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- Israeli strike on Gaza apartment building kills at least 15: Officials
- Suspected US strikes in Yemen kill at least 8 people, Houthi rebels say

8 NATION

- Kharge warns partymen at AICC session
- Verbal spat, WhatsApp war among MPs bring to fore TMC's internal rift

Punjab Police takes custody of Papalpreet Singh

HT Correspondent
DIBRUGARH, April 9: The Punjab Police on Wednesday took custody of Waris Punjab De member Papalpreet Singh from Dibrugarh Central Jail following the completion of his detention under the National Security Act (NSA). A team from the Punjab Police had sought permission for his custody and transit remand from the Court of the District and Sessions Judge, Dibrugarh. After receiving approval, the police team took custody of Singh from the jail. Before his transfer, Singh underwent a medical check-up at the Assam Medical College and Hospital (AMCH). A senior police official stated that Singh would spend the night in the lock-up at Dibrugarh Police Station and would be flown to Punjab on Thursday under heavy security. "In Punjab, he will be tried for the Ajnala police station attack case along with other Waris Punjab De members," the official added. Singh was brought to Dibrugarh Jail

from Punjab on April 11, 2023. It may be mentioned that eight Waris Punjab De members lodged in Dibrugarh Jail were already shifted to Punjab last month following the expiry of their NSA detention period. Those shifted include Kulwant Singh Dhaliwal, Harjeet Singh, Gurinderpal Singh Aujla, Gurmeet Singh Bukkwalwa, Bhagwant Singh, Daljeet Singh Kalsi, Basant Singh, and Varinder Singh Johal. They are now facing trial in Punjab for their alleged involvement in the 2023 Ajnala police station attack case. Significantly, with Singh's transfer, only Waris Punjab De chief Amritpal Singh remains in the high-security Dibrugarh Jail. His NSA detention period is set to expire on April 22. If not extended by the Punjab government, he is also likely to be shifted to Punjab. It may be recalled that Amritpal Singh won the Khadoor Sahib Lok Sabha seat in the 2024 general elections while still under detention in Dibrugarh Jail.

We are like a family, and therefore I urge state leaders to take care of workers like a family: Jorhat MP Gaurav bats for backing loyal Congmen to win polls

NEW DELHI, April 9: Congress' deputy leader in the Lok Sabha, Gaurav Gogoi, on Wednesday said that if the party wants to win upcoming polls, it must promote "staunch Congress persons" who have remained in the party despite threats and enticements. Addressing the AICC session on the banks of the Sabarmati River here, Gogoi recalled that when Rahul Gandhi recently toured Gujarat, he had said that those who have one foot in Congress and the other in some other party should be identified and expelled from Congress. "If we are to win the assembly elections in the coming time, then such staunch Congress persons should be brought forward -- those who have remained associated with Congress despite every threat or enticement," Gogoi said. "I am fully confident that if we



bring forward staunch Congress persons, we will win every assembly election," he added during the discussion on two resolutions at the session here. Gogoi also alleged that the BJP runs its organisation like a private limited company, while the Congress functions like a family.

"We are like a family, and therefore I urge state leaders to take care of workers like a family," he said. The Ahmedabad session, themed "Nyaypath: Sankalp, Samarpan aur Sangharsh," is being attended by more than 1,700 elected and co-opted AICC members. This comes a day after an extended Congress Working Committee (CWC) met here to finalise the session's agenda and discuss the resolutions to be passed in detail. Countering the BJP's high-pitched campaign of invoking nationalist figures to rally support, the Congress on Tuesday asserted its claim on the legacy of Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel, India's first deputy prime minister, whose path it pledged to follow in the "ideological war" with the BJP-RSS. (PTI)

India, China moving in 'positive direction': EAM Jaishankar

NEW DELHI, April 9: India and China are moving towards a "positive direction" in their ties and work needs to be done to normalise the relationship, External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar said on Wednesday. "I think we are moving in a positive direction," he said. India-China relations plunged to their lowest point since the 1962 war following the Galwan Valley clashes. Following a series of diplomatic and military talks, the two sides withdrew their troops from several friction along the Line of Actual Control (LAC) in eastern Ladakh. In October last, the two sides firmed up a disengagement pact for Depsang and Demchok, the last two friction points in eastern Ladakh. "It's obviously better than the last time I was here. I think the disengagement, particularly the Depsang-Demchok was important," he said at the News 18 Rising Bharat Summit. In October last, the two sides firmed up a disengagement pact for Depsang

and Demchok, the last two friction points in eastern Ladakh. Days after the agreement was finalised, Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Chinese President Xi Jinping held talks in Kazan and took a number of decisions to improve the ties. Jaishankar suggested that issues on the border remained to some extent because of the force build up over a period of years. "But there were many other things which also happened during this period some of it was a collateral of the situation; some of it was actually a carry-over from the Covid era. For example, our direct flights stopped during Covid, they were not resumed," he said. "The Kailash Mansarovar Yatra stopped during Covid. It did not again resume. I think there is work to be done. We are at it," he said. "We are sort of trying to see whether lot of this post-Covid and parallel to the border tension, the combination of these issues -- how much we can progress on this," Jaishankar added.

The external affairs minister said both sides are looking into these issues. "We are looking at it because at the end of the day we have always maintained that the situation, which we saw between 2020 and 2024, was not in the interest of either country," he said. "It was not in the interest of our relationship. And I think there is a recognition of that now," he added. Last month, India and China explored ways to rebuild ties and agreed to initiate efforts to promote people-to-people exchanges, including arrangements for resumption of direct flights and resume Kailash Mansarovar Yatra this year. In December NSA Ajit Doval travelled to Beijing and held talks with Foreign Minister Wang under the framework of Special Representatives (SR) dialogue on the boundary question. In January, foreign secretary Vikram Misri visited Beijing and held talks with his Chinese counterpart Sun Weidong. (PTI)

Tuliram Ronghang promises development in Arnam Teplong

HT Correspondent
KHERONI, April 9: Chief Executive Member (CEM) of the Karbi Anglong Autonomous Council (KAAC), Tuliram Ronghang, has assured the people of Arnam Teplong that the council will prioritise essential infrastructure projects. He made the announcement during a public interaction programme held on Tuesday under the 9th Amreng MAC constituency in Kheroni's Arnam Teplong village. The event marked a significant moment for the local community, as Ronghang pledged a series of developmental initiatives aimed at uplifting the region. "The KAAC will prioritise the construction of new roads, school buildings, and healthcare facilities, alongside other essential infrastructure projects," he said. He further emphasised the council's commitment to providing safe drinking water, establishing a Rongker Than (a traditional Karbi worship site), and supplying free books to recognised schools

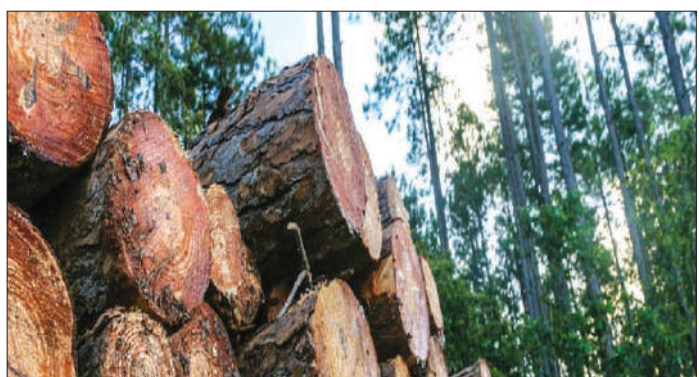


in the area. Additionally, the CEM announced the free distribution of land pattas to indigenous tribes under the provisions of The Scheduled Tribes and Other Traditional Forest Dwellers (Recognition of Forest Rights) Act, 2006, commonly known as the Forest Rights Act (FRA). "The KAAC is dedicated to fulfilling all the memorandums and concerns raised by the public during this interaction. We will work tirelessly to ensure the aspirations of the people of the Amreng constituency are met soon," Ronghang declared, reinforcing his administration's

focus on grassroots development. The programme was attended by several prominent dignitaries, including member of parliament Amarsing Tisso; MLAs Darsing Ronghang (Howrahhat), Bidya Sing Englang (Diphu), and Rupsing Teron (Bathalango); and former MP Horensing Bey. Various executive members (EMs), members of the Autonomous Council (MACs), board chairpersons, departmental officials, West Karbi Anglong BJP district president Radip Ronghang, along with district and mandal office bearers, party workers, and other distinguished guests also graced the occasion. The event underscored the KAAC's commitment to addressing local issues while also highlighting the intricate political dynamics at play as the region gears up for future electoral battles. For the people of Arnam Teplong, the promises made by Ronghang signal hope for a more developed and connected future.

Forest officials seize smuggled logs near Assam-Meghalaya border

HT Correspondent
KHERONI, April 9: Forest officials from the Southern Range, Kheroni, in West Karbi Anglong district conducted a raid on Tuesday night and seized a truck carrying illegally felled logs in Umkhermi village, near the Assam-Meghalaya border. The operation followed a tip-off about the illegal transportation of timber. A Meghalaya-registered truck (ML 04 6133), bound for Meghalaya, was seized and brought to the Southern Range office in Kheroni. However, the timber smugglers managed to flee the spot, and no arrests were made. Deputy Ranger Sushil Sarkar, who led the raid, said the perpetrators—often from Meghalaya—have long been engaged in



destroying forests in Assam to smuggle logs into the neighbouring state. "We received information about illegal activities in Umkhermi and immediately alerted the staff at the Mukoilum sub-beat office. They acted promptly and succeeded in

NEW YORK, April 9: Mumbai terror attack accused Tahawwur Rana is expected to be extradited to India from the US "shortly", sources have said. According to government sources in India, a multi-agency team from India has gone to the US and all paperwork and legalities are being completed with US authorities. Sources said "very high possibility" that Rana "could be extradited shortly." It is also learnt that Rana is not coming to India on Wednesday and the extradition process is in the works. The hugely significant development comes just days after Rana's last-resort attempt to evade extradition to India failed after the US Supreme Court justices denied his application, moving him closer to being handed over to Indian authorities to face justice in the dastardly attacks. Rana, 64, currently lodged in the Metropolitan Detention Center in Los Angeles, had sub-

Tahawwur Rana likely to be extradited to India 'shortly': Sources

mitted an 'Emergency Application For Stay Pending Litigation of Petition For Writ of Habeas Corpus' on February 27, 2025 with Associate Justice of the Supreme Court of the United States and Circuit Justice for the Ninth Circuit Elena Kagan. Kagan had denied the application earlier last month. Rana had then renewed his 'Emergency Application for Stay Pending Litigation of Petition for Writ of Habeas Corpus' previously addressed to Justice Kagan, and requested that the renewed application be directed to US Chief Justice John Roberts. An order on the Supreme Court website noted that Rana's renewed application had been "distributed for Conference" on April 4 and the "application" has been "referred to the Court." A notice on the Supreme Court website Monday said that "Application denied by the Court." New York-based Indian-American attorney Ravi Batra had told PTI that Rana had made his

application to the Supreme Court to prevent extradition, which Justice Kagan denied on March 6th. The application was then submitted before Roberts, "who has shared it with the Court to conference so as to harness the entire Court's view." The Supreme Court justices are Associate Justice Clarence Thomas, Associate Justice Samuel A Alito, Jr, Associate Justice Sonia Sotomayor, Associate Justice Elena Kagan, Associate Justice Neil M Gorsuch, Associate Justice Brett M. Kavanaugh, Associate Justice Amy Coney Barrett, and Associate Justice Ketanji Brown Jackson. In his emergency application, Rana had sought a stay of his extradition and surrender to India pending litigation (including exhaustion of all appeals) on the merits of his February 13. In that petition, Rana argued that his extradition to India violates US law and the UN Convention Against Torture "because there are substantial grounds for (CONTD. ON PAGE 2)

'India offers a compelling growth opportunity for foreign banks' Sitharaman highlights India's investment opportunities at investor roundtable in London

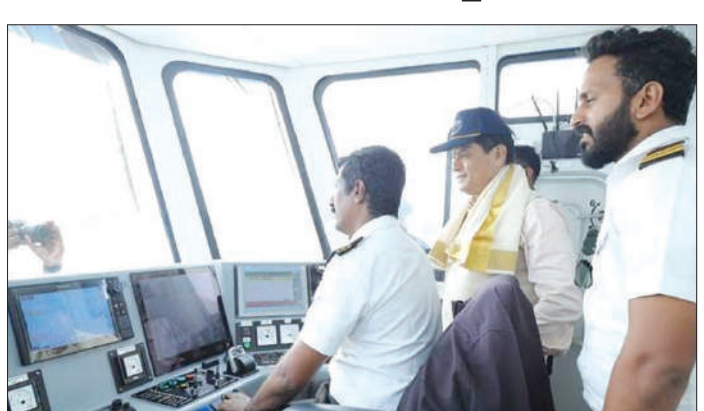
LONDON, April 9: India offers a compelling growth opportunity for foreign banks, Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman told investors in the UK. Sitharaman's remarks came as she chaired an India-UK Investor Roundtable in London, attracting around 60 UK investors representing various pension funds, insurance companies, banks and other financial institutions. According to the Ministry of Finance, the high-level roundtable on Tuesday evening outlined the priorities of the government for enabling sustained economic growth and investment opportunities, with the policy support that is shaping "New India". It highlighted the efforts being made by the ministry to pursue process and governance reforms to



reduce compliance burden and ease regulation for facilitating an enabling environment for business and investments. "India offers a compelling growth opportunity for foreign banks and the government of India is actively encouraging foreign investment in the banking sector," Sitharaman told the gathering. With an expanding middle class and strong and stable policy envi-

ronment, the Union Finance Minister said that India is set to become the sixth-largest insurance market by 2032 with the expected growth at 7.1 per cent CAGR from 2024-2028 — one of the fastest growing insurance markets among G20 countries, the Ministry of Finance readout said. Sitharaman also informed the investors that the Indian securities market is among the first major markets to fully adopt the T+1 settlement, as early as 2023, and India's market capitalisation stands at \$4.6 trillion, currently ranked fourth globally. "The Union Finance Minister spoke at length about India's maiden International Financial Services Centre GIFT-IFSC — an offshore zone that is endowed with an enabling (CONTD. ON PAGE 2)

Sonowal hails Kochi Water Metro as 'unique' mode of travel



KOCHI, April 9: Union Minister Sarbananda Sonowal on Tuesday travelled on the Kochi Water Metro and hailed the urban transportation system as a "unique" mode of travel that provides seamless connectivity while living up to the "green commitments". The Union Minister of Ports, Shipping and Waterway also held talks with Kochi Metro Rail Ltd

(KMRL) MD Loknath Behera and expressed interest in establishing the Water Metro in other parts of the country, a KMRL release said. After his journey aboard the Water Metro vessels for around an hour, he mentioned his experience on "X". "India's first Water Metro in Kochi is a unique urban transport system that provides seamless connectivity while living up to our green commitments. Delighted to take a ride around the city in the metro! "The vessels built by @eslcochin also show India's Aatmanirbhar shipbuilding innovation and are proving to be quite popular among travellers," he said. According to the KMRL release, after his travel on the Water Metro, Sonowal noted in the visitors' register that the transportation system was a "unique, enjoyable, exciting and comfortable" mode of travel. The Union minister travelled on the Fort Kochi and Vypin routes of the Water Metro and enjoyed the views and beauty of the backwaters, the release said. KMRL also said that the passenger count on the Water Metro crossed the 40 lakh mark before it completed two years of its operation. The Water Metro was launched by Prime Minister Narendra (CONTD. ON PAGE 2)

Home, auto loans to get cheaper as RBI cuts interest rate for 2nd time in a row

MUMBAI, April 9: Home, auto and other loans are likely to cost less as the Reserve Bank of India (RBI) cut interest rates on Wednesday for a second consecutive time and signalled more easing to come as it sought to bolster the economy that is facing further pressure from damaging US tariffs.

