infrastructure.

Railway Board Chairman and CEO Satish Kumar, DFCCIL Managing Director Praveen Kumar and important representatives from the Railway Board, Central Public Sector Enterprises (CPSEs) and other stakeholders were present on the occasion.

"DFCCIL has advanced its mission as one of Independent India's largest infrastructure projects. The corporation has taken monumental strides toward its goal of increasing the railways' share in India's freight landscape, aiming to lower logistics costs from 15% to below 9% and to bolster India's economic growth by stimulating both domestic and international trade," said a press statement issued by DFCCIL on the

occasion.

"Today, DFCCIL operates across seven states — Punjab, Haryana, Uttar Pradesh, Bihar, Rajasthan, Gujarat, and Maharashtra — positively impacting various industries along its routes, promoting MSME sector of India and generating jobs for the youth," it added.

According to DFCCIL, its two major corridors — the Eastern and Western Dedicated Freight Corridors — are transforming the transportation in India by linking the hinterland with the consumer centres and overseas markets.

The 1,337-km Eastern DFC connects Ludhiana in Punjab with Son-nagar in Bihar and the 1,506-km Western DFC runs from Dadri in Uttar Pradesh to the JNPT Port in Navi Mumbai.

"Both corridors boast cutting-edge rail infrastructure, managed efficiently through state-of-the-art Operation Control Centres (OCCs) in Prayagraj and Ahmedabad. In 2024, DFCCIL reached a significant milestone with over 96% of its project completed & commissioned." the DFCCIL said. (PTI)

Almost everyone in India vulnerable to climate change impacts; need for concerted efforts: Dr Swaminathan at COP29

BAKU, Nov 15: Almost everyone in India is now vulnerable to the impacts of climate change, former chief scientist of the World Health Organisation Dr Soumya Swaminathan has said, underscoring the urgent need for cross-ministerial and international collaboration to address its effects on health, gender and economic stability in the country.

Swaminathan pointed to women and children as especially vulnerable to these climate-driven health risks.

In an interview with PTI on the sidelines of global climate talks COP29 here in Azerbaijan's capital, Swaminathan called for a concerted approach, saying, "practically everyone in India is now vulnerable to climate change impacts, from extreme heat to vector-borne diseases. Addressing this requires close cooperation."

"We know that climate change has disproportionate impacts on women and children," she explained, noting how women, particularly in rural areas, face increased health risks due to continued reliance on solid fuels for cooking. She emphasised that "access to clean energy for everyone is a priority."

This, she argued, would not only reduce health risks associated with indoor air pollution but also lessen India's carbon footprint, marking a crucial step toward sustainable develop-



Dr Soumya Swaminathan speaking at a COP29 event.

ment. Climate-related health risks in India are varied, ranging from immediate effects such as respiratory illnesses due to air pollution, to long-term issues like malnutrition stemming from disrupted agricultural cycles.

Swaminathan noted that more than 80 per cent of India's population is now exposed to these risks, emphasizing that "everybody is now vulnerable," from rural farmers to urban migrants.

She highlighted the specific challenges faced by the urban poor, especially migrants who live in peri-urban areas with inadequate housing and sanitation, which exposes them to greater risks during floods and extreme weather events.

With health as a central theme, Swaminathan

stressed the benefits of green public transportation, an initiative she described as a "win-win solution."

"Carbon-neutral public transport will not only reduce air pollution but also promote physical activity and thereby improve health," she said, adding that reducing pollution would positively impact public health by curbing respiratory and cardiovascular diseases.

She also highlighted that India's urban centres are hotspots for these health issues due to dense populations and high pollution levels.

Swaminathan called for policies that integrate both health and climate objectives, stressing that this approach can drive development while building resilience against climate risks.

"If we do that kind of analysis, we can invest in actions that promote both development and reduce our carbon footprint," she noted, advocating for policies that prioritise "development with a climate-resilient focus."

Examples of such integrated actions include promoting clean cooking fuels, improving access to safe drinking water, and investing in infrastructure that can withstand extreme weather.

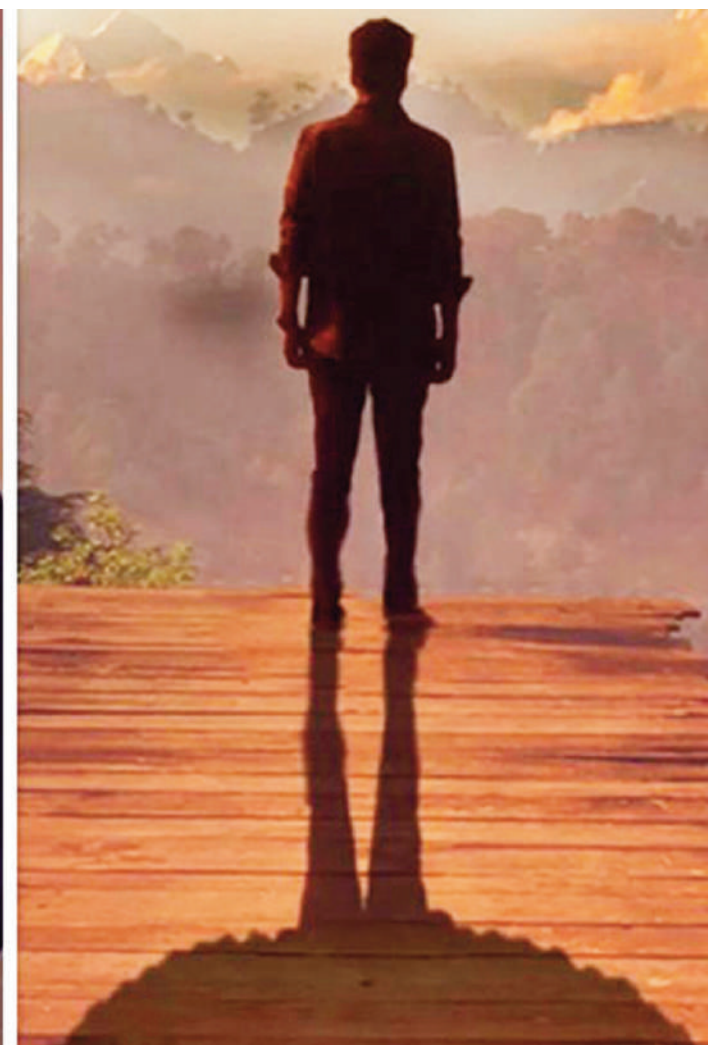
Dr Swaminathan went further to advocate for a gendered approach to climate policy, urging policymakers to "put a spotlight on women but also the poorest communities." (PTI)

