25 YEARS OF DEDICATED JOURNALISM

- Israeli strikes on Gaza kill at least 29, Palestinian medics say
- Taiwan demands China end its military activity in nearby waters
- No possibility of alliance with Congress for Delhi polls: Kejriwal
- 'RS chairman's partisan behaviour led us to move notice for his removal as VP'



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GUWAHATI, THURSDAY, DECEMBER 12, 2024

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CBI files chargesheets against AJRS Marketing duo

Assam Ponzi scheme scam: ₹5.14 crore swindled from around 2,600 victims



NEW DELHI, Dec 11: The CBI on Wednesday filed a chargesheet against Biswanath Roy and Mridul Dutta in one of the Assam Ponzi Scam cases related to AJRS Marketing Pvt. Ltd which allegedly swindled ₹ 5.14 crore from around 2.600 victims by promising to double the invested money in 200 days, officials said.

It is alleged that the accused were part of a multi-level deposit scheme collecting deposits under the trade names "Ayurvedlife" and "AJRS Trading"

Investors were allegedly lured with promises of substantial returns and incentives such as bikes, cars, and foreign trips upon reaching specific investment thresholds,

the officials said. Roy and Dutta marketed and promoted the unregulated deposit scheme of AJRS by participating in various meetings with potential depositors, it is alleged.

The duo allegedly promoted a non-existing business model through brochures of Ayurvedlife, AJRS Trading, and AJRS Group circulated to depositors through WhatsApp groups and chats to lure potential depositors to invest a large sum in their schemes.

Roy and Dutta allegedly falsely promised to double the depositors' money in 200 days through the unregulated deposit schemes.

They allegedly solicited members to the multi-level marketing (MLM) structure of the schemes where each participant had to recruit others to earn commission on the deposits of other members.

Both recruited members under them and made them deposit a large sum of (CONTD. ON PAGE-2) Himanta launches 12-day prog to distribute grants, assistance and scholarships

One med college, one varsity in every dist soon

GUWAHATI, Dec 11: Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma on Wednesday announced that every district of Assam will have one

university and one medical college. The Chief Minister said this while launching a 12-day programme on Wednesday to distribute grants, assistance and scholarships under various schemes across the state, benefitting nearly 12 lakh families.

Sarma said, "Assam has been progressing very rapidly in the path of development. At least 80 lakh people were uplifted from poverty in recent years which is a great achievement. The state government has given emphasis on education and health. Under the current dispensation, many colleges were upgraded to universi-



The chief minister said that the government is working to construct 23 medical colleges, and within a year, the work of another three medical colleges will com-

erses the length and breadth of Assam, at least one university will be found to come up in every dis-

The chief minister also stated that the ruling dispensation is also

working to construct one bridge

Woman ostracised by kangaroo court for wearing salwar-kameez

every district.

Meanwhile. Sarma announced that various grants and assistance will be distributed under different government schemes in the next 12

Under the microfinance incentive and relief scheme, more than 78,000 borrowers will benefit from the state government's relief package which will restore their creditworthiness and provide them

Moreover, the state government will distribute ₹ 353.67 crore to the 6.86 lakh disaster-affected families for the reconstruction of their houses, meeting their necessary requirements along with essential upplies. Sarma stated, "6,490 Self Help Groups (SHG) are set to get a support of ₹21.90 crore for set-

over the Brahmaputra River in

nation of pregnancy" of the unwanted foetus and submit a status report by December 19. days across the state. nation of Pregnancy Act, 1971, (MTPA) termination of pregnancy

financial stability.

ting up food processing units.'

was gang-raped by seven persons, including four minors in Tinsukia. Hearing the case (WP(C)(Suo Moto)/1/2024) on December 5, the court (CONTD. ON PAGE-2) Bhupen Borah

Gauhati HC permits

abortion of minor

GUWAHATI. Dec 11: The Gauhati High Court has permitted

the abortion of a 15-year-old gangrape victim, currently 26-weeks pregnant, from Assam's Tinsukia

Taking a suo motu cognisance of

a media report, a division bench of

Justice Kalyan Rai Surana and Jus-

tice Susmita Phukan Khaund on

Monday asked the state govern-

ment to carry out a "medical termi-

According to the Medical Termi-

The order said that according to

a news article on November 29, the

victim was 14 years old when she

of over 24 weeks is not allowed.

district in her "best interest".

takes jibe at Akhil HT Bureau GUWAHATI, Dec 11: Assam

Congress president Bhupen Borah on Wednesday took an indirect jibe at Akhil Gogoi and said that the Sivasagar MLA is set to face a tough challenge in ticket distribution during upcoming Panchayat

Gogoi has been critical of Congress since the grand old party broke the opposition alliance and fielded a candidate in the recently concluded by-election.

Borah, on Wednesday, addressed the reporters here, "Distribution of tickets to aspirants is a big challenge before every political party. Akhil Gogoi does not have an idea about this (CONTD. ON PAGE-2)

Five years of CAA passage marked by protests in Assam

GUWAHATI, Dec 11: Marking five years of the passage of the controversial Citizenship (Amendment) Act, opposition Assam Jatiya Parishad (AJP) and influential students' body AASU on Wednesday held protests against the legislation and termed it a

"black law" While AJP organised a protest at Chachal in Guwahati and said the law has become "illegal" after the Supreme Court verdict on the cutoff date of granting citizenship in Assam, the All Assam Students' Union (AASU) held an agitation in front of its headquarters in the Uzanbazar area.

"Today is a dark day for Assam. On this day in 2019, the struggling people of Assam took to the streets despite the threat of the state forces and started their protest against the CAB, which later became CAA,' AJP president Lurinjyoti Gogoi said, holding a black flag.

The painful memories of the CAA movement are still alive in

the hearts of every proud Assamese and they still haunt the people like a nightmare, he added.

"The Assamese community knows how to respond to traitors. We have not accepted the CAA and will never accept it. We will continue our struggle till the law is repealed," Gogoi said.

In a majority verdict, the Supreme Court on October 17 upheld the constitutional validity of Section 6A of the Citizenship Act which grants (CONTD. ON PAGE-2)

MANGALDAI, Dec 11: In a case of moral policing, a woman was socially ostracised and fined ₹ 5,000 for wearing salwar-kameez in the Darrang district of Assam, officials said on Wednesday

According to an official of the district commissioner's office, the incident took place in the Gongajani Kuwori village in the Sipajhar revenue circle area

The woman, identified as Meghali Das, on Wednesday filed complaints with the police and civil administration, and officials are likely to visit the village on Thursday to look into the matter.

"I have been ostracised and asked to pay a fine of ₹ 5,000 for wearing salwar-kameez... I run a small shop and since I need to bring commodities from the market, I prefer wearing salwar to a mekhela-sador (traditional Assamese dress) or saree," she told reporters here. Das said that the villagers objected to her wearing salwar-kameez and took the decision in a kangaroo court held at a local temple premises on Sunday.

"We are not being allowed to visit the houses of other people in the village. My three children have also been told not to go to shops, let alone visit other villagers. Villagers have also asked their children to not speak to my children at school," she added.

Despite the decision of the villagers, the affected woman vowed to continue wearing salwar-kameez as it is convenient for her work. (PTI)



🥌 প্ৰধানমন্ত্ৰী ফচল বীমা যোজনাই বতৰৰ অনিশ্চয়তাৰ সৈতে জড়িত ক্ষতিৰ শংকা কম কৰি পৰিশ্ৰমী কৃষক ভাই-ভনীৰ আৰ্থিক হিত ৰক্ষা কৰাত একেৰাহে গুৰুত্বপূৰ্ণ ভূমিকা পালন কৰি আহিছে। এই কৃষক হিতৈষী বীমাৰ লাভ কোটি কোটি কৃষকে পাব ধৰিছে। 🍤

- নৰেন্দ্ৰ মোদী, প্ৰধানমন্ত্ৰী

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সুৰক্ষা কৱচ পাওক সকলো কৃষক ভাই-ভনীকো কথাটো জনাওক

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Malhotra takes over as 26th RBI Guv

'Focus would be trust, growth & stability'

MUMBAI, Dec 11: Sanjay Malhotra took charge as the 26th Governor of Reserve Bank of India on Wednesday, and promised to focus on deepening trust, growth and ensuring stabil-

THE HILLS TIMES

Malhotra, 56, takes over as the central bank governor at a critical time where inflation has shot above the comfort level, growth has declined to a 7-quarter low and rupee is at all-time low level against US dollar.

"I can assure that we will put in the best foot forward in public interest to deliver what the public of India looks forward to, which is trust. which is growth and which is a stable and certain policy," he told reporters at his maiden interaction as a RBI Governor.

The career bureaucrat arrived at the RBI headquarters at the Mint Street around 1000 hours and completed formalities of taking charge in the presence of Deputy Governors M Rajeshwar Rao, T Rabi Sankar and Swami-

Michael Patra, Deputy Governor in-charge of the critical monetary policy function, was not

Malhotra said, "We are in a very dynamic world right now fraught with geopolitical tensions, climate change risks and political uncertainties", and affirmed that the RBI will remain "alert and agile" to meet the challenges.

RBI is a prestigious institution which has done commendable work over its history courtesy the diligence and hard work of its staff members and senior officials, said Malhotra,

Rupee settles

on a flat note



specifically mentioning his predecessor Shaktikanta Das' name.

"I will continue to uphold the legacy (of the RBI) and take it forward," he affirmed, outlining his thoughts on the key focus areas.

On growth, he said it is a "huge responsibility" to ensure that the expansion in economic

activity continues. Although there was no explicit mention of inflation in his remarks, Malhotra stressed that the

Policy certainty can be among the factors which can ensure stability, Malhotra said, adding that in his earlier assignment as the Revenue Secretary he focus was on stability in pol-

focus will be on "stability" and "trust".

As an institution, he said, the RBI is what it is because of the "trust" it has earned for workthat it would be his endeavour to strengthen it.

ing with the public's interest in mind, and added Whatever decisions are taken will be done with public interest in mind, Malhotra said. He, however, declined to take any specific questions from the media.

Resorting to cricket analogies a favourite with his predecessor Das, Malhotra said he cannot start playing his shots on day one itself. The new Governor said that he would re-

spond to media questions after understanding various issues from RBI's officers. The next monetary policy review is scheduled for the first week of February, offering

Malhotra nearly two months of time before he makes his maiden decision on interest rate and other important issues.

Malhotra, who till Tuesday was Revenue Secretary (1990-batch IAS officer of the Rajasthan cadre) in the finance ministry, said financial inclusion would be an important area for him, despite the successes achieved in the

RBI will collaborate with all stakeholders, including financial regulators, state governments and the Centre to deepen the benefits of financial inclusion, he said.

The central bank, he said, will also use the best that the technology has to offer in reducing costs and making banking services more acces-

Innovation will be fostered and the RBI will put the necessary guardrails as it is cognizant of the risks involved, he added.

Observing that the RBI does not have a "monopoly" on all the knowledge and information, Malhotra said, he will continue to tread on the consultative approach in policy making. (PTI)

Sensex, Nifty edge up in restricted trade ahead of US inflation data

MUMBAI, Dec 11: The rupee settled for the day on a flat note higher MUMBAI, Dec 11: Benchmark by just 1 paisa at 84.84 (provisional) against the US dollar on Wednesday, a tad above its all-time low level, amid rising expectations of a shift in the Reserve Bank's monetary policy stance post the appointment of Sanjay Malhotra as the new RBI gover-Forex traders said the Indian rupee

touched a fresh all-time low of 86.87 13 advanced. in intraday trade as change of guard at the Reserve Bank of India raised odds of a rate cut by the Reserve Bank of India (RBI) in its February

A bounce back in the US dollar from earlier lows also weighed on the rupee. However, positive domestic markets, FII inflows and reports of RBI intervention supported the rupee earlier in the day.

At the interbank foreign exchange, the rupee opened at an alltime low of 84.87 against the greenback. The USD/INR pair traded in a tight range and ended the session at 84.84 (provisional) against the dollar, higher by just 1 paisa from its previous close.

On Tuesday, the rupee settled for the day on a flat note higher by just 1 paisa at 84.85 against the US dol-

The government on Monday appointed revenue secretary Sanjay Malhotra as the 26th Governor of the Reserve Bank of India. (PTI)

HT Bureau
GUWAHATI, Dec 11: Online shopping platform Myntra, on Wednesday

announced its 21st edition of the End Of Reason Sale (EORS), live until

dive into an expansive collection from leading international, domestic

and homegrown brands, offering more than 3.5Mn styles from over 9500

brands to cater to their fashion-forward needs, an official statement

claimed. The categories that are expected to garner traction from con-

sumers during EORS include Men's Casual Wear, Men's and Women's

Ethnic wear, Women's Western Wear, Beauty and Personal Care, Watches

and Wearables, Winter Wear, Accessories, Travel essentials, Sports

Several popular brands that are expected to witness heightened traction

"Myntra's Gen-Z proposition, will feature over 100K trend-first styles from brands including Hersheinbox, Glitchez, Kpop, Slyck, Lulu & Sky,

include Levi's, Nike, adidas, H&M, L'Oreal, Decathlon, New Balance,

Bonkers Corner, Kassually, Freakins, Pronk, Bewakoof, House of Koala

Banking partners for EORS-21 include - Axis Bank, Kotak Mahindra

Bank, State Bank of India, HDFC Bank, Paytm UPI, Simpl, the statement

footwear, Kids' Wear and wedding collections.

Wrogn, and Rare Rabbit, among others.

Millions of shoppers from tier 1 and 2 cities, as well as beyond, can

equity indices Sensex and Nifty closed higher in restricted trade on Wednesday as investors awaited key US inflation data for further cues. The 30-share BSE Sensex rose by 16.09 points or 0.02 per cent to close at 81,526.14 even as 17 of its constituents declined and

Snapping its three-day losing run, the broader NSE Nifty advanced 31.75 points or 0.13 per

cent to settle at 24,641.80. From the 30-share Sensex pack, Bajaj Finance, Nestle India, Bajaj Finserv, Asian Paints, UltraTech Cement, Infosys, Maruti, Bharti Airtel and Hindustan Unilever

were among the gainers. JSW Steel, Adani Ports, NTPC, State Bank of India, Reliance Industries, Tech Mahindra, Axis Bank, Titan and HDFC Bank were

the laggards. "The Indian market exhibited subtle movements, reflecting mixed sentiments prevailing in global markets ahead of the US CPI inflation data release, which could influence the Fed policy," Vinod Nair, Head of Research, Geojit Financial Services, said.

The BSE smallcap gauge climbed 0.35 per cent and the midcap index gained 0.25 per cent. Among sectoral indices, Consumer Durables rose 0.59 per cent, Industrials by 0.40 per cent, Auto by 0.37 per cent, IT and Teck by 0.35 per cent each and FMCG by

0.34 per cent. Utilities, Bankex, Power and Services were the laggards.

Meanwhile, shares of PNC Infratech surged 12 per cent to close at ₹ 347.90 apiece, after the company announced the early completion of a key highway project in Uttar Pradesh, boosting investor sentiment. During the day, the scrip of the company climbed 15 per cent to hit intraday high of ₹ 357.15 apiece on the BSE.

On the other hand, stock of food delivery and quick-commerce major Swiggy fell 4 per cent to close at ₹ 522.70 apiece, as investors booked profits after the one-month lock-in period for an-

chor investors expired. As many as 2,146 stocks advanced, 1,840 declined and 110 remained unchanged on the BSE.

4.46 per cent to close at ₹ 519.50 apiece.

The market capitalisation of BSElisted firms climbed by ₹91,110.2 crore to ₹ 4,60,46,637.96 (USD) 5.43 trillion).

"The market exhibited a lackluster performance on Wednesday as it traded within a narrow range of just 107 points, marking the smallest trading range over the past seven sessions.

"The index remained close to its previous trading range, with relatively low trading volume suggesting a compression in volatility,' Ameya Ranadive Chartered Market Technician, CFTe, Sr Technical Analyst, StoxBox, said.

In Asian markets, Tokyo, Shanghai and Seoul closed higher, while Hong Kong settled in the negative territory. European markets were trading on a mixed note. The US markets closed in the red on Tues-

Global oil benchmark Brent crude rose 0.98 per cent to USD 72.90 a barrel.

Foreign Institutional Investors (FIIs) bought equities worth Rs 1,285.96 crore on Tuesday, according to exchange data.

On Tuesday, the 30-share BSE Sensex edged up 1.59 points to close at 81,510.05. Falling for the third day, the NSE Nifty dropped by 8.95 points to settle at 24,610.05. (PTI) Myntra announces EORS-21 Swiggy stock declines over 4 pc

NEW DELHI, Dec 11: Shares of food delivery and quick-commerce major

Swiggy declined more than 4 per cent on Wednesday as investors booked prof-

On the National Stock Exchange (NSE), the stock of the company slipped

Swiggy's scrip fell 3.84 per cent to settle at ₹ 522.70 per share on the BSE.

Following the lock-in expiry, as many as 6.5 crore shares of Swiggy, or a 3 per

cent equity stake, became eligible to trade, opening the doors for the investors

to go ahead and sell 50 per cent of their holdings. The lock-in period for the

remaining 50 per cent of shares owned by anchor investors ends on February

9. In terms of volume, 1.43 crore equity shares of Swiggy were traded on the

NSE, while 6.51 lakh scrips of the company exchanged hands on the BSE dur-

ing the day. The 30-share BSE Sensex rose by 16.09 points or 0.02 per cent to

close at 81,526.14. Snapping its three-day losing run, the broader NSE Nifty

In a regulatory filing on Wednesday, Swiggy said it has introduced One

As per the company, One BLCK is designed to deliver an elevated Swiggy

experience, it added. Last month, scrip of Swiggy listed with a premium of

nearly 17 per cent on the exchanges. The ₹ 11,327-crore initial public offer of

Swiggy got fully subscribed on the final day of the share sale on Friday, ending

BLCK, an exclusive, invite-only membership for consumers seeking the high-

advanced 31.75 points or 0.13 per cent to settle at 24,641.80.

its after the one-month lock-in period for anchor investors expired.

Need to blend commercial considerations with economic priorities, strategic needs: Sitharaman

NEW DELHI, Dec 11: Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman on Wednesday stressed that India Inc's commercial considerations should blend with the economy, nation's priorities and strategic needs.

Asking the industry to "realign and reset" itself based on the lessons learnt in the last decade, Sitharaman said the supply chains should be widespread lest geopolitical risks disrupt it.

"Economic and commercial considerations today will have to blend (with) economy and its priorities with politics and strategic needs," Sitharaman said at the CII Global Economic Policy Forum 2024 here.

Outlining the priorities of the economy for the next decade, Sitharaman said the industry should work with small and medium enterprises to explore how they can support large units, while equally contributing to job creation. "When we talk about restoring supply chains to frictionless supply chains, let's not forget it's not just economics, it's more than that... We have to build in our own decision making not just in economic sense but also in a political and strategic sense.

"Supply chains will have to be restored but you would have to reset it, realign it, you will have to make sure that it is spread so much that no geopolitical or strategic risks will threaten our wellbeing,' Sitharaman said.

Learning from the last decade



now realign, and industry will have to realign itself not just on economic principles.

Sitharaman said the attempt of both industry and governments everywhere should be to restore global calm and normalcy. There can nowhere be enough justifiable reason for skirmishes or war, she said. "The global priority for this decade should be to restore normalcy. They are the main cause for disruptions in supply chain, inflation and other global challenges," the Minister said.

Stating that the benefits of economic success will be spread properly only through technology. India's Digital Public Infrastructure (DPI), ONDC (Open Network for Digital Commerce) and technology stack for agriculture have democratised access.

"Farmers are now able to access

vantage of technology. I'm sure that 'Agri Stack' will be the next big thing you will hear coming out of India," she added.

"The world is facing challenges which are reflected in the economy," the Minister said.

Industry will have to look at ways to adapt with newer challenges, she said, adding scale cannot be the only criteria.

Addressing the session on decadal priorities of the global economy, Sitharaman said the government is super-conscious of the acoming generations with debt that is not sustainable.

"In this coming decade, the priority should be to manage finances and borrow for building assets, managing better, but it cannot be (that) such borrowing... leaves the next generation worried," she said. (PTI)

Contd. from Page 1...

Gauhati HC permits abortion

constituted a medical board and a district-level committee in accordance with the MTPA to examine the victim as to whether it would be appropriate to have the unwanted pregnancy terminated, with special emphasis to the risk involved in such a procedure.

The medical board in its report said the girl is "fit to undergo any obstetrical procedure", but refrained from suggesting termination of pregnancy in view of the MTPA.

The HC said, "The court is conscious of the fact that the girl is a minor and she is presently carrying an unwanted pregnancy of more than 26 weeks. The court is also conscious of the fact that at this stage, there is a threat to the life of the victim if termination of pregnancy is carried out at this stage.'

"However, comparing the present situation with the risk that the victim may undergo at the time of delivery at full-term of pregnancy, the risk factor appears to be same at the present stage as well as the risk that would

be involved at the time of delivery at full-term of pregnancy," it added. Referring to a Supreme Court judgment in April this year related to a similar case in Maharashtra, the Gauhati HC said it has the power to order the medical termination of pregnancy under Article 226 of the Constitution

"...the Court is of the considered opinion that this is a fit case for ordering MTP i.e. Medical Termination of Pregnancy of an unwanted foetus which would be in the best interest of the victim 'X' in view of her minor-

"As the medical termination of pregnancy would be carried out in terms of the order of this court, it goes without saying that the penal provision of the Medical Termination of Pregnancy Act, 1971 and Rules framed thereunder would not be attracted." it added. Accordingly, the court directed to constitute a team of expert medical practitioners to undertake the medical

termination of the pregnancy of the minor at a facility in Tinsukia or at Assam Medical College and Hospital in neighbouring Dibrugarh district at state expenditure. "The district authorities shall also take the help of a counsellor for the minor so as to assist her in mental

preparation to undergo the procedure as well as post counselling if so required," it added. The order also noted that the parents and victim expressed their consent for a medical termination of the un-

wanted pregnancy knowing about the risks involved in the procedure. (PTI)

issue. But in the upcoming Panchayat polls, he must have to give at least 250 tickets to candidates desiring to fight the election from his party. The Sivasagar MLA will then understand the complexity of the whole process.

to one place; however, alliance talks can be discussed only after the Panchayat polls. He said, "I guess Akhil Gogoi must be very busy in his constituency due to the upcoming Panchayat election.

Meanwhile, Borah also said that Congress will hold a three-day meeting to review the debacle in the recently

He said, "We will have a thorough discussion in Guwahati on December 13th, 14th, and 15th, and the officer bearers from the block and district will attend a meeting. We will gather firsthand accounts of the five seats that were lost in the recently ended by-election. After our review discussion, I will be able to explain why the

"The number of seats Congress wants to fight for must be decided by Congress. They postpone these matters until the election dates are set, and they then assign their candidates to the majority of the seats at the last

Govt begins 12-day programme

has transformed the education sector through improved infrastructure, new institutions and initiatives like 'Gunotsav'. Dear students, as the Amrit Peedhi, you must strive to fulfil Prime Minister Narendra Modi's vision of a developed nation by 2047," Sarma said.