The Monetary Policy Committee (MPC), consisting of three central bank members and an equal number of external members, voted unanimously to cut the repo rate by 25 basis points to 6 per cent. It had reduced rates by an equal measure in February -- the first cut since May 2020.

The repo rate is the rate at which the RBI lends money to banks to meet their short-term funding needs. With a 25 bps cut in the repo rate, all external benchmark lending rates (EBLR) linked to it will come down. And if the banks fully pass on this to the borrowers, equated monthly instalments (EMIs) on home, auto and personal loans will decline by 25 bps. The move lowers borrowing costs to the lowest level since November 2022, amid easing inflation and a fall in oil prices.

RBI changed its policy stance to "accommodative" from "neutral", indicating the possibility of more rate cuts in future, Governor Sanjay Malhotra said while announcing the MPC decisions.

The rate cut came on a day when the full 26 per cent additional tariffs on Indian goods exported to the US came into effect. The US tariffs exacerbate uncertainties, with some economists predicting a 20-40 basis point drag on Indian GDP growth in the current fiscal year that started on April 1.

RBI also lowered its estimate for economic growth to 6.5 per cent for 2025-26 fiscal year from



6.7 per cent earlier. The inflation projection was also lowered to 4 per cent from 4.2 per cent, keeping it within the target range of 2-6 per cent.

The Indian economy grew by 6.5 per cent in the fiscal year ended March 31 (2024-25), its weakest pace since the pandemic.

"The recent trade tariff-related measures have exacerbated uncertainties clouding the economic outlook across regions, posing new headwinds for global growth and inflation," he said. "Amidst this turbulence, the US dollar has weakened appreciably; bond yields have softened significantly; equity markets are correcting; and crude oil prices have fallen to their lowest in over three years."

Under these circumstances, central banks are navigating cautiously, with signs of policy divergence across jurisdictions, reflecting their own domestic priorities. State Bank of India (SBI) chairman CS Setty said the revision of stance to accommodative will cushion the secondary impact of tariffs on the domestic economy.

DK Srivastava, Chief Policy Advisor, EY India, said the central bank recognises that global uncertainties will have an adverse impact on India's growth prospects.

"However, a periodic injection of monetary stimulus supported by maintenance of adequate liquidity conditions and healthy domestic economic conditions, including robust agricultural prospects, will help India maintain a reasonably high GDP growth in the presence

of a likely global growth slowdown. The expectation is that RBI will continue the downward rate cycle by reducing the repo rate all the way to 5.25 per cent by successive reductions of 25 basis points each in the next three rounds," Srivastava said.

The Indian economy, the RBI Governor said, has made steady progress towards the goals of price stability and sustained growth. Growth is improving after a weak performance in the first half of the financial year 2024-25, although it remains lower than expected.

On the inflation front, while the sharper-than-expected decline in food inflation has given comfort, "we remain vigilant to the possible risks from global uncertainties and weather disturbances", Malhotra said.

Explaining the meaning of change in policy stance, he said, "The change in stance means MPC intends only the status quo or rate cut."

Since taking office in December, Malhotra has pivoted to a more growth-friendly approach than his predecessor Shaktikanta Das, who was more focused on containing price rise (inflation).

The new governor cut rates in his debut policy meeting in February, and has injected more than USD 80 billion into the banking system in the last two months.

Lower interest rates provide relief to businesses and consumers alike, potentially spurring credit demand, investments, and job creation. Commenting on the MPC decision, Upasna Bhardwaj, Chief Economist, Kotak Mahindra Bank, said, "The increasing global turmoil and its spillovers to the Indian growth slowdown will necessitate the MPC for deeper rate cuts."

"We see scope for additional 75-100 basis point rate cuts in the year ahead, depending on the scale

of global slowdown."

Radhika Rao, Executive Director and Senior Economist at DBS Bank, said recent liquidity management measures have underscored the preference to maintain a surplus balance, thereby keeping the banking system well-oiled and aiding policy transmission.

"Overall, policy guidance remained dovish, while keeping an eye on global uncertainties and the consequent need to maintain stability in domestic financial markets. We expect a further 50 bp of cuts this year," Rao said.

On the impact of global trade and policy uncertainties on growth and inflation, the RBI governor said uncertainty in itself dampens growth by affecting investment and spending decisions of businesses and households.

The dent on global growth due to trade frictions will impede domestic growth, Malhotra said, adding higher tariffs shall have a negative impact on net exports.

"There are, however, several known unknowns - the impact of relative tariffs, the elasticities of our export and import demand; and the policy measures adopted by the government including the proposed Foreign Trade Agreement with the USA, to name a few. These make the quantification of the adverse impact difficult," he said.

The risks to inflation are two sided. On the upside, uncertainties may lead to possible currency pressures and imported inflation. On the downside, slowdown in global growth could entail further softening in commodity and crude oil prices, putting downward pressure on inflation.

"Overall, while global trade and policy uncertainties shall impede growth, its impact on domestic inflation, while requiring us to be vigilant, is not expected to be of high concern," he said. (PTI)

RBI signals more rate cuts amid economic uncertainty: HDFC Economist

HT Bureau GUWAHATI, April 9: In a recent commentary on the Reserve Bank of India's (RBI) latest monetary policy decision, Sakshi Gupta, Principal Economist at HDFC Bank, highlighted the central bank's shift toward a more accommodative stance in an official statement here on Wednesday.

The RBI's decision to implement a 25 basis points (bps) rate cut, coupled with a change in its policy stance to accommodative, sends a clear signal that more rate cuts may be on the horizon.

Gupta anticipates two additional rate cuts in 2025, with the next one likely to come in the June policy meeting.

The continued improvement in liquidity conditions is expected to play a crucial role, as the average liquidity is forecasted to remain above neutral in the current quarter. This, she believes, will further drive the transmission of rate cuts into money market rates and deposit rates.

"As liquidity conditions continue to improve, expected to average above neutral in the current quarter, transmission of rate cuts to money market rates and for deposit rates is also likely to increase," she said.

However, the RBI's decision also takes into account the growing global economic risks, particularly due to tariff tensions. As a result, the central bank has revised its GDP growth forecast down by 20 basis points to 6.5%. Gupta cautioned that if global tensions continue to escalate, there could be additional downward pressure on growth projections.

"Recognising the increasing global headwinds due to tariff tensions, the RBI revised down its GDP growth forecast by 20bps to 6.5%. If global tensions continue to escalate, we see a further downside risk to these projections," she added.

Looking ahead to FY26, HDFC Bank expects GDP growth to be around 6.3%, assuming some retraction in current tariff announcements and successful bilateral negotiations.

Gupta's analysis indicates that while the RBI's actions are aimed at supporting domestic economic growth, external challenges remain a significant factor in shaping future policy decisions.

India emerging as a stable growth hub amid global uncertainty: NSE Chief Ashishkumar Chauhan

HT Bureau GUWAHATI, April 9: Ashishkumar Chauhan, Managing Director and CEO of the National Stock Exchange of India (NSE), shared an optimistic outlook on India's financial markets amid global challenges at the India Global Forum, Mumbai NXT25, through an official statement on Wednesday.

Chauhan highlighted the resilience of Indian markets, despite a \$1.5 trillion drop from their peak, emphasizing the country's robust long-term growth trajectory. "In 2014, India's market capitalization was under \$1 trillion. Today, it is approaching \$5 trillion, reflecting significant wealth creation," he noted, underscoring the substantial progress India has made in capital market growth.

Responding to concerns over foreign investor exits, Chauhan attributed the trend to global interest rate hikes and a broader 'risk-off' sentiment that has impacted emerging markets. However, he reassured stakeholders that India remains relatively insulated from global tariff

tensions, benefiting from a unique export profile.

Chauhan also pointed to the growing role of retail investors in shaping the Indian market. With more than 60 million Indian investors contributing as little as Rs 250 monthly through systematic investment plans (SIPs), the market experiences a steady inflow of \$2.5-3 billion per month. "This is a clear sign of rising trust in Indian businesses and entrepreneurs," he said.

On financial inclusion, Chauhan emphasized the significance of small-ticket investments in expanding market participation. "The growing maturity of investors, even during periods of market volatility, speaks volumes about the deepening financial literacy in the country," he added.

Regarding the IPO market, Chauhan noted that while over 50 IPO filings occurred in late March alone, global uncertainties might affect their timelines.

The NSE had a remarkable 2024, hosting 268 IPOs, raising

\$19.6 billion—the highest globally, with 178 IPOs from the SME sector. Overall, the exchange facilitated over \$209 billion in fund mobilization.

Chauhan also addressed recent operational adjustments, including the shift in derivatives expiry from Thursday to Monday, which was made in response to regulatory changes and market consultations. "This change is routine, and we await further guidance before implementing additional changes," he explained.

Concluding his address, Chauhan reflected on India's stable economic fundamentals and the consistent support of regulators and the government.

"While global turbulence remains, India is navigating these challenges with caution, and our strong economic foundation will guide us through," he said.

As the global economy grapples with uncertainties, India's market stability continues to make it a key player in the world of finance, the statement concluded.

Bandhan Bank unveils Elite Plus Savings Account

HT Bureau GUWAHATI, April 9: Bandhan Bank has launched the Elite Plus Savings Account, a premium banking product designed to cater to the evolving needs of affluent customers, offering a host of exclusive features and benefits, an official statement said on Wednesday.

The announcement was made by Partha Pratim Sengupta, Managing Director and CEO of Bandhan Bank, in the presence of Executive Director & Chief Business Officer Rajinder Kumar Babbar and Executive Director & Chief Operating Officer Ratan Kumar Kesh. Former Indian cricket captain Sourav Ganguly was among the first customers to open an Elite Plus account, the statement informed.

The Elite Plus Savings Account offers several premium features aimed at enhancing the banking experience for its customers. These include unlimited free cash deposits each month, as well as free RTGS, NEFT, and IMPS transactions. The account holders will also earn accelerated reward points and enjoy two complimentary lounge accesses every quarter. Other lifestyle bene-

fits include complimentary movie tickets worth ₹ 750 each month and exclusive access to premium golf sessions at select prestigious golf clubs across India.

Additionally, the Elite Plus account offers exclusive vouchers, milestone offers, and enhanced debit card insurance coverage, including personal accident cover up to ₹ 15 lakh and purchase protection of up to ₹ 3 lakh.

Sengupta commented on the launch, stating, "With this new offering, we aim to meet the growing needs of our premium customers, providing them with unmatched convenience, rewards, and exclusive privileges. From luxury travel benefits to comprehensive insurance coverage, the Elite Plus Savings Account is designed to provide an unparalleled banking experience."

Alongside the Elite Plus Savings Account, the bank has also reintroduced the Bandhan Elite Savings Account, now featuring additional benefits tailored to high-net-worth individuals (HNIs), further enriching the offerings for its affluent clientele.

Cycle Pure Agarbathi launches special fragrance collection inspired by Assam's Bihu

HT Bureau GUWAHATI, April 9: Cycle Pure Agarbathi, the world's largest agarbathi manufacturer, has unveiled a new fragrance collection designed to celebrate the cultural richness of Assam. The collection, titled "Bihu - Rongali, Kangali, and Bhogali," draws inspiration from the three major Bihu festivals celebrated in the state: Rongali Bihu, Kangali Bihu, and Bhogali Bihu.

The agarbathi range aims to enhance the festive spirit and evoke a deep sense of cultural pride, paying tribute to the traditions that bring the Assamese community together.

Launched in three phases to coincide with the Bihu calendar, the collection will see the release of one fragrance per festival.

Phase 1, focused on Rongali Bihu, has already been launched this April, capturing the joy and renewal associated with the arrival of spring and the Assamese New Year.

Phase 2, set for release in October, will celebrate Kangali Bihu, which is a time for introspection and prayers for prosperity, following the end of rice sowing.

Finally, Phase 3, coming in January, will honor Bhogali Bihu, a festival of gratitude and feasting that marks the conclusion of the harvest season.

Arjun Ranga, Managing Director of Cycle Pure Agarbathi, expressed his excitement about the new collection, saying, "We are delighted to celebrate the rich cultural heritage of Assam through our specially curated Bihu fragrance collection. With each phase, we aim to bring to life the unique emotions and rituals associated with the Bihu festivities, offering our consumers a more meaningful and immersive connection to the celebration. This collection is our tribute to the timeless spirit of Bihu—a festival that unites communities through joy, tradition, and shared values."

The Bihu fragrance collection has been carefully crafted to transport consumers to the heart of Assam's Bihu celebrations, infusing homes with the essence of each festival.

Available in retail stores across Assam, the collection promises to become an integral part of Assamese households during the festive season.

Gadkari makes case for increasing share of farm sector in GDP to 22 pc

NEW DELHI, April 9: Union minister Nitin Gadkari on Wednesday has made a case for increasing the share of agriculture in India's GDP to 22 per cent from the current 14 per cent, saying it would help prevent migration of rural youth to cities.

Speaking at an event here, Gadkari also pitched for diversification of agriculture towards energy.

He said, "65 per cent of India's working population who works in the farm sector contributes only 14 per cent of GDP. If the share of agriculture in India's GDP goes up

from 14 per cent to 22 per cent, no rural youth will migrate to cities."

The minister also underlined the need for soil testing to increase productivity.

Gadkari emphasised the need to reduce import of fossil fuels by encouraging production of bio-fuels and green hydrogen in India.

Currently, India imports fossil fuels worth ₹ 22 lakh crore per year.

He said it is a dream of Prime Minister Narendra Modi to make India the world's third largest economy. (PTI)

Yummy Noodles unveils Meghalaya's hidden gems at inaugural 'Yummy Talent Fest'

HT Bureau GUWAHATI, April 9: Yummy Noodles celebrated the success of its inaugural Yummy Talent Fest with a grand finale held on April 5 at the U Soso Tham Auditorium in Shillong.

The event, which aimed to spotlight the local talent of Meghalaya, concluded with an impressive display of creativity and artistry. With a total prize pool of ₹ 2 lakh, the fest sought to recognize emerging artists and performers from across the region.

The competition attracted over 600 attendees and featured 20 finalists selected from a pool of 142 participants who registered for the event.

These finalists showcased their talents in front of a live audience, with performances ranging from music and dance to visual arts.

In the months leading up to the finale, participants gained national recognition through social media features, allowing them to connect with a wider audience and celebrate their unique skills.

Rithika Baruah, chief marketing officer of Yummy Noodles, expressed pride in the event's success. "Our goal was to create a platform where Meghalaya's hidden talents could



be discovered and celebrated. The community's response has been phenomenal, and we are thrilled to have played a role in showcasing the incredible creativity and artistry within the region," she said.

The festival was divided into two categories: Entertainment and Creativity.

In the Entertainment category, which included performers like singers, rappers, and dancers, Ariana Syiem took first place with Mewan Aikupar Rynthathiang and Daphilakhamti Mary Pyngrope securing second and third place, respectively.

In the Creativity category, Garry & Rimeca, known for their cosplay creations, clinched the

top prize, followed by sketch artist Pynkitbor Kharbani and crochet artist Cuty Kharbuki.

The finale featured live performances, a Creative Zone where visual artists created their work in real time, and an interactive "Yummy 60-Second Noodle Battle" with a prize of ₹ 10,000.

The event also included open mic sessions, offering audience members the opportunity to showcase their own talents and win spot prizes.

All registered performers received certificates and exclusive Yummy merchandise as a token of appreciation for their participation.

The success of the Yummy Talent Fest marks a significant milestone for Yummy Noodles, which has a long history in Meghalaya.

The brand, which prides itself on being "Made in India, Made for India," continues its commitment to empowering local communities through creativity.

Looking forward, Yummy Noodles plans to expand the Yummy Talent Fest to other cities and states, aiming to create a national movement that blends culture, community, and creativity under one stage.

First-ever District conference of Grade III and above officials held in Kokrajhar CEM Pramod Boro calls for honest, people-centric Governance

HT Bureau
GUWAHATI, April 9: The CEM of the Bodoland Territorial Council (BTC), Pramod Boro, made a heartfelt appeal to all government officials to be polite, honest, and committed in their service to the people.