Manoj Bajpayee's 'The Fable' wins best film award at Leeds International Film Festival

Hoping it becomes four of four: Ricky Kej on Grammy nomination



MUMBAI, Nov 15: Music composer Ricky Kej, who has been nominated for his fourth Grammy award, says he hopes that it turns into a win and becomes "four of four". "I'm fortunate that I've been nominated three times in the past and all three times I've won. So, it is three of three. I'm hoping it becomes four of four," Kej told PTI in an interview. Kej has been nominated in the New Age Album category for "Break of Dawn". "This album has been on my mind since 2015. I was exposed to the philosophical quote that 'the impurities of the environment is a direct reflection of the impurities of the mind'. This was actually said by Prime Minister Narendra Modi at a speech in this event known as 'Samvad'. It was a Hindu Buddhist conference which happened in 2015," the Bengaluru-based artist said. Renowned sitarist and composer Anoushka Shankar is also nominated in the same category for her album 'Chapter II: How Dark It Is Before Dawn'. Other nominees are "Warriors of Light" by Radhika Vekaria and "Triveni" by entrepreneur and musician Chandrika Tandon, created in collaboration with flautist Wouter Kellerman and cellist Eru Matsumoto. Shankar also earned an additional nomination for her featured role on Jacob Collier's song "A Rock Somewhere", which also includes vocalist Varjashree Venugopal, who bagged her first nomination. Kej said he would love to collaborate with Shankar and has even reached out to her in the past. "I'm hoping that one day we do collaborate with each other, but we know each other, we are in touch and I hope a collaboration happens," the 43-year-old added. Another famous name on his list is legendary composer Hans Zimmer. "I've always wanted to collaborate with Hans Zimmer, the film composer. He's somebody who I've always wanted to collaborate with. I've met him twice, both times at the Grammys. We've taken a picture together... I'm hoping that one day I get the opportunity to work with Hans Zimmer," he said. Kej first won a Grammy in 2015 for "Winds of Samsara" in the Best New Age category and later for "Divine Tides", with Stewart Copeland in 2022. In 2023, he and Copeland were honoured again for "Divine Tides", this time winning the award for Best Immersive Audio Album. The 2025 Grammy Awards are scheduled to take place on February 2, 2025, at the Crypto.com Arena in Los Angeles. (PTI)



MUMBAI, Nov 15: Manoj Bajpayee-starrer "The Fable" has bagged the best film award at the 38th Leeds International Film Festival in the UK.

"The Fable", directed by writer-director Raam Reddy, won the award in the Constellation Feature Film Competition, which honours the best "new, trailblazing cinema from around the world".

In a statement, the competition jury said they were spell-bound by Reddy's "lyrical homage to old tales passed through generations and made always prescient through the steady rhythms and the undeniable truths of life".

"The film spoke to notions of colonialism and labour relations through the gentle yet effective hand of magical realism, guiding the viewer

through this tangible yet almost fairy-like land...

"No other film felt as fitting a choice for the Constellation Competition Grand Prize than this inventive, entrancing film about stories carried by stars and we hope that more and more audiences will be as lucky as we were to experience it as big as possible," the jury said. "The Fable", a US-Indian co-production, is about Dev (Bajpayee), who discovers mysteriously burnt trees in his sprawling estate of fruit orchards nestled in the Indian Himalayas.

In spite of all efforts, more fires break out, eventually leading him to see himself and his family for who they truly are, as per the official plotline.

Bajpayee said he is proud of the recognition "The Fable"

received at the Leeds International Film Festival.

"Working with director Raam Reddy, whose thoughtful storytelling and unique blend of magical realism added such depth to this project, alongside Pratap Reddy, Juhi Agarwal, and later, Guneeet Monga Kapoor and Achin Jain, has been a profound experience."

"My co-stars Priyanka Bose, Deepak Dobriyal, and Tillotama Shome brought extraordinary talent to this journey. Winning the Best Film award at Leeds is not just a triumph for our film but a proud moment for Indian cinema. I hope 'The Fable' continues to inspire and touch people around the world," the actor said in a statement.