As part of the '12 Days of Development' programme, the government will distribute a relief package worth ₹ 223 crore to over 78,000 borrowers under the microfinance loan waiver scheme, ₹ 353.37 crore to more than 6.86 lakh disaster-affected families as reconstruction and livelihood aid, and ₹ 21.9 crore to 6,490 self-help groups (SHGs) to support their food processing units. (PTI)

Five years of CAA passage

Indian citizenship to immigrants who came to Assam between January 1, 1966 and March 25, 1971. The Citizenship (Amendment) Act, 2019 (CAA) seeks to provide Indian citizenship to Hindus, Jains, Christians, Sikhs, Buddhists, and Parsis entering India on or before December 31, 2014 from Bangladesh, Pakistan and Afghanistan after five years of residence here.

The Centre on March 11 this year implemented the CAA by notifying the rules, four years after the law was passed by Parliament to fast-track citizenship for undocumented non-Muslim immigrants. The AASU leaders and supporters criticised the BJP government and said the organisation would continue

their protests against the CAA till it is abolished. After the Rajya Sabha passed the Citizenship (Amendment) Bill on December 11, 2019, the state had erupted in uncontrolled protests, in which agitators engaged in pitch battles with security forces in almost every major city or town, forcing the administration to impose curfew in several towns and cities.

During violent protests, three rail stations, post office, bank, bus terminus, shops, dozens of vehicles, and many other public properties were set ablaze or totally damaged in different parts of the state. (PTI)

CBI files chargesheets

amount in the company, the CBI alleged in the charge-sheet. "Subsequently, the deposits were allegedly misappropriated, causing a total fraud of approximately ₹ 5.14 crore and affecting around 2,600 victims, primarily from Assam," the CBI Spokesperson said in a statement.

The actions of AJRS Marketing Pvt. Ltd allegedly constituted illegal trading without requisite permissions from the Securities and Exchange Board of India (SEBI) and the Reserve Bank of India (RBI), the CBI has alleged. "The chargesheet has been filed within 90 days of the arrest of the two accused (Roy and Dutta). They are presently lodged in the judicial custody in this case," the statement said. The agency had registered the case on October 14 as one of the 41 cases referred by the Assam Government

under online trading scam. "The complaint alleged a surge in fraudulent trading apps and companies operating in Assam, which misled the public with promises of high returns. The entities allegedly swindled crores of rupees from investors, causing

significant financial harm," it said. Main accused Gopal Paul, director of AJRS Marketing Private Limited,

was also arrested by the CBI in this case on November 12 and is presently under judicial custody, it said. (PTI)

Bhupen Borah takes jibe

According to the Congress president, the grand old party is always in favour of uniting all opposition forces

Once the polls are over, we might have a discussion on opposition alliance.' concluded by-election in the state.

bypolls could not yield our expected results. To recall, Akhil Gogoi has previously stated that a coalition with the Congress party could only be formed if the seat-sharing agreement was finalized well in advance of the elections.

with 3.59 times subscription. (PTI) Proposed 35% GST on products will fuel illicit trade: Studies

est level of convenience and service.

HT Bureau
GUWAHATI, Dec 11: Recent

among many others" it stated.

studies have proposed that the 35% GST slab on high-tax products like tobacco and aerated drinks is counterproductive and poses serious risks to India's economy, employment, and tobacco control efforts.

High taxes on cigarettes will

push consumers towards cheaper,

illicit alternatives and will give fuel to the smuggled market, the studies suggested. India's legal cigarette industry, which makes up only 10% of overall tobacco consumption but con-

tributes 80% of tobacco tax

revenue, is under threat from high taxes and a growing illicit trade. Cigarette tax hikes have been significant, with excise rates increasing by a CAGR of 15.7% between 2012-2017, followed by hikes of 20% in 2017, 13% in

2020, and 16% in 2023. This aggressive taxation has made legal cigarettes unaffordable, driving consumers to the smuggled market



India now has the fourth-largest illicit cigarette market, costing the government an estimated ₹21,000 crore annually, with the total illegal tobacco market valued at over 30,000 crore, the studies

According to studies by Euromonitor International and Alvarez & Marsal (2024), in India, 90% of tobacco consumers can afford products in the $\stackrel{?}{\sim} 0.50$ to $\stackrel{?}{\sim} 4$ per unit range, making them opt out of highly-taxed products in favour of lower-quality cheap to-

The growth of smuggled cigarettes has reduced demand for Indian-grown tobacco, causing job losses and a decline in farmer income. From 2013 to 2023, the decline in tobacco production resulted in a loss of 238 million man-days of employment.

Tobacco contributes over ₹ 72,000 crore in tax revenue (2022-23) and ₹ 12,000 crore in foreign exchange (2023-24). According to ASSOCHAM, the

sector adds ₹ 17 lakh crore to India's economy, including its direct and indirect contributions. The majority of tobacco consumed in India (68%) comes from the unorganized sector, which pays

or evasion, making regulation difficult. The legal cigarette industry and a small portion of bidi and smokeless segments fall under the organized sector. Even within these segments, tax-paying manufactur-

little to no tax due to exemptions

non-compliant players. Tobacco leaves are taxed under GST's reverse charge mechanism, but non-FCV tobaccos, used in bidis and smokeless products,

ers are disadvantaged compared to

often evade regulation. Regulating these tobaccos like FCV tobaccos would help bring them fully under the tax net.

Case registered in kidnapping and murder case

THURSDAY, DECEMBER 12, 2024

HT Correspondent
HOJAI, Dec 11: In a follow-up investigation into the kidnapping and murder of Vijay Chouhan, 28, from Rampurbasti, Hojai, the police have registered Case No 362/2024 at the Hojai police station.

It is important to note that Chouhan was abducted on December 5, and a ransom demand of ₹50 lakhs was made on December 6 by one of the abductors. His body was subsequently recovered from Sambao, a remote area in the Dima Hasao district, under the jurisdiction of the Dayangmukh police sta-

In connection with this case, the police have arrested four individuals: Samwel Bathari, a resident of Kheroni with a prior criminal record; Krishna Rai, also known as Rocky, from Langting and suspected to be the ransom caller; Robin Langthasa, a resident of Lalmati in Kaki; and Montu Lal Kheresa, who resides in

HT Correspondent

JORHAT, Dec 11: The North-East

Affected Area Development Soci-

ety (NEADS), a grassroots devel-

opment NGO based in

Dhekiakhowa, in association with

Assam Women's University

(AWU), Jorhat, organised a "Peo-

ple's Seminar" to commemorate

International Human Rights Day.

The event was held at the Con-

A unanimous resolution to

strengthen grassroots actions and

foster collaboration among legal

professionals, media, academia,

and civil society to uphold human

Dibrugarh's Reeme

Bordoloi shines with

Rank 15 in APSC CCE

A Correspondent
DIBRUGARH, Dec 11: Reeme

Bordoloi from Dibrugarh has

achieved a remarkable milestone

by securing Rank 15 in the Assam

Police Service category in the

the district, with residents of Amollapatty North celebrating her

Her success has brought pride to

Reeme is the daughter of Bhaba

Bordoloi, who

expressed their

immense joy at

her accomplish-

messages and

good wishes has

Nanda Bordoloi and Binu Devi

poured in from her community,

lauding her dedication and perse-

verance. Reeme, who credits her

success to hard work, consistency,

self-belief, and the support of her

family and well-wishers, has an

impressive academic and profes-

sional background. She completed

her HSLC at Little Flower School,

Dibrugarh, her Higher Secondary

at Salt Brook Academy, Dibrugarh,

and earned a B.E. in Electrical En-

prepare for the state civil services.

Her relentless efforts have culmi-

nated in this significant achieve-

ment, making her an inspiration for

APSC CCE-2023.

achievement.

ference Hall of NEADS on Tues-

Officials aim for zero accident fatalities DRSC holds meeting to enhance road safety measures

HT Bureau
GUWAHATI, Dec 11: District Road Safety Committee (DRSC) on Wednesday conducted a meeting with a focus to enhance road

safety measures in Dima Hasao. The meeting was chaired by District Commissioner (DC) Simanta Kumar, where road safety issues and the enhancement of coordination among various departments were discussed to ensure the safety and well-being of the district's residents.

During the meeting, Kumar gave clear directions for improving road safety.

Apart from this, key matters such as resolutions, discussions on shortcomings, and identifying vulnerable areas were undertaken. Responsibilities were assigned to various departments and officers to ensure the effective implementa-

NEADS and AWU host seminar on

International Human Rights Day



The authorities have outlined several specific directives aimed at ensuring the safety and well-being of residents within Dima Hasao district. Specific directives included, regular frisking operations

along highways, particularly on roads leading to Falcon Festival which will consist of manned barricades and the reintroduction of night checking to enhance security

The seminar featured engaging

discussions, with attendees sharing

their perspectives on critical issues

such as gender equality, the rights

of indigenous communities, and

the impact of climate change on

of NEADS, expressed his grati-

Tirtha Prasad Saikia, director

vulnerable populations.

REGION

All picnic parties are required to adhere to issued guidelines. Drivers accompanying picnic-goers will undergo checks for alcohol consumption. Authorities have committed to achieving zero fatalities related to road accidents within Dima Hasao district. A reassessment of the operation of large night buses within Dima Hasao will be undertaken.

Kumar further emphasised the importance of these measures in preventing road accidents and ensuring the safety of all road users. concluded The meeting solemnly resolve to implement the discussed measures promptly and effectively.

The meeting was attended by ADC Illias Ahmed ACS, SP incharge Dinesh kumar IPS, additional SP Faruque Ahmed APS, assistant commissioner Kankan Saikia and other officials.

Minor girl assaulted

HT Correspondent
MARGHERITA, Dec 11: A
heinous incident of sexual assault has taken place in Margherita Co-District where a 13-year-old minor girl was allegedly molested by her grandfather.

The incident occurred on Tuesday at around 8:00 pm at Namdang Colliery under Margherita Police

The alleged person has been identified as Prakash Lama (44).

'The incident occurred when his father Prakash Lama and her daughter were at home and by taking advantage of our absence my father allegedly molested my daughter multiple times after that local people informed Margherita police Prakash Lama was brought to Margherita Police station," said the victim's mother.

In this regard, a case has been registered under BNS 65 Clause 1 RW section 4/8 POCSO Act at Margherita police station and the accused was produced before the court. After appearing before the Margherita sub-judicial magistrate, Lama was sent to judicial custody in Tinsukia.

Meanwhile, local people of Namdang Colliery are demanding capital punishment for the accused.

Assam Rifles observes **Human Rights Day**



HT Correspondent **BISWANATH CHARIALI, Dec** 11: Assam Rifles observed Human Rights Day with an event at Assam Rifles High School, Lokra, stated a press release.

The program was held on Tuesday, and aimed to raise awareness about fundamental human rights among students and educators.

A total of 53 participants, including 42 students, 9 teachers, and 2 Assam Rifles personnel, attended the event. The program featured engaging discussions and interactive sessions, emphasising the importance of human rights and fostering a sense of responsibility and awareness among the at-

Assam Rifles reiterated its dedication to promoting education and social values, leaving a positive impact on young minds and strengthening its ties with the com-

Train cancellations and frequency reductions due to fog: NFR



HT Bureau
GUWAHATI, Dec 11: In view of the upcoming foggy season, Northeast Frontier Railway (NFR) has cancelled and has also brought down the frequency of trains as precautionary measure to ensure passenger safety and operational efficiency, an official statement said on Wednesday.

The cancelled trains are Train No. 15903 (Dibrugarh - Chandigarh) Express: Cancelled every Monday and Friday until February 28, 2025. Train No. 15904 (Chandigarh - Dibrugarh) Express: cancelled every Wednesday and Sunday until March 2, 2025. Train No. 15620 (Kamakhya -Gaya) Express: cancelled every Monday until February 24, 2025. Train No. 15619 (Gaya - Kamakhya) Express: cancelled every Fuesday until February 25, 2025. Train No. 15621 (Kamakhya – Anand Vihar Terminal) Express: cancelled every Thursday until February 27, 2025. Train No. 5622 (Anand Vihar Terminal -Kamakhya) Express: Cancelled every Friday until February 28,

Frequency reduction of train services are Train No. 12505 (Kamakhya – Anand Vihar Terminal) Northeast Express: Cancelled every Sunday and Wednesday until

January 8, 2025. Train No. 12506 (Anand Vihar Terminal - Kamakhya) Northeast Express: Cancelled every Tuesday and Friday until January 10, 2025. Train No. 15483 (Alipurduar – Delhi) Sikkim Mahananda Express: Cancelled every Wednesday and Saturday until January 8, 2025. Train No. 15484 (Delhi – Alipurduar) Sikkim Mahananda Express: Cancelled every Friday and Monday until January 10, 2025. Train No. 12523 (New Jalpaiguri - New Delhi) Express: Cancelled every Tuesday until February 25, 2025. Train No. 12524 (New Delhi - New Jalpaiguri) Express: Cancelled every Wednesday until February 26, 2025. Train No. 15909 (Dibrugarh - Lalgarh Jn.) Avadh Assam Express: Cancelled every Saturday until February 22, 2025. Train No. 15910 (Lalgarh Jn. – Dibrugarh) Avadh Assam Express: Cancelled every Tuesday until February 25, 2025.

Passengers are advised to check for updates and plan their travels accordingly.

Foggy weather during winter months, often leads to reduced visibility, posing challenges for train operations, resulting into delays due to speed restrictions and potential safety risks.

Assam govt begins 12-day programme to dole out benefits of schemes

GUWAHATI, Dec 11: Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma launched a 12-day programme on Wednesday to distribute grants, assistance, and scholarships under various schemes across the state.

On the first day, scooters under the Dr Banikanta Kakati Merit Award as part of the Pragya Bharti scheme, cash prizes under the Anundoram Borooah Award, and bicycles through the chief minister's special scheme were distributed in Guwahati and Jorhat, benefiting students from Kamrup Metropolitan, Kamrup, and Jorhat districts.

"Starting today, Team Assam will embark on a 12-day journey to visit people and distribute grants and assistance under various schemes. This period will ensure fi-

nancial and moral supsections of our society," Sarma said while launching the pro-Lakhs of people will

get welfare benefits in the coming days under different schemes, beginning this special period with appreciation to thousands of meritorious students. added.

On the first day, 45,226 students from the three districts were given cash awards and two-wheelers

The scheme will benefit 26,969 Class 10 students who secured 75 per cent marks with cash benefits, 48,673 Class 12 students with scooters, and 3,23,640 Class 9 students with bicycles across the state.

"The Government of Assam has transformed the education sector through improved infrastructure, new institutions and initiatives like 'Gunotsav'. Dear students, as the Amrit Peedhi, you must strive to fulfil Hon'ble Prime Minister Narendra Modi's vision of a developed nation by 2047," Sarma said.

As part of the '12 Days of Development' programme, the government will distribute a relief package worth ₹ 223 crore to over 78,000 borrowers under the microfinance loan waiver scheme. ₹ 353.37 crore to more than 6.86 lakh disaster-affected families as reconstruction and livelihood aid, and ₹ 21.9 crore to 6,490 self-help groups (SHGs) to support their

College, Guwahati. Gita from Lord Krishna during the Mahabharata After working for five years in an automobile company in Gureach of the LACs. gaon, Haryana, Reeme decided to

tees, including Narad Upadhyaya, Damodar Baral, Punya Nirola, Meghashyam Sarma, Purna Kumar Sarma, Homnath Dhakal, Bhim Prasad Ghimire, Madhusudhan Baral, Lila Kanta Sarma, and Agni

According to a press note from NEADS, the event featured several

was adopted at the seminar.

prominent speakers, including Hemen Borah, president of the Jorhat Bar Association; Dibyajyoti Sharma, a senior journalist; and Bijay Gogoi, a faculty member at AWU. The speakers highlighted the challenges and opportunities in promoting human rights, particuarly within the diverse and vulnerable communities of the state and the region.

Hemen Borah emphasised the pivotal role of the legal fraternity in ensuring justice and upholding

ginalised groups. Dibyajyoti Sharma, drawing from his extensive experience in journalism, emphasised the media's responsibility in exposing human rights violations and amplifying the voices of the unheard. He urged journalists to remain committed to their pursuit of truth and justice. Bijay Gogoi underscored the

the rule of law, especially for mar-

role of academia in fostering human rights education and raising awareness among young people. He emphasised the importance of inclusive policies and research-driven solutions to address the socioeconomic disparities that hinder

tude to all participants and collaborators, stating, "Human rights are fundamental to a just society, and through people's platforms like this seminar, we aim to build awareness and inspire collective action to safeguard these rights for all."

De-siltation work of DTP drain to be completed by March: Patra

HT Correspondent

DIBRUGARH, Dec 11: The desiltation of Dibrugarh Town Protection (DTP) drain has started recently, and it will be completed by March, said DMC Mayor Dr Saikat

'We have started the de-siltation of DTP drain from December 7. The cleaning has going on using super sukar and other technologies. The cleaning started from zero point to Laluka which spans 5.1 km. We have set a target that before 15 March 2025 the work should be completed," Patra said on Wednes-

Patra said that the cleaning started from zero point to Laluka which spans 5.1 km, adding, "We

have set a target that before 15 March 2025 the work should be completed." Dibrugarh Municipal Corporation (DMC) has initiated the cleaning of the DTP drain in in the district.

In the first phase, the work involves the removal of approximately 30,000 cubic meters of silt and debris. The drain, measuring an average depth of 1 meter and a length of 5,000 meters is being cleaned in the first phase.

The cleaning process is being carried out using advanced equipment, including super suckers, poclains, and barges, depending on the convenience and requirements of each section.

"The entire drain cleaning proj-

ect is expected to be completed by March 2025," the officials added. The Dibrugarh Town Protection

(DTP) drain a crucial storm water drainage system spanning 9.5 km has failing to flush out rain water from the town because of illegal encroachment and dumping of garbage and plastic in the drain.

This year, Dibrugarh town have faced severe waterlogging problem and as a result the town was under water for several days.

"If the proper cleaning of the drain will done then the waterlogging problem will be solve to some extent. We have also started cleaning of narrow drains in all the wards using mini-super sucker," Patra concluded.

devotion at Samar Dalani

HT Correspondent
BISWANATH CHARIALI, Dec 11: Geeta Jayanti was observed with a Gita oration program at the Sri Sri Laxmi Narayan Temple premises in Samar Dalani on Wednesday.

As part of the celebration, 20 devotees recited the Gita to commemorate the occasion, followed by 'nam kirtan' performed by the local women's society. The day marks the occasion when Ariuna first heard the hymns of the

gineering from Assam Engineering

The event saw the participation of several devo-Prasad Dulal, among others.

Geeta Jayanti observed with Draft panchayat electoral rolls published

HT Correspondent

JORHAT, Dec 11: Along with the rest of the state, the Jorhat district administration as per the directive of the State Election Commission on Wednesday published the draft electoral rolls of the district for the ensuing panchayat elections.

Addressing newspersons at the DC's conference hall today evening, Jorhat district development commissioner Rajiv Roy stated that the total number of panchayat voters was 603242, out of which male -293957, and female-309285. Roy said that after the delimitation process, the number of ZPCs is 16 from the earlier 19 and total number of Gaon Panchayats is 86 from the earlier 90 and the number of Anchalik Panchayats is 6.

The DDC said that the 16 ZPCs are spread across four Assembly constituencies in the district with four ZPCs in

"The hard copy of the electoral rolls would be available at the respective block and GP offices from December 14," DDC said.

Roy said that claims and objections related to the rolls could be filed from December 14 to 21, with the final electoral rolls scheduled to be published on December 28.

Educates students on responsible social media use and online safety

BTR organises cyber security awareness campaign for students

HT Correspondent KOKRAJHAR, Dec 11: Bodo

Territorial Region (BTR) organised an innovative awareness campaign titled "The Impacts of Social Media and Cyber Security Threats for Students" at Kokrajhar Girls' Higher Secondary School on Wednesday.

This pioneering initiative, led by the BTR, aims to educate students and the younger generation about the responsible use of social media and the potential risks associated with cybercrime.

During the inauguration of the campaign, BTR executive member for Information and Public Relations, Dr Nilut Swargiary, urged students to use mobile phones and the internet wisely, acknowledging both their advantages and potential hazards. He also highlighted the importance of guiding the younger generation in the right direction through such awareness cam-

"This initiative reflects the BTR Government's commitment to providing students with opportunities



and guidance under the dynamic leadership of CEM Pramod Boro," he stated

"The BTR Government is dedicated to building a strong human resource base, as persistent effort is a key to eliminating poverty and achieving progress," he added.

Dr Swargiary also informed that the campaign would be conducted across all five districts of the BTR within this month.

He praised the remarkable achievements of students, particularly the girls who secured top positions in the recently declared APSC CCE results. He encouraged students to persevere with determination, emphasizing that clarity of goals, hard work, and resilience are essential for overcoming challenges and achieving success.

In his address, joint secretary Ractim Buragohain encouraged students to practice conscious control over their thoughts and reactions, enabling them to make informed decisions in both the digital realm and their personal lives. The program included valuable

insights from several experts, in cluding Prof Pranab Kumar Singh of CIT, Kokrajhar, and DSP Madhu Kakoti, who spoke on cyber safety and social media usage. They emphasised the importance of maintaining a secure digital presence and the critical need for students to stay vigilant online. The program was conducted by the adviser of SEED, BTR, Ranjan K Baruah. Earlier, in his welcome address,

Zahid Ahmed Tapadar, RO cum CHD of BTR IPRD, stressed the importance of integrating the lessons learned from the campaign into daily life to foster responsible digital behavior.

It is notable that this is the first time in Assam that a government department has undertaken such an initiative for students, making it a unique and groundbreaking effort. No other Sixth Scheduled Council or the State Government has introduced such a comprehensive program aimed at equipping students with the skills necessary to navigate the digital world safely.

ATTSA issues one month ultimatum for the reparation of road



HT Correspondent MARGHERITA, Dec 11: Assam

Tea Tribes Student Association (ATTSA) Margherita branch committee has issued one month deadline to both BJP led government at the Union and state for the repair of the dilapidated Dirok-Deomali road of Margherita at the earliest.

A delegation of ATTSA team led by its central executive committee and joint publicity secretary Pranjal Baraik, Margherita branch committee secretary Manoj Tanti, organising secretary Meshor Baraik, Mahesh Nand executive member Tinsukia district committee along with other members and

local residents were present during the time of inspection of Dirok-Deomali road on Wednesday.

The delegation raised concerns over the BJP-led government at both state and union levels for failing to address the current issue.

The 15-kilometer stretch, which serves as a vital trade link between Assam and Arunachal Pradesh has remained neglected for over two decades significantly hampering commerce and daily commuters.

Speaking to the media, Pranjal ighlighted the plight of the road which connects Margherita Tea Estate Tiniali in Assam to Deomali in Arunachal Pradesh.