Speaking at the first-ever District Conference for all Grade III and above officials, held on Tuesday at the Bodofa Cultural Complex in Kokrajhar, CEM Boro emphasized the need to bridge the gap between government machinery and the general public. He urged officers to conduct regular field visits to ensure speedy, time-bound, and transparent implementation of welfare schemes.

"Let us serve the people with humility and honesty. Be kind, be present, and always remember — governance is not about power, it's about care and responsibility," CEM Pramod Boro said, calling for a shift towards empathetic and people-driven governance.

He also highlighted the importance of fostering a culture of mutual care and cooperation among colleagues and departments, stating that a better society begins with how we treat one another — within the system and beyond.

Speaking on the occasion, Assam Minister for Handloom, Textiles and Sericulture, U G Brahma, emphasized the importance of goodwill and dedication in working for the betterment of soci-



ety. He underlined the crucial role government officials play in bringing about positive change through effective service delivery and public engagement. He also expressed hope that the Bodoland Territorial Region (BTR) will become a model for others in development and good governance.

MP Rangwara Narzary stated that people across the country are now taking inspiration from the BTR Model of Peace. He emphasized that this model is bringing about positive change in various regions.

Boro also emphasised the need to focus on development-centric initiatives and achieve the targets outlined in the 100-Day Action Plan to be formulated for the financial year 2025–26. He urged the Council Heads of Departments (CHDs) of BTR to ensure that while setting targets and planning activities, proper field verification

and assessment of actual ground requirements are carried out. Speaking at the preparatory meeting held at BTCLA Auditorium on Tuesday for 100-day targets for departments and focused thematic areas, he also called for the formulation of a long-term vision aimed at the holistic development of the Bodoland Territorial Region.

"We must align our planning with the aspirations of the people and ensure that every initiative we take leads to real change on the ground," CEM Boro said, underlining the importance of realistic and impactful governance.

Speaking at the meeting held with all the Council Heads of Departments (CHDs) of BTR, Principal Secretary of BTC, Akash Deep, stressed the need for a result-oriented framework. He urged departments to adopt measurable goals and ensure timely execution to translate plans into tangible out-

comes. The meeting was also attended by Deputy CEM of the Bodo Kachari Welfare Autonomous Council Romio P Narzary, Political Adviser of CEM Madhab Chetry and several other MCLAs of BTC.

The BTC also organised a consultative meeting with representatives of 75 community organisations at the Bodofa Cultural Complex, Kokrajhar. The meeting, which witnessed participation of 75 organisations from all 26 communities of BTR, was chaired by BTC CEM Pramod Boro.

In his address, CEM Pramod Boro reflected on Bodoland's transition from conflict to stability following the signing of the Bodo Peace Accord in 2020. "BTR today stands as a model of peace, where dialogue and cooperation among communities have become the foundation for progress," he said.

One of the major announcements of the day was the proposal for setting up a Community Museum to preserve and celebrate the heritage of all 26 communities. He also urged community organisations to propose community-specific restricted holidays and submit plans for community festivals that the council government could support in organising.

On the linguistic front, CEM Boro released the first volume of a Multilingual Word Book comprising of 10 languages, and announced that a second volume,

covering the remaining communities of BTR, will be published in the first half of the current financial year under the Vision Document programme. The CEM also highlighted key development areas aligned with the Vision Document, focusing on education, infrastructure, and economic empowerment.

He introduced "Sangharsh to Nirman" (From Struggle to Construction) as the guiding theme for the region's journey ahead.

BTCLA Speaker and Chairman of Vision Document Committee Katiram Boro, in his remarks, expressed appreciation for the enthusiastic response from community organisations. He assured that the suggestions and feedback received during the meeting would directly influence policy formulation, especially concerning cultural preservation and inclusive development.

Community representatives actively participated in the discussion, sharing views on the proposed museum, the need to enhance language education, job creation, and healthcare services. While many favoured a unified museum complex with separate rooms for each community, others advocated for distinct spaces that could house not just artefacts but also libraries and cultural centres.

The meeting concluded with a renewed commitment by the BTR Government to work closely with all communities to realise the goals outlined in the Vision Document.

Assam Agriculture Commission chairman lays stress on modern technology access to farmers



HT Correspondent
JORHAT, April 9 : Hari Shankar Gupta, Chairman, Agriculture Commission, Assam and former Director, Borlaug Institute for South Asia addressing the 25th convocation of Assam Agricultural University here on Wednesday said that agricultural scientists must commit to increasing the income of the nearly 69 per cent of the population involved in farming.

To achieve this, the farming community must gain access to modern agricultural technologies, he said. The development and dissemination of advanced technologies across agriculture and allied sectors are vital to enhancing the livelihoods of farming households and boosting the state's overall growth. Assam Agricultural University can play a central role in this transformation by pioneering and promoting these innovations for the benefit of Assam's farmers, he said.

He said that the vision of a rising Assam demands robust growth in agriculture and allied sectors.

While the university has performed commendably in its core areas, the need for further improvement remains pressing. Crop productivity continues to be a major concern, as Assam's per hectare yield of major crops lags behind that of leading Indian states. Enhanced productivity and diversification into high-value crops like fruits, vegetables, and spices were identified as key drivers of growth. The low productivity in the agricultural and allied sectors highlights the vast potential for sustained development in the state. Researchers at Assam Agricultural University were urged to identify and disseminate best practices to farmers.

As agriculture undergoes significant global transformation, it is expected that the university will

continue to strengthen its research portfolio in these cutting-edge fields.

Gupta also encouraged the University to intensify efforts in data analytics, leveraging large datasets from reliable sources to derive insights into crop health, yield potential, and resource needs. Such advancements would facilitate timely and precise decision-making, ultimately benefiting farmers across the state.

The scientist spoke on the importance of environmentally friendly farming practices, such as water conservation, minimising chemical inputs, and promoting soil health. These sustainable approaches are considered crucial to elevating Assam's agricultural sector to the next level, he felt.

Assam Minister for Agriculture Atul Boro, who was the guest of honour on the occasion, spoke of various undertakings by the Government to enhance the agri sector and of the achievements in the sector.

The AAU on the occasion conferred Honorary doctorates to Dr Purnima Devi Barman, a wildlife biologist who is a recipient of prestigious Whitley Gold Award known as the 'Green Oscar' for her exemplary conservation efforts aimed at protecting the endangered Greater Adjutant Stork and its wetland habitat, and to Padma Shri awardee and renowned environmentalist Jadav Payeng.

Altogether 548 students from nine colleges under the AAU, were presented their certificates for their respective courses including PhD, gold medals and other awards at the event.

Earlier, the AAU Vice-Chancellor Dr Bidyut Chandan, in his welcome address, spoke about the progress of the university and about the steps taken to promote innovative thinking and enhance capacity in the agriculture sector.

Aditi Sanman-2025 presented to three noted individuals

HT Correspondent
NAGAON, April 9: The Assamese weekly "Amar Aditi" has been honoring outstanding individuals who have made significant contributions to various fields in society.

This year, three distinguished personalities were awarded the Aditi Sanman-2025.

The recipients of the award were Swapanil Deka, Superintendent of Police, Nagaon, Siraj Uddin Ahmed, founder and Chief Advisor of Gram Vikas Parishad, Nagaon, a five-time national awardee and noted scribe and editor of a daily newspaper from Guwahati Anil Barman.

The awards were presented to the recipients at their work-places by the Amar Aditi family. All three awardees expressed their gratitude and wished the weekly newspaper continued success.

Siraj Uddin Ahmed, a noted social worker, emphasized the importance of timely recognition, stating that awards and honors should be given earlier in life to provide motivation and encouragement while Anil Barman, highlighted the need for newspapers to focus on promoting language, literature, and culture, in addition to news dissemination. He also noted the decline in newspaper readership and the challenges faced by the industry, emphasizing the importance of catering to readers' tastes.

The award ceremony was attended by the chief editor, editor, and sub editors of Amar Aditi, as well as senior scribe Kanak Hazarika from Nagaon.

NFR achieves progress in New Panbazar ROB construction

HT Bureau
GUWAHATI, April 9: The Northeast Frontier Railway (NFR) has achieved an important milestone in the construction of new Road Over Bridge (ROB) at Panbazar, with the successful launching of a 60-meter Bow String Girder. This critical operation was executed flawlessly during a well-coordinated 3-hour traffic block on the night April 8.

The new ROB, once completed, will replace the earlier structure built in 1965, which has already been dismantled. The old ROB had long posed structural and operational challenges. With limited vertical and horizontal clearances, the old bridge enforced a permanent speed restriction of 15 km/h and created a "dead wire zone" affecting electric locomotive operations. Also, recurrent water-logging dur-

ing heavy rains further disrupted train movements and passenger services in the vicinity. Designed to overcome these limitations, the new 60-meter span bridge will ensure enhanced clearances, eliminating speed restrictions and facilitating seamless movement of electric locomotives. Elevated track levels will mitigate water-logging issues, ensuring smooth operations even during the monsoon season.

Beyond its technical upgrades, the project plays a strategic role in remodelling Guwahati station yard, paving the way for additional platforms and improved passenger amenities. The new three-lane wide carriageway—upgraded from the previous two-lane configuration—will ease road congestion and enhance urban traffic flow.

Despite spatial constraints near

the Fire Brigade station impacting material storage and logistics, the project has advanced steadily till date. Key achievements include completion of foundational structures, fabrication and positioning of the bow string girders and innovative sub-soil strengthening through Geo-cell technology to ensure long-term durability and stability.

Regular inspections by authorised agencies have upheld stringent quality and safety standards throughout the construction process. NFR General Manager Shri Chetan Kumar Shrivastava personally reviewed the project's progress and directed officials to ensure timely completion. With the successful girder launch, the ROB project now enters its final phase, set to significantly boost both rail and road connectivity in Guwahati.

Cyber criminals in Morigaon police net

HT Correspondent
MORIGAOON, April 9: Morigaon police today arrested two hardcore cyber criminals under Mayong PS from their procession. The accused are identified as Charibud Jaman(26) of Garudalani and Ramij Reja of Chutikudar Jannagaon under Sahibganj Mukasil PS of Jharkhand State. The duo notorious cyber criminals were arrested during the raid. An Apple laptop, a Lenovo laptop, a CPU, two iPhone mobiles, a scanner machine, a printer machine, passbooks of State Bank, Punjab National Bank, HDFC, ICICI and Bank of India. They seized chequebooks, ATM cards, Ayushman cards, an iPad and Rs 2,22,100 in cash. Police have already arrested the two cyber criminals and are continuing to question and investigate.

Floral tribute to cultural activists at Taralungso

HT Bureau
DIPHU, April 9: The Karbi Cultural Society and cultural community including the members of Karbi Cultural Society (KCS) recently at Karbi People's Hall, Taralungso offered floral tribute and a silent prayer at chekimo – memorial column to remember the departed cultural activists, who have dedicated their lives to the preservation and promotion of Karbi culture and heritage.

The chekimo was marked by traditional rituals, floral offerings, and moments of silence in honor of those who left a lasting impact on Karbi society through their artistic and cultural contributions. Participants expressed their respect and gratitude, hoping that the departed souls would continue to bless and inspire the younger generations to uphold the cultural values they so passionately nurtured.

Sunil Tokbi, general secretary,

KCS who participated in the chekimo said the gathering witnessed chants and prayers, creating a spiritual atmosphere filled with remembrance and reverence. Many attendees shared heartfelt memories and paid homage to the legacy of the departed cultural figures, reaffirming their commitment to continue the work left behind.

"The tribute at Chekimo stands as a reminder of the enduring spirit of those cultural warriors whose love for their land, language, and identity remains alive in the hearts of the people," Tokbi stated.

At the same time deep reverence was offered to Ru Rangina Sarpo – the divine god of art and music to seek blessings and spiritual harmony. The ritual, deeply rooted in traditional beliefs, was performed with devotion and reverence by community members and cultural practitioners.

Pandit Bidyut Mishra performs in Sivasagar

HT Correspondent
SIVASAGAR, April 9: Internationally renowned violinist and vocalist Pandit Bidyut Mishra with his soulful rendering of Raag Pradhan and Raag Basanta enthralled the music lovers that gathered in a function here in Purana Amolapatty on Tuesday. The musical programme organized by Rangpur Sangeet Mancha, established in 2018, has been organising such musical programme in Sivasagar to popularising classical music. Noted classical singer Pronoti Baruah spoke on the objectives and said that the forum would like to inspire the young music lovers by bringing them closer to the exponents in the art besides reviving the golden songs of the yester years. Pandit Mishra wished the progress of the forum and appreciated the initiative of the organizers. The event was attended by over a hundred people. President of the Forum, Suruj Kumar Patiri felicitated the noted musician with a gamosa and mementoes. Prominent persons attending the function were Dr Anjana Sharma, Karunabh Dutta, Dr. Tridiv Mohanta, Firoz Akhtar Khan, Farid Akhtar Khan, Hrishikesh Gogoi, and Dharma Dutta.

Dhubri Police solve bank robbery case, Mukesh Gowala arrested

HT Correspondent
DHUBRI, April 9: In a significant achievement, the Dhubri Police have successfully apprehended Mukesh Gowala, a notorious criminal involved in a series of bank lootings, the arrest took place in the Fata-pukur, area of Jalpaiguri, West Bengal, after extensive efforts by the Golakganj police team, with the assistance of local authorities in the neighboring state West Bengal.

Mukesh Gowala, infamously known for his criminal activities, was wanted in connection with the robbery of rupees four lakh thirty seven thousand five hundred from a customer at the State Bank of India, Golakganj Branch. The incident occurred on March 20, when the victim, Hitesh Rai, a local ATM operator, was talking to a bank employee inside the employees counter. Gowala approached the victim from behind and steal a bag filled with money before fleeing the scene. The entire robbery was captured on the bank's CCTV cameras, which played a crucial role in identifying the culprit. Following the incident, an FIR was lodged by the

victim at the Golakganj Police Station, prompting a dedicated investigation led by Dhubri's Superintendent of Police, Navin Singh, based on the CCTV footage and other intelligence, the police team conducted a series of operations across various locations.

The breakthrough came when they tracked Gowala to a hideout in Jalpaiguri, where they coordinated with West Bengal Police to execute the successful raid. Mukesh Gowala, widely known as a "chiloni thief" for his swift and stealthy operations, now faces charges related to multiple robberies.

His capture marks a significant win for the Dhubri Police in their continued efforts to combat cross-border criminal activities. Authorities are expected to gather further information from Gowala, which may help in resolving additional cases involving similar criminal acts. The successful operation has been hailed as a major victory for inter-state cooperation between the police forces of Assam and West Bengal, reaffirming their commitment to maintaining law and order across state borders.



Bollywood actress Neha Dhupia inaugurates Guru Nanak Sports Academy in Guwahati

HT Bureau
GUWAHATI, April 9: The Guru Nanak Trust proudly announced the inauguration of the Guru Nanak Sports Academy, a premier sports institute established within the campus of Guru Nanak Senior Secondary School, Guwahati. Bollywood actress Neha Dhupia inaugurated the academy.

Set up under the aegis of the Guru Nanak Trust, the Sports Academy aims to provide high-quality training in a wide range of sports disciplines including Karate, Cricket, Football, Badminton, Volleyball, Basketball, Skating, Table Tennis, and many more. This initiative marks a significant step towards promoting sports and physical education among students.

During the inauguration, Sardar Bhupinder Pal Singh, Secretary of the institution, expressed his heartfelt gratitude to Neha Dhupia for her presence and support. He shared his hopes that the Sports Academy would fulfill the long-cherished dreams of both students and guardians by bringing structured sports facilities to the school campus. He further mentioned that, for the time being, these facilities would be exclusively available to the students of Guru Nanak Senior Secondary School, Guwahati.