Executive producer Guneeet

Monga Kapoor said she is thrilled about receiving the best film award.

"This win is a testament to Raam Reddy's vision and Manoj Bajpayee's remarkable performance. We're honoured to see our story resonate with global audiences on such a grand stage. The magic of 'magic realism' has just begun!" Monga said.

Reddy said he is grateful for the win at the Leeds International Film Festival.

"I want to dedicate this award to my amazing team, whose sustained passion and effort over the years have brought The Fable to life," the director said.

Last month, "The Fable" won the special jury prize at the 2024 MAMI Mumbai Film Festival. (PTI)

ALI FAZAL CONCLUDES SHOOTING FOR ANURAG BASU'S 'METRO IN DINO'

MUMBAI, Nov 15: Actor Ali Fazal on Friday said he has completed filming for director Anurag Basu's highly anticipated film "Metro In Dino".

The upcoming film is a follow-up to Basu's critically acclaimed 2007 movie "Life In A Metro". In a statement, Fazal said working on the romantic drama movie has been a joyful and emotional experience.

"Wrapping up 'Metro In Dino' has been a journey filled with emotion, joy, and creativity. Working with Anurag sir has been an absolute honour. His vision and storytelling have always inspired me, and I'm thrilled to be part of this incredible team of 'Metro In Dino'. "I can't wait for the world to see what we've created together," said the actor, known for his work in "3 Idiots", "Fukrey" franchise, and "Mirzapur" series. Fazal is part of the film's ensemble cast which also includes Aditya Roy Kapur, Sara Ali Khan, Anupam Kher, Neena Gupta, Pankaj Tripathi, Konkona Sen Sharma, Ali Fazal and Fatima Sana Shaikh.

The film is produced by Bhushan Kumar of T-Series and Anurag Basu Productions Pvt Ltd. It has music by Pritam, who earlier collaborated with Basu on films "Gangster", "Life In a... Metro", "Barfi!", "Jagga Jasoos", and "Ludo". (PTI)



I'm older and I just know more: Connie Nielsen on coming back for 'Gladiator II'



NEW DELHI, Nov 15: Danish star Connie Nielsen remembers throwing her all to play Lucilla in Ridley Scott's "Gladiator" as it was her career's first big movie but when she got a chance to step into the role again after two decades, the actor felt she could slip into the many layers of the character with more comfort.

The 59-year-old actor said when Scott and his team first told her about the idea of the sequel, they promised that "Connie will be happy".

"I knew it was going to be good. I love the whole setup of the story. It's an incredible setup. And for an actor, the way they wrote Lucilla and put her into situations that are unimaginable and crazy, and at the same time, grand, it was a great setup for her," Nielsen told PTI in a virtual interview. Nielsen has

fond memories of her early years in Hollywood where she debuted with the 1997 movie "The Devil's Advocate", starring Al Pacino and Keanu Reeves. She was cast in "Gladiator" just two years later.

"It was my first big movie and I threw everything that I could. And I think this time I have reached a place as an actor and as a human where I feel very comfortable inside of many layers at the same time. I felt like I was able to play at more levels in this film than perhaps in the first one because I'm older and I just know more," she added.

In "Gladiator", Lucilla was introduced as the daughter of Emperor Marcus Aurelius and the sister of Commodus, who becomes the king of Rome after committing patricide. She and Russell Crowe's Maximus, a

Roman general-turned-gladiator, are seeking to overthrow Commodus. And in the second part, set two decades later, it is revealed that Lucilla's son Lucius, played by Paul Mescal, was fathered by Maximus. She sends Lucius away to protect him from palace intrigue but is once again caught between her maternal instincts and her duty towards Rome.

Nielsen said this time around, she could trust herself more with the role.

"There's something really wonderful that happens when you get to a certain age as a woman. You kind of realise that there's a part of you that is whole and amazing and you can trust it. And I kind of felt like that when I was doing the character this time around." The actor, also known for starring in movies such as "Mission to Mars",

"Wonder Woman" and "Nobody", referred to the 2003 book "Rubicon: The Last Years of the Roman Republic" by author Tom Holland to understand the empire as well as its administration, the political strife and the specific cultural life of Romans.

"(It) became like my inner sort of, I don't know, ballast. And then I really used the religious experience, the spiritual experience of Lucilla as it would have been back then like her thoughts and how she dealt with almost unimaginable pain and danger to her life, spiritually and mentally," she added.

When asked how Lucilla will resonate with modern audiences, given the shift in the portrayal of women on screen since she first played the role, Nielsen said the character has always appealed to both men and women. (PTI)

WITH A GAMBLE IN GREECE, ENGLAND RECOVERS WITHOUT HARRY KANE FOR 3-0 WIN

ATHENS, GREECE, Nov 15: This time, Lee Carsley's gamble paid off. In a surprise move, England's interim coach left captain Harry Kane on the bench for the Nations League match against Greece on Thursday and the youthful team eased to a 3-0 win in Athens.

It was a far cry from a month ago when Carsley boldly picked a team featuring no recognized strikers — Kane was injured on that occasion — and full of midfielders, only for England to lose 2-1 to Greece at Wembley Stadium. Carsley's brief tenure with England as a caretaker coach after the departure of Gareth Southgate has been under a cloud of scrutiny since that first

ever defeat to Greece. Yet he'll hand the reins to Thomas Tuchel at the end of the year with his reputation somewhat restored and the future suddenly looking more positive for the national team.