Despite serving a population of over 30,000; the road has seen no substantial repair efforts. Pranjal criticised Margherita

BJP MLA Bhaskar Sharma, Dibru-

garh MP and Union minister Sar-

bananda Sonowal, Rajya Sabha

MP and Union minister Pabitra Margherita for their lack of action on the matter. Pranjal further noted that repeated memorandums submitted to Margherita MLA Bhaskar Sharma, former Dibrugarh MP and Union minister Rameshwar Teli and the

sioners have gone unanswered. "This neglect has made life difficult for students, workers, traders, pregnant women, and others who rely on this road for daily transit." he added.

Margherita co-district commis-

He accused the BJP-led government of remembering the Tea Tribes only during elections for votes, stating, "This negligence will not be tolerated anymore".

Pranjal further threatened that if the sought demands are not met, ATTSA will block road permanently disrupting all movement indefinitely.

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QUOTE OF THE DAY

Not knowing anything is the sweetest life. - Sophocles

Impeachment notice against VP

n an unprecedented move in the parliamentary history of India, the opposition INDIA bloc submitted a notice on December ▲ 10 at the Rajya Sabha Secretary General P.C. Modi's office sought removal of the Chairperson of the Upper House, the Vice-President of India Jagdeep Dhankhar, alleging him of conducting proceedings of the House in an "extremely biased" manner. Union Minister for Parliamentary Affairs Kiren Rijiju on December 11, during his address in the House, said, "We will not allow this." Amidst uproar in the House during Centre-Opposition faceoff, Rajya Sabha was adjourned for the day. Given the adamant attitudes of both the ruling establishment and the opposition, one can't but think that the issue may overshoot to a hazardous level having far reaching legal and political implications for the country. Since the NDA has a majority in the Rajya Sabha, it can defeat the impeachment motion, if taken in the House for consideration, but the debate can impact politics in the country in a way that can impact the political fortune of the ruling establishment. The immediate background of the joint move of the opposition INDIA bloc has enough indication of that. The opposition has been demanding discussion on the Adani issue alleging that the Union Government is protecting the friend of PM Narendra Modi at the cost of public money and the interest of the people.

The Opposition's six-point chargesheet notice was signed by not only the Congress but other opposition political parties too. Therefore, Kiren Rijiju's attack on only Congress over the impeachment notice, calling the allegations against the Chair baseless is not enough. Whatever may be the outcome of the impeachment notice, most likely to be defeated on account of the majority of NDA in the House, if taken for consideration. Kiren Rijiju's statements suggest that it would not be taken for consideration at all, and in that case when the winter session of the Parliament will end on December 20, the notice for removal would expire automatically. Nevertheless, it will have serious implications on National politics, since the move would exert great pressure on the Vice-President who holds a significant role in the national political hierarchy, being only second in line to the presidency, and as Chairman of the Rajya Sabha.

There six-point chargesheet puts the narrative straightforward: Leaving aside Mr Dhankhar's constant interruptions whenever opposition MPs attempt to speak, the Chairperson had also repeatedly denied legitimate requests made by the Leader of the Opposition in the Rajya Sabha Mallikarjun Kharge to "intervene and rebut falsehoods propagated by Prime Minister Narendra Modi, and the Leader of the House and BJP President J P Nadda. A serious charge against Dhankhar is that he had taken it upon himself to be an "impassioned spokesperson" of the Union government's policies while criticising the opposition MPs' viewpoints if "contrary of oppose the position of the ruling government." The Executive's influence through Vice-President over the legislative process in the Rajya Sabha has come under question, especially when Vice-President aligned himself with the ruling RSS family. India can't compromise with the neutrality of legislative processes and the chairman of the House. Procedural change in such cases is imperative.

Government data given in Rajya Sabha conceals frightening unemployment

he data given by the Union Ministry of State for Labour and Employment Shobha Karandlaje in a written reply in Rajya Sabha on December 5, 2024 conceals the frightening ground level reality of unemployment in India. The pattern is simple first various government agencies produce data portraying rosy picture on employment front, and the Centre goes on repeating this, and the propaganda is so loud that it drowns the desperate voices of the unemployed.

Centre highlighted that worker population ratio rose, unemployment rate dropped, and formalization of jobs that is quality jobs had risen. The data were taken from the annual Periodic Labour Force Survey (PLFS) 2023-24, Annual Survey of Unincorporated Sector Enterprises (ASUSE) (2022-23), and the KLEMS (Capital, Labour, Energy, Materials, and Services) database by the Reserve Bank of India (RBI). All the databases were already convincingly suspicious, and were sufficiently refuted in the past by many analysts.

The reply further mentioned the government announcement in the Budget 2024-25, referring the Prime Minister's package of 5 schemes and initiatives to facilitate employment, skilling and other opportunities for 4.1 crore youth over a 5-year period with a central outlay of Rs. 2 lakh crores, without mentioning how much progress has already been achieved since there is little progress in these schemes, even though the budget exercises have already begun for the next financial year 2025-26, which will be tabled within less than two months on February 1, 2025.

The propaganda machine of the government is busy in protecting the image of the Prime Minister of India Narendra Modi especially regarding his promises fulfilled. Everybody knows his promise of 'work for every hand' made during election campaigns in 2014, which was later interpreted 2 crore jobs every year, since that much number of people were estimated joining in India's workforce every year. The data now given in the Rajya Sabha refers to RBI's KLEMS provisional data 2023-24, which said employment in the country increased to 64.33 crore in 2023-24 compared to 47.15 crore in 2014-15. Total increase in employment during 2014-15 to 2023-24 was about 17.18 crore, the Union Ministry of Labour said.

It was during 2024 Lok Sabha election, the Labour Secretary of Union Ministry of Labour and Employment has said that the an increase in employment. PM Modi had also claimed the same, and the reality came to light when the RBI data wars released on July 8. RBI's data was found to be questionable. In the year 2014-15 we had 471.46 mil-

lion employed persons, which rose to 472.04 million in 2015-16. For the year 2016-17, when millions **MSMEs** were closed and most of them reduced

their operation

up to 75 per cent

after the demon-

vember 2016, and millions of workers lost their jobs, the RBI data showed 1.2 per cent increase in employment

which increased to 473.2 **DEGREE OF THOUGHT** For the year, 2017-18, when even NSSO data

showed 45 years high unemployment rate at 6.1 per cent, the RBI data showed that employment increased by 1.8 per cent to 475 million. For the year 2018-19, RBI data on employment showed a jump of 17.6 per cent to 492.6 million. In 2019-20, RBI data showed a jump in employment be 41.8 per cent that rose to 534.4 million. The more mysterious RBI data came for 2020-21, the vear of the lockdown and COVID-19 crisis when the entire economy came to a halt. RBI data said that employment jumped to 31.2 per cent for that year and it reached to 565.6 million. The next COVID-19 crisis year was 2021-22, and the RBI data showed 11.9 per cent jump in employment which reached to 577.5 million. For 2022-23 the data showed 19.2 per cent jump to 596.7 million, and for 2023-24 the jump was 46.7 per cent to 643.3 million. This obviously suspicious RBI data has again been given in the Rajya Sabha to

It is also a well-known fact that by 2017-18, unemployment rate rose to 6.1 per cent which was 45 years high, which was leaked followed by resignation of officials of National Statistics Office alleging suppression of the data. The data was finally released by the government after 2019 election. The Centre had changed the labour data collection

show a rosy picture on employment front.

facing severe criticism on rise of unemployment. PLFS produces two sets of data – one is on usual status basis, and the other is on Current Weekly Status (CWS) basis. The data on usual status basis is largely

> machinery since it is al ways much ower than the unemployment rate calculated on the CWS basis. The data

Rajya Sabha referring Worker Population Ratio (WPR) also said, "employment during the last 7 years including COVID period has in-

By: Dr. Gyan Pathak per cent in 2023-24. During the same period, Unemployment Rate (UR) on usual status for persons of age 15 years and above has de-

creased from 46.8 per

cent in 2017-18 to 58.2

creased from 6.0% to 3.2%. The fact is PLFS 2023-24 wraps up disturbing level of India's labour market distortion. For the year 2023-24 the unemployment rate on CWS basis was 4.9 per cent and the proportion of unemployed in population was 2.1 per cent. Government's propaganda ma-

chine does not talk this higher level of unem-

ployment but they always use usual status

lower level of employment. Further, PLFS 2023-24 shows that 19.4 per cent people were counted as employed who were actually helping in the household enterprises and were not getting wages at all. Number of such people had risen from 18.3 per cent in 2022-23, and 17.5 per cent in 2021-22. Then there are own account workers, which are about 39 per cent, and most of them are employed in very low earning jobs which are

actually unemployment in disguise. A total of 58.4 per cent of the total employed people in 2023-24 were self-employed. The percentage of self-employed has risen from 55.8 per cent in 2021-22 and 57.3 per cent in 2022-23. It is indicative of the declining job opportunities in the labour market which enforcing people to become either helping hand in household enterprises or own

1991 on December 12 is crucial for the country

amidst lack of social security coverage. Regular wage and salaried jobs have been almost stagnant, the PLFS 2023-24 shows. It was 21.5 per cent in 2021-22, declined to 20.9 per cent in 2022-23, and reached 21.7 per cent in 2023-24. Share of casual labour in the work force was also declining which was 19.8 per cent in 2023-24, but was 21.8 per cent in 2022-23 and 22.7 per cent in 2021-22.

It should also be noted that those who get one hours of paid work in a week are also counted as employed, and also those who out of frustration after not finding job in the market has left searching for jobs. Such is the calibration in producing an inflated employment data and reduced unemployment data.

The Union Ministry of Labour and Employment has also stated in its reply in the Rajya Sabha that as per the available Annual Survey of Unincorporated Sector Enterprises (ASUSE) report, the estimated number of workers has increased to 10.96 crores in 2022-23 from 7.79 crore in 2021-22. It is a sharp increase in low quality jobs. Nevertheless, the reply said that 7 crore net subscribers have joined Employees' Provident Fund Organisation (EPFO) between September 2017 and September 2024 indicating increase in formalisation of the job market.

It is also well known fact that there has been severe shortage of decent jobs in India that prompted Union Government to bring three Employment Linked Schemes in the Budget 2024-25, and very little progress has vet been achieved. EPFO is being in the process of being revamped.

The Union government is therefore in urgent need to take concrete steps for employment generation in the forthcoming budget 2024-25. The promise of providing 'work for all hands' in 2014 must be implemented in right earnest from at least 2025, 11 years after the promise was initially made. Calibration of only data on paper to show rosy picture and image building of the government does not serve the real purpose on the ground

Union Budget 2025-26 must reassess the various programmes intended for employment generation to find out the gaps and take steps including increase in capital expenditure, MGNREGA fund for the rural areas, introducing similar employment guarantee schemes for urban areas, and recognising the service workers and others on honourarium as workers to provide more decent works.

Impact of Syrian developments on oil could Supreme Court hearing on Places of Worship Act extend beyond short term price trends

By: K Raveendran

yria, a relatively minor player in terms of oil production, has emerged as a key player in regional geopolitics. The country's strategic position in the heart of the Middle East, combined with its deepening ties with Russia and Iran, places it at the centre of ongoing tensions. These dynamics are not only significant in terms of regional power struggles but are also influencing the global oil market.

While Syria does not contribute substantially to global oil supply, its role in the broader geopolitical scene, particularly concerning neighbouring Iraq, holds significant implications for oil prices and market stability. As instability in Syria reverberates throughout the region, the potential for spillover into Iraq could drive up geopolitical risk premiums, leading to higher oil prices in the near term.

The latest developments in Syria have already begun to alter the balance of power in the region. Syria's alliance with Iran, in particular, has exacerbated tensions with Western powers and regional players, drawing attention to its potential to influence oil market dynamics. Iran, which faces significant economic and political pressure due to ongoing sanctions, is heavily invested in maintaining its influence in Syria. The axis of cooperation between Russia, Iran, and Syria has created a volatile environment that is influencing broader regional stability, particularly in neighbouring countries such as Iraq.

Iraq, a country that plays a critical role in global oil supply, is deeply affected by the situation in Syria. Iraq produces approximately 4.1 million barrels per day (bpd) of crude oil, making it one of the top producers in the world. The country's northern and western regions, close to Syria, have been particularly vulnerable to instability in Syria. Sectarian tensions, ongoing militia activity, and the presence of various armed groups have created a volatile environment in Iraq that is increasingly influenced by events in Syria. As the situation in Syria continues to evolve, the risk of further destabilization in Iraq remains high. This could have serious consequences for oil production and supply from Iraq, particularly if the northern oil fields or export routes through the Kurdish region are disrupted.

The potential for spillover from Syria into Iraq is a key factor that could drive up the geopolitical risk premium in the global oil market. Any significant disruption to oil



production in Iraq, whether through direct conflict or instability in the region, would have a ripple effect on global oil prices. With oil prices already subject to fluctuations based on geopolitical developments, further tensions in Iraq could push prices higher, as markets price in the risk of supply disruptions. The impact on the oil market could be felt on multiple fronts, from the immediate effects on production and exports to longer-term shifts in market senti-

However, there is an argument to be made that the geopolitical risks associated with the ongoing conflict in Syria might, in the longer term, reduce the geopolitical risk premium in the oil markets. If the power equations in Syria were to become further weakened, there could be a shift in the region's balance of power. A weakened Iranian regime, under significant pressure from both domestic unrest and external sanctions, might seek to de-escalate tensions with the United States and other Western powers. Such a shift could lead to a reduction in the broader geopolitical risks that have fuelled oil price volatility in recent years. In this scenario, a more stable geopolitical environment in the Middle East could help to ease tensions in oil markets, reducing the risk of further supply disruptions and potentially lowering prices in

the medium to long term. Despite the possibility of a longterm reduction in geopolitical risk, the short-term outlook for the oil market remains uncertain. The immediate impact of Syria's ongoing conflict is likely to push up geopolitical premiums, as investors price in the potential for further instability in the region. As oil prices are often highly sensitive to perceived risks in key production regions, the uncertainty surrounding Syria's future trajectory could weigh heavily on market sentiment. The market's ability to absorb shocks from Syria's instability will depend on several factors, including the resilience of Iraq's oil production, the willingness of Iran to engage in negotiations with Western powers, and the broader strategic calculus of regional players like Saudi Arabia, Russia, and the United States.

Any disruption to Iraq's oil pro-

duction could have significant implications for global oil supply, especially as countries like the United States, China, and India continue to rely on Iraqi oil. Iraq's southern oil fields, which account for the majority of the country's production, have generally been more secure than the northern regions. However, the risk of militia activity and sectarian violence in the north, particularly near the Kurdish region, remains high. The possibility of renewed conflict along Iraq's border with Syria, particularly if Kurdish forces are drawn into the conflict, poses a serious risk to the stability of Iraq's oil production. Additionally, any disruptions to Iraq's oil exports through the Turkish Ceyhan pipeline or through the Persian Gulf could send shockwaves through global markets.

The broader implications of Syria's instability extend beyond Iraq. Saudi Arabia and other Gulf producers are closely watching developments in Syria, as the conflict has direct implications for the broader security of the region. The Saudi-led coalition's involvement in the war in Yemen and the country's ongoing rivalry with Iran have compounded the regional uncertainty. Should Syria's conflict escalate further, it could trigger a broader regional conflict, further destabilizing the global oil supply chain. Saudi Arabia, as the world's largest oil exporter, is well positioned to adjust its production in response to any significant supply disruptions, but it cannot fully mitigate the effects of a prolonged regional conflict on oil prices. (IPA

By: Arun Srivastava

t the first glace it does not appear to be ethically legitimate, complying to the judicial practices, that a three-judge bench would have a relook at the verdict of a five-judge bench which while pronouncing the Ayodhya verdict, had approved the law and held that Places of Worship Act is a legislative of Indian polity.

It would have been appropriate to have it examined by a larger bench. Article 145(3) of the Constitution requires a minimum of five judges for cases involving a substantial question of law or the interpretation of the Constitution. Instead of agreeing to hear the petitions, CJI could well have refused to entertain the reauests.

The order of Justice Chandrachud to reopen the Gyanvapi mosque case has forced the CJI Sanjiv Khanna to have a look at the PW Act. Chandrachud's action is certainly questionable as he ordered for opening of the case disregarding the protection of Religious Places of Worship Act, 1991, which prohibits reopening of such cases on the dubious ground that Hindus were not seeking to change the character of Gyanvapi mosque only to determine its religious character.

Chandrachud should have realized the possibility of his order being misused, as is happening now. True enough his order has come handy for the Hindu bigots to create social and religious animosity. They have been using his order to rake up the disputes in Varanasi,

Mathura and many other places. They have virtually been empowered to stake claim on any mosque of being built on

On an earlier occasion, Chandrachud had told a gathering of lawyers after visiting the Dwarka temple in Gujarat that the saffron dhwaj (flag) on the temple stands for the flag of justice. It is beyond comprehension how could he make such remark. Modi's ten year rule has seen spread of Hindutva in the higher judiciary and the legal fraternity. A judge of the Calcutta High Court, on the day of his retirement, revealed his lifelong association with the RSS. Another judge of Calcutta High Court, Abhijit Gangopadhyay, resigned a few weeks before the Lok Sabha election, within a few days became a BJP candidate and was elected to the Lok Sabha.

Only on last Sunday, December 1, Justice Shekhar Kumar Yadav of Allahabad High attended a meeting of the legal cell of the Vishwa Hindu Parishad and delivered a lecture on the Uniform Civil Code (UCC). He said; "The UCC defines the laws in the context of marriage, inheritance, divorce and adoption in any religious community". At the meet the VHP leader went up to alleging that Bangladesh had become a "second Kashmir". The meet called upon Hindus to unite for pro-



ternity for his communal leaning

Obviously, what could a victim from the minority community, who approaches the higher judiciary for justice, expect from him. In yet another case, a two-member bench of the Madhya Pradesh High Court in July had come out with the suggestion that to serve the country one must join the RSS. Modi is for appointing lawyers who are close to RSS as the judges of

Months after the Ayodhya verdict, petitions were filed in SC challenging validity of the law on grounds of being "arbitrary and unreasonable and infringing the fundamental right to practice religion". The petitioners included

A judge of the

Calcutta High

Court, on the day

of his retirement,

association with the

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BJP's Ashwini Upadhyay, Subramanian Swamy and other Hindu organisations seeking to open litigation routes for ownership claims over disputed sites like those at Kashi and Mathura. In all fairness the judges should revealed his lifelong have rejected the pleas. But ironically instead of refusing to entertain they accepted them. which has been primarily responsible for the present situa-

Coming out with the demand to demolish the masjids is unstoppable. This will go on. The hardcore Hindutva forces would continue to file petitions before the police and court and they in turn would order demolition of these mosques, to resurrect the Hindu gods who were buried by the Mughal rulers. This action is part of a well designed conspiracy to terrorise Muslims and be subservient to them. The modus operandi is quite simple. A VHP

or Bajrang Dal cadre or a person claiming to be Hindu will file a complaint. Next day the babus of ASI would confirm the existence of Hindu idol and on the third day the court order for demolition by the police.

It was a court order for survey of Sambhal's Jama Masjid to ascertain whether it was built over a demolished temple that triggered violence in which five persons were shot dead by the police. A mob accompanying the survey

commission was chanting "Jai Shri Ram" at the gate of the Jama Masiid in the presence of the district magistrate and the superintendent of police. Recently, a local court issued notices on a petition from a Delhi-based activist claiming that the 13th-century Ajmer Sharif dargah, a shrine to Sufi saint Khwaja Moin-ud-din Chishti, stands over the ruins of a Shiva temple.

In Sambhal, the local court had ordered the survey on the day the petition was moved, November 19, and the court-appointed surveyors visited the mosque the same afternoon accompanied by district magistrate Rajendra Pensiya and superintendent of police Krishna Kumar. It is indeed mysterious that a local court ordered a survey on the 12th-century dargah of the Sufi saint Khwaja Moinuddin Chishti -- one of the most sacred Sufi sites in Asia not just for Muslims but for all Indians who are proud of our pluralist traditions. The most astonishing has been the petition was based on the research carried out by the petitioner. The court instead of seeking to know his research credentials accepted his submission as truth. The judicial quotient of the judge could be understood from the simple fact that he did not want to confirm the authenticity of the so called research

Justice B.G. Kolse Patil, a retired judge of Bombay High Court accused justice Chandrachud of intellectual dishonesty; "I had opposed the Babri judgment because although people thought the matter was finished, that had indeed opened a Pandora's box.... Justice D.Y. Chandrachud's intellectual dishonesty was seen in his judgment (in the Gyanvapi) case against the 1991 law." If Chandrachud had stuck to the Supreme Court's judgment in relation to the Places of Worship Act, 1991 this nature of political uncertainty and threat of communal backlash should not have arisen.

In this connection observation of senior advocate Sanjay Hedge is quite significant: "The suits in Sambhal and Ajmer ought to have been dismissed at the threshold as being barred under the (1991) Act. However, because of an oral observation by Justice (retired) D.Y. Chandrachud in the Gyanvapi matter, it is thought that the Act, while preventing change of character, does not preclude an inquiry into the nature of that character on August 15, 1947. I think it is frivolous and vexatious to entertain litigation where no ultimate relief can be given." (IPA Service)

The threat of mega dams on Assam's ecology

ENVIRONMENT

By: Himangshu Ranjan Bhuyan

THURSDAY, DECEMBER 12, 2024

The northeastern state of Assam, located in the biodiversity-rich Eastern Himalayas, is an ecologically fragile region that has been facing severe environmental challenges. One of the most significant threats to its ecology today is the construction of mega dams. While dams are often promoted as engines of development, providing hydroelectric power, irrigation, and flood control, the reality is more complex. In Assam, the environmental, social, and economic consequences of building large dams have sparked intense debate, with growing concern over the irreversible damage they may cause to the state's ecosystems and communities.

Assam's geographic position makes it particularly vulnerable to the impacts of mega dams. The Brahmaputra River, one of the world's largest and most dynamic river systems, flows through the state, supporting a rich diversity of life and providing livelihoods for millions of people. This river, along with its tributaries, forms the lifeblood of Assam's agricultural economy and natural ecosystems. However, the river is also notorious for its annual flooding, which can be both destructive and beneficial. The delicate balance of this natural system is threatened by the construction of large dams, which alter water flow, sediment transport, and the overall hydrology

The primary argument in favor of constructing mega dams in Assam and its neighboring states is their potential to generate vast amounts of hydroelectric power. With India's growing energy demands, the government has prioritized hydroelectric projects as part of its strategy for meeting the country's renewable energy goals. The Brahmaputra and its tributaries offer significant hydroelectric potential due to their fast-flowing nature, steep gradients, and consistent water supply from the Himalayan snowmelt and monsoons. Proponents of dams argue that they can provide a clean and renewable energy source, reducing India's dependence on fossil fuels and lowering greenhouse gas emissions.