The establishment of the Guru Nanak Sports Academy reinforces the institution's commitment to holistic student development and lays a strong foundation for nurturing future sports talent from the region.



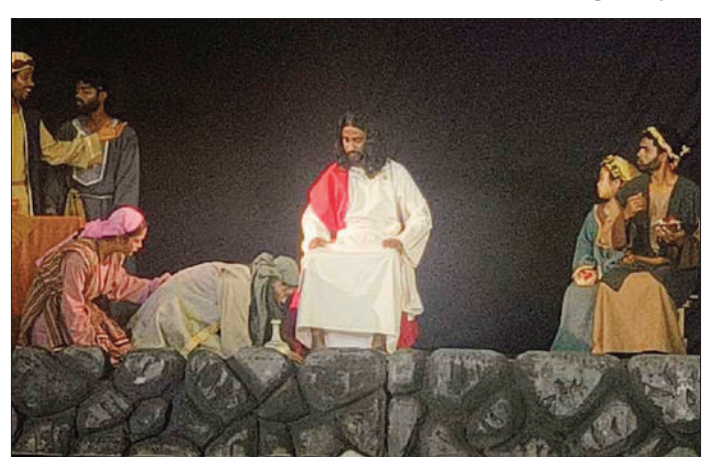
Musical Drama depicting Passion and Resurrection of Jesus Christ

Evening opened with two well-received welcome songs by Binita and Mabeni

HT Correspondent
DIBRUGARH, April 9: Dibrugarh Herald Good Friday and Easter Sunday, a high-quality musical drama depicting the Passion and Resurrection of Jesus Christ was staged at Bishop Hubback Hostel, Dibrugarh on Tuesday. Jointly organised by the Dibrugarh Inter-Church Forum (DICF) and the Christian Leaders Fellowship (CLF), the event drew a large and diverse audience from across the city.

The evening opened with two well-received welcome songs by Binita and Mabeni, followed by an invocation by Rev Benhur Soren, Pastor of Athabari Church. The event was anchored by Ansa Basumatary, who smoothly guided the flow of the programme.

Delivering the welcome address, Lamkhola Doungel, Ad-



viser to DICF, said, "This Cantata is a powerful portrayal of the human and divine dimensions of the Easter story. It conveys a message of love, forgiveness, and hope that continues to resonate across cultures and generations."

The Chief Guest, Assam Gau-rava arawdee Ram Chandra Sashoni, was felicitated by DICF with a traditional phulam gamosa and a citation in recognition of his contributions to public service. A short address was given by

Rev A Kithan ahead of the main performance—an hour-long musical drama of a high professional standard.

The performance offered a compelling narrative of the life, suffering, death, and resurrection of Christ, delivered through powerful acting, music, and stage-craft. The audience responded with appreciation for the thoughtful presentation and strong performances.

The evening concluded with a vote of thanks from Mr. Dennis Bird, President of DICF, who acknowledged the efforts of all involved in bringing the event to fruition.

The program was widely appreciated for its artistic merit, meaningful message, and smooth execution—making it a memorable cultural event in the city's calendar.

LOST
I have lost my Grade Card of 5 semester of TDC (AUS) bearings Roll: 052219 No.102400497. BIPLOB DAS PROBHAT DAS CHERAKANI 6003012764

LOST
I have lost my HSLC Original Admit card Roll - B20-465, No - 0442, and Higher secondary Registration certificate vide Regd no 136796 of session 2020- 21, on 05.03.2025 at jengkha market under Kheroni, p.s. area. Sundarlal chauhan, S/O Raghunath Chauhan, Vill - Ramthepi no 2 P.O. - Jengkha PS - Kheroni Dist - West Karbi Anglong Phone number 8638553512

Tact is the ability to describe others as they see themselves.
-Abraham Lincoln

Baby has his task cut out

71-year old CPI(M) politburo member Mariam Alexander Baby has taken over as the sixth general secretary of the Communist Party of India (Marxist) following his nomination at the 24th congress of the Party which concluded at Madurai on April 6. Baby is a veteran leader of the CPI(M) from Kerala with wide exposure both in the state and also in national politics. He was the education minister in the Kerala LDF government as also member in Rajya Sabha for two terms. Like his earlier two predecessors, Baby also joined the CPI(M) through students movement. It seems that the CPI(M) leadership chose M A Baby over the prominent peasant leader and present politburo member Dr. Ashok Dhawale taking into account two factors. First, Baby's familiarity with the national politics and political leaders due to his Rajya Sabha tenure and secondly, Baby can two terms even within the present 75 year limit for CC members. The new CPI(M) general secretary will be 74 in 2028 by the time the 25th party congress of the CPI(M) is held. So he has no problem for second term as per the present age ceiling. Baby is suave, media savvy and has good friends in the cultural world. His friendly manners and transparent approach were noted by us. He was unorthodox, a good listener and a communist with a liberal mind.

The big question is: will Baby be able to steer the CPI(M) at this critical period and impart dynamism among the party cadres. Can Baby arouse the same confidence among the INDIA Bloc partners as the former CPI(M) general secretary Sitaram Yechury could? As a part of the new strategy of the CPI(M) and the Left, he should talk with the other Left parties and work on mobilising the cultural workers and the groups from every region of the country under a national banner to fight against Hindutva on a priority basis. This will be far more impactful than the limited focus given in the political resolution on paying "special attention to organise anti-communal work through social and cultural activities among the working class and in the working class residential areas by the party and the trade unions".

The existing cultural organizations like IPTA of the CPI, CPI(M)'s own groups and the CPI(ML)-Liberation supported various groups in Bengal, Bihar and Jharkhand can be put under one broad banner to steer the course of the movement. Apart from this broad political task, the new general secretary will have to deal with the state assembly elections in Kerala in 2026. The win is of high importance to the CPI(M) because only Kerala remains as the only state presently ruled by the party as the leader of the Left Democratic Front. As regards West Bengal which is also going to polls along with Kerala, the issue is whether the state CPI(M) can break the jinx of present zero in the assembly to one or two seats. For the new CPI(M) general secretary challenges are too many. It is to be seen how he meets that in his present term.

Rahul Gandhi is focusing on Bihar youth in a big way before Assembly polls

By: Arun Srivastava

Pressurising the alliance partner to accrue more political and electoral benefit has certainly not been an alien concept. It has been in vogue for pretty long time. Obviously to look at the frequent visit of Rahul Gandhi to Bihar from the perspective of pressurising RJD to concede more seats to Congress during the October assembly election would be a flawed analysis. A weak political party is always vulnerable and it cannot be supposed to dictate the terms. Congress is not an exception.

Rahul's three visits to Bihar during the last three months ought to be seen and analysed in entirely new perspective. No doubt a strong Congress will create some kind of pressure on the big brother RJD for some more seats. But it cannot be expected to dictate RJD chief Lalu Yadav or Tejashwi. The fact also cannot be ignored that Congress has no sufficient number of winnable candidates. It even cannot claim to have that amount of strength which would ensure victory of its all candidates. The remark that Rahul made during his Monday visit to Bihar is quite significant; "Our aim is to draw the attention of the world to the plight of Bihar's youth, who find government jobs getting scarce day by day and privatisation bringing no benefits. Let us bring the government in the state under pressure and change it". It is intriguing to make out what prompted him to say "our aim is to draw the attention of world". Why the world should bother the plight and miseries of Bihar's youths? What is the relation between the two? Youths of other states are also facing the problems of joblessness. But what is so special about Bihar that it should be brought to the attention of world?

In fact the answer to the vexed issue has come from him: "wanted to show the world the plight of youths of Bihar who have to migrate to other states in search of jobs." At a time when all the states have been achieving huge economic growth, Bihar has been languishing. The youths of Bihar have indeed been the most productive force and have been contributing to the socio-economic growth of other states, they were unable to help their own state. Bihar is incapable to help them in earning their livelihood in their own state. Why there is utter lack of job in Bihar?

As in other places, in Patna too, while addressing the Samvidhan Bachao Sammelan he lambasted the feudal and rich people for the exploitation of the poor. OBC, EBC, Dalits, Muslims and poor of the general castes. He pressed for caste census, and slammed RSS-BJP for opposing a caste-based census and asserted Congress would ensure social justice by shaping policies

based on ground realities. He directly attacked RSS chief Mohan Bhagwat, saying, "Mohan Bhagwat says there is no need for a caste census. I want to tell him -- a caste-based census is like an x-ray of society. It reveals the real picture of the population and helps frame inclusive policies."

Ever since Rahul embarked on his Bharat Bachao yatra, he had come to realise that the giving leverage to rich and feudal elements would prove to be disastrous for the Congress. It has to return to its old base of poor and dalit. The rich and upper caste people rallying behind RSS and BJP and pursuing the politics of Hindutva has made him conscious of the fact that these people could not be relied. They nurture of the feeling that BJP can protect their class interest. Obviously in the greater interest of the party and make it gain back its old credibility, Rahul chose the political line of setting a counter narrative to the politics of violence and hatred of saffron ecosystem. For this Congress has to be reformed. This issue was also raised by Rahul at the sammelan. He emphasised on internal reforms within the Bihar Congress. It implied a shift in leadership representation. He said "Earlier, two-thirds of our district presidents in Bihar were from upper castes. Under Mallikarjun Kharge's leadership, that has changed. Today, two-thirds come from OBC, EBC, Dalit, and Mahadalit communities. We've aligned leadership roles with population realities".

Urging party workers to connect with marginalized communities, Gandhi emphasized the need to build a people-centric political movement: "Bihar has always led transformative movements. This time too, Bihar will lead from the front". He tried to lay down an ideological critique: "This Constitution is not just a document from 1947 - it reflects the values of our ancient civilization. The ideology of Savarkar has no place in it; he never had the courage to face the truth." He underlined "fear and silence dominate national discourse. It's difficult to speak the truth these days. People know it, but many leaders are afraid to say it aloud". His observation that plight of Bihar youth should be brought to world ought to be seen in this perspective.

Rahul is not only the leader who has been frequently visiting Bihar. Narendra Modi who did not find time to visit Manipur even for once during the last two years, has been making frequent forays to Bihar. Shockingly the mainstream media which has been agog at Rahul's visit never sought to know why Modi has been regularly visiting Bihar. Of course like in other northern Indian states, Bihar has some regional parties, but it is Congress which is in direct contest with BJP. Any political development that takes

On the 10th of April, 1755, the founder of Homeopathy Dr. Samuel Hahnemann was born and a new chapter in the history of medicine was started. World Homeopathy Day is an occasion to honour the contributions of homeopathy and its impact on healthcare. Held every year on the 10th of April globally, it commemorates the achievements of Dr. Samuel Hahnemann, the founder of homeopathy, and raises awareness about this alternative medical system. This day is celebrated with various events that highlight the effectiveness of homeopathy in treating ailments naturally. World Homeopathy Day 2025, like previous years, will inspire millions to explore the benefits of homeopathy through seminars, discussions, and awareness campaigns. According to the official website of the Ministry of Ayush, the name homeopathy is derived from the Greek 'homeo', which denotes similar, and 'pathos' means suffering or disease. It is a practice that believes in curing the disease based on the principle of 'like cures like'. "Homeopathy is a therapeutic method of treatment based on the concept of individualisation and holism. Homeopathy is a unique system of medicine in terms of its sources and preparation. Method of preparation includes the potentiation of medicinal substance to the minute level by which the most inert substance can become the most potent dynamic medicine, enough to stimulate the body's self-healing capability," the website added. Numerous conditions can be treated with homeopathy, including rheumatoid arthritis, allergies, migraines, depression, premenstrual syndrome, and chronic fatigue syndrome. According to the "National Institute of Health", more than 200 million people regularly utilize homeopathy globally, and over six million Americans use it to address particular medical issues. World Homeopathy Day Timeline :

1796 (Homeopathy's Inception): The discovery of homeopathy by Dr.Hahnemann represents a novel approach to healing in the traditions of medical history. #1835 (First Homeopathic Medical College): The Allentown Academy in Pennsylvania, the first homeopathic medical college, opened in the United States. #1920s (Rise and Fall of Homeopathy): Homeopathy's popularity fluctuates around the world as scientific skepticism grows, but its main application is in Europe. #1970s (Homeopathy Revival): The late 20th-century holistic health movement sparks a resurgence of interest in homeopathic medicine. #2005 (First World Homeopathy Day): The First World Homeopathy Day celebrates the birth anniversary of Dr. Samuel Hahnemann. #Present (Homeopathy Today): Homeopathic methods are used by many integrative health practitioners worldwide, and a growing body of scientific evidence attests to their advantages. Theme of World Homeopathy Day 2025 : Each year, World Homeopathy Day has a specific theme to highlight an important aspect of this medical system. The theme for World Homeopathy Day 2025 is expected to be "Homeopathy for a Healthier Future: Natural, Safe, and Effective." This theme will emphasize the role of homeopathy in achieving long-term wellness, its effectiveness in chronic disease management, and its contribution to integrative healthcare. Clinics and institutions can use tools like the Positive Festival Poster Maker App to create eye-catching and informative posters to highlight this theme and promote awareness. History of World Homeopathy Day : World Homeopathy Day is observed in memory of Dr. Samuel Hahnemann, who introduced homeopathy in the late 18th century. His principle of "like cures like" revolutionized medical treatment by using highly diluted natural substances to stimulate the body's self-healing processes. Over the years, homeopathy has gained global recognition and has been widely practiced in many countries. The day serves as a tribute to his contributions and encourages further research and acceptance of homeopathy in modern medicine. Significance of World Ho-

meopathy Day :

World Homeopathy Day holds immense significance as it promotes the benefits of homeopathy and its role in holistic healthcare. The day aims to:

Increase Awareness: Educating people about the effectiveness of homeopathy in treating various diseases. **Promote Research:** Encouraging scientific studies and clinical trials to validate homeopathic treatments. **Highlight Safe Healing:** Showcasing homeopathy as a natural, non-invasive, and side-effect-free treatment option. **Integrate Traditional Medicine:** Fostering collaboration between homeopathy and conventional medicine to enhance patient care. **Benefits Of Homeopathy Treatment :**

Advantages of homeopathic medicine are :

Effective Treatment: A few diseases such as Allergies, Migraine, Autism, Acne, and more reappear frequently. Therefore, homeopathy is the most effective medical approach for treating these chronic illnesses in a way that is both practical and long-lasting.

Free From Side Effects: Homeopathic medicines are made from minerals and rich plants. To create a remedy, no chemicals are combined. As a result, no one is adversely affected by homeopathic treatment. It is safe for everyone including pregnant women, newborn babies, elderly people, and others.

Reduces Depression and Anxiety:

Daily hustle can sometimes lead to anxiety among individuals. Due to its lack of adverse effects, homeopathy is regarded as one of the greatest medicinal systems for treating depression and anxiety.