Indeed, looking to the future is the reason he chose Ollie Watkins over Kane for this match.

"This team needs to try and create leaders and one way to do that is give them opportunities," he said of the decision to pick Watkins in a team that also included a debut for Liverpool midfielder Curtis Jones.

Watkins led England's forward-leaning formation, justifying the selection with a goal in

the seventh minute when he tapped in a cross from 22-year-old winger Noni Madueke — another unexpected starter.

Jude Bellingham had a hand in the second goal in the 78th, sending in a shot that hit the post before the ball deflected off Greece goalkeeper Odysseas Vlachodimos and into the net. Jones flicked the ball in for 3-0 five minutes later.

"There were a lot of positives," Carsley said. "I see the quality the players have got and you're now seeing what they are capable of. ... When you see the team, you might have thought it was a gamble — you know, a risk — but I've got real confidence in these players."



Kane came on for Watkins in the 66th minute and Carsley said he expected the captain to start on Sunday when England hosts Ireland, seeking a win to finish top of the group and secure promotion back to the top tier of the Nations League.

"He was absolutely fine," Carsley said. "I think it'd be fair to say he wants to play every game like all top players do. I think he understands it's important that other players experience that kind of experience we had tonight. He's a great example to the rest of the players."

"It was brilliant for Ollie to get a goal," Carsley added. "It's important that if we're going to put these players in a position where

we are going to win the World Cup, these players need as many experiences as they can. It was no slight on Harry."

The Greeks went scoreless despite convincing spells in attack, with coach Ivan Jovanovic conceding that England had found its form to halt a run of four successive wins for his team.

"England is a better team for sure, they have higher quality, but the result could have been different," Jovanovic said. "I have no complaints with the effort the players put in, their runs and their challenges, but we were a notch behind them. England was very good, very good, and we were below the level we can play at." (AP)

Title holders India face acid test against China in women's ACT hockey

RAJGIR (BIHAR), Nov 15: Defending champions India will face their sternest test at the women's Asian Champions Trophy when they take on reigning Olympic silver medallists China in a blockbuster contest here on Saturday.

Both India and China are undefeated in the tournament so far, having registered three wins from as many games.

But world no. 6 China lead the points table on account of better goal difference of 21 as against India's 18.

The top four teams after the round robin stage will qualify for the semifinals of the six-team tournament.

In the last two outings between the two sides, at the 2023-24 FIH Pro League in February this year, China came out victorious on both occasions. So, Saturday's match provides a great opportunity for India to settle scores. But it is easier said than done as there is hardly anything to separate the two sides.

Both India and China have scored goals aplenty in the three matches so far.

While the 13-0 thrashing of Thailand have taken India's tally to 20 goals, China still lead the chart, with 22 strikes.

Against Thailand on Thurs-



day, the Indians played a near-perfect game with all their departments clicking at the same time. The Salima Tete-led side scored eight field goals and five from penalty corners.

The most heartening factor was India's ability to find the net from set pieces, which was a cause of concern in the first two games. The hosts converted five

of the 12 penalty corners they earned against Thailand with four coming from direct tries.

If the Indian backline was hardly tested by Thailand, the forward line was led superbly by Deepika, who alone scored five goals, including two from set pieces with direct dragflicks. Besides Deepika, the likes of Preeti Dubey, Navneet Kaur,

Lalremsiami and Beauty Dung and Sangita Kumari also shone bright upfront.

Preeti, Lalremsiami and Manisha Chauhan scored a brace each. The Indian midfield was superbly controlled by skipper Salima and Neha Goyal, with Sushila Chanu and Uditia holding the fort at the backline.

Going into the next match, the

only worry for India would be the lack of action for their defence, with Savita Punia and Bichu Devi Karibam being hardly tested by the Thailand team. The Indian midfield and defence will have to be at their best against the nimble-footed Chinese who are known for their brisk counterattacks.

The other important thing will be the transition of the ball from backline into the Chinese circle. The Indian strikers are also expected to face a much tougher test against the Chinese compared to the last game.

The most important thing will be to not rush with the ball and pick the right options inside the opposition circle.

India's chief coach Harendra Singh opined that the team needs to maintain its structure as it did against Thailand.

"I am happy with the way the team kept their structure and managed to manipulate the opposition and score goals."

"There was connection between the defenders and attacking midfielders and we need to do the same in the remaining matches," Harendra said after Thursday's match.

In other matches of the day, Malaysia will take on Japan while Korea will play Thailand. (PTI)

Pepi goal lifts US over Jamaica 1-0 in CONCACAF Nations League quarters first leg



KINGSTON, JAMAICA, Nov 15: Ricardo Pepi put the United States in good position to advance to the CONCACAF Nations League semifinals, scoring an early goal for a 1-0, first-leg win against Jamaica at Kingston on Thursday night in coach Mauricio Pochettino's first competitive match.

"We were here to fight. We knew it was going to be difficult," Pepi said. "At the end of the day we got the result and now it's time to go and take care of it at home." The second leg of the total-goals quarterfinal is Monday in St. Louis, and the winner advances to a March 20 semifinal at Inglewood, California. The United States won the first three editions of the tournament. "In a difficult situation, they competed really well," Pochettino said. "Of course, we need to improve in all the areas."