However, the ecological costs of these dams are immense. The construction of large dams requires the submergence of vast areas of land, leading to the destruction of forests, wetlands, and wildlife habitats. The Brahmaputra River basin, where many of these dams are proposed, is home to a variety of endemic and endangered species, including the Indian rhinoceros, Bengal tiger, Gangetic dolphin, and various migratory bird species. The loss of habitat due to dam construction threatens the survival of these species, many of which are already under pressure from habitat fragmentation, poaching, and other human activi-

ties. Wetlands, which act as critical biodiversity hotspots and natural buffers against floods, are particularly vulnerable to the impacts of dams. When wetlands are submerged or their water supply is altered, the delicate ecosystems they support can collapse, leading

to the loss of plant and animal species. The effects of mega dams on aquatic ecosystems are perhaps the most concerning. Dams disrupt the natural flow of rivers, which has far-reaching consequences for the species that depend on free-flowing water. Fish, in particular, are severely affected by the presence of dams, which block their migratory routes and alter the timing and quantity of water flow. The Brahmaputra River is home to a variety of fish species, many of which undertake long-distance migrations to spawn. These migrations are essential for maintaining healthy fish populations and sustaining the livelihoods of communities that rely on fishing. The construction of dams can prevent fish from reaching their spawning grounds, leading to a decline in fish populations and, ultimately, the collapse of fisheries. This has significant implications not only for biodiversity but also for the food security and economic well-being of local communities.

In addition to disrupting fish migration, dams can also alter the physical characteristics of rivers, such as water temperature, oxygen levels, and sediment transport. The Brahmaputra River carries a large amount of sediment from the Himalayas, which is essential for maintaining the fertility of the floodplains and deltas in Assam. This sediment is deposited during the monsoon season, enriching the soil and supporting agriculture. Dams trap sediment behind their walls, preventing it from reaching downstream areas. Over time, this can lead to a reduction in soil fertility, affecting agricultural productivity and leading to the degradation of ecosystems that depend on nutrient-rich sediments. The reduction in sediment transport also has geomorphological consequences, as the river's ability to shape the landscape is diminished. This can result in increased riverbank erosion downstream, altering the natural flow patterns of the river and causing the displacement of communities living along its banks.

The potential for increased flooding is another significant concern associated with mega dams in Assam. While dams are often touted as a solution to flooding, their actual effectiveness in this regard is debated. Large reservoirs behind dams can store water during periods of heavy rainfall, theoretically reducing the risk of downstream flooding. However, the unpredictability of the monsoon season, combined with the siltation of reservoirs, can limit the effectiveness of dams in controlling floods. In some cases, dam releases during extreme rainfall events can exacerbate flooding downstream, as the sudden release of water adds to already swollen rivers. This has been a concern for many communities living in flood-prone areas of Assam, who fear that the construction of dams will make flooding more unpredictable and severe.

The social impacts of mega dams in Assam are as significant as the ecological ones. The construction of large dams often involves the displacement of thousands of people, many of whom belong to indigenous and marginalized communities. These communities have a deep connection to their land, which is not only a source of livelihood but also of cultural and spiritual significance. When dams are built, vast areas of land are submerged, forcing people to relocate. The process of displacement is often fraught with difficulties, as resettlement programs are rarely able to provide adequate compensation or alternative livelihoods. Displaced communities face the loss of their homes, agricultural land, and access to natural resources, leading to social and economic marginalization. Moreover, the disruption of traditional ways of life can have profound cultural impacts, as displaced communities are often unable to maintain their cultural practices and social structures in new environments.

The construction of dams also raises concerns about the violation of indigenous rights. Many of the areas targeted for dam construction are inhabited by indigenous communities who have lived in these regions for centuries. These communities have developed sustainable ways of managing natural resources, and their knowledge of the local environment is invaluable for biodiversity conservation. However, the voices of these communities are often marginalized in the decision-making process surrounding dam construction. The lack of meaningful consultation and participation in these processes has led to widespread protests and resistance from indigenous groups, who see the construction of dams as a violation of their rights to land, resources, and self-determination. The economic benefits of mega dams are

also called into question when considering the long-term costs of environmental degradation and social disruption. While hydroelectric power can provide a source of revenue and electricity, the economic costs of environmental damage, displacement, and the loss of biodiversity are often overlooked. For example, the decline in fisheries due to dams can have significant economic repercussions for communities that rely on fishing for their livelihoods. Similarly, the loss of agricultural productivity due to reduced sediment transport and altered water flow can affect food security and rural economies. The costs of managing increased riverbank erosion, flooding, and other environmental impacts can also place a burden on local governments and communi-

ties. In many cases, the economic benefits of dams are concentrated among a small group of stakeholders, while the environmental and social costs are borne by the most vulnerable communities.

In recent years, the construction of mega dams in Assam has sparked widespread protests and opposition from civil society groups, environmentalists, and indigenous communities. One of the most controversial projects is the Lower Subansiri Hydroelectric Project, which has been the subject of protests for over a decade. The dam, located on the Subansiri River, a major tributary of the Brahmaputra, has faced opposition due to concerns about its environmental and social impacts. Environmentalists have raised alarm over the potential for the dam to disrupt the river's ecology, affect fish migration, and increase the risk of downstream flooding. Indigenous groups, meanwhile, have protested against the lack of consultation and the potential displacement of communities.

The resistance to mega dams in Assam has also been fueled by concerns about the region's seismic vulnerability. The Eastern Himalayas, where many of these dams are being constructed, is a seismically active region, prone to earthquakes. The construction of large dams in this area increases the risk of dam failures in the event of an earthquake. A dam failure could have catastrophic consequences for communities living downstream, leading to loss of life, property, and environmental damage. The seismic risks associated with dam construction have been a key argument for those opposing these projects, as the potential for disaster outweighs the perceived benefits of hydroelectric power.

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In light of these concerns, there is growing recognition that alternative approaches to water and energy management are needed in Assam. Rather than relying on large-scale infrastructure projects like mega dams, there is increasing interest in exploring decentralized and community-based solutions. Small-scale, run-of-the-river hydroelectric projects, for example, have been proposed as a more sustainable alternative to mega dams. These projects generate electricity without requiring large reservoirs or significant alterations to river flow, minimizing the environmental and social impacts. Community-managed water systems, which prioritize local knowledge and participation, have also been successful in managing water resources sustainably and equitably.

In essence, the construction of mega dams in Assam poses a significant threat to the state's ecology, biodiversity, and communities. While hydroelectric power offers the promise of renewable energy, the environmental and social costs of these projects are immense. Dams disrupt natural ecosystems, displace vulnerable communities, and increase the risk of environmental disasters. In a region as ecologically and culturally rich as Assam, the consequences of these projects could be devastating. As the debate over mega dams continues, it is essential to prioritize sustainable, community-based solutions that protect both the environment and the people who depend on it. (The writer is Editor in Chief of the Assamese E-magazine SAMPROTIK, he can be reached at himangshur1989@gmail.com)

Warming waters could endanger all fish in tropical & subtropical regions, warns UNESCO

By: Himanshu Nitnaware

ising global temperatures could have devastating consequences for marine ecosystems, particularly in tropical and subtropical regions, a UNESCO report has warned. Researchers predict that up to all fish species in these areas may surpass their thermal tolerance limits under the most severe climate change scenario.

This scenario, known as SSP 8.5 or the 'business as usual' pathway, projects a global temperature rise of 4.4°C by the end of the century if greenhouse gas emissions continue to increase at the present rate unchecked.

The findings are part of Engaging Communities to Safeguard Ocean Life report, which underscores the vulnerability of marine species as oceans warm, pushing them beyond their known thermal ranges

Given the current scenario, many species will experience temperatures exceeding their tolerance limits, the report said. It could potentially endanger 10 per cent to 50 per cent of fish species in temperate oceans, which could exceed their thermal thresholds. For example, species in the Tubbataha Reefs and Belize Barrier Reef are already nearing or exceeding their upper thermal limits.

In June this year, UNESCO's State of the Ocean report revealed that ocean temperatures are now rising at twice the rate observed 20 years ago. with 2023 recording one of the sharpest increases since the 1950s. Even species with some capacity to adapt are likely to experience increased stress, affecting their survival and reproductive success, the report said.

eDNA mapping for monitoring marine biodiversity

The findings were presented alongside UN-ESCO's marine biodiversity mapping initiative, which used environmental DNA (eDNA) sampling to identify nearly 4,500 species across 21 World Heritage sites.

The mapping was done over a period of three years considering that climate disruption and ocean warming are shifting marine species into cooler and deeper waters from their natural habitats, said Fanny Douvere, head of world heritage marine programme, addressing a press conference. Only eight per cent of the oceans are protected, Douvere said, emphasising the urgency of protecting the remaining 20 per cent of oceans not yet under protection under the 30x30 initiative. She also called for better understanding and monitoring of species distribution to build resilience. adding that the data would help to protect the marine species being forced away from their natural

UNESCO has developed a standardised, noninvasive eDNA sampling method to create an inventory of marine biodiversity at 21 of its 51 World Heritage marine sites. These sites are home to over a third of the world's vulnerable and endangered marine species and harbour 20 per cent of the planet's blue carbon, including 15 per cent of the global coral reef area.

While eDNA technology has been used before, this marks the first time it has been standardised for monitoring marine biodiversity, Douvere ex-

plained. Volunteers collected 1.5-litre water samples to trace genetic information from an average of 100 marine species per sample.

Marine organisms leave traces of DNA in their environment through skin cells, excrement and saliva. By filtering the water samples, researchers were able to extract genetic information about marine species

As many as 250 volunteers from 19 countries identified 4,406 species, including 2,078 fish species, 86 shark species, 28 mammals and three turtles. Of these, 120 were classified as vulnerable, endangered, or critically endangered on the International Union for Conservation of Nature Red List. The Ningaloo Coast in Australia yielded the highest number of species identified, with 787 species recorded, including 340 fish and 24 threatened species.

The report also highlighted the detection of rare becies, such as the white-spotted guitarfish (Rhynchobatus australiae) in Australia's Ningaloo and Shark Bay and the giant guitarfish (Rhynchobatus djiddensis) in South Africa's iSimangal-Wetland Park.Commerson's dolphin

(Cephalorhynchus commersonii) was found in France's French Austral Lands and Seas World Heritage site.

Early warnings and challenges

In addition to biodiversity, the eDNA method also provided early warnings of invasive species. For example, the presence of invasive lionfish at the Belize Barrier Reef Reserve System was confirmed, enabling local management teams to take preventive action before irreversible damage to the local ecosystems.

"As an example, UNESCO eDNA Expeditions sampling in Belize successfully confirmed the presence of invasive lionfish at the Belize Barrier Reef Reserve System World Heritage site. Although lionfish are already well established in the Caribbean Sea, this documented sensitivity of eDNA monitoring makes it a promising tool for tracking their spread. Indeed, this potential was recognised by local management at the Brazilian Atlantic Islands: Fernando de Noronha and Atol das Rocas World Heritage site," the report noted.

However, the method has limitations, including biases and variations across taxonomic groups. The report noted failures in detecting species of Requiem sharks of the family Carcharhinidae, such as the oceanic whitetip shark (Carcharhinus longimanus), the Pondicherry shark (Carcharhinus hemiodon) and the Ganges shark (Glyphis gangeticus).

Success in identifying species depended heavily on water quality as well. Tropical sites with clearer waters generally yielded more species than nontropical locations. "Turbid waters posed additional issues, resulting in the need to repeat the sampling at some locations, such as the Wadden Sea World Heritage site (Denmark, Germany, Kingdom of the Netherlands)," the findings observed.

The report concluded that it remains unclear how well marine species can adapt to warming oceans. "As ocean temperatures rise, species that cannot adapt or migrate face the risk of extinction, leading to a potential loss of marine biodiversity, or shifts in biodiversity, in affected areas," it said (Courtesy: Down to Earth)

The rise of green businesses

By: Satyabrat Borah

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

The concept of green businesses is not entirely new, but it has gained much more attention in recent years. With growing concerns about global warming, deforestation, and waste accumulation, there is a clear need for businesses to change the way they operate. Traditional businesses often prioritize profit over sustainability, which can lead to practices that harm the environment. However, green businesses are built on the idea that it is possible to make money while still being environmentally responsible. These companies focus on sustainability by using renewable resources, reducing waste, and minimizing their carbon emissions. Their goal is to create products and services that are not only beneficial to consumers but also to the planet. One of the key factors behind the rise of green businesses is the increasing consumer demand environmentally friendly products and services. People today are more aware of the impact their purchasing decisions have on the planet, and many are choosing to support companies that share their values. Consumers are becoming more conscious of the environmental footprint of the products they buy, whether it's the materials used, the energy required for production, or the waste generated during the process. As a result, businesses are responding by shifting towards greener, more sustainable practices. This shift is not just happening in the consumer goods sector; it is also occurring in industries such as transportation, energy, and construction, where businesses are seeking ways to reduce their environmental impact.

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

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

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

The rise of green businesses is also being fueled by government policies and regulations that promote sustainability. Many governments around the world are implementing policies that encourage companies to adopt environmentally friendly practices. These policies include financial incentives such as tax breaks or grants for businesses that invest in renewable energy or reduce their carbon emissions. In some countries, governments are introducing regulations that require businesses to meet specific sustainability standards, such as reducing waste or using environmentally friendly materials. These policies create a supportive environment for green businesses to thrive and encourage more companies to adopt sustainable practices. As governments continue to prioritize environmental protection, green businesses will continue to play an important role in driving positive change.

For entrepreneurs and small business owners, starting a green business is becoming more accessible than ever before. With the rise of online platforms and the growing demand for sustainable products, entrepreneurs can easily reach a global audience. Additionally, there are now more resources and support systems in place to help green startups succeed. Many organizations and networks are dedicated to supporting green

and resources. This has led to a growing number of innovative green startups that are developing new technologies, products, and services to address environmental challenges. From sustainable fashion brands to eco-friendly packaging companies, green businesses are emerging across a wide range ergy companies, for example, are helping of industries. One of the key benefits of green businesses is that they often have a positive impact on local communities. By focusing on sustainability, green businesses create jobs that support both the economy and the environment. For example, renewable energy companies often hire workers to install solar panels or maintain wind farms, which creates local employment opportunities. Green construction companies also create jobs in areas such as building design, project management, and construction labor. Additionally, many green businesses are committed to supporting local communities by sourcing materials locally, reducing transportation emissions, and supporting

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

Another challenge is the need for innovation and constant adaptation. The field of sustainability is rapidly evolving, and businesses must stay up to date with the latest technologies and practices in order to remain competitive. This requires ongoing investment in research and development, as well as a commitment to continuous improvement. However, the pace of innovation in the green business sector is accelerating, and companies that stay ahead of the curve will be well-positioned to succeed in the future.

The rise of green businesses is a positive trend that shows how companies are increasingly recognizing the importance of sustainability. As consumers become more environmentally conscious, businesses are responding by adopting green practices that reduce their environmental impact and contribute to a more sustainable future. Green businesses are not only helping to protect the environment but also creating new opportunities for innovation, economic growth, and job creation. While there are challenges to overcome, the future of green businesses looks bright, and they will undoubtedly play a key role in shaping the future of the global economy. As the world continues to face environmental challenges, the rise of green businesses will be crucial in driving the change needed to create a more sustainable and prosperous future for all.

US defence chief observes drills with Japan, Australia

CAMPASAKA (JAPAN), Dec 11: US Secretary of Defence Lloyd Austin expressed confidence about enhanced military capabilities among the United States, Australia and Japan as he observed joint exercises Wednesday showcasing their closer cooperation as tensions grow in the region. Austin is in Japan to reaffirm the importance of their alliance and Washington's commitment to regional security.

Austin noted as he observed the trilateral Yama Sakura 87 exercises held at the Japanese army's Camp Asaka on the outskirts of Tokyo that the necessary equipment, munitions and people are in place and "these are the things that will guarantee success if we ever get challenged on the battlefield." Japan, under a security strategy introduced in 2022, is pursuing a rapid military buildup to increase its deterrence against growing threats from China, North Korea and Russia, and has bolstered defense cooperation, especially with the United States and Australia. On Tuesday, during talks with Japanese officials, Austin praised the strength of the Japan-US alliance at a time of rapid global political change, including unrest in South Korea and Syria. (AP)

Israeli strikes on Gaza kill at least 29, Palestinian medics say

STRIP), Dec 11: Israeli strikes on the Gaza Strip killed at least 29 people overnight and into Wednesday, including one that hit a home where displaced people were sheltering in the isolated north, killing 19, according to Palestinian medical officials.

The Israel-Hamas war has raged on with no end in sight, even after Israel reached a ceasefire with Lebanon's Hezbollah and attention shifted to the overthrow of Syrian President Bashar Assad. Both the outgoing and incoming US administrations have said they hope to end the war before the inauguration but months of ceasefire talks have repeatedly stalled.

The strike that killed 19 occurred in the northern town of Beit Lahiya near the border with Israel, according to the nearby Kamal Adwan Hospital, which received the bodies. Hospital records show that a family of eight was among those killed, including four children, their parents and two grand-

The hospital said another strike near its entrance on Wednesday killed a woman and her two chil-

Another strike in the built-up Nuseirat refugee camp in central Gaza killed at least seven people.

according to the Awda Hospital. The dead included two children, their parents and three relatives, it

There was no immediate comment from the Israeli military. The military says it tries to avoid harming civilians and accuses militants of hiding among them, putting their lives in danger.

Militants in central Gaza meanwhile fired four projectiles into Israel on Wednesday, two of which were intercepted, the military said. The other two fell in open areas. and there were no reports of casu-

The military ordered the evacuation of a five-block area of the built-up Maghazi refugee camp in central Gaza, saying the rockets had been fired from there. The or-

ders indicated that Israel would soon carry out strikes in the area.

The war began when Hamas-led militants stormed into Israel on October 7, 2023, killing some 1,200 people, mostly civilians, and abducting around 250 people, including children and older adults. Around 100 hostages are still inside Gaza, at least a third of whom are believed to be dead.

Israel's retaliatory offensive has killed over 44,000 Palestinians in Gaza, according to local health officials. They say women and children make up more than half the dead but do not distinguish between fighters and civilians in their count. Israel says it has killed over 17,000 militants, without providing evidence.

Thousands more Palestinians

have gone missing during the war, some after encounters with Israeli

Israel has been waging a renewed offensive against Hamas in Gaza's isolated and heavily destroyed north since early October. Troops have surrounded Beit Lahiya, Beit Hanoun and the urban Jabaliya refugee camp, allowing in almost no humanitarian aid and ordering tens of thousands to flee to nearby Gaza City.
Israeli officials have said the

three communities are mostly deserted, but the United Nations humanitarian office said Tuesday that it believes around 65,000 to 75,000 people are still there, with little access to food, water, electricity or health care. Experts have warned that the north may be experiencing

Sigrid Kaag, the senior UN humanitarian and reconstruction coordinator for Gaza, told reporters at the UN on Tuesday that civilians trying to survive all across Gaza face an utterly devastating situa-

She pointed to the breakdown in law and order and looting that has left the UN and many aid organisations unable to deliver food and other humanitarian essentials to hundreds of thousands of Palestini-

22 arrested, 150 booked for propagating against Pakistan Army on social media



LAHORE, Dec 11: Pakistani authorities have booked 150 suspects and arrested 22 of them, mostly belonging to Imran Khan's party, for allegedly propagating against the army on social media on the killings of the party workers in Islamabad on November 26, an official said on Wednesday.

According to the Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI), at least 12 party workers were killed and hundreds wounded when law enforcers opened fire on the protesters in Islamabad on November 26. It also claims that around 105 party workers have been missing since then.

Following the incident, Khan's supporters started blaming the Pakistan Army for opening fire on the peaceful protesters.

The Shehbaz Sharif-led government denied that the law enforcers opened fire on the protesters and pledged to take strict action against those propagating on social media.

The government formed a special task force headed by the Federal Investigation Agency (FIA) chief to NAB such elements.

"Subsequently, the FIA cybercrime wing booked some 150 suspects and arrested 22 social media activists across the country," an FIA officer said.

He said that the FIA made 117 raids, mostly in Punjab, to arrest the suspects involved in the propaganda against the state institu- curity personnel. (PTI)

The suspects (social media activists) have been booked under different sections of the Prevention

of Electronic Crimes Act (PECA). Earlier, Amnesty International had demanded a transparent investigation of the state's deadly crackdown to disperse PTI supporters from Islamabad's D-Chowk where they had gathered for the release of their incarcerated leader and former prime minister.

More than 10,000 protesters surged into Islamabad on Nov 26, defying a ban on public gatherings and a lockdown to skirmish with 20,000 security forces enlisted to turn them back. As Khan supporters inched towards the heavily barricaded D-Chowk, the police and security forces used intense teargas shelling to disperse the protesters.

Interior Minister Mohsin Naqvi had said the law enforcers had bravely repulsed the protesters without using firearms. Khan's party harshly criticised the interior minister for his statements and blamed him for the alleged violence against its supporters, claiming multiple deaths.

Condemning the violence, Amnesty demanded a "prompt, thorough, impartial, effective and transparent investigation" into the deaths and injuries of protesters as well as the unlawful use of force, including lethal and less-lethal weapons, by se-

South Korea's top 2 police chiefs detained over enforcement of martial law

SEOUL (SOUTH KOREA), Dec 11: South Korea's two highest police officers have been detained to be investigated for their roles in enforcing President Yoon Suk Yeol's short-lived martial law decree last week, police said Wednesday.

The development comes hours before the main liberal opposition Democratic Party submits a new motion to impeach Yoon as the country's main law enforcement institutions expand their investigation into whether the president's declaration amounted to rebellion. The first impeachment attempt failed last Saturday when the ruling party boycotted the vote. The Democratic Party said it aims to put the new motion to a vote on Saturday.

Yoon's ill-conceived power grab has paralyzed South Korean politics, frozen its foreign policy, and rattled financial markets, greatly reducing his chances of completing his five-year term and casting a turbulent shadow over one of Asia's most robust democracies.

After last week's impeachment motion fell through, the leader of Yoon's conservative party pledged to arrange his stable exit from power, saying the party will coordinate with Cabinet members over state affairs and that Yoon will be sidelined from duties during a transition to an early election.

However, the plans have been widely criticized as unrealistic and unconstitutional. The constitution explicitly states that impeachment is the sole method for suspending presidential powers and that the authority to command the military rests solely with the president. The Defense Ministry said this week that Yoon remains in charge of the country's military forces.

Earlier Wednesday, Yoon's former defense minister, Kim Yong Hyun, was arrested after a Seoul court approved a warrant for him on allegations of playing a key role in a rebellion and committing abuse of power. Kim became the first person arrested over the December 3 martial law decree.

Police said National Police Agency Commissioner General Cho Ji Ho and Kim Bong-sik, head of the metropolitan police agency of the capital, Seoul, were being held at Seoul's Namdaemun police station.

They have been investigated for their roles in deploying police forces to the National Assembly in an attempt to quired. (AP)

block lawmakers from entering the parliament to vote to lift Yoon's martial law decree, which was abruptly announced on the night of December 3.