Mechanism of Homeopathic Treatment : Homeopaths are those who provide medical care to patients using the principles of homeopathy. The basic principle behind the workings of homeopathic treatment is "like cures like." This implies that any illness can be cured by treating symptoms with natural ingredient-based medications. For example, cutting an onion brings

tears to your eyes. Consequently, in homeopathic medicine, it is utilized to cure allergies. To dilute these substances, homeopathic physicians add alcohol or water. After this, they blend the mixture, known as the potentization process. In general, homeopaths believe a smaller amount of homeopathic medicine works far better than a larger dose. Homeopathy medicines come in the form of liquid drops, creams, sugar pellets, gels, and tablets. A homeopathic physician will inquire about a person's physical, mental, and emotional well-being in great detail. He will further prescribe the remedy according to the symptoms a person has. Celebration in India :

On the occasion of World Homeopathy Day 2025, a two-day grand convention is set to be hosted at Gandhinagar, Gujarat. Organised under the aegis of the Ministry of AYUSH, the two-day convention will be jointly hosted by the Central Council for Research in Homeopathy (CCRH), the National Commission for Homeopathy (NCH), and the National Institute of Homeopathy (NIH) on April 10-11, 2025 at the Mahatma Mandir Convention and Exhibition Centre, Gandhinagar. This year, the theme of the convention is 'अध्ययन, अभ्यास एवं अनुसंधान' (Education, Practice and Research) highlighting the three foundational pillars for the growth of Homeopathy. Prataprao Jadhav, Union Minister of State (Independent Charge) of the Ministry of Ayush; and Minister of State in the Ministry of Health and Family Welfare will inaugurate the convention. The event is expected to witness participation from about 10,000 delegates from across the globe, making it the largest gathering in the history of homeopathy. The aim of World Homeopathy Day 2025 is to strengthen global access to homeopathic research advancements, its practical applications, and its growing impact in both healthcare and industry. The convention will not only cater to academics and researchers but will also bring together policymakers and industry experts on one unified platform. A major highlight of the event will be India's largest-ever "Live Materia Medica" competition

and separate, thought-provoking sessions organised by the three collaborating organisations for exhaustive deliberations. With being home to the WHO's first Global Traditional Medicine Centre in Jamnagar, this large-scale event will further position Gujarat as a frontrunner in endorsing traditional and complementary systems of medicine. Dr. Subhash Kaushik, Director General, Central Council for Research in Homeopathy (CCRH), stated that "We are proud to host World Homeopathy Day 2025 at Gandhinagar's Mahatma Mandir Convention and Exhibition Centre. It will be the largest congregation of homeopathy professionals to date. With the theme 'Education, Practice, and Research,' the event will spotlight the collaborative efforts of India's three key institutions; NCH, NIH, and CCRH, each playing a critical role in shaping homeopathy's future." Dr. Pinalin N. Trivedi, Chairperson-in-Charge, National Commission for Homeopathy (NCH), emphasized the academic significance of the event, and said, "This year's celebration will witness the largest representation from the education sector, paving the way for future generations of homeopathy professionals. We will also use the platform to sensitise the students about the new courses introduced by NCH." Last year, the event was celebrated in New Delhi with the gracious presence of the President of India, Droupadi Murmu amid a huge delegation. In 2023, the event was graced by the Vice President of India, Jagdeep Dhankhar. As this year's celebrations unfold in Gandhinagar, the city will provide a monumental platform to Homeopathy to celebrate, collaborate, and chart the course for the future of homeopathy. Conclusion : World Homeopathy Day 2025 is a perfect opportunity to raise awareness about the natural and holistic benefits of homeopathy. Whether a person is a practitioner, a believer in alternative medicine, or someone looking to explore homeopathy, this day encourages participation and knowledge sharing. (The author can be reached at digan-taraju@gmail.com)

Mahavira: Spiritual hero of nonviolence and peace

By: Lalit Garg

The entire life of Mahavira is a living inspiration for the rise of self and others. He has illuminated millions and millions of people with his aura of positivity. Therefore becoming a Mahavir is a symbol of the meaning of life. To become a Mahavir means to lead a healthy life, to develop immunity, to illuminate the soul and become a person who is self-reliant. Every year we celebrate the birth anniversary of Lord Mahavir, but this year the birth anniversary has to be purposeful, not mere planning. For this, every person should do spiritual practice to look within himself; Mahavir is not only worshiped, but should be imbibed in life. It is necessary that we inculcate the teachings given by Mahavira in our life and practice.

Every person prepares to become a Mahavir, then only one can get rid of problems. Mahavir can only become a person who is completely devoted to the goal, whose lifestyle is restrained and disciplined, who has the capacity to bear the sufferings. One who can maintain equanimity, restraint and balance even in adverse circumstances, who is ready to practice silence and heat the body. In whose mind there is a feeling of coexistence towards the whole being. One who not only knows how to change his destiny through effort, but also wishes for a bright future for the entire humanity.

Mahavir was born centuries ago, but his life and teachings are more effective and relevant in today's time of crisis and many diseases. Mahavir is a wave of health-evolution, a smokeless crest of healthy life-light. There is an unnamed river of courage and restraint. There was a hint of eternity in his dialogues. His lifestyle was so dominant that he would have been bound by a once-living. There was such a brilliance in his eyes that the one who saw him once could not forget. There was such an invitation in his call for a healthy life that it could not be ignored. His guidance was so perfect that the one who found him could never go astray. His presence was so inspiring that one would get transformed. He said 'appanasachamesja' - find the truth yourself. He did not make anyone run with the help of crutches. If you have the ability to walk on your feet, then you can walk whenever you want and reach wherever you want. He not only illuminated the way, but also created the inner light. These are all the reasons that remind us of Mahavira.

Mahavira believed in a healthy life.

They lived on their own. He also taught others to live in himself. They were healthy. No disease could touch him. He gave many sources of health. One of them was the formula - Kayotsarga. Kayotsarga means purification of the body, maintenance of the body, purity and restraint towards the body. Kayotsarga is also the starting point of sadhana and it is also the final point. This is the first understanding of health and the final conclusion. It is the shield for emergency situations involving the body. It is the use of stress-immersion and is free from all sorrows.

Mahavira's sadhana period lasted twelve and a half years. In it he repeatedly used kayotsarga. The wearer of protective armor or bulletproof jacket does not have the fear of being shot, similarly after going into deep Kayotsarga, the effect of adverse conditions of major diseases and deadly and life-threatening attacks is attenuated. Like Mahavira, one who practices Kayotsarga becomes healthy-hearted, becomes light and can lead a happy life by being absorbed in expansive meditation.

The person, who wants to get rid of various kinds of diseases, wants to become healthy and has to take medicine in the form of Kayotsarga. Mahavira had the science of medicine whose constituent elements are not mentioned in medical science, he gave such an unfolding system of health, which is as easy as it is difficult. Kayotsarga is a type of penance. In which physical restlessness and anger etc. have to be immersed. The focus has to be on the breath. Is the mind fickle or the restlessness of the mind is the mind. On the basis of this concept, it seems difficult to stop the restlessness of the mind.

In the practice of Kayotsarga, words like relaxation, shavasana or relaxation for the body are used. Kayotsarga is such a door, from where one can get a glimpse of the soul, a feeling of existence apart from the gross body. In Kayotsarga, the body and mind get complete relaxation. There are many misconceptions about Jainism in the public. Jainism is a religion that hurts the body. Mahavira talks of giving rest to the body. How can the principle of suffering be valid in such a situation? Any austerity or penance does not mean to cause pain to the body, but to cultivate the body. The mind cannot be controlled without the body. Therefore, through yogic processes, a way has been made to cultivate the body.

Kayotsarga has a special significance

in the field of spirituality. Its usefulness in medical science is also undeniable. Kayotsarga also plays a big role in various investigations done by the modern equipment of medical science. In every medical examination, it is advised to leave the body a little loose and slow down the breathing, it is said to leave the mouth loose even during the extraction of teeth. In case of high blood pressure, it can be balanced by kayotsarga. Unbalanced lifestyle and stress are the major problems of this time. Small and big, rich and poor, everyone is surrounded by this tension. This is a problem for which doctors do not even have a cure. Kayotsarga can be a permanent solution to the problem of stress and fear. If Kayotsarga is done regularly, then there will be no leave for tension and fear to arise. Through Kayotsarga, both body and mind can be kept healthy. Kayotsarga is a mantra for self-meditation, in the same way, health is also a mantra for spiritual practice.

In modern life, the practice of silence, mantra cultivation and restraint is very useful. Silence gives rest, happiness comes. But the glory of silence that is accompanied by Kayotsarga is different. Be it silence, meditation, fasting or any other restraint ritual, all have a useful place in getting rid of diseases. Those who want physical, mental and spiritual health, want to avoid epidemics and diseases, they should use this great mantra Kayotsarga of Mahavira. Kayotsarga is medicine and highway to health. Any one following this can lead a healthy life.

Lord Mahavira is truly a shining beam of light and the founder of universal religion. He is the savior of the human mind of this creation. Mahavir had given maximum emphasis on fasting, restraint and character. Mahavir's entire life is the culmination of austerity and meditation, so he is self-motivated. The teachings of the Lord are life-giving in which the solution of life's problems is contained. Lord Mahavira is Chinmaya Deepak (a lamp that has the never lasting illumination light) The lamp removes the darkness, but the usefulness of the Chinmaya lamp to defeat the darkness of ignorance is undeniable. In fact, Mahavira's discourses and teachings are millions of beams of light. In order to be flooded with the rays of knowledge, it is necessary to immerse in them, only then will we be able to move towards a healthy life. (The writer is a journalist, columnist who can be reached at lalitgarg11@gmail.com)

The importance of Assam's wetlands

By: Himangshu Ranjan Bhuyan

Assam's wetlands are a vibrant and indispensable part of the region's landscape, serving as vital reservoirs of biodiversity and playing a critical role in maintaining the ecological balance, supporting local economies, and nurturing cultural traditions. These extensive and dynamic ecosystems, which include freshwater lakes, ox-bow lakes, marshes, and ponds, form an interconnected network that sustains a myriad of plant and animal species while simultaneously providing essential services to human populations. Over the decades, these wetlands have emerged as nature's own safeguard against environmental degradation, acting as natural water filters, flood protectors, and breeding grounds for countless aquatic organisms.

In the vast and lush expanse of Assam, wetlands are more than just bodies of water; they are living ecosystems that embody the intrinsic connection between nature and the local communities. They are often described as the "kidneys of the landscape" because of their remarkable ability to cleanse water by filtering out pollutants and sediments, thereby maintaining the overall health of the environment. The intricate networks of waterways, channels, and floodplains in these wetlands capture and store rainwater, which not only recharges groundwater levels but also helps to moderate the local climate. This natural process is crucial in a region where the seasonal monsoons can bring both life-giving rains and destructive floods. The wetlands serve as a buffer, absorbing excess water during heavy rains and releasing it gradually, which prevents the abrupt surges that could otherwise lead to catastrophic flooding in nearby agricultural lands and urban settlements. The biological richness of Assam's wetlands is awe-inspiring. They support an incredible diversity of life, ranging from microscopic algae to large mammals. Aquatic vegetation thrives in these waters, creating habitats that sustain fish populations, amphibians, reptiles, and an array of invertebrates. Migratory birds from distant regions find refuge in these wetlands, turning them into vibrant stopover sites during their long journeys. The wetlands not only serve as crucial breeding and feeding grounds but also act as natural sanctuaries where species that are otherwise endangered or threatened can flourish. In regions such as the Kaziranga National Park, the wetlands complement the park's famous grasslands by offering a unique habitat for species like the one-horned rhinoceros and

various water-dependent animals. The delicate balance maintained in these ecosystems is a testament to nature's ability to create and sustain life when given the proper conditions.

Economically, the wetlands of Assam are a lifeline for many communities. For centuries, local populations have relied on these water bodies for their subsistence, drawing from them a range of resources that include fish, aquatic plants, and water for agriculture. Fishing, in particular, is a major economic activity that supports not only local diets but also livelihoods. The fish harvested from these wetlands form an integral part of the regional cuisine and have become synonymous with the cultural identity of Assam. Beyond the immediate economic benefits, the wetlands also contribute to the tourism sector. Eco-tourism has grown steadily in the region as more visitors are drawn to the natural beauty and serenity of these ecosystems. Bird watchers, naturalists, and adventure seekers find Assam's wetlands an irresistible attraction, further driving economic activity and creating opportunities for community-based tourism initiatives that promote sustainable practices.

The cultural significance of Assam's wetlands cannot be overstated. For many indigenous and local communities, these ecosystems are deeply interwoven with their traditions, folklore, and spiritual beliefs. Generations have grown up with stories and practices that honor the natural world, viewing wetlands not merely as physical spaces but as sacred entities imbued with life and history. Festivals, rituals, and community gatherings often take place near these water bodies, reinforcing the bond between people and their environment. This cultural heritage has, in many ways, been a driving force behind efforts to preserve these vital landscapes, ensuring that traditional knowledge and practices are passed down through the ages.

Despite their invaluable contributions, Assam's wetlands face an array of challenges that threaten to undermine their ecological integrity and the services they provide. Rapid urbanization and unplanned development have led to the encroachment of these fragile ecosystems, as expanding human settlements and agricultural projects claim more land for their activities. Pollution has emerged as a serious concern, with industrial waste, agricultural runoff, and domestic refuse all taking their toll on water quality. In many instances, the accumulation of pollutants has disrupted the natural cycles within these wetlands, leading to diminished biodiversity and the loss of habitat for many species. Furthermore, the in-



creased sedimentation resulting from deforestation and poor land management practices has reduced the water-holding capacity of the wetlands, impairing their ability to regulate floods and maintain healthy aquatic environments.

Another significant threat comes from invasive species that alter the delicate balance of these ecosystems. The introduction of non-native plants and animals can displace indigenous species, reducing biodiversity and altering the natural processes that sustain the wetlands. In a region already grappling with the impacts of climate change, such invasions can exacerbate existing problems. Changing weather patterns, increased temperatures, and more frequent extreme weather events further compound the stress on these ecosystems, making conservation efforts all the more urgent. In response to these challenges, a multifaceted approach to wetland conservation has been adopted by various stakeholders in Assam. Government agencies, non-governmental organizations, and local communities have come together to implement measures aimed at protecting these ecosystems. Conservation policies, such as the Wetlands (Conservation and Management) Rules, have been formulated to provide a regulatory framework that safeguards the wetlands against unbridled development and environmental degradation. These policies emphasize the importance of integrated management strategies that balance developmental needs with ecological sustain-

ability. Efforts are also being made to raise awareness about the ecological and cultural importance of wetlands, with educational campaigns and community outreach programs designed to instill a sense of stewardship among local residents.

Scientific research and monitoring are critical components of these conservation strategies. By conducting detailed studies on water quality, species diversity, and the impacts of human activities, researchers are able to develop a deeper understanding of the dynamics within these wetlands. Such research not only informs conservation efforts but also provides valuable insights that can help predict and mitigate the effects of climate change. Restoration projects are increasingly being undertaken to rehabilitate degraded wetlands, with initiatives focusing on replanting native vegetation, removing invasive species, and restoring natural water flows. These projects serve as a reminder of the resilience of nature and the potential for recovery when human intervention is guided by sound ecological principles.

In many ways, the future of Assam's wetlands depends on the harmonious coexistence of development and conservation. There is a growing recognition that economic progress and environmental sustainability are not mutually exclusive but rather mutually reinforcing. By promoting sustainable agricultural practices, implementing effective waste management systems, and developing eco-

friendly tourism, it is possible to ensure that the wetlands continue to serve as a resource for both nature and people. Community engagement remains at the heart of these efforts, as local populations possess the traditional knowledge and vested interest necessary to manage these resources effectively. Empowering communities through participatory management models not only strengthens conservation outcomes but also fosters a deeper appreciation for the natural world.

The ongoing challenges faced by Assam's wetlands highlight the urgent need for a paradigm shift in how natural resources are managed. Conservation efforts must extend beyond mere protection and include strategies for sustainable utilization that benefit both the environment and the local populace. By integrating traditional ecological knowledge with modern conservation techniques, Assam can create a robust framework that ensures the long-term health of its wetlands. This integration is essential in a world where the pressures of climate change, urbanization, and industrialization continue to intensify.

Assam's wetlands stand as a testament to nature's enduring capacity to nurture life, offering invaluable services that sustain both the environment and human society. They embody a delicate balance between natural processes and human activity, one that has evolved over centuries of interaction between people and their surroundings. The wetlands are not only reservoirs of biodiversity but also living symbols of the interconnectedness of all life forms. Their preservation is a shared responsibility that requires the collective efforts of governments, communities, scientists, and conservationists alike.