Pepi scored from Christian Pulisic's pass in the fifth minute, Matt Turner saved a penalty kick and the U.S. won with a shutout on the road for the first time since a 2016 friendly at Cuba. The Americans had 60% possession but were outshot 12-6.

Jamaica finished a man short after Mason Holgate was given his second yellow card for pushing Brandon Vázquez in the 86th, 10 minutes after his first for kicking Gianluca Busio.

Pulisic sparked the goal when he received a pass from Johnny

Cardoso and dribbled up the center of the field. Pepi burst past Amari'i Bell, ran onto the ball and took a touch, then mis-hit his shot but put the ball in off goalkeeper Andre Blake's far post for his 12th goal in 32 inter-

national appearances.

"I just saw Christian between the lines and I thought I had space in behind, so made a run," Pepi said after his third goal against Jamaica.

Pulisic became the 33rd player to make 75 U.S. appearances. Pepi is the fourth American to score 12 international goals before age 22 after Landon Donovan, Jozy Altidor and Pulisic. Joe Scally's giveaway led to Jamaica being awarded a penalty kick by Costa Rican referee Juan Gabriel Calderon. Kasey Palmer passed to Shamar Nicholson, who spun around Mark McKenzie and was pulled down by Turner. The goalkeeper dived to his right to bat away Demarai Gray's 14th-minute spot kick, Turner's third save in eight penalty kicks while in the U.S. goal. "I try to stay grounded, but I was definitely pumped up in the moment," said Turner, who has started one club match in eight months. "Needed a play like that for a long time now. I think that might have been the first penalty I've ever conceded in my career, so then to turn around and save it was a pretty nice feeling."

Malik Tillman replaced an injured Cardoso in the 20th minute. Pochettino took over the U.S. after Gregg Berhalter was fired for a first-round Copa America exit and started with a pair of friendlies last month.

Pochettino made six changes to the starting lineup from last month's 2-0 loss at Mexico, inserting McKenzie and midfielders Weston McKennie, Tanner Tessmann and Cardoso along with Pulisic and Pepi. (AP)

ICC puts PCB's 'POK' CT Trophy tour on hold after BCCI's strong objection

NEW DELHI, Nov 15: The BCCI has strong objected to Pakistan Cricket Board's purported move to take the Champions Trophy for a tour of the disputed 'Pakistan Occupied Kashmir', prompting the global body ICC to put the promotional event on hold.

The tournament, last played in 2017, is already in limbo after the BCCI officially intimidated ICC about Indian cricket team's inability to travel to Pakistan.

The PCB in return, as of now, has rejected the proposed 'Hybrid Model' with India playing its matches in Dubai. The schedule has also been put on hold and the new controversy could only make things uglier. It is learnt that BCCI secretary Jay Shah on Friday spoke to the top brass of the ICC and condemned this move by Pakistan and has urged the global body to take strong note.

"The BCCI secretary, after it came to his notice, called up the ICC and was extremely critical of PCB's move to conduct a Trophy tour of multiple cities which fall under Pakistan Occupied Kashmir," a senior BCCI official privy to the development told PTI on conditions of anonymity.

"He has urged the ICC to take strong action. As far as Islam-

abad is concerned, there is no issue but there can't be any Trophy tour to POK."

The Trophy Tour is part of the global body's promotional campaign, involving visits to multiple cities as per discussions between the international body and the host country.

However, the Pakistan Cricket Board, without prior consultation with all stakeholders, announced on its official social media that the Trophy would be taken to Skardu, Murree, and Hunza areas that fall under the disputed territory.

"Get ready, Pakistan! The ICC Champions Trophy 2025 trophy tour kicks off in Islamabad on 16 November, also visiting scenic travel destinations like Skardu, Murree, Hunza and Muzaffarabad. Catch a glimpse of the trophy which Sarfaraz Ahmed lifted in 2017 at The Oval, from 16-24 November," PCB tweeted.

When an ICC Board Member was contacted, he told PTI: "The discussions on Trophy tour is still on. I am not aware if PCB had kept everyone in loop about the four cities mentioned but if not then it was certainly not the right thing to do. I don't think ICC will allow PCB to take the trophy to any disputed region." (PTI)

Prajnesh Gunneswaran announces retirement from professional tennis

CHENNAI, Nov 15: Asian Games bronze medal winner Prajnesh Gunneswaran on Friday announced his retirement from professional tennis.

The 35-year-old Indian, who won singles bronze in the 2018 Jakarta Asian Games, wrote on his Instagram account: "Hanging up my racquet. Thank you."

Gunneswaran, who rose to world No.75 in the ATP rankings in 2019, expressed his deep gratitude for being able to compete at the top level for several years.

"As I write this, my heart swells with gratitude, pride, and a touch of nostalgia. Today, I step off the competitive tennis court for the last time."

"For over three decades, this game has been my sanctuary, my greatest teacher, and my most faithful companion. From the

first swing of my racquet to representing India on the grandest stages, the journey has been nothing short of extraordinary," he wrote.

The Chennai-born player, who turned pro in 2010, finished with a singles record of 11-28 and the doubles record of 1-1. His highest doubles ranking was 248 which he attained in 2018.

Gunneswaran also competed in all four Grand Slams, bowing out in the opening round in all instances. The Australian Open was the only Slam in which he competed on multiple occasions -- 2019 and 2020.