The Assembly was also encircled by heavily armed troops, which military commanders say were deployed on the orders of the former defense minister. But enough lawmakers eventually managed to enter a parliament chamber and unanimously rejected Yoon's decree, forcing the Cabinet to lift it before daybreak on December 4.

During a parliamentary hearing Tuesday, Kwak Jong-keun, commander of the Army Special Warfare Command whose troops were sent to parliament, testified that he received direct instructions from Kim Yong Hyun to obstruct lawmakers from entering the Assembly's main chamber. Kwak said the purpose of Kim's instructions was to prevent the 300-member parliament from gathering the 150 votes necessary to overturn Yoon's martial law order.

Kwak said Yoon later called him directly and asked for the troops to quickly destroy the door and drag out the lawmakers who are inside. Kwak said he discussed Yoon's order with the commander at the scene and that they concluded there was nothing that could be done, ruling out the possibility of threatening the lawmakers by shooting blanks or cutting off electricity.

At the same hearing, senior officer Kim Dae-woo of the military's counterintelligence agency said his commander, Yeo In-hyung, asked him if an army bunker in Seoul had space to detain politicians and other figures after martial law was imposed. Yeo is considered a close associate of Kim Yong Hyun. Last week, Hong Jang-won, a deputy director of the country's spy agency, said Yoon ordered him to help Yeo's command to detain some of his political rivals but he ignored the president's order.

Kwak and Yeo are among those who face opposition-raised rebellion charges along with Yoon and Kim, and the Defense Ministry suspended them last

If Yoon is impeached, his presidential powers would be suspended until the Constitutional Court decides whether to restore his powers or remove him from office. If he is dismissed from office, a new presidential election would be re-

Ex-defense chief in South Korea tried to kill himself after being arrested over martial law

SEOUL (SOUTH KOREA), Dec 11: South Korea's previous defence minister was stopped from attempting suicide while in detention over last week's martial law declaration, officials said Wednesday, as President Yoon Suk Yeol's office resisted a police attempt to search the compound.

The main liberal opposition Democratic Party plans to introduce a new motion to impeach Yoon for his December 3 declaration that imposed martial law in South Korea for the first time in more than four decades.

Its first impeachment attempt against Yoon last Saturday failed after ruling party lawmakers boycotted the vote. The party said it plans to submit the new motion on Thursday to set up a vote on Yoon's ill-conceived power grab has paralysed

South Korean politics, frozen its foreign policy and rattled financial markets. On Wednesday, rival North Korea's state media for the first time reported about the turmoil across the border, but the country hasn't showed any suspicious activi-Shin Yong Hae, commissioner general of the

Korea Correctional Service, told lawmakers that former Defense Minister Kim Yong Hyun tried to kill himself the previous night at a detention centre in Seoul. He said correctional officers stopped him and that he was in stable condition. Kim was arrested early Wednesday after a

Seoul court approved a warrant for him on allegations of playing a key role in a rebellion and committing abuse of power. Kim became the first person formally arrested over the martial law de-

Kim, one of Yoon's close associates, has been ccused of recommending martial law to Yoon makers eventually managed to enter a parliament lated to my term in office. (AP)

chamber and they unanimously rejected Yoon's decree, forcing the Cabinet to lift it before daybreak on December 4

Kim said in a statement on Tuesday that he deeply apologises for causing significant anxiety to the public. He said all responsibility for the martial law imposition rests with him and pleaded for leniency for soldiers deployed to enforce it. Prosecutors have up to 20 days to determine

whether to indict Kim. Yoon's office hampers search of presidential

Later Wednesday, police detained National Police Agency Commissioner General Cho Ji Ho and Kim Bong-sik, head of Seoul's metropolitan police. They were accused of deploying police forces to parliament to block lawmakers from

The main focus of investigators is finding whether Yoon, Kim and others involved in imposing martial law committed rebellion. A conviction on the charge of rebellion carries a maximum death sentence.

South Korean police said they sent officers to search Yoon's office on Wednesday to look for any evidence related to the martial law introduction. But investigators failed to enter the office as of Wednesday evening, about six hours after their arrival, senior police officer Lee Ho-young said in parliament. Some observers earlier said that the presidential security service won't likely permit searches of Yoon's office, citing a law that prohibits searches of sites with state secrets without approval from those in charge of those areas.

Yoon on Saturday apologised over the martial law decree, saying that he won't avoid legal or political responsibility for it. He said he would and sending troops to the National Assembly to leave it to his party to chart a course through the block lawmakers from voting on it. Enough law- country's political turmoil, including matters re-

Taiwan demands China end its military activity in nearby waters



TAIPEI. Dec 11: Taiwan demanded Wednesday that China end its ongoing military activity in nearby waters, which it said is unilaterally undermining peace and stability in the Taiwan Strait and disrupting international shipping and trade.

The Foreign Ministry, in a statement posted on its website, said it was responding in part to the activities of a "large number" of Chinese naval and coast guard ships in the first-island chain, the Pacific archipelago off the Asian continental mainland that includes Japan, Taiwan and part of the Philippines.

"The Ministry of Foreign Affairs solemnly demands that the Beijing authorities immediately stop military intimidation and all irrational activities that endanger regional peace and stability," the statement said. Taiwan defence officials say Mehdi said the government's they have detected Chinese ships since Monday, both off Taiwan and farther out along the first-island chain. They described the formations as two walls designed to demonstrate that the waters belong to China. China restricted airspace

off its southeast coast from Monday to Wednesday, an indication that it was planning to hold drills, but the country's People's Liberation Army has not confirmed whether it is doing so. Taiwan has been expecting drills following stops by its president, Lai Ching-te, in Hawaii and the US territory of Guam during an overseas trip last week. China claims self-governing Taiwan as its territory and opposes any official contact with America and other foreign governments.

A Chinese spokesperson didn't comment directly on any military exercises but said in a statement posted online Wednesday that the government would not let provocations by Taiwan in collusion with external forces go unchecked.

"We will take necessary measures to resolutely defend national sovereignty and territorial integrity, maintain peace and stability in the Taiwan Strait and safeguard the fundamental interests of compatriots on both sides of the Taiwan Strait," said Zhu Fenglian, a spokesperson for the government's

Pakistan blocks 80k SIM cards for spreading fake news the issue of fake news. ment claims is fake news

ISLAMABAD, Dec 11: Pakistan authorities have blocked approximately 80,000 SIM cards for spreading fake news amid concerns regarding the social media propelled misinformation, the government said on Wednesdav.

Parliamentary Secretary for the Cabinet Division Sajid Mehdi told the National Assembly, in response to a calling attention notice regarding the spread of false news on digital platforms, also pointed out the need for reforms in the Prevention of Electronic Crimes Act (PECA), 2016 to better tackle

The amendments to this law would expedite the trial of cases related to the dissemination of

false information, he added.

The issue of fake news has already grabbed international attention as a major threat to domestic and global peace and stability and authorities claimed that Pakistan has faced the challenge in the wake of protests by the jailed former prime minister Imran Khan's party.

Khan's Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) party extensively uses social media to drive home its messages, which the govern-

Meanwhile, Pakistani authorities have booked 150 suspects and arrested 22 of them, mostly belonging to Khan's party, for allegedly propagating messages against the army on social

November 26, an official said on Wednesday. proactive steps, including blocking SIM cards, revising laws, and establishment of a joint task force, are aimed at mitigating the harmful effects

preparation to manage simultane-

ous crises involving the adver-

concerned about cooperation

among the four countries. Coordi-

The US for many years has been

saries.

media about the killings of the

party workers in Islamabad on

Biden approves national security memo aimed at helping Trump on China, Iran, North Korea, Russia

WASHINGTON, Dec 11: President Joe Biden has approved a new national security memorandum that is meant to serve as a roadmap for the incoming Trump administration as it looks to counter growing cooperation among China, Iran, North Korea and Russia, the White House said Wednesday.

Biden administration officials began developing the guidance this summer. It was shaped to be a document that could help the next administration build its approach from day one on how it will go about dealing with the tightening relationships between the United States' most prominent adversaries and competitors, according to two senior administration officials.

The officials, who spoke on the condition of anonymity under ground rules set by the White House, said the classified memorandum would not be made public because of the sensitivity of some of its findings.

The document includes four broad recommendations: improv-



ing of information with allies about sia's invasion of Ukraine in 2022. the four adversaries, calibrating the The officials noted that as Rus-US government's use of sanctions sia has become more isolated by and other economic tools for maximum effectiveness, and bolstering

much of the world. Moscow has turned to Iran for drones and missiles. From North Korea, the Russians have received artillery, missiles and even thousands of troops that have travelled to help the Russians try to repel Ukrainian forces from the Kursk region.

Russia with dual use components that help keep its military industrial base afloat.

In return, Russia has sent fighter jets to Iran and assisted Tehran as it looks to bolster its missile defence and space technology.

North Korea has received from Russia much-needed fuel and funding to help build out its manufacturing and military capabilities. The officials added that Russia has de facto accepted North Korea as a nuclear weapon state.

China, meanwhile, is benefiting from Russian know-how, with the two countries working together to deepen their military technical cooperation. The two nations are also conducting joint patrols in the Arctic region.

Biden and President-elect Donald Trump have sharply different worldviews, but officials in both the incoming and outgoing administrations said they have sought to coordinate on national security issues during the transition. (AP)

S Africa to use G20 Presidency to further push shared goals: Minister

JOHANNESBURG, Dec 11: South Africa will use the G20 Presidency that it assumed at the beginning of this month to further push the shared goals of member countries, Minister of International Relations and Cooperation Ronald Lamola has said.

Lamola delivered the opening remarks at the first G20 Sherpas meeting on Monday where he said that South Africa's presidency will be held under the theme Solidarity, Equality, Sustainability, which seeks to harness global will and capabilities to confront the enormous challenges the world is facing.

"South Africa will use its G20 Presidency to secure urgent progress on shared goals through several priority actions. These include strengthening disaster resilience and response; ensuring debt sustainability for low-income countries; mobilising finance for a just energy transition; and harnessing critical minerals for inclusive growth and development," Lamola said.

"In the spirit of Ubuntu, our shared humanity, we will address these challenges through our high-level deliverables and priorities, which lie at the core of the original G20 mandate of promoting strong, sustainable, balanced and inclusive growth and by building partnerships across all sectors of society to find collective solutions," he added.

The minister said three temporary task forces, an initiative and a commission will be established during South Africa's G20 Presidency. These would include the priorities of inclusive economic growth,

industrialisation, employment and reduced inequality; food security; and artificial intelligence, data governance and innovation for sustainable develop-"A review of the work of the G20, 'The G20 at

20 years: A Reflection on Key Achievements and the Way Forward', will also feature as one of South Africa's deliverables through a Sherpa Track Initiative. South Africa also proposes the establishment of a Cost of Capital Commission during its G20 Presidency," Lamola said. The minister said that the South African govern-

ment would continue the significant strides made

by the Brazilian G20 Presidency in enhancing the

G20 as a site of democratic global engagement through a comprehensive dialogue with civil society and other state and non-state institutions. He said that in the same way that Brazil had done. a G20 Social Forum will be convened ahead of the Leaders' Summit in November 2025, to bring together representatives of the existing engagement

groups and other segments of civil society that may

offer meaningful contributions to the G20. "As we build on the past and set the tone for the future, we must accentuate the need to adhere to universal values, shared norms, and strong multilateral institutions. Now more than ever, multilateral institutions must be strengthened and reformed to deliver broad global consensus and serve as platforms to resolve disputes. (PTI)

Chakma council chief

THURSDAY, DECEMBER 12, 2024

gets no-confidence motion

AIZAWL, Dec 11: The chief executive member (CEM) of Mizoram's Chakma Autonomous District Council (CADC), Rasik Mohan Chakma, was removed from his position through a no-confidence motion, an official said.

The motion was moved by opposition Zoram People's Movement (ZPM) member Doymoy Daveng Chakma during the first sitting of the council's winter session on Wednesday, he said. Out of the 18 members present during the voting, nine voted in favour of Chakma's removal, while eight opposed it. Two members were absent.

Sources said the no-confidence motion stemmed from concerns over Rasik Mohan Chakma's dual role as a Mizoram National Front (MNF) legislator and CEM of Chakma council, as well as allegations of corruption and irregularities in recruitment under the council.

In March, Assembly Speaker Lalbiakzama had issued a showcause notice to Chakma regarding his dual membership, following a complaint by opposition members. However, Chakma maintained that he could not be disqualified, arguing that holding dual positions did not constitute an 'office of profit' under existing laws.

Rasik Mohan Chakma, 60, served as the CEM of the Chakma council since his sixth election victory in May last year. He also contested the state assembly elections in November 2023, winning the Chakma-dominated Tuichawng seat

Manipur MLAs urge PM for funds for Kuki-Zo areas development Suspension of Operations agreement was aimed at resolving political issues and usher in peace

IMPHAL, Dec 11: Ten Kuki-Zo legislators of Manipur have requested Prime Minister Narendra Modi for "budgetary arrangements" to fund development projects in districts inhabited by the

They reiterated their demand for separate administration in the form of a Union territory and called for expediting political dialogue at the earliest to resolve the ethnic conflict in the state.

In a memorandum addressed to the PM on Tuesday, the MLAs alleged that the Kuki-Zo community has faced discrimination at the hands of the state government, depriving them of not just development but also essential supplies.

"It (state government) failed to ensure even supply of life-saving drugs and other essential supplies to our people on diktats of radicalised (Imphal) Valley-based organisations. "Our people do not disrupt the movement of vehicles carrying essential items in Kangpokpi district on the advice of the central government, but the Meiteis, with full knowledge of the state government, do not allow such supplies to our people in the hill districts," the MLAs alleged. "We would like to reiterate and

place our people's political aspira-



tion for a separate administration in the form of a Union territory with legislature for your serious and timely consideration," the memorandum stated.

The MLAs also strongly protested the delay in political dialogue on "mere pretexts and technicalities" over extension of SoO (Suspension of Operations) with 25 Kuki militant groups represented by two umbrella bodies -the Kuki National Organisation and the United Peoples Front – at the "behest of the biased and communalised Manipur government and Meitei civil society organisations". The SoO is a tripartite agreement signed on August 22, 2008 between the Centre, Manipur government and Kuki militant outfits to initiate political dialogue with the insurgents.

"We condemn attempts to create divisions within our people by proposals to discontinue the SoO with select armed groups. The Suspension of Operations agreement was aimed at resolving political issues and usher in peace, and it is against the very spirit of the agreement if the government is hesitant to extend the SoO with select armed groups within the SoO framework," the memorandum stated.

Alleging that the state government has deprived the Kuki-Zo people of development funds, the MLAs stated, "We urge the central government to kindly make interim planning mechanism and budgetary arrangements to fund the much-needed developments projects in the districts predominantly inhabited by our people, pending final solution through political dialogue.'

The MLAs also alleged that the hill districts were left out of the recently approved construction of 57 roads in Manipur, for which funds amounting to ₹ 201.50 crore have been sanctioned under the Central Roads and Infrastructure Fund, the memorandum stated.

It also claimed that the state government has left out affected hill districts for funding of central financial assistance under the Prime Minister's Development Initiative for North Eastern Region (PM-DevINE) amounting to ₹ 104.6 crore.

The MLAs, while seeking an audience with the Prime Minister, said their areas continued to be attacked by armed militants.

More than 250 people in Manipur have been killed and thousands rendered homeless in ethnic violence between Imphal Valleybased Meiteis and adjoining hillsbased Kuki-Zo groups since May last year. (PTI)

45 acres of illegal poppy cultivation destroyed in Ukhrul



IMPHAL, Dec 11: Forty-five acres of illegal poppy plantation were destroyed at Phungyar in Manipur's Ukhrul district and two persons arrested, police said on Wednesday.

A combined team of the Ukhrul police, the BSF, forest department and the district administration carried out the operation in the Mapithel hill range on Tuesday, they

Letkhohao Haokip (37) and Hegou Khongsai (30) were arrested from the spot for their alleged involvement in the illegal cultivation, the officials said.

Two persons identified as

In a post on X, Chief Minister N Biren Singh lauded the team for the operation.

"War on Drugs Intensifies; 45 Acres of Illegal Poppy Cultivation Destroyed," he said. (PTI)

Hand grenade found on steps of private bank in Manipur

IMPHAL, Dec 11: Unidentified people on Wednesday kept a hand grenade in front of a private bank in Manipur's Imphal West district, police said on Wednesday.

Passersby spotted the grenade on the stairs in front of the private bank at Singjamei and informed the police. The police, in turn, called the bomb squad to defuse it.

The police registered a case and initiated an investigation.

curity forces, during search operations at Tingkai Khullen in Kangpokpi district, recovered several arms, including a carbine machine gun with magazine, one single bolt sniper rifle, one 9 mm handgun with magazine, one hand grenade along with two tube launchers, ammunition and a radio set, a police statement on Wednesday said. (PTI)

Nagaland CM's micro finance initiative 2.0 launched



to ashes in Arunachal district

ITANAGAR, Dec 11: At least 108 ₹ 2 crore, officials said.

HT Correspondent

DIMAPUR, Dec 11: Nagaland Chief Minister's Micro Finance Initiative 2.0 (CMMFI 2.0) was unveiled on Wednesday, opening a gateway of opportunities for aspiring entrepreneurs and farmers

Designed to provide holistic financial support, the initiative offers subsidies, tailored financial solutions, and innovative project support to turn ideas into reality.

The CMMFI 2.0 covers a wide spectrum of entrepreneurship ventures such as retail (provision stores, general stores, and pharmacies), services (auto garages, mobile food units, gyms, salons, and craft industries), transport (twowheeler and four-wheeler taxis, ambulance services, and commercial vehicles), innovation (hydroponics, software/BPO, and e-commerce delivery centers), hospitality (homestays, cold storage, and bakery and cafeteria), agriculture (customized finance for agriculture projects following NABARD guidelines), etc. An official report said a com-

vegetable sheds were destroyed in

a massive fire at Pasighat vegetable

market in Arunachal Pradesh's East

Siang district on Tuesday night, of-

East Siang's disaster management

officer Tsangpa Tashi said.

The fire broke out around 9 pm,

Preliminary estimates indicate

available in the CMMFI booklet at www.credit.nagaland.gov.in.

In a boost for logistics and transport-related ventures, CMMFI 2.0 has partnered with leading automobile brands to offer special benefits, including exclusive subsidies on commercial vehicles.

Eligible beneficiaries can access up to 30% back-ended subsidies on vehicles, with applications open under programmes like Nagaland Tourism Connect and Nagaland Logistics Connect.

The initiative also provides comprehensive support, including detailed project report (DPR) preparation, application assistance through the credit portal, and financial institution linkages.

Applicants can visit Swavalamban Connect Kendras (SCK) located at their respective district DC office premises or contact the credit facilitation outreach unit at 9436030303 For further assistance or grievance redressal, the applicants may reach out to the CMMFI facilitation cell at credit.finngl@gov.in or call 9077175990. Over 100 vegetable sheds reduced

Several structures, including veg-

etable and fruit sheds, footwear

stalls, grocery shops, small hotels,

and shops selling clothes and sta-

tionery, were completely gutted in

the blaze. Tashi, quoting an eyewit-

ness, suggested that the fire might

have been caused by a short-circuit,

although no casualties have been re-

Human Rights Day observed in Manipur

SENAPATI, Dec 11: The Naga Peoples Movement for Human Rights (NPMHR) commemorated Human Rights Day, 2024 at Tahamzam (Senapati) in Manipur.

The programme commenced with a stilt stick walk led by the Young Troupe from Tahamzam central traffic point to the Maram Union Secretariat where the program was held. After a traditional chant opening prayer by Rev Fr Siby Alexander, Parish Priest of St. John Bosco Church, Maram Khullen, Moms' in Touch band graced the occasion with a traditional song.

This was followed by Neingulo Krome, Secretary General, NPMHR, sharing briefly on the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and its relevance to the Nagas. In sharing, he pointed out the struggle of indigenous peoples across the world for self-determination, and how mechanisms within the UN, however limited, have provided space for addressing the concerns of indigenous peoples such as the adoption of the Universal Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples.

Nepuni Piku, Forum for Naga Reconciliation (FNR), in his solidarity message, honoured human rights activists who had passed on. Pointing out that human rights have to be seen through the lens of democratic governance based on the worldview, values, and principles of the Nagas as an



real, instead of abstract concepts, needs of the people.

This was followed by an open discussion centered around "An Audit on the Right to Self Determination of Nagas. The open discussion brought forth a number of concerns and issues of the Nagas; a primary topic being the present ongoing peace talks between the Nagas and the Government of India contextualized against the Framework Agreement of August 2015; the failure of both parties to make any positive progress, and what this means in terms of peace for the region.

An overwhelming emergent point in the discussion was the focus on the need for respectful honourable negotiations between the Nagas and the Government of India, and the need for Nagas to continue to advocate for their rights keeping in tune with indigenous community, he reiterated the need to advocate for rights based on the this year's UN theme, "Our Rights, Our Future, Right Now." (NNN)

Defence land needs balance between security Women arrested needs, wellbeing of locals: Arunachal Guv

ITANAGAR, Dec 11: Arunachal Pradesh Governor Lt Gen (Retd) K T Parnaik on Wednesday emphasised that AGARTALA, Dec 11: Acting defence land requires a comprehensive approach, balancing national security needs with the well-being of local communities and the environment.

During a meeting with S N Gupta, principal director of Defence Estates under Eastern Command Kolkata, at Raj Bhavan here, the Governor suggested that through reforms, better land management and increased collaboration, the state can ensure that its defence infrastructure remains robust while fostering positive relations with its citizens. Parnaik said that efforts should be made to optimize the use of available defence land for the development of infrastructure without compromising military needs, a Raj Bhavan communique said.

He said that collaboration between civil and military authorities can help to balance defence requirements with local development needs and building better communication channels with local administration can help improve civil-military relations.

The Governor directed Gupta to ensure that all acquisitions and hiring of land were done with due diligence, in keeping with established instructions, with the state ad-

with cannabis

HT Correspondent

on a tip-off, Tripura Police apprehended two women in possession of cannabis at Jogendra Nagar railway station in Agartala on Tuesday afternoon.

The women, both hailing from Bihar, were found carrying 8.4 kilograms of cannabis, with an estimated market value of ₹1 lakh. The operation was carried out by officers from the East Agartala police station following confidential information regarding an attempt to smuggle the contraband out of Tripura.

Officer-in-Charge Rana Chatterjee stated, "Upon receiving the intelligence, a police team immediately rushed to the railway station and detained the suspects. Initial investigations suggest that the women were transporting the cannabis to Bihar. We have identified the involvement of multiple individuals, including local agents, who are now under our radar."

The two suspects were produced in court on Wednesday, where the police sought permission to interrogate them in jail custody to uncover further details about the drug network.

Meghalaya achieves 78.5% of toilet construction under 'Hamara Shauchalay' initiative

SHILLONG, Dec 11: Meghalaya has achieved 78.5 per cent of construction of toilets till date.