Looking ahead, the story of Assam's wetlands is one of resilience and hope. It is a story that underscores the need for continued vigilance, innovation, and collaboration in the face of mounting environmental challenges. The future of these ecosystems hinges on our ability to recognize their worth, respect their boundaries, and invest in their restoration and sustainable management. In doing so, Assam can ensure that its wetlands remain a vibrant source of life, culture, and prosperity for generations to come. The enduring beauty and ecological significance of these wetlands remind us that the health of our environment is intrinsically linked to our own well-being, urging us to act as responsible custodians of nature in an ever-changing world. *(The writer is the Editor in Chief of the Assamese e-magazine SAMPROTIK. He can be reached at himangshur1989@gmail.com)*

Indian Ocean's silent shift



By: Satyabrata Borah

The Indian Ocean is one of the most important and beautiful parts of our Earth. It has always been a place of mystery, beauty, and life. It touches many countries and gives water, food, and support to millions of people. But now, scientists have found something surprising. They say the Indian Ocean is moving.

At first, this sounds strange. How can an ocean move? We know water in the ocean moves all the time in the form of waves, tides, and currents. Ships sail on it, and storms pass over it. But here, scientists are talking about something deeper. They mean the ocean itself, the entire body of water and the ocean floor under it, is shifting slowly from its place. This kind of movement is very slow, and it cannot be seen easily. But over many years, this movement can make big changes.

Scientists use satellites and special tools to study the Earth. They found that the Indian Ocean is not staying still. It is moving slightly towards the northeast every year. This might not be something we notice in daily life, but for scientists and people who study the Earth, it is very important.

The reason for this movement lies deep inside the Earth. Our planet is made up of large pieces of rock called tectonic plates. These plates are like a big jigsaw puzzle covering the Earth. The Indian Ocean lies on one of these plates, and that plate is slowly moving. It moves a few centimeters every year. This movement is very slow, but it never stops. Over thousands or millions of years, this small movement becomes a big change.

The Indian plate, on which the Indian Ocean rests, is pushing into the Eurasian plate in the north. That is one reason we have the Himalayan mountains. It also causes earthquakes sometimes. But now, scientists are also seeing that this movement is affecting the ocean too.

This movement of the Indian Ocean may not sound like a big problem at the moment, but it does bring some concerns. If the ocean floor is moving, it can change the sea level in some places. In one area, the sea level might rise, while in another area, it might fall. This can affect the people who live near the coast. Some islands in the Indian Ocean are already worried about rising sea levels. If the land under the ocean is moving, it could make the situation worse.

It can also affect the weather. The Indian Ocean plays a big role in the monsoon, which brings rain to India and nearby countries. If the ocean moves or changes shape even slightly, it could change how winds and clouds behave. That could mean less rain in some areas and more in others. Farmers, fishermen, and many other people depend on the regular rhythm of the weather. Any change in the ocean could upset this rhythm.

Another concern is about earthquakes and tsunamis. When the sea floor moves suddenly, it can cause a strong earthquake. If this happens under the ocean, it can lead to a tsunami. The 2004 tsunami in the Indian Ocean was one of the deadliest natural disasters. So, any sign of movement in the ocean floor must be taken seriously.

But it is also important to remember that the Earth has always been changing. Mountains rise, oceans shift, and land moves. These changes happen slowly, and they are part of the natural process of the Earth. The movement of the Indian Ocean is not new. It has been happening for millions of years. What is new is that now we are able to see and understand it better.

Thanks to science and technology, we are learning more about our planet every day. This helps us prepare for the future. If we know how the ocean is moving, we can plan better. We can build stronger buildings, prepare better warnings for disasters, and protect the people who live near the sea.

The Indian Ocean is very important for trade, travel, and the climate. Ships carry goods across it every day. Countries around the ocean depend on it for fishing, oil, and many other resources. If it is moving, we need to understand how that might affect these things.

The ocean also has life in it — fish, whales, corals, and many other sea creatures. If the ocean floor moves, it could affect their homes too. Changes in temperature, water flow, or sea level can affect where fish go or where corals grow. Protecting sea life is important for the balance of nature and for people who depend on the ocean for food.

So, what can we do? First, we must support the work of scientists. They are studying the ocean closely to learn more. Their research can help us understand what is happening and what might happen next. We should also take care of the ocean. Pollution and overfishing make it harder for the ocean to stay healthy. A clean and balanced ocean can handle changes better.

We should also share this knowledge with others. When people know more about how the Earth works, they can make better choices. Children in schools, leaders in government, and ordinary people can all learn about the Indian Ocean's movement and be part of the solution.

The Earth is always alive. It breathes, moves, and changes, just like we do. The Indian Ocean is not just a big body of water. It is a living part of our planet. It gives us so much, and now we are learning more about how it lives and moves. This new knowledge can help us care for it better and live more safely with the changes that come.

Even though the ocean is moving slowly, its message is clear. The Earth is never still. And the more we understand that, the more we can live in harmony with it.

Greening India: Balancing industrial growth with climate resilience

By: Dipak Kurmi

As climate change intensifies across the globe, the importance of tree plantation and carbon sequestration has surged to the forefront of environmental sustainability strategies. For India, a rapidly growing economy with a significant dependence on carbon-intensive industries, the transition to greener practices is no longer a matter of choice but an urgent necessity. With mounting global pressure to reduce carbon footprints and the looming risks posed by climate change, India must integrate afforestation and carbon offset initiatives into its industrial and economic framework to ensure long-term sustainability.

India's Forest Cover Deficit: A Call for Action

Currently, India's forest and tree cover stands at 25.17%, significantly falling short of the 33% target set by the National Forest Policy of 1988. Bridging this gap is not merely a policy ambition—it is an ecological imperative. Rapid urban expansion, deforestation, and surging greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions have exacerbated environmental degradation, making afforestation a key strategy in mitigating these adverse effects. Tree plantations act as natural carbon sinks, capturing and storing atmospheric carbon dioxide, which is critical in combating global warming and ensuring long-term ecological balance.

Recognizing the urgency, India has implemented multiple initiatives to encourage afforestation. The National Agroforestry Policy of 2014 and the Trees Outside Forests in India (TOFI) program have been designed to promote plantation efforts among private landowners, farmers, and industries. These initiatives not only help reduce dependency on natural forests but also contribute to ecological restoration and employment generation in rural areas. By integrating agroforestry with tree-based enterprises, India can align environmental conservation with economic growth, fostering a model where sustainability complements livelihoods.

Global Carbon Regulations: A Rising Challenge for Indian Industries

India's industrial sector is facing increasing scrutiny under stringent international carbon regulations. One of the most significant developments is the European Union's Carbon Border Adjustment Mechanism (CBAM), which will impose tariffs on carbon-intensive imports such as steel, cement, and chemicals by 2026. Given that India's trade with the EU reached €124 billion in 2023, the impact of these tariffs could be substantial, potentially threatening the competitiveness of Indian exports in global markets.

To counter these challenges, Indian industries are exploring carbon-offset projects, including large-scale tree plantations, as a means to reduce their carbon footprints. Investments in afforestation initiatives not only align with global sustainability standards but also allow companies to secure carbon credits under internationally recognized mechanisms such as the Verified Carbon Standard (VCS) and

the Clean Development Mechanism (CDM). These credits enable industries to offset their emissions, ensuring compliance with global regulations while maintaining economic viability.

The Economic and Social Impact of Tree Plantations

Beyond their environmental significance, tree plantations offer considerable economic and social benefits. Agroforestry, in particular, presents a viable model for enhancing rural incomes while promoting ecological restoration. By cultivating multipurpose tree species that yield both economic and environmental returns, farmers and marginalized communities can create sustainable revenue streams. This dual approach not only reduces rural poverty but also strengthens climate resilience by improving soil health and water conservation.

Active community participation is crucial to the success and sustainability of plantation projects. By involving local stakeholders in afforestation efforts, these initiatives can foster a sense of ownership and ensure long-term viability. Additionally, capacity-building programs can equip communities with the necessary knowledge and skills to manage and maintain tree plantations effectively, thus securing both economic and ecological benefits.

Overcoming Financial Barriers: The Need for a Robust Carbon Trading Policy

While tree plantations present a promising pathway toward sustainability, financial constraints remain a major obstacle. The rising cost of carbon credits poses a significant challenge for industries seeking to offset emissions. In 2023, the price of carbon credits under the European Union Emissions Trading System (EU ETS) averaged €83 per tonne of CO₂, with projections suggesting a sharp rise to \$238 per tonne by 2050. For Indian businesses, direct investment in afforestation programs offers a cost-effective alternative to purchasing expensive carbon credits from international markets.

To fully leverage carbon offset opportunities, India must establish a transparent and efficient carbon trading policy. Under Article 6 of the Paris Agreement, countries can engage in carbon credit trading to meet their emission reduction targets. Developing a well-regulated and credible carbon trading framework will not only attract international investments but also strengthen India's position in the global carbon markets, making it a key player in climate mitigation efforts.

Towards a Sustainable Future: The Role of Strategic Partnerships

A multi-stakeholder approach is essential to tackling the dual challenges of environmental degradation and industrial sustainability. Collaborations between industries, government agencies, and local communities can lead to scalable afforestation models that integrate agroforestry, address climate change, and enhance rural livelihoods. Strategic investments in large-scale tree plantations, coupled with innovation in carbon sequestration technologies, will play a pivotal role in shaping India's transition toward a sustainable, low-carbon

economy.

As India strives to achieve its net-zero emissions target by 2050, tree plantations and carbon sequestration will serve as crucial pillars in bridging the gap between policy ambitions and on-ground implementation. These initiatives align economic growth with environmental stewardship, offering a comprehensive roadmap for a greener future.

The Urgency of Climate Action

Tree plantations are no longer an optional solution; they have become a necessity in the fight against climate change. They offer a scalable and impactful strategy to reduce carbon footprints, improve biodiversity, and enhance rural livelihoods. With global climate regulations tightening and the costs of inaction mounting, Indian industries must take proactive steps toward sustainable practices and investments in carbon offset initiatives.

By prioritizing afforestation and carbon sequestration, India can strike a balance between industrial growth and ecological preservation, ensuring a resilient and sustainable future for generations to come. Integrating these initiatives into national policies and industry strategies will not only mitigate climate risks but also reinforce India's role as a leader in global climate action.

India stands at a pivotal juncture where economic expansion and environmental responsibility must converge. Tree plantations and carbon sequestration provide a viable path to achieving sustainability while ensuring industrial competitiveness in a carbon-conscious global economy. The nation's commitment to expanding forest cover, promoting agroforestry, and developing a structured carbon trading policy will be instrumental in mitigating climate change and meeting international sustainability benchmarks.

Strategic investments in large-scale afforestation projects, alongside collaborations between industries, policymakers, and local communities, will drive meaningful progress. These initiatives not only enhance carbon capture but also generate economic opportunities, particularly for rural populations. By integrating tree-based enterprises into national development strategies, India can harness the economic potential of sustainability while addressing pressing ecological challenges.

As global climate regulations grow increasingly stringent, Indian industries must proactively invest in carbon offset initiatives such as afforestation and reforestation programs. Establishing a robust and transparent carbon trading framework will further solidify India's standing in international markets.

The road ahead demands a comprehensive and multifaceted approach, aligning industrial growth with environmental stewardship. By prioritizing tree plantations and carbon sequestration, India can pave the way for a sustainable, carbon-neutral future, ensuring long-term resilience and prosperity for its people and the planet. *(The writer can be reached at dipakkurmipltd@gmail.com)*

Israeli strike on Gaza apartment building kills at least 15: officials say

DEIR AL-BALAH (GAZA STRIP), April 9: Israeli aircraft struck a residential block in war-torn northern Gaza on Wednesday, killing at least 15 people, health officials said, as the renewed fighting in the devastated Palestinian enclave showed no signs of letting up.

Gaza's Health Ministry said more than half of the dead were women and children. It said at least 40 people were wounded in the strike, which hit a four-storey building in the Shijaiyah neighbourhood of Gaza City. Rescue teams were searching for victims under the rubble.

The Israeli military said it struck a senior Hamas militant who it said was behind attacks emanating from Shijaiyah. It did not name him or provide further details. Israel blames the deaths of civilians on the militant group, because it embeds itself in dense

urban areas.

As it ratchets up pressure on Hamas to agree to free hostages, Israel has issued sweeping evacuation orders in parts of Gaza, including for Shijaiyah. It has imposed a blockade on food, fuel and humanitarian aid that has left civilians facing acute shortages as supplies dwindle. It has pledged to seize large parts of the Palestinian territory and establish a new security corridor through it.

Earlier this week, Hamas fired its strongest volley of rockets since the ceasefire collapsed, lobbing 10 projectiles toward southern Israel.

Israel resumed its war against Hamas in Gaza last month after an eight-week ceasefire collapsed. The ceasefire brought a much-needed reprieve from the fighting to war-weary Palestinians in Gaza and sent an infusion of humanitarian aid to the territory. It also led



to the release of 25 living Israeli hostages held in Gaza and the return of the remains of eight others, in exchange for hundreds of Palestinian prisoners.

end, something Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu says he will not agree to until Hamas is defeated. Hamas wants the war to end before it frees the remaining 59 hostages it holds, 24 of whom are believed to be alive.

The war, which was sparked by Hamas on October 7, 2023, attacks on southern Israel, has seen the deadliest fighting between Israelis and Palestinians in their history. It has ignited a humanitarian crisis in already impoverished Gaza, and has sent shockwaves across the region and beyond.

Netanyahu traveled to Washington this week to meet with President Donald Trump and in their public statements offered sympathy for the plight of the hostages but shed little light on any emerging deal to suspend the fighting.

Trump has said he wants the war to end. But his postwar vision

for Gaza — taking it over and relocating its population — has stunned Middle East allies, who say any talk of transferring the Palestinian population, by force or voluntarily, is a nonstarter. Israel has embraced the idea.

Netanyahu meanwhile is under pressure from his far-right political allies to continue the war until Hamas is crushed, an aim Israel has yet to achieve 18 months into the conflict.

The war has killed more than 50,000 Palestinians in Gaza, according to the health ministry there, which does not differentiate between combatants and civilians in its count but says more than half of the dead are women and children.

Hamas killed 1,200 people during its October 7 attack, mostly civilians, and took 250 people captive, many of whom have been freed in ceasefire deals. (AP)

20 elderly people killed in fire at nursing home in China



BEIJING, April 9: Twenty elderly people were killed in a fire at a nursing home in north China's Hebei province, local officials said on Wednesday.

A total of 39 elderly residents were residing in the building when the blaze broke out around 9 pm on Tuesday (local time) in Longhua County, Chengde City, state-run Xinhua news agency reported.

The fire was extinguished by around 11 pm. A total of 20 people have been confirmed dead so far while 19 were sent to a hospital for examination.

Police have detained the person in charge of the nursing home. The cause of the fire is still under investigation, the report said.

Hong Kong-based South China Morning Post quoted Jimu News that the 300-bed Guoen Senior Home had 260 elderly residents at the time of the blaze, based on public records.

Among them were 98 people with total disability and 84 described as semi-disabled. According to the records, the remaining 78 residents were capable of self-care.

According to the licensing record, its business scope was "providing accommodation, food, and daycare for the elderly and disabled". In October, more than 50 officials were punished after they were found to be responsible for a January 2024 fire that killed 39 people and injured nine at a building complex in Xinyu city in the southeast province of Jiangxi.

Investigations showed that the fire was caused by the illegal construction of a cold storage facility in the basement of the building complex, resulting in casualties and a direct economic loss of more than 43.52 million yuan (USD 5.9 million), the Post report said. (PTI)

Nightclub roof collapse in Dominican capital leaves at least 79 dead and 160 injured



SANTO DOMINGO (DOMINICAN REPUBLIC), April 9: The roof of an iconic nightclub in the Dominican capital collapsed early Tuesday during a merengue concert attended by politicians, athletes and others, leaving at least 79 people dead and 160 injured, authorities said.

Crews were searching for potential survivors in the rubble at the one-story Jet Set nightclub in Santo Domingo, said Juan Manuel Méndez, director of the Center of Emergency Operations.

"We continue clearing debris and searching for people," he said on Tuesday night. "We're going to search tirelessly for people."