"Every drop of sweat, every victory, every setback - it's all woven into the fabric of who I am. Tennis taught me discipline, resilience, and the power of dreaming big," he further wrote

in his post.

"It gave me friendships that transcend borders and memories that will last a lifetime. It challenged me to dig deep, to grow, and to be better - not just as a player but as a human being," he noted. He had success in the ATP Challenger Tour and in ITF Futures Tour, possessing a record of 2-7 and 9-9 respectively in the singles category.

He won only a title in the doubles -- Egypt F25, Sharm El Sheikh (ITF Futures Tour) -- in 2018 with his Egyptian partner Issam Hachem Tawel.

Gunneswaran's biggest win against a top-20 player came in 2019 when he beat the then-18th-ranked Nikoloz Basilashvili of Georgia during the Indian Wells Masters in the second round. (PTI)

AIFF and state associations pitch for more match time for domestic players in 3-day conclave

NEW DELHI, Nov 15: The All India Football Federation (AIFF) and its affiliated units on Friday mulled on the possible restructuring of the Santosh Trophy and state leagues in order to give more match time to domestic players.

Top officials of the AIFF and 32 Member Associations (MAs) from across the country deliberated upon the diverse challenges in each state in a three-day conclave that concluded at the Football House here on Friday. AIFF President Kalyan Chaubey chaired the meetings on all three days.

"The members also agreed that more match time is required for Indian domestic players and discussed how the AIFF and the MAs can restructure the Santosh Trophy or the State Leagues to

create more match time," the AIFF said.

The AIFF State Gradation and State Specific Strategic Plans meeting saw the principal office bearers of the federation listen to the presidents and secretaries of the MAs, who were offered the floor for 40 minutes each.

The MAs made detailed presentations of their operations at the state level over the last three years and unfolded their future plans in the next three years while realistically identifying their challenges and advantages.

The AIFF officials also deliberated upon the proposals from the member associations for the development of football in their respective states in alignment with the Vision 2047 plan.

"We must ensure that there are state-wise plans for maximum

optimisation of development, which will also help Indian football to move ahead in totality. Our proposals and discussions for the entire 25 hours in three days hovered around with this specific thought," said Chaubey.

"... we have provisioned for each MA to submit their self-evaluation cards, based on which we will make proposals on a case-to-case basis." The self-evaluation cards are broad-based, having nearly 500 points and cover several key areas like administration, infrastructure, football ecosystem, sporting achievements, marketing and broadcasting, etc. According to the AIFF, the meeting also discussed the possibilities of gaining Atma Nirbhar Status (financial sustainability) for both the AIFF and its MAs.

"The AIFF, currently, mainly receives grants from three sources -- the Ministry of Sports and Youth Affairs, GoI, the FIFA, and the AFC, most of which are subject-specific grants."

"AIFF is making every effort to collaborate with various state governments and other organisations for the conduct of national and international tournaments and matches to relieve the budget constraints to an extent. These organisations have largely come forward in extending the infrastructure facilities to the AIFF," it said.

The federation also informed that it currently has 13,195 licensed coaches, and 3,616 registered referees for the 2024-25 season.

"The meeting felt if the

coaches should undergo refresher courses for training at the grassroots level, then the same should be applied to the referees as well. The meeting deliberated upon the improvement of Indian refereeing in general and felt that this is one area that should be looked into specifically," the AIFF said.

It was also noted by the members that nearly Rs 2,200 crore has been approved by several state governments for the renovation of football stadium or infrastructure (like Guwahati Rs 630 crore, Kokrajhar Rs 140 crore, Tawang Rs 224 crore, Nagaland Rs 300 crore, Telangana Rs 27 crore, Uttar Pradesh 800 football fields averaging Rs 1 crore each per field and 18 small stadiums averaging 10 crores for each stadium). (PTI)

Rahul's form been a cause of concern for the Indian team

My aim is to get back into T20 team, look forward to this IPL to give me platform: KL Rahul

PERTH, Nov 15: The beleaguered KL Rahul is seeking to use the next IPL as a vehicle to stage a comeback to the Indian T20I side as he wants to remain involved in all three formats of the game.

The 32-year-old is in line to open the innings if skipper Rohit Sharma does not play in the first Test of the upcoming five-match Border-Gavaskar Trophy series at Perth.

Rahul's form has been a cause of concern for the Indian team as he was recently dropped for the last two Tests against New Zealand at home with Sarfaraz Khan replacing him.

But the batter, who is pleasing to watch when in full flow, remains unperturbed by his lean run of form.

"My aim is to obviously get back into the T20 team. I've always wanted to be an all-format player, and that desire and drive haven't changed over the years. I want to still play for India in all three formats and have done that

Golaghat's Nikhamoni Bora propels Assam into aquatic adventure sports

HT Bureau

GUWAHATI, Nov 15: Inspiring the next generation of athletes from Assam, Nikhamoni Bora, a 23-year-old water sports enthusiast, has become the state's first certified female sailor, following in the footsteps of trailblazers like sprinter Hima Das and Olympic medalist Lovlina Borgohain.

Hailing from Golaghat, which Borgohain also calls home, Bora's entry into water sports marks a significant stride in a field still emerging in India. "Hima and Lovlina have been my role models, and I am glad to have started my journey in water sports, which is in a nascent stage in India," says Bora.