"Till date, the state has the coverage of 53627 individual household latrines and 1108 community sanitary complex units across the state. In terms of percentage, we have achieved 78.5 per cent in construction of toilets," PHE minister Marcuise N Marak told reporters on Tuesday, which marked the closing of the "Hamara Shauchalay: Hamara

He said that the Hamara Shauchalay: Hamara Samman was launched on November 19, 2024 with the objective to call attention to the need for functionality of toilets both individual or household toilets and community toilets. "The campaign ended today, the day ob-

served internationally as Human Rights Day because all human beings are born free and equal in dignity and rights, that's the basic thing," he said. "Our target is that the sustainable development goals is achieving access to adequate equitable sanitations, hygiene for all, ending open defecation, while paying special attention to the needs of women and girls, and those in vulnerable situations worldwide," Marak said while adding that the campaign emphasizes the significant of sanitation as a cornerstone of dignity, health and well being for every



The minister further informed that the department has received over 14.80 lakh applications for construction of individual nousehold latrines.

"Out of this, we have sanctioned funds for construction of 87,184 individual toilets in the different villages at a cost of ₹ 12,000 each," he said.

Marak has also reviewed the implementation of the mission in the state and said, "I have made it clear that the department should make sure all toilets, both individual and community toilets, should be functional."

He said that the state has also achieved 83.81% in terms of open defecation free (ODF) plus status.

The minister said land issue is one of the challenges faced while implementing the mission. (NNN)

No E.587689/106

SHORT NOTICE INVITING e-TENDER FOR PRINTING OF THE BOOK MUKHYAMANTRIR BOKTRITA SONKOLON, VOL.III

e-tender in two bid system are invited from reputed designing and printing Press/ Publishers based in Guwahati having minimum 3 years experience in Govt. sector for printing and delivery of the Book "Mukhyomantrir Boktrita Sonkolon, Vol.III" and e-book conversion of the said book as per the specification mentioned in the e-Tender. The terms & conditions and details of works are given in the tender document.

The bid document is available online from 11.00 a.m. of 12th December, 2024 and the bid should be submitted online in the website htps://assamtenders.gov.in. Last date and time of Bid upload is 20-12-2024 upto 11.00 a.m. To participate in this tender process through e-procurement, the bidder should have the valid Digital Signature Certificate (DSC) of Class-II signing to be registered in the portal https://assamtenders.gov.in by the bidders themselves.

The tender processing fee of ₹ 2000,00 (Rupees Two Thousand only) along with the Earnest Money Deposit (EMD) of ₹ 2.00 lakh (Rupees Two lakh only) shall be deposited online through www.assamtenders.gov.in as per prescribed time schedule. EMD submission is mandatory.

The bidders are required to submit original copy of the Technical Bid in hard copy affixing court fee stamp/e-stamp of ₹ 8.25 (Rupees Eight and Twenty-Five Paisa) only in the Directorate of Information and Public Relations, Assam, Last Gate, Dispur Guwahati-781006 on or before 12.00 noon of 20th December, 2024 for cross verification along with all the samples as mentioned in the e-Tender document. The submission of hard copy of Technical Bid is a must. The tender proposal should be uploaded online as per prescribed schedule. In case of Bid opening date falls in a Government holiglay, the Bid will be opened in the next working day.

Janasanyog /C/5045/24/12-Dec-24

Director Information and Public Relations Astram, Dispur, Guwahati -78100

Sd/-

25th Hornbill Festival draws over 2 lakh visitors

Final day of the festival saw the highest attendance, with 32,081 visitors

HT Correspondent **DIMAPUR, Dec 11:** The 25th edition of

the annual 10-day Hornbill Festival at Naga Heritage Village, Kisama, drew a total of 2,05,968 visitors, recording an increase of 33.7% in footfall compared to last year. The festival, which concluded on December 10, recorded 1,54,057 attendees in 2023.

According to the data from the state directorate of tourism, this year's festival attracted a diverse crowd, with 2,527 foreign tourists, 56,217 domestic visitors, and 1,47,224 local attendees.

The final day of the festival saw the highest attendance, with 32,081 visitors, making it the peak day in terms of turnout. It also witnessed the highest number of local attendees, with 23,816 people in attendance.

The first day of the festival recorded the highest number of foreign visitors, with 513 tourists, while Day 8 saw the largest number of domestic visitors at 9,342. On the other hand, Day 4 had the lowest turnout, with 14,502 visitors.



This year's edition witnessed significant growth across all categories of attendees. The number of foreign tourists increased from 2,108 in 2023 to 2,375 in 2024. Domestic visitors also saw a sharp rise, from 37,089 last year to 56,217 this

Local attendance grew from 1,14,860 to 1,47,224, reflecting the festival's deepening connection with the local population and its appeal to a wider audience.

The Hornbill Festival, known for showcasing the diverse cultures and traditions of Nagaland, continues to grow in prominence as a major cultural and tourism event in India.

As the 'Festival of Festivals' celebrated its 25th edition, it further cemented its position as one of the most anticipated events of the year, attracting tourists from around the world and fostering a stronger appreciation for the region's heritage.

No. BDB/15th FC-125/2020-21/1863

NOTICE INVITING TENDER

Date:10/12/2024

Sealed tender affixing a non-refundable Court fee stamp of Rs.8.25(Rupees eight &twenty five) only with a validity period of 180 days, which will subsequently to be converted and drawn up In the printed of F-2 form are invited form are invited from the registered Contractors of Class-II and Class-I (A,B,&C) category of Assam PWD(Building)BTC, according to their eligibility for submitting tender for the following work under 15th FC(Untied Grant) for the year 2023-2024 during 2024-25 as stated below. The tender will be received by the undersigned up to 12.00 Noon. On 24/12/2024 and will be opened on the same date &, place at 2.00 P.M.

ne built day of place at 200 first				
Sl. No	Name of Works	Tender Amount (Approx)	Cost of Tender Paper	Time of Completion of Work
1.	"Const, of Community Hall at Pamuapathar" under 15th FC (Untied Grant) for the year 2023-2024 during 2024-25	9,52,668.00	350.00/-	6(Six) Months from the

Detail N.I.T. may be seen in all working days during office hours in the office of the undersigned. Tender papers will be issued to the contractions or their authorized agents from 14/12/2024 to 21/12/2024 in the office of the undersigned on payment in the from of Demand draft/Banker's Cheque from any Nationalized Bank ,duly pledged in favour of the B.D.O. Baska Development Block Mushalpur, payable at S.B.I. Mushalpur.

Sd/- Block Dev. Officer IPR(BTC)/C/2024-25/1069 Baska Dev. Block

supremo Arvind Kejriwal on Wednesday once again ruled out the possibility of an alliance with Congress for the Delhi Assembly polls, amid reports that the two parties could join hands for the election in

In a post on X, Kejriwal said the Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) will contest the election on its own strength in Delhi. "There is no possibility of any alliance with the Congress," the former Delhi chief minister said.

His remarks came amid media reports that the two parties are likely to have a tie-up for the polls to the 70-member Delhi Assembly due in February.

Earlier this month also, Kejriwal had ruled out the possibility of an alliance between his party and the Congress for the Delhi election.

The recent buzz over an alliance between the two Indian National

NEW DELHI, Dec 11: Several opposition

parties on Wednesday said the "partisan"

conduct of Rajya Sabha Chairman Jagdeep

Dhankhar prompted them to move a notice

for his removal as vice president and alleged

that politics has taken precedence over rules

Addressing a press conference at the Con-

stitution Club here, Congress president

Mallikarjun Kharge alleged that Dhankhar

is working as a government spokesperson

and acting like a school headmaster, often

sermonising experienced opposition leaders

and preventing them from speaking in the

House. Kharge also claimed that Dhankhar

himself is responsible for the disruptions in

the House. "The Rajya Sabha chairman's

conduct has been contrary to the dignity of

the post he holds. He targets opposition lead-

ments as remarks by Kalyan Banerjee

against Union minister Jyotiraditya

Scindia created an uproar which refused

to die down despite apology tendered by

the TMC member. Finally, the chair ad-

Trouble arose when Banerjee was

speaking during a discussion on the

amendments to the Disaster Management

Act. The TMC member alleged non-co-

operation by the central government dur-

ing the COVID-19 pandemic, but

Minister of State for Home Nityanand Rai

countered it, saying it was Prime Minister

Narendra Modi who helped all the states

and successfully handled the crisis by tak-

Rai also alleged that the West Bengal

Scindia stood up and supported Rai,

saying that India had emerged as a

"Vishwa Bandhu" during the pandemic

and helped all the needy countries across

the world. Following this, Baneriee at-

tacked Scindia and made certain remarks

against the minister which were expunged

The verbal spat between the treasury

and opposition benches lead to adjourn-

ment. When the House reconvened,

Banerjee apologised for his remarks, but

House and said sorry. But I will say that

we all come to this House with the spirit

of contribution to the nation's develop-

ment...but we also come with a sense of

"Mr Kalyan Banerjee rose in this

government tried to put hurdles in the

transportation of Covid vaccines through

journed the House for the day.

ing everyone along.

by Speaker Om Birla.

Scindia refused to accept.

its territory.

in the Upper House of Parliament.



to participate in the event to mark

the culmination of the "Nyay Yatra"

moval," he said.

Lok Sabha adjourned for day as remarks

by TMC's Kalyan Banerjee trigger uproar

ers and often praises the government,"

over rules in the Rajva Sabha and the chair-

man has indulged in partisan behaviour," he

The Congress chief said since 1952, no

resolution has been brought against the vice

president under Article 67 of the Constitu-

tion as those who held the post previously

never indulged in politics and remained un-

biased. "The notice for the Rajya Sabha

chairman's removal is not about personal

with his behaviour and partiality. That is

why we have given the notice for his re-

a betrayal of the Constitution and the people

"Any individual in their lives will not

stand compromising with their self re-

spect. Attack us on our policies, on our

views, but if you will get personal, cer-

tainly be prepared for the response," the

Union minister said.

of India," Kharge added. (PTI)

"This is not just a breach of protocol but

RS chairman's partisan behaviour led us to

move notice for his removal as VP: Oppn parties

taken out by the party ahead of the Delhi Assembly polls.

Kejriwal met Nationalist Congress Party (SP) chief Sharad Pawar on Tuesday amid a rising demand in the INDIA bloc to appoint West Bengal chief minister Mamata Baneriee as the head of the alliance

that is currently chaired by Congress president Mallikarjun Kharge. However, neither Kejriwal nor the AAP has so far commented on the discussions that took place at the meeting with Pawar.

NATION

These developments are being seen as the Congress and the AAP making their moves cautiously in view of the upcoming Delhi polls, so that future options remain open, sources said. AAP's Rajya Sabha MP Raghav Chadha said reports suggesting any possible alliance between his party and the Congress are "completely baseless". "There is no scope for any alliance in Delhi. I urge everyone not to propagate such baseless rumours. The AAP is fully prepared to contest the election independently," Chadha asserted. Senior AAP leader Sanjay Singh said Keiriwal, the party's national convenor, has cleared it now

The AAP will contest the election independently and defeat the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) "comprehensively again, like it did in 2015 and 2020, winning 67 and 62

seats respectively", Singh asserted. The AAP and the Congress contested the Lok Sabha election in Delhi together earlier this year but were defeated from all the seven seats by the BJP. However, the two parties failed to finalise a seat-sharing deal for the Haryana Assembly polls in October despite several rounds of talks.

The AAP has so far released two lists containing the names of 31 candidates for the Delhi polls. The names of the remaining candidates

are expected to be announced soon. Out of power in Delhi since 1998, the BJP is making all-out efforts to dethrone the AAP from the

Centre must act, protect minorities in Bangladesh: Mamata

Kharge said. "Politics has taken precedence DIGHA (WB), Dec 11: West Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee on Wednesday said the Centre must give protection to minorities in violence-hit Bangladesh, and bring back "those willing to return"

> Banerjee also claimed that fake videos were being purposefully circulated, as certain sections were trying to foment communal tension.

"We want protection for minorities in Bangladesh. The Union government must act. It should also bring back those who want to grievances or political battles. We are fed up return to India," she told reporters here.

Bangladesh's minority Hindus, who constitute about 8 per cent of the 170 million population, have faced attacks in 50-odd districts since the fall of Sheikh Hasina's Awami League government on August 5.

garding Bangladesh)... Several fake videos are being circulated and people are getting misled. The Indian government has sent a representative, it is their responsibility. I have information that issuance of visa has been increased so that more people from that country can return," Banerjee said.

The CM is on a three-day trip to Digha to review the construction of the Jagannath tem-

She said that Muslim clerics, too, have criticised the attacks on Hindu minorities in Bangladesh and sought protection for them.

We are getting information that flights and trains are operating, and people with visas and

passports are arriving... Not a single India-Bangladesh border has been closed," the chief minister asserted. (PTI)

"I have already said in the assembly (re-BJD, Cong oppose delinking of

BHUBANESWAR, Dec 11: Opposition BJD and Congress on Wednesday came down heavily on Odisha's BJP government, accusing it of remaining silent as the profit-making Waltair division is being delinked from

by BJD member Ranendra Pratap Swain and Congress Legislature Party leader Rama Chandra Kadam, who claimed that ECoR would lose an annual revenue generation of about ₹ 10,000 crore after the Waltair division is merged with the newly-formed South Coast Railway Zone.

Swain, an MLA, blamed Railway Minwas elected to the Rajya Sabha with BJD support

Waltair division from ECoR

Odisha's interest after becoming Railway Minister," Swain said.

proposed Rayagada Division instead of being included in

way Zone in Andhra Pradesh.

Congress would launch an agitation if the Waltair division is delinked from the ECoR Zone.

However, Deputy Chief Minister KV Singh Deo reclaiming that most from the BJP government at the Centre.

"Different railway projects worth ₹73,000 crore are being implemented in the state. While the Waltair division is getting delinked from the ECoR zone, it is getting a newly formed Rayagada Division. Therefore, ECoR will continue to have three divisions under its jurisdic-

Cong insulting Jat community with motion against VP only to divert attention from Soros issue: BJP



NEW DELHI, Dec 11: The BJP on Wednesday alleged that the Congress was attempting to "defame" Jagdeep Dhankhar and "insulting" the Jat community by initiating a motion to remove him from the Vice President's post only to deflect public attention from the Gandhi family's "links" with George Soros.

Keeping up its offensive against the Congress, the ruling party also alleged that the connection between US-based billionaire Soros and the Nehru-Gandhi family runs deep, extending beyond Sonia Gandhi's 'role' as co-president of the Forum of Democratic Leaders - Asia Pacific (FDL-AP).

"Fori Nehru, a Hungarian like Soros, was married to BK Nehru. Jawaharlal Nehru's cousin, making her the aunt of Rahul Gandhi, former Congress President and Leader of the Opposition," the BJP said in a post on X.

George Soros is documented to have visited Fori Nehru and maintained extended correspondence with her and their association traces back to the time when BK Nehru served as India's ambassador to the United States, the party claimed.

This raises questions about the extent to which the Nehru-Gandhi family may have compromised India's strategic interests, over the decades, to benefit their extended family's financial and entrepreneurial pursuits, as well as the interests of the deep state, they have been aligned with, it said.

The BJP also slammed the Congress over the decision of the opposition INDIA bloc in Maharashtra to move the Supreme Court over allegations of manipulation of electronic voting machines (EVMs) in the state assembly elections held recently, saying it shows they do not have any respect for the Constitution.

Addressing a press conference at the BJP headquarters, BJP MP and national spokesperson Sambit Patra termed the opposition parties' notice for a no-confidence motion against Dhankar and INDIA bloc's decision to move Supreme Court on the EVM issue as painful and disturbing.

The Congress takes the issue of EVM to the Supreme Court again and again and returns defeated. Every time it tried to curse and drag the Election Commission, it faced embarrassment Yet the Congress is going to move the Supreme Court on the issue, he

This shows that Congress does not have any respect for the Constitution of India, he charged.

Patra alleged that the Congress along with its allies in the opposition gave a notice for initiating a motion to remove Vice President Dhankhar in a hurry on Tuesday after the BJP raised, both inside and outside Parliament, the issue of Gandhi-Nehru family's link with George Soros and the conspiracy to destabilise the country taking fund from the George Soros Foundation

Sonia Gandhi and Rahul Gandhi the entire Nehru-Gandhi family are involved in it, he claimed.

The BJP leader said it's sad that the Congress has sought initiation of a no-confidence motion against Dhankhar who comes from a humble background

It's an insult to a farmer's son, a man who comes from a humble background, he said, adding, And you (Congress) talk about caste?

Patra said that the Congress and its allies have brought the notice against Dhankhar knowing very well that it will fall flat on the floor of the House as they do not have enough numbers in their favour.

However, the party has brought such a kind of notice for the first time in Rajya Sabha against its chairperson just to insult the Jaat community, he charged.

Jats are patriots. Jats have shed their blood for the freedom of Hindustan and for Hindustan. Today you are making such allegations against a Jat Vice President. Somewhere you are trying to defame him by saying that he is not doing his work properly, Patra said.

Let me tell you that a farmer's son, a Jat, never bows down. He will never bow down. And the respect of Jats will always remain intact and firm in India Parliament will give a reply. People will give a reply, he added. (PTI)

"He has apologised...I do not accept his the East Coast Railway Zone apology for the personal attack that he (ECoR). He further argued that the jected the Opposition's alleareas of Waltair division had made on me and on the women of The issue was raised in the NEW DELHI, Dec 11: Lok Sabha on India." he said. Assembly during Zero Hour should be merged with the Odisha had benefited the Wednesday witnessed repeated adjourn-

Banerjee apologised again but protests from treasury benches continued. A Raja, who was presiding the House, said the two have settled the matter between themselves. As uproar continued, he adjourned the proceedings till 5 pm. When the House re-assembled, a Samaiwadi Party member started speaking on the Bill. But noisy protests by the treasury

benches continued, after which the Chair adjourned the House for the day. Earlier, the House passed the Railway (Amendment) Bill.

In the afternoon, when the House was taking up Zero Hour, the proceedings had to be adjourned till 2 pm amid a face-off between government and opposition benches over alleged links between the Congress leadership and US billionaire George Soros-backed outfits.

After days of disruptions, the Lok Sabha took up the entire Question Hour which was followed by the Zero Hour with members raising issues related to their constituencies.

Trouble broke out in the House when Congress member Gaurav Gogoi raised the issue of violence in Manipur and accused the BJP of raising the Soros issue to hide their failures in the northeastern state. Commerce minister Piyush Goyal hit back, accusing the Congress leadership of having links with Soros-backed outfits that were allegedly working to destabilise India.

As the opposition and treasury benches traded charges, BJP member Sandhya Ray, who was in the chair, adjourned the proceedings till 2 pm. (PTI)

from Odisha. He also announced that "I feel ashamed that we voted for the man who has working against

the South Coast Railway Zone. "I demand a statement from Chief Minister Mohan Charan Majhi on this issue," he added. CLP leader Rama Chandra Kadam alleged that the BJP-led central government

was neglecting the interests of Odisha by allowing the Waltair division to merge tion as earlier," Singh Deo with the South Coast Rail- said. (PTI)

Govt working on policy of 'zero casualties' during disasters: Union Minister Rai in Lok Sabha

NEW DELHI, Dec 11: The government is working on the policy of "zero casualties" during disasters in line with Prime Minister Narendra Modi's pledge of making India a developed country by 2047, Union Minister Nityanand Rai said in the Lok Sabha on Wednesday.

Moving the Disaster Management (Amendment) Bill 2024 for consideration and passage, Rai said that since the Modi government has come to power, losses have come down due to able disaster management techniques.

Members of the opposition expressed reservations on the bill during the discussion, alleging that it would lead to centralisation of power in the hands of the Union government, but the minister asserted that the legislation was framed to address the difficulties flagged by the

"India faces a variety of disasters across seasons. The government is working on the policy of 'zero casualties' in line with Prime Minister Narendra Modi's pledge of making India a developed country by 2047," Rai said.

The minister of state for home said in the recent cyclones, there was zero loss of lives as compared to the super cyclone (of 1999) in which thousands had

"States faced difficulties in implementing the Disaster Management Act of 2005. The proposed amendment is based on overcoming the difficulties flagged by states to the Union Home Minister," he said.

Initiating the debate, Congress leader Shashi Tharoor claimed that the legislation is constitutionally untenable as it lacks on various fronts, is "ill thought out" and will lead to "overlapping".

He said the bill would bring greater centralisation of power in the hands of central government.

Tharoor said the legislation seeks to weaken the national executive committee and state executive committees related to disaster management.

He lamented that the Kerala government's demand for declaring the rains, floods and landslides in Wayanad, that took place in July, as a national disaster was rejected by the central government.

Asking the central government to withdraw the bill, the Congress MP said that the MPs will have no voice in disaster management once the legislation

Supporting the bill, BJP MP Trivendra Singh Rawat said that the legislation will help the states in handling all disasters in a better way. He said the bill took care of the con-

cerns of the people living in remote areas of hill states like Uttarakhand, which has seen many natural disasters

Rawat expressed the hope that legislation will enable the government to handle disasters more efficiently.

Participating in the debate, TMC's Kalyan Banerjee said the bill seeks to make several positive changes in disaster management but there were many negative clauses too.

He claimed that the bill would ensure further centralisation power in the hands of Union government.

When the TMC member alleged noncooperation by the central government during the COVID-19 pandemic, Minister of State for Home Nityanand Rai countered it, saying it was Prime Minister Narendra Modi who helped all the states and successfully handled the crisis by taking everyone along.

Rai also alleged that the West Bengal government tried to put hurdles in the transportation of COVID-19 vaccines through the state. (PTI)

Chouhan bats for 'one nation, one election', says frequent polls

CHANDIGARH, Dec 11: Making a strong pitch for 'one nation, one election', Union Agriculture Minister Shivraj Singh Chouhan on Wednesday contended that frequent polls were creating hurdles in the

nation's progress.

Addressing an event in Kurukshetra as part of the ongoing International Gita festival, Chouhan said the country is moving ahead rapidly under the leadership of Prime Minister Narendra Modi.

A glorious, prosperous and powerful India is being built under the leadership of the prime minister. Soon, India will become the "Vishwa Guru" (world leader) in front of our eyes. There is no doubt about it, and the whole world knows it, he said.

"But there is one hurdle in India's progress and development, which is frequent elections. Any other thing may be happening or not in the country, but election preparations continue for twelve months all five



elections get over, Assembly elections come. Harvana, Jammu and Kashmir, Maharashtra and Jharkhand are done, now Delhi assembly polls are coming," Chouhan said.

"Then there will be elections in Bihar and when we will deal with it, there will be another round of elections. All political parties prepare for elections all five years and in that public welfare works and development works get left behind,'

"Chunav jeetne ki chinta mein, sare dalon ke neta lage rehte hai (Leaders of all parties remain engaged in the race of winning the elections)," the Union minister said in the presence of Haryana Chief Minister Navab Singh Saini.