Nearly 12 hours after the top of the nightclub collapsed onto patrons, rescue crews were still pulling out survivors from under the debris. Firefighters removed blocks of broken concrete and used sawed pieces of wood as planks to lift heavy debris as the noise of drills breaking through concrete filled the air.

The confirmed death toll had reached 66, Méndez said late Tuesday afternoon. Earlier, officials had said there were at least 160 people injured.

Méndez said rescue crews were prioritizing three areas in the club: "We're hearing some sounds."

Nelsy Cruz, the governor of the northwestern province of Montecristi and sister of seven-time Major League Baseball All-Star Nelson Cruz, was among the victims. She had called President Luis Abinader at 12:49 a.m., saying she was trapped and that the roof had collapsed, first lady Raquel Abraje told reporters. Officials said Cruz died later at the hospital.

"This is too great a tragedy," Abraje said, her voice breaking.

The Professional Baseball League of the Dominican Republic posted on X that MLB pitcher Octavio Dotel, 51, also died. Dotel had pulled Dotel from the debris earlier and brought him to a hospital. Also killed was Dominican baseball player Tony Enrique Blanco Cabrera, said league spokesman Satosky Terrero.

Among the injured was national lawmaker Bray Vargas.

Relatives of merengue singer Rubby Pérez, who was performing when the roof collapsed, initially said that he had been rescued, but Méndez said later Tuesday that wasn't true. He said rescue crews were still looking for Pérez.

Pérez's manager, Enrique Paulino, whose shirt was spattered with blood, told reporters at the scene that the concert began shortly before midnight, with the roof collapsing almost an hour later, killing the group's saxophonist.

"It happened so quickly. I managed to throw myself into a corner," he said, adding that he initially thought it was an earthquake.

It wasn't immediately clear what caused the roof to collapse or when the Jet Set building was last inspected.

The club issued a statement saying it was cooperating with authorities and noted that the owner, Antonio Espallat, was out of the country and returned late Tuesday.

"There are no words to express the pain this event has caused. What happened has been devastating for everyone," he said.

A spokeswoman for the Ministry of Public Works referred questions to the mayor's office. A spokesperson for the mayor's office did not respond to a message for comment.

Prosecutor Rosalba Ramos told TV station CDN that while "everybody wants to know" what happened, authorities were still focused on finding survivors. They set up a makeshift morgue near the club while more than 120 people lined up to donate blood at two different centers.

Manuel Olivo Ortiz, whose son attended the concert but did not return home, was among those anxiously waiting outside the club known for its traditional Monday parties where renowned national and international artists perform.

"We're holding on only to God," Olivo said.

Also awaiting word was Massiel Cuevas, godmother of 22-year-old Darlenys Batista.

"I'm waiting for her. She's in there, I know she's in there," Cuevas said, firm in her belief that Batista would be pulled out alive.

President Abinader wrote on X that all rescue agencies are "working tirelessly" to help those affected.

"We deeply regret the tragedy that occurred at the Jet Set nightclub. We have been following the incident minute by minute since it occurred," he wrote. Abinader arrived at the scene and hugged those looking for friends and family, some with tears streaming down their faces. "We have faith in God that we will rescue even more people alive," he told reporters. (AP)

Suspected US strikes in Yemen kill at least 8 people, Houthi rebels say

DUBAI, April 9: Suspected US airstrikes pounded the area around Yemen's Red Sea port city of Hodeida on Tuesday night, killing at least eight people, the Iran-backed Houthi rebels said.

The strikes hit around Hodeida's al-Hawak district, the rebels said, and wounded 16 people. The area is home to the city's airport, which the rebels have used in the past to target shipping in the Red Sea.

Since its start, the intense campaign of US airstrikes targeting the rebels over their attacks on shipping in the Red Sea -- related to the Israel-Hamas war -- has killed at least 81 people, according to casualty figures released by the Houthis.

Footage aired by the rebels' al-Masirah satellite news channel showed chaotic scenes of people carrying wounded to waiting ambulances and rescuers searching by the light of their mobile phones. The target appeared in the footage to be a home in a residential neighbourhood, likely part of a wider decapitation campaign launched by the Trump administration to kill rebel leaders.

Other strikes targeted Yemen's mountainous Amran governorate, north of the rebel-held capital of Sanaa. There, the Houthis described American strikes hitting telecommunication equipment. Previous US strikes also targeted telecommunications gear in Amran near Jebel



Aswad, or the "Black Mountain."

Strikes later apparently targeted Jebel Nuqum, near Sanaa. Others hit Dhamar and Ibb governorates, wounding three.

The US military's Central Command, which oversees American military operations, did not immediately acknowledge the strikes. That follows a pattern for the command, which now has authorization from the White House to conduct strikes at will in the campaign that began March 15.

The American military also has not been providing any information on targets hit. The White House has said more than 200 strikes have been conducted so far.

Defense Secretary Pete Hegseth, speaking in the Oval Office on Monday during a visit by Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu,

warned that America was "not going to relent" in its campaign targeting the Houthis.

"So we have a lot more options and a lot more pressure to apply," Hegseth said. "And we know, because we see the reports, how devastating this campaign has been in them. And we will not relent," he said.

An AP review has found the new US operation against the Houthis under President Donald Trump appears more extensive than that under former President Joe Biden, as Washington moves from solely targeting launch sites to firing at ranking personnel and dropping bombs on cities.

The new campaign of airstrikes started after the rebels threatened to begin targeting "Israeli" ships again over Israel blocking aid entering the Gaza Strip. The rebels have loosely defined what constitutes an Israeli ship, meaning many vessels could be targeted.

The Houthis targeted more than 100 merchant vessels with missiles and drones, sinking two of them and killing four sailors from November 2023 until January of this year. They also launched attacks targeting American warships without success.

The US campaign shows no signs of stopping, as the Trump administration has linked its airstrikes on the Houthis to an effort to pressure Iran over its rapidly advancing nuclear program as well. (AP)

US tariffs: China vows 'resolute, effective measures' but holds back on further retaliation

BEIJING, April 9: China promised to take "resolute and forceful" measures to safeguard its interests after US tariffs totalling 104 per cent came into effect Wednesday but stopped short of announcing any new import taxes on America.

US President Donald Trump's explosive new tariffs on 60 countries came into effect just after midnight Wednesday US time.

The new tariff includes stiff new levies that will increase import taxes on Chinese goods by at least 104 per cent. The additional tariffs on China kicked in after Beijing refused to meet Trump's deadline to withdraw its own retaliatory levies on the US.

Asked why China has not slapped retaliatory tariffs after Tuesday's assertions to fight till the end and whether the two countries are holding talks to resolve the issue, Chinese Foreign Ministry spokeswoman Lin Jian told a media briefing here "China continues to take firm and resolute measures to safeguard our legitimate rights and interests".

"We will not tolerate any attempt to harm China's sovereignty, security and development interests", she said.

"As for the dialogue you mentioned, if the US really wants to address the issue through talks it should take the attitude of equality respect and mutual benefit," she said.

China hit back at the US with 34 per cent tariffs on American goods in tit-for-tat retaliation hours after Trump announced 34 per cent tariffs on China on April 4.

Angry over China's retaliation, Trump further imposed 50 per cent tariffs taking the levies on China since he took over the second term to 104 per cent.



"But right now, the US still abusing tariffs on China perusing maximum pressure and China opposes and never accepts such bullying and hegemonic acts," he said.

On April 2, the president imposed a 10 per cent global tariff on hundreds of countries and promised far steeper "reciprocal" tariffs on April 9 for nations that he maintains have "ripped off" America.

Since February, the president has imposed successive rounds of tariffs on China. On Wednesday, the minimum tax on Chinese imports hit 104 per cent.

There is no official clarification here as to why China has refrained from retaliating against Trump's additional tariffs.

China hit back at the US with 34 per cent tariffs on American goods in tit-for-tat retaliation hours after Trump announced 34 per cent tariffs on China on April 4.

Angry over China's retaliation, Trump further imposed 50 per cent tariffs taking the levies on China since he took over the second term to 104 per cent.

Pakistan to send high-level delegation to US to hold talks on new tariffs

ISLAMABAD, April 9: Pakistan on Wednesday decided to send a high-level delegation to the United States to hold talks on trade promotion and new tariffs, the prime minister's office said.

Chairing a review meeting on increasing the country's exports and the tariffs imposed by the US on imports, Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif directed that prominent business personalities and exporters be included in the delegation, state-run Radio Pakistan reported, citing a statement issued by his office.

The delegation was tasked by the Prime Minister to determine a mutually beneficial course of action for the future following negotiations on new tariffs imposed by the United States on imports.

Shehbaz said that Pakistan's trade relations with the United States span decades and the government is keen to strengthen this trade partnership.

The decision comes after last week's announcement by the US to impose a 29 per cent duty on goods from Pakistan in response to a 58 per cent tariff on US products charged by Pakistan.

Shehbaz had constituted two separate committees to tackle the fallout of the tariffs.

Officials said that the premier was briefed on the findings of the 12-member steering committee and various options were dis-

cussed to address the situation. The meeting was also informed that Pakistan's embassy in Washington was in touch with the US administration.

Shehbaz reiterated that Pakistan values its decades-old trade ties with the US and emphasised that the delegation must ensure all relevant business leaders and exporters are part of the dialogue process.

The US is Pakistan's largest single-country export market with about \$6 billion in annual exports, while Pakistan's imports from the US are about \$1.5 billion.

Its exports will now face a 39 per cent tariff, comprising a 10 per cent baseline import duty and a 29 per cent reciprocal tariff, a senior Commerce Ministry official said.

However, despite tariff hype, it is believed that the cost of the US decision would be limited to up to \$700 million due to limited bilateral trade.

Earlier, a US delegation met Shehbaz on the sidelines of the Pakistan Minerals Investment Forum Tuesday. The delegation led by the Senior Bureau official and Acting Assistant Secretary of the Bureau of South and Central Asian Affairs, Eric Meyer, attended the forum.

The prime minister reiterated his government's wish to work with President Donald Trump. (PTI)

Xi pledges to strengthen ties with neighbours amid Trump's tariff war with China

BEIJING, April 9: Chinese President Xi Jinping on Wednesday pledged to strengthen the strategic relationships with neighbouring countries by "appropriately" managing differences and enhancing supply chain ties as the Trump administration escalated the tariff war with Beijing.

In his first public speech after US President Donald Trump's steep global hike of tariffs, especially targeting China with 104 per cent on Chinese exports to America, Xi called for building a community with a shared future with neighbouring countries and striving to open new ground for China's neighbourhood work, state media reported.

Xi made the remarks at the high-level central conference on work related to neighbouring countries. The two-day conference on Tuesday and Wednesday was attended by top officials from the ruling Communist Party. In his speech, Xi systematically summarised the achievements and experience of China's neighbourhood work in the new era, scientifically analysed the current situation, and outlined the goals, tasks, ideas and measures for the next phase, state-run Xinhua news agency reported. (PTI)



HONG KONG, April 9: A Hong Kong social worker was sentenced to three years and nine months in prison Wednesday on a

charge of riot for her role in the 2019 anti-government movement, in a case that signals the authorities' stern approach to protest-related acts.

Jackie Chen was among a group of social workers who often carried a loudspeaker seeking to mediate between police and protesters during the often-violent social unrest. While she had been acquitted in her first trial in September 2020, prosecutors successfully appealed the verdict. She was convicted following a retrial.

In March, judge May Chung rejected Chen's claim of being a mediator in her verdict. She said Chen had continuously shouted unfounded accusations against the police during a protest in August 2019 and had used her social worker role, claiming to be "safeguarding justice," to back the protesters.

Handing down the sentence on Wednesday, Chung noted Chen did not resort to violence at the scene, but her sentencing would have to consider what the whole

crowd was doing at the site. She pointed to the serious circumstances of the riot.

The judge initially set the sentence at 5 years but reduced it after considering factors like the pressure facing Chen over the long legal proceedings and her contribution as a social worker.

In Chen's mitigation letter posted by local media, she said 2019 was a crucial turning point in her life, with many social workers wanting to provide emotional support during the protests. She said even though she knew the government had planned to appeal against her acquittal in the first trial, she never thought of leaving the city because she wanted to continue her service for the people who are in need.

She said she felt especially guilty toward her 75-year-old mother, whose health has deteriorated in recent years. She hoped the judge could allow her to reunite with her family earlier.

"Although many people say I am a good social worker, I am truly an unfilial daughter," she wrote.

When she entered the courtroom, her supporters in the public gallery waved at her. She smiled and nodded back.

The social worker's conviction drew attention because of her mild role in the 2019 protests. The movement, sparked by a now-withdrawn extradition bill, was the biggest challenge to the Hong Kong government since the former British colony returned to Chinese rule in 1997.

Chen could also lose her social worker license. Last year, the government amended the law to allow the removal of a social worker's name from the register if he or she has been convicted of an offense that is punishable with imprisonment and may bring the profession into disrepute.

In the same hearing, three other defendants received jail terms of two years and five months each for rioting. They had been initially acquitted but the government successfully appealed. They then chose to plead guilty. (AP)

'CPIM government had deprived the state, but after BJP came, people have seen what development is'

CPIM, Congress competing with NOTA, will vanish slowly: Tripura CM

HT Correspondent

AGARTALA, April 9: Tripura Chief Minister Manik Saha on Wednesday criticized the CPIM and Congress for their negative politics and said that both parties will vanish in the coming days as they are competing with NOTA.

Saha said this after inaugurating 45 projects in Dharmanagar under North District of Tripura.

"Today is an important day and people of North District will remember it. The opposition CPIM said 'where is development?' and I replied—if you can't see development, go for a cataract operation. Their work is to do negative politics. They don't believe in God and they are atheists. Their work is only to act negatively, and slowly they will vanish. They are now competing with NOTA. While Congress, who have only three MLAs, are also on the path of vanishing. They are made for each other. I want to urge them to come here to witness the development," said Saha.



Saha said that the present state government is working under the direction of Prime Minister Narendra Modi. "Earlier we had only one national highway and now six more highways are under construction. The then CPIM government had deprived the state, but after BJP came, people have seen what development is. We believe in work, not in dialogue. The indigenous people have understood how PM Modi, since 2014, has been working for the development of the Janajati. Many people have played politics by creating differences between tribal and non-tribal communities," he said.

He said that the inaugurated projects include those related to Health, Education, and ARDD, and the people would benefit greatly.

"Tripura at the national level has achieved many awards for Panchayats. Without developing Panchayats, the development of the country is not possible, as the majority of people live in villages. We have received seven Panchayati Raj awards. Tripura is the only state where, from Assembly to Panchayat, we have introduced the E-office system," he added.

Scientific coal mining permission to 11 more miners in Meghalaya



SHILLONG, April 9: Meghalaya Chief Minister Conrad K Sangma said eleven more miners are all set to get the mining opening permission for starting scientific mining of coal in the state soon.

As of now three miners have started extracting coal using scientific mining methods as prescribed by the Central authorities and they are dealing with issues of safe transportation, he said on Tuesday.

"Mining of coal by three (3) miners in the state has started in a scientific manner after the Coal Ministry was satisfied with the work of extracting coal," said Sangma.

Sangma said that as per the latest information, 11 more miners are awaiting permission from the Ministry to extract coal in the state.

"I don't have the exact number but in 1-2 months, another 10-11 miners mostly from East Jaintia Hills and West Khasi Hills will be

getting the permission to extract coal in a scientific manner," he said.

On March 17, 2025, after more than decades, mining in Meghalaya was re-opened in East Jaintia Hills.

The chief minister had virtually inaugurated the first scientific coal mining block at Saryngkham-A block in the Byndihati East Jaintia Hills district.

In January 2025, the Ministry of Coal had approved three coal mining leases which include Saryngkham-A and Lumia-khi-Wah Sarang in East Jaintia Hills and Pyndeng-shalang in West Khasi Hills.