Nikhamoni's achievements are already drawing attention. She has claimed three windsurfing titles, earning two gold and one bronze medal between December 2023 and April 2024. Recognising her efforts, the Directorate of Sports & Youth Welfare, Government of Assam awarded her ₹ 3 lakh and a spot in the India Book of Records for "the most windsurfing tournaments won by a female." Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma also praised her on Twitter, saying, "Happy to see our girls break so many glass ceilings. Assam is proud of her."

Bora's journey hasn't been easy. She faced societal pressure to choose a "safer" career, but her family's support and her days in the National Cadet Corps gave her the confidence to pursue sports. Starting with rifle shooting and weightlifting, she found her true calling in water sports after her NCC Commanding Officer introduced her to sailing. Bora went on to gain Level 1 and 2 sailing certifications from the Yachting Association of India and has since trained in windsurfing and kiteboarding.

Corporate support has been key to Bora's development. Cairn provided crucial backing for her kiteboarding training, covering fees that had previously been an obstacle. Looking back on the difficulties, Nikhamoni shared, "After multiple rejections I learnt about Cairn and their support to sports people over time. I sent a letter to them and left for my training. Their team believed in me from the outset and within 3 days of my training, I was informed that my training fee has been paid by the company. This boosted my morale to pursue my dreams."

Bora highlighted that Cairn's support helped her to access top-notch training and expert in Aqua Outback, during June 2024, where their guidance helped hone her skills, ensuring a safe and enjoyable experience. "As the first home-grown youth sailor from the state, I proudly achieved my goal of becoming a national gold medalist in Kiteboarding with your blessings," she says. "Cairn's commitment towards nurturing talent has been instrumental in helping me chase my passion," she adds.

Bora says she is committed to paving the way for future aspiring sailors, especially young girls, from her village and elsewhere in Assam. She aims to guide her next batch of young girls in a Morigaon camp, where she is initiating kayaking and canoeing. She has also shown interest in the steps taken by the Assam Government to advance sports as something beyond a hobby. "I have miles to go," she says with a glint in her eyes, and a determination that sounds steely, and sturdy!



for many years," Rahul told Star Sports.

"I've been out of the T20 team for a while, and I know where I

stand as a player and what I need to do to get back. So, I look forward to this IPL season to give me that platform to enjoy my cricket

and play the way I want to," he added.

Since 2022, he has scored 514 runs in Tests from 12 matches (21

innings) at an average of 25.7, having registered three half-centuries and a century.

During the interaction, Rahul emphasised on always keeping the team ahead of his individual aspirations.

"All of us as players want to play with freedom, and everyone would think that the way I batted, I'm enjoying playing that. But like I said, my thought process and motivation have always been team first. It doesn't matter what I want to do or what my natural game is.

"We play a team sport. If I played tennis, it would be different; I could stick to saying, 'This is my natural game.' But in a team sport, it's very different. Each game, you'll have a different role and responsibility given to you to find a way to deliver for the team," he said.

The Bengaluru man's last Test hundred was against South Africa at Centurion in December 2023 and since then made just two fifties in nine innings. (PTI)

Haryana's Anshul Kamboj becomes only third bowler to claim all 10 wickets in Ranji Trophy

LAHRI (HARYANA), Nov 15: Haryana pacer Anshul Kamboj entered the record books on Friday as he became only the third bowler in the history of Ranji Trophy to claim all 10 wickets in an innings.

Kamboj, 23, achieved the feat in the home team's Group C game against Kerala at the Chaudhary Bansi Lal Cricket Stadium on the outskirts of Rohtak. Kamboj ended with incredible figures of 10/49 in 30.1 overs.

Premangshu Chatterjee of Bengal (10/20 vs Assam, 1956) and Pradeep Sunderam (10/78, Rajasthan v Vidarbha, 1985) of Rajasthan are the other two bowlers to have taken 10 wickets in an innings in the country's premier domestic tournament.

Overall, Kamboj is the sixth Indian bowler to grab a 10-wicket haul in First-Class cricket. The legendary Anil Kumble, Subhash Gupte and Debashish Mohanty are the others on the list.

The pacer entered the third day's play with eight wickets to his name and claimed the wickets of Basil Thampi and Shoun Roger to complete the remarkable feat.

As a result, Kerala were all out for 291 in

their first innings.

While running through the Kerala batting line-up, Kamboj also went past 50 First-Class wickets in 19 matches.

Kamboj, who was picked by Mumbai Indians for the 2024 IPL after an impressive domestic season, recently represented the India A in the ACC Emerging Asia Cup tournament in Oman.

Kamboj was among the leading wicket-takers with 17 scalps from 10 matches as Haryana went on to win the Vijay Hazare Trophy title for the first time.

This season he became only the third pacer to record an eight-wicket haul in the Duleep Trophy, behind Mohanty (10/46) and Ashok Dinda (8/123).

Kamboj has 23 wickets from 15 List-A games to his name.

Best bowling figures in Ranji Trophy history: 10/20 – Premangshu Chatterjee – Bengal v

Assam (1956-57)

10/49 – Anshul Kamboj – Haryana v Kerala (2024-25)

10/78 – Pradeep Sunderam – Rajasthan v Vidarbha (1985-86).