"Now I am the Agriculture Minister, but If elections come, I remain engaged in election campaigning for three months continuously," he said. A lot of time of the prime minister, chief ministers, ministers, MPs, MLAs, officers and other employees is wasted and all development works are impacted, the minister charged. "Public welfare works are left be-

hind," he said, while adding that expenditure is involved in conducting elections while poll expenses are also incurred by those contesting. "The Election Commission also

spends, it is public money and then political parties also spend. How much time is wasted? Now, when elections will be held in other states, Nayab Saini ji (will go there for campaigning etc), the Haryana government officials will be put on duty (by the Election Commission) as observers. Your work here will stalled for two-three months....(frequent polls). It ob-

structs our development," he said. Chouhan said frequent elections will keep taking place and therefore by amending the Constitution, all the assembly and Lok Sabha elections should be held together once in five years. "We must create public aware-

ness for this," he said at the event attended by seers and students who gathered for the global recitation of the Bhagavad Gita. "Tell me, should it (simultaneous polls) happen or not? Tell me

loudly, should it happen or not..," he asked. "A public awareness should be created so that the political parties are one on the issue of holding simultaneous elections... so that the country's progress and develop-

ment are not hindered," he said. Moving ahead with its 'one nation, one election' plan, the central government in September accepted the recommendations of the highlevel committee for holding simultaneous polls for the Lok Sabha, state assemblies and local bodies in a phased manner. (PTI)

Goa cash-for-jobs scam: AAP seeks judicial probe; BJP says ED inquiry on PANAJI, Dec 11: The Aam Aadmi

Party on Wednesday demanded a judicial probe into the cash-for-jobs scam in Goa, claiming that an inquiry by the Enforcement Directorate (ED) will not yield any result.

Goa BJP spokesperson Giriraj Pai Vernekar, however, said the opposition itself had demanded an ED inquiry which was now underway and there was nothing to hide.

The AAP leaders were targeting Chief Minister Pramod Sawant and his family over the scam for "political reasons", he said, adding the first FIR in the matter was registered at the CM's behest.

The Goa police have arrested several persons in connection with the fraud wherein many people have been duped under the pretext of being provided government jobs.

Several complaints had been filed across Goa, with many government job aspirants alleging they were forced to pay lakhs of rupees to some persons under the pretext of facilitating employment

CM Sawant had said an unbiased investigation was underway into the scam, with police apprehending several accused, who were luring youth to pay for getting government obs. Talking to reporters here, AAP Goa president Amit Palekar said media reports have claimed the ED has initiated an inquiry into the

"I feel that the ED's inquiry will fetch no results as it is yet another agency of the BJP," he alleged.

Palekar alleged some BJP functionaries were involved in the scam, hence his party has demanded a judicial inquiry into it.

AAP MP Sanjay Singh also recently targeted the state BJP government over the scam.

Reacting to AAP's allegations of Sawant and his wife being involved in the scam, Vernekar challenged the Arvind Kejriwal-led outfit and other opposition parties to come forward with "a single document linking the CM or his family to the cash-for-jobs scam." (PTI)

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Muslims in UP's Jaunpur adopt Hindu surnames, cite Hindu ancestry

ΓHURSDAY, DECEMBER 12, 2024



JAUNPUR (UP), Dec 11: Several Muslim families in a village here have adopted surnames such as Dubey, Pandey, and Tiwari, claiming their ancestors were Hindus.

This transformation stems from a campaign led by the Vishal Bharat Sansthan, an organisation encouraging individuals in the Purvanchal region of the state "to reconnect with their roots" to end religious

Naushad Ahmed, now known as Naushad Ahmed Dubey, said, "I discovered my ancestors were Brahmins. My father, Lal Bahadur Dubey, was later known as Lal Bahadur Sheikh.'

A resident of Dehri village in Kerakat tehsil, he asserted that he follows Islamic practices such as namaz and fasting, but has started caring for cows and now owns nine of them. "I haven't changed my religion, just my surname, to honour my ancestors," he said. However, none of the family members have changed their surname.

The campaign has inspired others in the village which has a sizeable Muslim population.

Sheikh Abdullah, now Sheikh Abdullah Dubey, said he has adopted the Dubey surname but continues to practice Islam. He declined to engage in Hindu rituals like reciting the Hanuman Chalisa or idol worship

Ehtesham Ahmed, another resident, acknowledged his Brahmin lineage but refrained from using a Hindu surname, saying, "Adopting a surname doesn't mean practising Hindu rituals.'

Naushad, who faced backlash after getting his full name printed on his daughter's wedding invitation, revealed, "Some people spread rumours that I have converted my religion, causing the marriage to be called off. However, I didn't justify

myself to anyone."

The local Kerakat police station in-charge Avneesh Kumar Rai on Tuesday held a meeting in the village following threats to Naushad's family.

"We will identify and act against mischief-makers," he assured them. Meanwhile, Jaunpur Superintendent of Police Ajaypal Sharma told PTI that extra police personnel have deployed in the area as a preventive measure even though, there have been no official complaints in the cases. "We are maintaining communication with all locals.'

Rajeev 'Guruji', the national president of Vishal Bharat Sansthan, said the organisation's work aims to help people rediscover their ancestry.

"Through our 'Reconnect with Roots' initiative, many have come forward to explore their family histories," he said.

He added that the campaign has extended beyond Jaunpur, with families in Azamgarh, Ghazipur, and Varanasi also adopting Hindu surnames. He claimed that Kunwar Naseem Raza Sikarwar of Ghazipur and others like Irshad Ahmed Pandey and Rehan Dubey have played pivotal roles in this move-

When asked about the motivation for the initiative, Rajeev said, "The aim of this campaign is to end religious conflicts. If people know their roots, they can forget their mutual

"Any religion can be changed but caste cannot be changed. There are as many castes in Muslims as there are in Hindus. Muslims also have Brahmins, Thakurs, and Vaishyas. In such a situation, if we find out their roots and prove that a particular person is also a Brahmin, then people can forget their mutual animosity," he told PTI. (PTI)

'Roving, fishing inquiry': Delhi HC asks CBI stand on plea over electoral bond donations 'This appears to be a roving and fishing inquiry'

NEW DELHI, Dec 11: The Delhi High Court on Wednesday sought the stand of the CBI over a plea seeking the court-monitored investigation into the alleged quid pro quo and corruption in donations made through electoral bonds to various political parties.

A bench comprising Acting Chief Justice Vibhu Bakhru and Justice Tushar Rao Gedela, while clarifying it was not examining the allegations, asked the CBI counsel to seek instructions and said the plea did not seem to be bonafide and was pushing a "roving and fishing inquiry"

"You are building edifice on quid pro quo. This appears to be a roving and fishing inquiry. This is seeming to be a petition that is without any material. This does not seem bona fide," it said.

The CBI counsel raised a preliminary objection saying the petition was not maintainable.

"The scope of the petition is limited. Complaint is made. Reject it if you want. Take instructions. We are not telling you how you deal with a complaint," the court told the CBI counsel.



was made out in view of the disclosure following the Supreme Court's judgement scrapping the electoral bonds scheme, and urged the court to direct the CBI to file an affidavit.

The court refused his plea and posted the hearing in January,

Petitioner Sudip Narayan Tamankar, who claims to be an activist espousing the cause of public interest, sought a direction for a court-monitored investigation by the CBI into his April 18, 2024, complaint pursuant to a Supreme The counsel for the petitioner Court court passed on August 2. Tamankar, in his plea, said the

electoral bond scheme created an opaque electoral funding veil for quid pro quo arrangements between corporate entities and the political parties. A five-judge Constitution bench

of the Supreme Court on February 15 scrapped the electoral bonds scheme of anonymous political funding introduced by the BJP government Following the top court's judge-

ment, the State Bank of India, the authorised financial institution under the scheme, shared the data with the EC, which made it public subsequently.

The electoral bonds scheme no-

tified by the government on January 2, 2018, was pitched as an alternative to cash donations made to political parties as part of its efforts to bring in transparency in political funding.

Tamankar previously filed a petition before the Supreme Court with a similar prayer.

On August 2, the top court rejected a batch of pleas seeking a court-monitored investigation into the electoral bonds scheme while observing it couldn't order a roving inquiry.

The apex court said it would be premature and inappropriate to order a probe under a retired judge when the remedies available under the ordinary law governing criminal law procedure had not been invoked.

It said it cannot order a roving inquiry into purchase of electoral bonds on the assumption of a quid pro quo for award of contract.

The apex court also said where there was a refusal to investigate or a closure report was filed, recourse could be taken to appropriate remedies under the law governing criminal procedure or Article 226 of the Constitution. (PTI)

Manish Sisodia not to report to police twice a week: SC

and former Delhi deputy chief minister Manish Sisodia won't have to report to the investigating officer twice a week in the corruption and money laundering cases related to the Delhi excise policy after the Supreme Court relaxed his bail conditions on Wednesday.

A bench of Justices B R Gavai and K V Viswanathan eased the conditions, calling them unnecessary. "The petitioner shall regularly attend the trial," it said.

The apex court on November 22 agreed to hear Sisodia's pleas and issued notices to the CBI and the ED seeking their responses.

On August 9, the apex court granted him bail in both cases linked to the alleged 2021-22 Delhi excise policy case, saying a 17month long incarceration without trial deprived him of his right to a speedy trial.

The apex court then imposed conditions, including his reporting to the investigating officer every Monday and Thursday between 10 and 11 am. During the hearing on November 22, Singhvi argued the AAP leader had appeared before the investigating officers 60 times.

Sisodia was arrested by both the CBI and the ED in the corruption and money laundering cases, respectively, linked to the alleged ex-

NIA records conviction rate of 95.23 per cent: Govt

NEW DELHI, Dec 11: The NIA, which registered 640 cases since its inception, has recorded a conviction rate of 95.23 per cent in 147 cases which have been decided by courts, the government informed the Rajya Sabha on Wednesday.

Responding to a question, minister of State for Home Affairs Nityanand Rai said 109 cases of the anti-terror agency are under "active investigation", while 395 are under "further investigation".

"As of December 05, 2024, the NIA has registered 640 cases since its inception... 505 cases have been charge sheeted. 4174 accused have been arrested so far by the NIA and 595 have been convicted," he said.

Rai said that out of 147 cases decided by courts, 140 have resulted in conviction, thus showing a conviction rate of 95.23 per cent by

"The NIA has seized/attached a total of 543 (movable and immovable) properties worth ₹ 109.6 crore under the Unlawful Activities (Prevention) Act," he said.

Prior to 2019, there were eight branch offices of the NIA and since 2019, the government has taken further steps to strengthen the agency and has sanctioned 13 new branch offices along with two zonal offices during the last five years. Rai said.

"With regard to strengthening of man power, since 2019, 810 new posts have been eated, one post of additional director general (ADG) and six posts of inspector general (IG) rank officers have been sanctioned. In addition to above, 105 posts of technical experts for cyber/technical experts have been sanctioned by the government," he said. (PTI)

Violent protests in Maharashtra's Parbhani over damage to Constitution replica CHHATRAPATI SAMBHAJINAGAR,

Dec 11: Prohibitory orders were imposed in central Maharashtra's Parbhani city on Wednesday as violent protests rocked the city for second day over the vandalising of a replica of the Indian Constitution, police

Amid the bandh called by Ambedkarite activists, a mob indulged in arson and the district collector's office was vandalised, officials said.

Prohibitory orders were imposed in the city, banning the gathering of five or more persons in public places, and a company of the State Reserve Police Force has been called in to help maintain law and order, said a senior official.

A glass-encased cement replica of the Constitution outside Parbhani railway station, close to a statue of Dr B R Ambedkar, was found to have been damaged on Tuesday, sparking protests.

Police arrested a man in connection with the incident, but protests resumed on Wednesday morning. "PVC pipes outside a shop were set ablaze around 1 pm today. As the mob became violent, police fired tear gas shells and dispersed them," said acting

superintendent of Police Yeshwant Kale. The protesters were demanding that police should find who was behind Tuesday's incident of vandalising, he told PTI.

Hundreds of protesters gathered outside the collector's office, and some of them including women activists rushed inside and damaged furniture and window panes before police brought the situation under control, said inspector general of Police Shahji

Protesters were supposed to hand over a memorandum to the collector in the morning and return peacefully, but some of them



attacked signboards of shops and CCTVs along the way and tyres were also burnt on the road, he said.

Bandh was also observed in Vasmat area of the district, local officials said.

Protesters had blocked the railway tracks at Parbhani station on Tuesday evening and roughed up the loco-pilot of the Nandigram Express.

IG Umap who reviewed the law and order situation appealed people not to target public property and resort to violence.

Varsha Gaikwad, Ambedkarite leader and Lok Sabha MP from Mumbai, demanded a thorough investigation. "How can anyone insult the Constitution....those arrested should be thoroughly questioned to find who is the mastermind," she said.

Congress leader Vijay Wadettiwar blamed the initial "lax approach" of the government and local administration after the incident came to light.

Had necessary action been taken promptly, the violence could have been avoided, he said

Shiv Sena (UBT) leader Aaditya Thackeray said desecration of the Constitution's

replica was condemnable. Demanding strict action against the culprits, he also appealed to the protesters to conduct their agitation peacefully. (PTI)

Much needed to completely eradicate Actor Mohan Babu booked for allegedly manual sewer cleaning: SC

NEW DELHI, Dec 11: Observing much needed to be done, the Supreme Court on Wednesday directed the Centre to file an acremained unheard and muted, in bondage tion taken report on the compliance of its direction for ensuring manual sewer cleaning was completely eradicated in a phased man-

A bench of Justices Sudhanshu Dhulia and Aravind Kumar asked additional solicitor general Aishwarya Bhati, appearing for the Centre, to call a meeting of the central monitoring committee with all the stakeholders within two weeks.

The committee reviews the implementation of the Prohibition of Employment as Manual Scavengers and their Rehabilitation Act, 2013 (MS Act, 2013).

'The order passed by the court (in 2023) said that considering the development of technology, it was entirely possible to eradicate manual scavenging and employment of labour for sewer cleaning. This has not been done. From the report, it appears that much needs to be done," the bench said.

Senior advocate K Parameshwar, who is assisting the court as amicus curiae, submitted 40 deaths occurred due to sewer cleaning and cleaning septic tanks in 2024 but no FIR was filed.

He flagged most of the committees as mandated under the Act were not in place and pointed out noncompliance of the laws. The matter would come up in January,

ulation, involved in manual scavenging, had and systematically trapped in inhumane conditions, the top court in 2023 directed the Centre and states to take appropriate measures, frame policies and issue directions to ensure that manual sewer cleaning was completely eradicated in a phased man-

The top court had asked the Centre to issue guidelines and directions that any sewer-cleaning work outsourced or required to be done by or through contractors or agencies, did not require individuals to enter

Issuing a slew of directions, the court previously asked the central and state governments to pay ₹ 30 lakh compensation to the next of kin of those who died while cleaning

It directed all the states and union territories to make sure all departments, agencies and corporations ensured the guidelines and directions framed by the Centre were incorporated in their own guidelines.

The apex court had further directed in the case of sewer victims suffering from any disability, the minimum compensation won't be less than ₹ 10 lakh.

If the disability was permanent and rendered the victim economically helpless, the compensation should not be less than ₹ 20

assaulting journalist in Hyderabad

HYDERABAD, Dec 11: A case was registered against veteran Telugu actor Mohan Babu for allegedly assaulting a video journalist here, police said on Wednesday.

In a related development, the former Rajya Sabha member and his two sons--Vishnu and Manoj, were served notices under Section 126 BNSS to appear before the Rachakonda Commissioner of Police on December 11 for a "probable breach of peace"

Accordingly, Manoj appeared before the police commissioner.

In his complaint, the journalist stated that when he visited Mohan Babu's Jalpally residence on December 10 to cover the ongoing "dispute" between the actor and his younger son Manoj, the senior actor confronted him and other journalists aggressively. He allegedly grabbed the microphone, used "abusive and foul language," and attacked him with it, causing a head injury.

Based on the complaint lodged by the 35-year-old journalist, the case was registered under Section 118 (1) (voluntarily causing hurt using dangerous weapons or substances) of the BNS at the Pahadishareef police station, a police official said.

Condemning the "attack," media

personnel protested on Wednesday, demanding an apology from Mohan Babu. Addressing reporters, Mohan Babu's elder son Vishnu today said he will not speak on the family issue and expressed hope that it would be resolved amicably. He asked media not to sensationalise the matter.

Reacting on the "attack" on the journalist, he termed it as unfortunate, adding "it was not intentional". Manoj, who separately met reporters, apologised to the mediaper-

sons over the incident on behalf of his father and elder brother. Meanwhile, Mohan Babu was admitted to a hospital after complain-

ing of illness. The differences within Mohan Babu's family became public on December 9 after he lodged a police complaint, alleging that Manoj and his wife had "orchestrated" a plan to take possession of his Jalpally home through intimidation and force.

However, Manoj reiterated that his fight was not for a "share of the property" but for "self-respect and the safety of his wife and children." He had already sought police protection for his family.

Earlier, the police had booked Manoj and others based on Mohan Babu's complaint. (PTI)

Techie suicide: Victim's family demands justice, strict action against harassers

BENGALURU, Dec 11: The family of the 34-year-old techie who allegedly died by suicide, has demanded justice for him and strict action against his harassers.

Atul Subhash, who worked for a private firm in the city, had left behind a 24page purported death note, giving extensive details of what he alleged was years-long emotional distress of marital issues; multiple cases filed against him and harassment by his wife, her relatives, and a judge based in Uttar Pradesh, police

Speaking to PTI videos here, Subhash's brother Bikas said, "I want my brother to get justice. I want this country to have a legal process through which even men can get justice. I want strict action against those who are sitting on a legal chair and doing corruption because if this continues then how will people expect justice.'

Alleging corruption in the system, he said justice can be expected only when it is corruption-free, when every party is heard equally and arguments are done based on facts

"....can expect justice only when decisions are made on the basis of facts and if it does not happen, then people will slowly start losing faith in judicial system. It may lead to a situation where people may get afraid to get married. Men may start feeling that if they get married, they will just end up being an ATM machine for vending money," he alleged.

Subhash's body was found hanging at his residence in the Manjunath Layout area, which falls under the Marathahalli police station limits, on Monday. A placard reading "Justice is due" was found in the room where he allegedly ended his

Before taking to the extreme step, he recorded an over 80-minute video on Rumble, explaining the circumstances behind his decision.

In the video, which has now gone viral on social media platforms, Subhash can be heard saying, "I feel that I should kill myself because the money I earn is making my enemies stronger. That same money will be used to destroy me, and this cycle will keep going.'

Subhash's uncle Pawan Kumar alleged his nephew was being harassed and tortured for money and that he was also humiliated by his wife and the judge.

"What has happened is very unfortunate. He was losing the case (filed by his wife). He was being tortured. They (wife and family) were constantly demanding money from him. To the best of his capacity, he was giving her money for child maintenance.

Initially the family demanded ₹ 40,000 per month, doubled it later and then wanted the deceased to provide Rs 1 lakh.

Kumar charged Subhash's wife and her family of 'minting' money from his nephew under the pretext of child maintenance, for the couple's four year-old

He wondered how much money would be required to raise a child of this age.

"His wife even said that he should commit suicide if he cannot pay the amount to which the judge also laughed. This really hurt him," he alleged.

Suicidal thoughts had been lingering in Subhash's mind for the last six months "and till the last moment, he didn't let us know anything.'

Kumar said the family had no idea Subhash may do something like this. "He had made a time table for everything."

Following Subhash's death, a case of abetment of suicide has been registered against his wife and her family members. (PTI)

India to triple atomic power capacity by 2031 'Among global leaders in leveraging atomic energy for peaceful and innovative purposes

NEW DELHI, Dec 11: India's atomic power capacity has almost doubled in the past decade from 4,780 megawatts to 8,081 megawatts and it would be tripled by 2031, Union Minister Jitendra Singh said on Wednesday.

Responding to a question in the Lok Sabha, Singh who holds key portfolios in the Prime Minister's Office, including the department of atomic energy and the department of space, emphasised the transformative strides made since 2014. "When this government came into

power, the total power generation capac-

ity was 4,780 megawatts. Today, in 2024,

it stands at 8,081 megawatts. This means

that the capacity developed in the last 10

years equals what was achieved over the previous 60 years," he said. Singh projected that by 2031-32, the generation capacity would triple, reach-

ing 22,480 megawatts. The minister attributed this progress not only to technical expertise but to a shift in political will.

"We always had the talent and capac-



ity, but what was missing, perhaps, was the enabling milieu provided by political

leadership," he said. Responding to questions about powersharing arrangements and project delays in Tamil Nadu, Singh noted that the formula for electricity distribution had been revised to ensure fairness.

"Currently, 50 per cent of electricity is

allocated to the home state, 35 per cent to neighbouring states, and 15 per cent to the national grid. This formula aligns with the federal spirit," he said. Singh acknowledged that one project

in Tirunelveli remains on hold, contributing to delays in capacity expansion in the state. However, he highlighted the success of Kundankulam, which now has

four operational units, and Kalpakkam, both of which gained momentum post-2014. Singh also highlighted the peaceful applications of atomic energy, as envisioned by Homi Bhabha. He noted the role of atomic energy in

agriculture, producing 70 mutagenic crop varieties, and healthcare, where isotopes developed through atomic processes are used in cancer treatment. "India is among the global leaders in

leveraging atomic energy for peaceful

and innovative purposes," he noted.

On India's thorium reserves, Singh said the country possesses 21 per cent of the world's supply. "Monazite, a beach mineral, is the primary source of thorium. Past issues of

pilferage have been addressed, and we

are advancing towards utilising this resource," he said. Singh added that the indigenous Bhavini project is experimenting with thorium usage, which will reduce dependence on uranium and other imported

materials. (PTI)



Ranveer Singh

Baaja Baaraat:

DREAMS

'WHEN MY

BECAME A

start a wedding planning company called 'Shaadi Mubarak'.

made his acting dreams a "reality".

Stories on Wednesday.

REALITY

NEW DELHI, Dec 11: Bollywood star Ranveer Singh has marked the 14-year

The hit Hindi film, which released in theatres on December 10, 2010, is di-

rected by Maneesh Sharma and produced by Yash Raj Films. It also starred

release anniversary of "Band Baaja Baaraat", his debut feature film which he said

"Band Baaja Baaraat" featured the actor in the role of Bittu, an unambitious,

lazy Delhi man who teams up with a focused, driven woman Shruti (Anushka) to

Ranveer, who has since then went on to become one of the most versatile per-

formers in Hindi cinema, shared a video montage from the film on his Instagram

He captioned the post as: "14 years since Band Baaja Baaraat. When my

dreams became a reality. #dreams #manifestations #blessings #gratitude." Ranveer is also known for films such as "Ram-Leela", "Dil Dhadakne Do", "Gully

Boy", "Bajirao Mastani", "Rocky Aur Rani Kii Prem Kahaani", and "Singham

He is currently working on an untitled film with director Aditya Dhar. (PTI)

on 14 years of Band

Alia Bhatt congratulates Payal Kapadia for twin Golden Globe nominations

NEW DELHI, Dec 11: Bollywood star English Language and the Best Di-Alia Bhatt has applauded Payal Kapadia after her acclaimed film "All We Imagine As Light" was nominated for two Golden Globe Awards.