List of Indian bowlers with 10-wicket haul in First-Class cricket:

10/20 – Premangshu Chatterjee – Bengal v Assam (1956-57) – Ranji Trophy

10/46 – Debashish Mohanty – East Zone v South Zone (2000-01) – Duleep Trophy

10/49 – Anshul Kamboj – Haryana v Kerala (2024-25)

10/74 – Anil Kumble – India v Pakistan (1999) – Kotla --

Test match

10/78 – Pradeep Sunderam – Rajasthan v Vidarbha (1985-86) – Ranji Trophy

10/78 – Subhash Gupte – Bombay v Pakistan Combined Services and Bahawalpur XI (1954-55). (PTI)



অসম চৰকাৰ

তথ্য আৰু জনসংযোগ সঞ্চালকালয়, অসমৰ

উদ্যোগত

ৰাজ্যিক ভিত্তিত

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মুখ্য অতিথি

শ্ৰীযুত পীযুষ হাজৰীকা

মন্ত্ৰী, তথ্য, জনসংযোগ, মুদ্ৰণ আৰু লেখন সামগ্ৰী,

জলসম্পদ, সংসদীয় পৰিক্ৰমা আদি বিভাগ

নিৰ্দিষ্ট বক্তা

ড° কুলধৰ শইকীয়া

প্ৰাক্তন আৰক্ষী সঞ্চালক প্ৰধান, অসম

বিষয়

‘সংবাদ মাধ্যমৰ পৰিৱৰ্তিত ৰূপ’

ভাৰতৰ সমৃদ্ধ ইতিহাস আৰু স্পন্দনশীল আধুনিকতাৰ সমাহাৰেৰে আজি ৰাষ্ট্ৰৰ জীৱনধাৰা অধিক গতিশীল কৰাৰ ক্ষেত্ৰত সংবাদ মাধ্যমৰ এক অপৰিসীম দায়িত্ব আছে। এখন আত্মনিৰ্ভৰ ভাৰত গঢ়াৰ ক্ষেত্ৰত আমাৰ গৰিমাময় ঐতিহ্যৰ ওপৰত মনোনিবেশ কৰি কৃষিৰ পৰা তথ্য-প্ৰযুক্তিলৈ সমাজৰ সকলো ক্ষেত্ৰৰ বিষয়ে তথ্য পৰিবেশন কৰাত সংবাদ মাধ্যমে গুৰুত্ব আৰোপ কৰিব লাগিব

ড° হিমন্ত বিশ্ব শৰ্মা

মুখ্যমন্ত্ৰী, অসম

লোক নিৰ্মাণ বিভাগৰ সন্মিলন আৰু প্ৰশিক্ষণ কেন্দ্ৰ, দিছপুৰ, গুৱাহাটী-৬

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তথ্য আৰু জনসংযোগ সঞ্চালকালয়, অসমৰ দ্বাৰা প্ৰচাৰিত

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In three T20Is, we've seen fearless approach by India: VVS Laxman



JOHANNESBURG, Nov 15:

India stand-in head coach VVS Laxman said his side has been playing "fearless" cricket in the on-going T20I series against South Africa, and the approach, for him, was the primary reason behind the wholehearted support the visitors receive anywhere across the globe.

India are leading the four-match T20I series 2-1 and the final match will be played here at the Wanderers later this day.

"What we have seen in these three matches is the fearless approach of this team," Laxman said during a reception hosted for the Indian team here on Thursday night.

Laxman said the entertaining the fans is an important part of the game along with winning the matches.

"During any tours to any foreign country, we play and try to entertain the crowd. And we always feel that we are playing at home."

"The reason for that is all the wonderful fans of the Indian cricket team – the Diaspora of India who settled down in various countries but still love the Indian team and the Indian cricketers," he added.

"I don't know if the support was for the home team or for our team (in SA). There was a lot more blue in the crowd than actually green," Laxman said.

Skipper Suryakumar Yadav said it was nice to meet Indian community during a hectic tour.

"It's always good to meet the Indian community when we come away from home. It makes us feel like we are at home."

"It's always good to have such a lovely evening in between a tournament and in between a bilateral

series to really have some fun," said Suryakumar.

Indian Consul General Mahesh Kumar said cricket relations between India and South Africa, more than a century old, can serve as a model for the broader relations between the two countries.

"In 1921, a 17-member team, mostly Indian-origin people, went to India for a four-month tour. At that time, cricket and soccer were mixed. They played both the genres."

So, we have a 100-plus years of cricket history. There was an interruption during the apartheid years in South Africa.

"But now, it is inclusive – free from racial and religious divides. It has massive people's participation and it also encases our shared ambitions," Kumar said.

Chairman of Cricket South Africa Pearl Maphoshe made a plea for the Indian squad to return to South Africa in 2025.

"We cannot have enough of Indian teams in South Africa. We really love you. Someone said cricket in India is not a sport but a way of life."

"I want to assure you that cricket in South Africa is becoming a religion, so please come back next year so that we can do this together," Maphoshe said.

Thanking the team for taking the time out ahead of the final game, High Commissioner Prabhat Kumar said it was a dream of people to meet the players personally.

"India was the first country where South Africa toured after the abolition of apartheid in 1991. So, we have deep relations. I recall that in 2009 IPL was hosted by South Africa when we couldn't host it (due to the general elections in India)," Kumar said. (PTI)