The Malayalam-Hindi film, which marks Kapadia's feature directorial debut, is nominated for Best Motion

rection - Motion Picture at the upcoming awards.

Bhatt shared a video clip of Hollywood star Mindy Kaling announcing "All We Imagine..." as one of the nominees in the Best Direction - Motion Picture cate-

gory.
"History is yours! @payalkapadiafilm @allweimagineaslightfilm," she captioned

> the announcement video on hei Instagram Story on

The official Instagram page of "All We Imagine..." re-shared Bhatt's post on the

French co-production,

the first Indian title from

India to win the Grand

Prix Award at the

Cannes Film

Prabha

(Kani Ku

ruti) and

(Divya

Prabha)

from

Kerala

Anu

charted history by becoming

love in Mumbai along with their friend and cook Parvaty (Chhaya Kadam). "All We Imagine...", which The film, an official Indiareleased in November in

India after releasing in Kerala a month ago, is set to rerelease in select cinemas on December 13.

"Coming back this Fri-

day in select cinemas!" wrote Kapadia after an X user urged her to re-release the movie in theatres. Rana Daggubati's production banner Spirit Media has distributed "All We Imagine... across Indian the-

Honoured to have been invited by PM to commemorate Raj Kapoor's legacy: Kareena



NEW DELHI, Dec 11: A day after the members of Rai Kapoor's family met Prime Minister Narendra Modi, Bollywood star Kareena Kapoor Khan thanked him for inviting them to "commemorate the extraordinary life and legacy of their grandfather ahead of the cinema icon's birth cente-

The Kapoor family, including

actors Ranbir Kapoor, Riddhima Kapoor Sahni, and Neetu Kapoor, met the prime minister on Tuesday and invited him to the Raj Kapoor Film Festival to be held to celebrate the occasion.

December 14, 2024 marks the 100th birth anniversary of Raj Kapoor, an actor, editor, a director, and a producer, known for classics such as "Aag". "Awara", "Barsaat", "Shree 420", and "Bobby"

According to Kareena's Instagram post, the PM invited the Kapoor clan to New Delhi ahead of the milestone anniver

We are deeply humbled and honored to have been invited by the Honourable Prime Minister, Shri Narendra Modi, to commemorate the extraordinary life and legacy of our grandfather, the legendary Raj

"Thank you Shri Modi ji for such a special afternoon. Your warmth, attention, and support in celebrating this milestone meant the world to us," she captioned a series of pictures of the family with the prime min-

The Kapoor kin, including Rima Jain, Karisma Kapoor, Alia Bhatt, Saif Ali Khan, Aadar Jain, Aarman Jain and Anissa Malhotra, met Modi in New Delhi on Tuesday to invite the prime minister for the Raj Kapoor Film Festival, a source earlier told PTI. (PTI)

Tension at actor Mohan Babu's Hyderabad home over son's entry attempt

HYDERABAD, Dec 11: A case was registered against veteran Telugu actor Mohan Babu for allegedly assaulting a video journalist here, police said on Wednesday.

In his complaint, the journalist stated that when he visited Mohan Babu's Jalpally residence on December 10 to cover the ongoing "dispute" between the actor and his younger son Manoj, the senior actor confronted him and other journalists aggressively.

He allegedly grabbed the microphone, used "abusive and foul language," and attacked him with it, causing a head injury. Based on the complaint filed by the 35-year-old journalist, the case was registered under Section 118 (1) (voluntarily causing hurt using dangerous weapons or substances) of the BNS at the Pahadishareef police station, a police official said. Chaos erupted at Mohan Babu's residence on Tuesday night when Manoj, an actor, attempted to enter the

house but was denied entry.

During the commotion, the video journalist covering the incident was allegedly attacked.

TV visuals showed Mohan Babu trying to hit the journalist with a microphone Condemning the "attack," media personnel protested on Wednesday, demanding an apology from Mohan

Raj Kapoor@100: His films, portrayal of women and the wrinkles of time

NEW DELHI, Dec 11: He started with "Aag" in 1948 and ended with "Ram Teri Ganga Maili" in 1985, one praised for its portrayal of a man in search for the woman of his dreams and the other panned by some for its male gaze. In the 37 years in between, Raj Kapoor directed 10 films and produced many, each in its own way burnishing the

showman image. As filmdom, fans and family celebrate the 100th birth anniversary of Raj Kapoor, amongst the most impactful in the history of Indian cinema, it was also time to wonder - have his films wrinkled with time or stood the test of the decades in

an ever changing India? Yes, they have. Just like fine wine, said film historian SMM Ausaja, who sees 100 years of Raj Kapoor as a "momentous" occasion for the Hindi film industry.

"His films had a message and got the social issues right. That is the reason why they were also popular outside India, especially in the Russian republic. Those were the days of socialism and Nehruvian socialism. And his father Prithvirai Kapoor was close to Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru," Ausaja told PTI.

Raj Kapoor, who would have been 100 on December 14, made his first film "Aag" when he was just 24.

It was the year after Independence and the young filmmaker mirrored many of the preoccupations of a young nation in the films that followed.

The burning passion of the Hindi cinema pioneer, inspired by his father Prithviraj Kapoor, led to the

birth of RK Studios that year. The banner's films, starting with "Aag" and going on to "Awara",

"Barsaat", "Jagte Raho", "Mera Naam Joker", "Bobby" and "Ram Teri Ganga Maili", chronicled the different phases of a filmmaker in tune with an India on the move. All his films are remembered for their

There has been a dramatic change in the times, socialism is no longer considered a viable option and consumerism is considered a valuable activity, said sociologist Sanjay Srivastava.

"Hindi films since the 1990s reflect these themes. It is not that Raj Kapoor's films have aged badly but that Indian society has aged differently," Srivastava told PTI.

"Most of his films were heroine oriented. Look at the bravery of this man that he launched his son Rishi Kapoor in a film called 'Bobby'. Which producer in the world will do this?" Ausaja asked.

The 1973 teen romance, which catapulted newcomers Rishi Kapoor and Dimple Kapadia, playing the titular role in "Bobby" into stardom, was a runaway hit.

Despite suffering a "colossal disaster" in the ambitious, pensive "Mera Naam Joker" (1970), Raj Kapoor bounced back three years later with "Bobby, which the veteran filmmaker helmed when he was 50, said his grandson Ranbir Kapoor.

"He had the courage to make a film with newcomers, a 50-year-old man making a film for the youth. That means that he really kept up with the times. He was not somebody who was high up in his ivory tower. He was constantly in touch with the common man," Ranbir said at a retrospective of the showman at the recent International Film Festival of India (IFFI). (PTI)







Left-handed Litchfield was caught behind chasing an away swinger

Sutherland's special ton takes Australia to 298



PERTH, Dec 11: Australia survived a stellar spell from India pacer Arundhati Reddy to post a challenging 298 for six in the third and final Women's ODI here on Wednesday.

Annabel Sutherland (110 off 95) led Australia's recovery after Reddy struck four times in quick succession for career-best figures in limited-overs cricket. Having already lost the series,

India opted to bowl at the iconic WACA ground but did not get the required breakthroughs in the first powerplay with Phoebe Litchfield (25 off 33) and Georgia Voll (26 off 30) going strong.

However, Reddy, playing only her fifth ODI, changed the course of the game in one over by removing the openers in a space of four balls. Unlike Renuka Thakur and Saima Thakor. Reddy got the ball to swing back from a fuller length and that is what led to the fall of last match's centurion Voll, who saw her stumps disturbed.

Left-handed Litchfield was caught behind chasing an away swinger and all the momentum gained by Australia was suddenly

Next to depart was star allrounder Elysse Perry who had no answer to a beauty from Reddy that held its line to hit the top of off-stump. When Beth Mooney departed, Australia were reduced to 78 for four from 58 for no loss.

Sutherland and Ashleigh Gardner (50 off 64) then showed the enviable depth of the Australian batting by sharing a 96-run stand for the fifth wicket. Sutherland was the aggressor in the partnership and especially pounded the spinners, smashing two fours and a six off Deepti Sharma in the 40th

India's catching left a lot to be desired as they grassed three tough

Australia skipper Tahlia Mc-Grath (56 not out off 50) joined Sutherland in the 35th over and the duo pushed the score towards 300. Sutherland got to her hundred by dispatching Deepti for a six over mid-wicket in the final over of the

Bengal go down to Baroda in SMAT quarterfinals

BENGALURU, Dec 11: Pacer Mohammed Shami rarely operated at his best and it had a cascading effect on Bengal as they went down by 41 runs against Baroda in the quarterfinals of the Syed Mushtaq Ali Trophy here on Wednesday.

Opener Shashwat Rawat topscored with a 26-ball 40 (1x4, 3x6) as Baroda posted a competitive 172 for seven, and Bengal ended up with 131 all out despite Shahbaz Ahmed (55, 36b, 3x4, 4x6) playing a fine cameo.

Skipper Hardik Pandya (3/27) along with his pace colleagues Lukeman Merriwala (3/17) and Atit Sheth (3/41) were the lead bowlers in Baroda's stroll into the semifinals.

Shami's outing was more in focus as the seasoned quick has been striving hard to join the Indian squad in Australia at least for the last two Tests of the ongoing Border-Gavaskar Trophy.

His overall numbers ahead of this match was 11 wickets from eight matches at an economy rate of 7.8, but on this day Shami looked anything but sharp.

He started with two wides in the first over and hardly looked in control of the proceedings for the rest

The 34-year-old clocked deliveries around 140 clicks across two spells and bowled a few yorkers, but generally struggled to zoom in on the stumps as he often does.

Shivalik Sharma (24, 17b) clobbered him for two successive sixes, though one was an edge that flew behind the third man.

Shami got two consolation wickets of Shivalik and Atit Sheth towards the end when Baroda was trying to accelerate.



Shami could not make any impact with the bat either falling for a two-ball duck to India teammate Hardik Pandya.

Later, Baroda pacer Merriwala derailed Bengal's chase taking three wickets in the fourth over.

Merriwala got rid of in-form Karan Lal, skipper Sudip Kumar Gharami and Writtick Chatterjee, who fell to a sensational tumbling return catch.

Shahbaz tried to resurrect Bengal's innings towards the backend but there was no real support for

In the other quarterfinals at Alur, Madhya Pradesh rode on the allround show of Venkatesh Iver to enter the last four with a fine sixwicket win over Saurashtra.

Venkatesh took two wickets and made an unbeaten 38 off 33 balls as MP overhauled Saurashtra's 173 for seven with four balls to spare.

Brief scores: At Bengaluru: Baroda: 171/7 in 20 overs (Shashwat Rawat 40, Abhimanyu Rajput 37, Shivalik Sharma 24; Mohammed Shami 2/43, Pradipta Pramanik 2/6) beat Bengal: 131 all out in 18 overs (Shahbaz Ahmed 55, Ritwik Roy

Chowdhury 29; Lukeman Merri-

wala 3/17, Hardik Pandya 3/27,

Atit Sheth 3/41) by 41 runs. At Alur: Saurashtra: 173/7 in 20 overs (Chirag Jani 80 not out; Venkatesh Iyer 2/23) lost to Madhya Pradesh: 174/4 in 19.4 overs (Arpit Gaud 42, Venkatesh Iyer 38 not out, Rajat Patidar 28) by 6

Milonjyoti Sangha clinch Champion Title

HT Correspondent
JORHAT, Dec 11: Milonjyoti Sangha ,Sotai clinched the champion title in Jorhat A Division football league Milonjyoti defeated Teok Sub Association Football Team by tiebreaker (3-1) in the final match played in the ground of Kalyani Sports ground on Tuesday . The match was finished with no goal scored from both teams in stipulated time. As a champion in the league Milonivoti received the running shield with a cash prize of ₹ 10 thousand. Teok Sub Association also awarded by runner up trophy and ₹ 5 thousand as cash prize. Kopil Bora of Teok Sub Association adjudged the 'Best Player ' of the league while Samujjal Bora re presenting Milonjyoti bagged the 'Best Player' in the final match. Prakash Goswami, Dhurba jyoti Sabhapandit ex state players, Lalit Bora, and many dignitaries were present in the prize distribution

'Horses as athletes great sentiment but things are not so simple'

NEW DELHI, Dec 11: Should they be called athletes, equipment or simply what they are, horses? The Equestrian Federation of India (EFI) seems keen to have them clubbed with athletes but the riders have urged caution against pushing for something that may end up "complicating" things going forward.

The Delhi High Court is actually hearing a petition on the administration of EFI that has been accused of breaching the national sports code by granting voting rights to private clubs and institutions. The case has been filed by the Rajasthan affiliate of EFI, which wants these rights to be exclusively for state associations.

It was during one of the hearings that EFI made this rather unrelated submission that piqued the interest of those who follow the sport as well as those who are involved in

"It does not really matter whether a horse is an athlete or equipment because it is not going to vote in the Equestrian Federation of India elections," Rajesh Pattu, a member of the Indian bronze-winning teams in 1998, 2002 and 2006 Asian Games, told PTI dismissing the entire argument

"EFI is just wasting the time of

justifications.

This has nothing to do with the electoral college, which is the main matter," he pointed out.

Fouaad Mirza, India's first Equestrian to qualify for an Olympics (Tokyo Games in 2021), is all for categorising horses as athletes but he also warns of the complexities that come with such a

"Definitely, I consider my horse as an athlete. I look at my horse as a professional and high-end athlete. On the other side, if you try to humanise them with regard to legal things, as legal person, through legislation, or rewarding them, it becomes quite difficult and complicated.

"They are animals at the end of the day and if you try to attach hugalities, I think it complicates the situation," he said.

Both Mirza and Pattu are currently training in Saarbrucken. Germany

The Constitution of the Federation Equestre Internationale (FEI), the international body for equestrian sport, defines an athlete as "any person taking part in an FEI Event. Such person may be, including but not limited to a rider, a driver, a lunger, or a vaulter."

The FEI Statute of 2023 does the court by giving such irrelevant not have a definition of horse but

of athlete. In international competitions, the FEI lists athletes and horses separately and does not call them equine athletes.

EFI is a member federation of the FEI, but it seems to have taken a leaf out of Italy's book after the European nation became the first country to categories horses as athletes through legislation.

"Equestrian sport is peculiar in nature where there are two athletes, the individual and the horse. It is a club-based sport and an expensive sport," EFI's counsel argued before Justice Sanjeev Narula, who has reserved his judgment on the matter of whether the body is in violation of the sports code as alleged by the Rajasthan Equestrian Association.

The petition was first filed in 2019. REA's main prayer was against the EFI granting voting rights to clubs and institutions. The REA wants that privilege to be exclusively for state associations. It had contended that EFI's decision breached the Sports Code.

The EFI, on the other hand, has maintained that it has received specific exemptions from the Sports

The REA's response to horses as athletes submission was driven by legality. For them, if horses are to be considered athletes, India may not be able to take part in international competitions as most of the animals used by the country's competitors are of foreign breed.

Interestingly, horses competing in international equestrian events need passports to identify them and facilitate their transportation. "The argument that the sport is

unique where horses and riders are considered as athletes is absurd and contrary to the Sports Code. Also, in most cases, the horses used by Indian Athletes in International events are foreign bred, having foreign passports," the REA's counsel has said. "If horses are treated as athletes,

Indian athletes will not be permitted to use foreign bred horses, as the Sports Code mandates that only an Indian national can reprements.'

It's an argument that Pattu felt, has merit.

"...Government has ruled that only Indian passport holders can represent the country and play under our flag. So, under the law of the land, horses have to be considered equipment even by those of us who love our animals and consider them athletes," he pointed

REA is represented by senior advocate Rajiv Dutta as well as Neha Singh and Ashish Kothari. (PTI)

Malaysian coach Tan Kim Her joins India team for second stint



NEW DELHI, Dec 11: Malaysian doubles specialist Tan Kim Her has reunited with star pair Satwiksairaj Rankireddy and Chirag Shetty, starting his second stint at the Indian badminton landscape.

The 53-year-old has been roped in by the Badminton Association of India (BAI) for a four-year term the 2028 Los Angeles Olympics.

"I am very happy to be back in India and get a chance to work with Satwik-Chirag and also the young and talented group of doubles players who have the potential to follow on the path of Satwik-Chirag," Tan said in a release.

"I am looking forward to creating a bigger group of doubles combinations who can tournaments at the world stage."

Tan, who arrived in Hyderabad on Sunday, was India's doubles

instrumental in bringing Satwik and Chirag together before the 2016 Olympics.

He will take over the reins from Denmark's Mathias Boe, who guided Satwik and Chirag to many highs, including attaining the world number 1 status, winning an Asian Games gold, and securing a World Championships bronze.

However, the pair faced heartbreaks in two Olympics — Tokyo and Paris.

In his second stint, Tan, who had taken up an offer from Japan's badminton association in 2019, will focus on developing strong doubles partnerships and bench strength ahead of the 2026 Asian Games and 2028 Los Angeles

"We had been looking for quality foreign coaches who could work with our current top players and also guide our next-generation players as we prepare for the 2028 Olympics," said BAI Secretary General Sanjay Mishra.

"Finding the right coach took time, but we were determined to bring in those who can continue the development of our badminton stars and also work with a bigger group of players and help build a strong pipeline of talent for the fucoach from 2015 to 2019 and was ture," he said. (PTI)

Former skipper Smith is also in the middle of a woeful run

Entire Australian top-order is under pressure: David Warner

BRISBANE, Dec 11: It's not just Usman Khawaja but the entire Australian top-order that is feeling the "pressure" despite the series-levelling win in Adelaide, reckons former opener David Warner.

While the under-fire Marnus Labuschagne found form with a resolute fifty, batting mainstay Steve Smith and rookie opener Nathan McSweeney continue to search for runs in the ongoing Border-Gavaskar Trophy.

"I think the pressure is on all the top order, not just 'Uzzie'," the former Australian left-hander was quoted saying by Fox Cricket.

Travis Head smashed a memorable hundred at home as Australia bounce back to level the five match series after a crushing loss in Perth. 'Travis came out and counter-

punched and scored a brilliant hundred, and we know he's capable of doing it. But it's everyone else around supporting that," said

"It's not just one player in particular, it's the top six scoring bulk runs and making sure you're giving rest to the fast bowlers. It was a fastpaced Test in the first game, but this last one was Mitchell Starc at his best as usual with the pink ball.

Associate Editor- Nilomoni Borah



"Come Brisbane, we need to see some big runs from the top order," he said about the third Test beginning here on Saturday.

McSweeney had a forgettable debut in Perth being trapped LBW by Jasprit Bumrah in both his innings for 10 and 0, while in Ade-

laide he managed 49 runs. Khawaja has 34 runs in the first two Tests and in his last 16 innings he has reached fifty only once.



Former skipper Smith is also in the middle of a woeful run, having scored 19 in his three innings of the series. On McSweeney, Warner said: "He's had four of probably the

> an opening batsman, and I think he's handled it well," Warner said. "We saw glimpses the other day of the intent that you show when you're scoring, and there are a lot of question marks around why they

> five hardest jobs when it comes to

chose him, but the glimpses that you've seen, we now know why.

"He's got a good temperament, I like the way he sets up, and I think he's got a good future ahead of him. It's just this bowling attack from India is relentless if they bowl in partnerships.

On whether Sam Konstas should replace the struggling Khawaja, Warner said: "They would have picked him if they thought he was ready by now. That's up to the se-There have also been talks about

a Test comeback for gun all-rounder Glenn Maxwell but Warner feels the white ball specialist "doesn't deserve that opportunity". "If you're not being picked for your Shield team, then why do you

deserve it? You've got to actually want it, to want to play four-day cricket," Warner told CODE. "Unless he's putting his hand up, he's playing all the club cricket stuff and all that, to want to play Test cricket. He in my

(opinion), doesn't deserve that op-

portunity. Maxwell, who has a career average of 26.07 in the format, last played a Test against Bangladesh in September 2017. (PTI)

Eminent threat looms over PCB over Champions trophy withdrawal bid

KARACHI, Dec 11: The Pakistan Cricket Board could face revenue losses, lawsuits and also risk international alienation if it decides to withdraw from the ICC Champions Trophy over a deadlock on the mode of organising the 50-over event scheduled in February-March next year. A senior cricket administrator here, who is well-versed with the organisation of ICC events, told PTI on Wednesday that it would not be an easy decision for the PCB to pull out if the hybrid model is not accepted in entirety by the ICC and the BCCI.

"Pakistan has not only signed a host agreement with the ICC but like all other participating nations in the event, it has also signed a mandatory Members' Participation Agreement (MPA) with the ICC," the administrator explained.

"It is only after a member nation signs the MPA for playing in an ICC event that it is eligible to get a share of revenues earned from ICC events.

"Most importantly when the ICC signed a broadcast deal for all its events, it has given a guarantee that all ICC members are available to play in their events including the Champions Trophy," he said.

Last week, the ICC reached a consensus to conduct the eight-team competition in a hybrid model, allowing India to play its share of matches



in Dubai while agreeing "in principle" to a similar arrangement in multi-lateral events till 2027. However, a formal announcement is awaited.

The agreement means that Pakistan will not be obligated to travel to India for ICC events till 2027.

As part of the broadcast deal, at least one India-Pakistan match has to be scheduled in all ICC events, said the administrator.

"The estimated bid a broadcaster makes for a long-term deal with the ICC is only after he has calculated the stimated value of all matches involving all countries.

"It is no surprise that the broadcaster offsets his loss of revenues from other matches with the estimated earnings from selling commercial spots and other rights for the Pakistan and India fixtures.

The administrator said that if Pakistan were to withdraw from the tournament, it could face potential lawsuits from the ICC and even some of the 16 other member boards on the ICC's executive board. The broadcaster may also exercise a similar option as the country's withdrawal will hit the estimated revenues of all stakeholders.

"PCB Chairman Mohsin Naqvi has to come clean on the whole issue. MPAs are the same for all countries and unless the PCB has kept some safeguard clauses in their host agreement with the ICC for the CT, they face a tricky situation," the administrator stated. (PTI)

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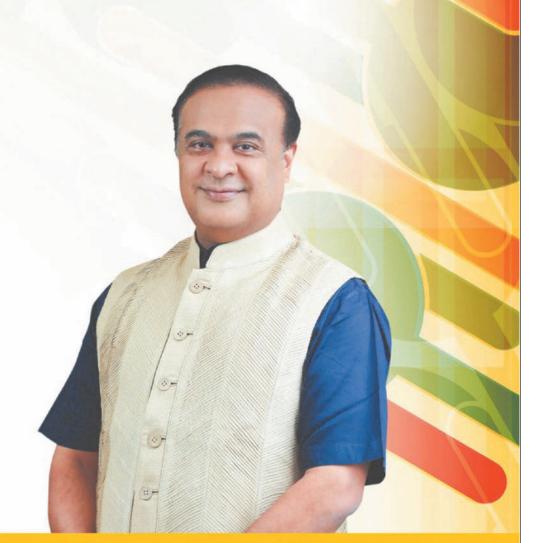
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