Rat hole mining was banned by the National Green Tribunal (NGT) following numerous complaints on its devastating impact on the environment besides a series of coal mine tragedies in Meghalaya. (PTI)

AFSPA imposition in Manipur opposed

IMPHAL, April 9: The imposition of Armed Forces Special Powers Act, 1958 (AFSPA) in Manipur remains a highly contentious issue, with a coalition of six student bodies from the valley vehemently opposing its continued enforcement.

In a joint press release recently, the groups comprising All Manipur Students' Union (AMSU), Manipuri Students' Federation (MSF), AIMS, Democratic Students' Association of Manipur (DESAM), SUK and Kangleipak Students' Association (KSA) argued that the law, often referred to as the "black law," violates the fundamental human rights of the people of Manipur and fosters an atmosphere of fear and oppression. AFSPA has been in place for decades, granting sweeping powers to the armed forces in areas declared as "Disturbed Areas."

The law, which has been used by the central government to maintain control over regions facing unrest, has been a point of major controversy for decades, particularly in Manipur where it has remained in effect for several years.

The six student bodies have strongly criticised the impacts of AFSPA, noting its re-enforcement in various police stations across the state since its imposition. The groups raised serious concerns over the law's contribution to human rights violations, including extrajudicial killings, arbitrary arrests, forced disappearances, and torture.

Despite efforts to modify or relax its enforcement in certain regions, AFSPA remains intact in multiple districts, continuing to fuel violence and suffering. The student bodies have reiterated their demand for the immediate repeal of the law, urging for an end to the cycle of conflict and for peace to be restored in the region. (NNN)

16th Finance Commission visits Arunachal Pradesh

HT Correspondent

ITANAGAR, April 9: The Government of Arunachal Pradesh (GoAP) submitted an estimate of an amount of Rs 6.89 lakh crores grant in aid for the state from central government.

The estimated amount was submitted to the member of finance commission, Annie George Mathew during the XVI Finance Commission's meeting with Urban Local Bodies (ULB), Rural Local Bodies (RLB), Political Parties and Trade & Industries at the state banquet hall here on Tuesday.

While briefing about the meeting, Mathew said, whatever demands and amount submitted by the State of Arunachal would be finalized after visiting 28 states of the country.

Informing, finance commission has very wide and comprehensive consultative with the state government to know the general ideas of the state government's state of affairs, she said, state government has asked for increase in share of 47% from 41% in Centrally Sponsored Schemes (CSS) for fairer

and more balance development of the state.

However, it is to be mentioned that the XV finance commission had recommended that 41% of divisible share would go to the state government and the remaining 59% will remain in the centre, she asserted.

"Arunachal Pradesh has been consistently getting an increase in horizontal development in devolution rate, I think from the XI FC when it was 0.244% the XV FC made it 1.757%," said Mathew.

The government of Arunachal has asked for 100% central government funding including an increase in forest & ecology shares from 10% to 12.5%, she added.

"The government of Arunachal Pradesh said because of the unique needs they want more money," said Mathew, emphasizing the importance of preservation of culture and tradition of tribal people as requested by the state government to provide funds for the same in terms of demographic performance.

As asked by the media persons



on the steps which the finance commission is going to take for the larger interest of the state of Arunachal Pradesh, she said "As of now we are just listening to the grievances being placed by different state's government, we will make report/recommendations available by October 31."

Since the report is yet to be made and placed before the central government, she also informed that commission will be recommending grants in aid for the state of Arunachal as per the requirement like grants for local bodies both rural & urban, state specific grants, sectors (health & education), revenue deficit and disaster management grants.

Locals protest firing at home for orphaned boys

IMPHAL, April 9: Local people staged a sit-in on Wednesday to protest firing by unknown miscreants at a home for orphaned boys in Sagolband area in Imphal West district.

Protesters holding placards raised slogans condemning the firing and demanded immediate arrest of the perpetrators.

At least two armed miscreants had fired six rounds at a children's home where orphaned boys were staying at around 1.40 am, police said.

Khaiden Ongbi Komita who runs the home told reporters, "It is really unfortunate that the home for children was fired at. The reason for the firing is yet to be known. We appeal not to allow such incidents to happen in the future again. The home has many orphaned children..." (PTI)

Cotton University, NECTAR and St Anthony's College collaborate to conduct Geospatial Learning in Shillong

10-Day Training Module on GIS and Remote Sensing Inaugurated at St Anthony's college



HT Bureau

GUWAHATI, April 9: In a groundbreaking initiative to empower students, researchers, and professionals with essential geospatial skills, the Northeast Centre for Technology Application and Reach (NECTAR), in collaboration with Cotton University and St Anthony's College, Shillong, has launched the fourth batch of its highly anticipated 10-day Mobile Campus-based GIS and Remote Sensing training program. This dynamic training, aimed at honing practical skills and expertise in GIS, remote sensing, digital image processing, and cartography, commenced from Wednesday at St Anthony's College.

The Geology Department of St Anthony's College, in association with NECTAR, has spearheaded this training program, designed to equip participants

with hands-on experience and in-depth knowledge in cutting-edge geospatial technologies. This initiative serves as a vital platform for developing the skill set necessary for tackling regional challenges in the Northeast, particularly in the difficult terrains of Meghalaya and other parts of the region.

Arun Kumar Sarma, Director General of NECTAR, inaugurated the training program with an inspiring address to the students. He emphasized the significance of this opportunity for students to dive into the world of geospatial applications through expert-led practical sessions and advanced software tools. Sarma also highlighted NECTAR's unwavering commitment to advancing geospatial research in the Northeast, underscoring the role of GIS and remote sensing in addressing regional issues such as environmental man-

agement, disaster control, and resource mapping.

"The world is experiencing a rapid evolution in geospatial technology, with GIS and remote sensing transforming not only research and decision-making but also governance. These technologies are crucial for addressing climate challenges, enhancing disaster preparedness, managing resources, and supporting sustainable urban planning," said Sarma during his keynote speech.

Sarma also encouraged students and faculty to engage with NECTAR's geospatial infrastructure and contribute their innovative ideas to furthering research in this vital sector. He assured participants that NECTAR remains committed to expanding geospatial research programs, bridging the gap between theoretical knowledge and practical application in the region.

The event is graced by the Principal of the College Fr. Arcadius Puwein by his warm welcome address, urging students to explore the expertise facilities of NECTAR and Shri Rajendra Jena, Chief Geomatics Officer highlighted the objective of this unique off campus program of NECTAR with meticulously designed to the comfort of students and curriculum in synchronized more towards the practical applications. Dr Colin Z Rentlei, Advisor (Technical), NECTAR also joined the event and discussed about the future collaboration on faculty development programs for better learning ecosystem in the sector of Geospatial Technology Application through the initiatives of St. Anthony's college.

Three including 2 militants arrested in Manipur for extortion activities

IMPHAL, April 9: Security forces arrested three persons including two militants from Imphal West, Imphal East and Kangpokpi districts for being involved in extortion activities, police said on Wednesday. One active cadre of the proscribed KCP (PWG) was arrested from Loitang Khullen area in Imphal West district on Tuesday, the police said.

A member of the banned outfit PREPAK (Pro) was arrested from Sagolmang Bazar in Imphal East district on Tuesday, they said.

Police arrested one person on Tuesday from Khamenlok in Kangpokpi district for extorting money from truck drivers. (PTI)

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

No.31PSC/CON/Exam-23/2024-2025

NOTIFICATION

The Assam Public Service Commission hereby declares today, the 9th April, 2025, the result of the **Stenography Proficiency Test** for recruitment to the post of Stenographer Grade-II in Assam Secretariat (Janata Bhawan) under General Administration Department (Adv. No. 19/2024 Dtd. 09/09/2024) conducted by the Commission on 8th and 9th January, 2025.

Candidates bearing the following Roll Numbers have qualified Stenography Proficiency Test and they will have to appear in the Objective Type Written Test to be conducted by the Commission through Computer Based Test (CBT). The date of Computer Based Test (CBT) will be notified shortly. Roll Number of candidates to be appeared in the Computer Based Test (CBT) are stated below (horizontally):

(i) Stenographer Grade-II (English):

10070	10084	10086	10191	10239
10572	10888	10929	11273	

(ii) Stenographer Grade-II (Language): No candidate qualified in Stenography Proficiency Test.

NB: Results may be accessed through the APSC's website www.apsc.nic.in

Sd/-
Principal Controller of Examinations,
Assam Public Service Commission,
Jawaharnagar, Khanapara, Guwahati-22

DIPR /D/HLT/3/10-Apr-25

No.GDB/Misc/192/2022-23/877

TENDER No. 18 OF 2024-25
INVITATION FOR BIDS (IFB)

Selected tenders affixing Non-refundable court fee stamp of Rs. 8.25 (Rupees Eight & Twenty Five Paise) only with at validity period of 180 (One Hundred Eighty) days which will subsequently to be covered and drawn up in the printed F-2 form are invited from the intending Registered Contractors of all categories of the Assam PWD (Bldg. & Roads) for submitting tender for the work below. The tenders will be received by the undersigned up to 2.30 PM 01-04-2025 to 21-04-2025 and will be opened on the date 21-04-2025 at 2:30 PM.

Sl. No.	Name of Work	Approx Estimated value of work	Tender Value	Earnest money 2% for GNL & 1% for ST/SC/OBC/MOBC	Cost of tender document	Time of completion
1	Land Dev. With const. of goal post at Ouguri (Hadogra) playground, under SYW fund for the year 2024-25	6,00,000.00	6,00,000.00	Rs. 12,000/- & Rs. 6000/-	Rs. 200/-	3 (Three month)

Detailed NIT may be seen in all working days in the Office of the undersigned. Tender paper will be issued to the contractor or their authorized agent up to 11.30 AM in all working days from 01-04-2025 to 21-04-2025 in the office of the undersigned on payment in the form of Banker Cheque/Bank Draft/ Demand draft duly pledged in favour of the BDO, Goreswar Development Block.

Sd/-
Block Development Officer,
Goreswar Dev. Block, Goreswar

AFFIDAVIT

I, Shri Khoya Sing Terang, C/o- Sing Terang, is a resident of village-Rongmonjir Gaon, PO & PS- Diphu, Dist. Karbi Anglong, Assam. My name was wrongly recorded as Khoya Terang in my Aadhar Card instead of Khoya Sing Terang.

The names Khoya Sing Terang and Khoya Terang are the names of the same person.

TREE TRIMMING, CHOPPING AND DWARFING AS PER SITE REQUIREMENT

Tender No. EL-TRD-NFR-LMG-OHE-MOD-38 Dated: 07-04-2025. E-Tenders are invited by the undersigned for the following works: Name of work: Tree Trimming, Chopping and Dwarfing as per site requirement in Lumding Division for One (01) Year. Tender Value: ₹12,22,525/- Earnest Money: ₹34,500/- Date & Time of closing of Tender: 15.00 hrs. of 30-04-2025. The complete information with the tender documents of above tender will be available in website www.reps.gov.in Sr.DEE/TRD & GS/Lumding NORTHEAST FRONTIER RAILWAY Serving Customers With A Smile

PM Modi's meeting with Yunus Raised concerns of radicalisation in Bangladesh: Jaishankar

NEW DELHI, April 9: India conveyed its concerns over attacks on minorities and radicalisation in Bangladesh at the meeting between Prime Minister Narendra Modi and head of the neighbouring country's interim government Muhammad Yunus last week, External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar said on Wednesday.

Jaishankar underscored India's push for holding fresh polls in Bangladesh, saying elections are essential to democracies, and asserted that "no country wishes Bangladesh well more than us".

Modi and Yunus met for the first time in Bangkok since the ouster of the Sheikh Hasina government in August last year in the face of a massive anti-government protest.

"I think the main messages from our side which came out at the meeting -- one that our relationship with Bangladesh for historical reasons is a very unique relationship. It's very fundamentally a people-to-people connect," Jaishankar said at the News 18 Rising Bharat Summit.

"No country wishes Bangladesh well more than us; that's almost in our DNA. As a well-wisher, as a friend, I think we hope they go the right way and do the right things," he said.

Jaishankar said the Indian side was very open in sharing its con-



cerns over the current situation in Bangladesh.

"We have concerns about radicalising tendencies. We have concerns about the attacks on minorities. I think we were very open about sharing those concerns," he said responding to a question on what PM Modi conveyed to Yunus.

"As a country which has a democratic tradition, democracies require elections. That's how mandates are given and mandates are renewed. So, we hope that they go down that path," Jaishankar said, underlining India's push for

holding fresh elections in Bangladesh.

India-Bangladesh relations nosedived dramatically after the interim government headed by Muhammad failed to contain attacks on minorities, especially Hindus, in that country.

Last week, the Indian side was upset over the Bangladeshi version of the meeting between Modi and Yunus.

Yunus' press secretary Shaiful Alam, in a Facebook post on Saturday, said the chief adviser raised with Modi Bangladesh's request for the extradition of Hasina and

the "response was not negative".

People familiar with the matter described the version as "mischievous and politically motivated", especially the aspects relating to attacks on minorities and Dhaka's request for extraditing former premier Sheikh Hasina, people familiar with the matter said on Saturday. The characterisation of the Indian prime minister's remarks regarding the relationship with Yunus and the previous Bangladesh government were "inaccurate", they said.

New Delhi has so far not responded to the request made by Bangladesh's interim government last year for the extradition of Hasina. Hasina has been living in New Delhi since she fled Dhaka in August last year.

In the meeting in Bangkok on Friday, Modi conveyed to Yunus India's deep concerns about the safety of Bangladesh's Hindus and other minorities.

"The prime minister urged that rhetoric that vitiates the environment is best avoided," an Indian readout of the meeting said.

PM Modi underlined India's concerns related to the safety and security of minorities in Bangladesh, including Hindus, and expressed his expectation that the government of Bangladesh would ensure their security. (PTI)

Submit proposal for using electric vehicles in govt bodies: SC to Centre

NEW DELHI, April 9: The Supreme Court on Wednesday directed the Centre to submit a proposal by April 30 on the adoption of electric vehicles (EVs) in government departments to reduce pollution. A bench of Justices Abhay S Oka and Ujjal Bhuyan asked additional solicitor general Aishwarya Bhati to place on record the proposal by April end.

During the hearing, Bhati said while 60 lakh vehicles over the permissible age were plying in Delhi, in the NCR the number stood at 25 lakh.

"ASG has flagged issues that large number of overage vehicles plying in Delhi and NCR region. We will issue directions on this when we consider the issue of vehicular pollution (sic)," the bench said.

The top court further directed the Centre to complete the study within three months on the use of remote-sensing technology to keep a check on vehicular pollution.

"Attention is invited to reconsider the issue pertaining to issue of remote sensing. UoI (union of India) has sought time of 10-12 months to complete the study. This issue is of vital importance for curbing vehicular pollution. We direct Union of India to complete the study within three months from today," the bench said.

Bhati said after the FASTag system coming into existence, cars zoomed past toll plazas and couldn't be used anymore to conduct the study. So, we will need some more time, she said.

The proposal for using remote sensing devices for on-road emission monitoring had first come in 2019 from Environment Pollution (Prevention and Control) Authority, which assists the apex court on environment issues.

The top court has been monitoring the air pollution crisis in Delhi in an ongoing Public Interest Litigation — M C Mehta v. Union of India, since 1984. (PTI)

SC raps Centre over delay in cashless scheme for accident victims, summons transport secy

NEW DELHI, April 9: The Supreme Court on Wednesday rapped the Centre over the delay in formulating a cashless medical treatment scheme for motor accident victims and summoned the secretary of the Ministry of Road Transport for an explanation.

A bench of Justices Abhay S Oka and Ujjal Bhuyan took objection that despite its January 8 order, the Centre did not comply with it.

"The time granted has expired on March 15, 2025. This is a serious breach and violation of not only orders of this court but a violation of implementing a very beneficial legislation. We direct the secretary, ministry of road transport and highways to appear on video-conferencing and explain why the directions of this court were not complied with," the bench said.

Only when top government officers are summoned here they take the orders of the court seriously, it added.

Additional solicitor general Vikramjeet Banerjee, appearing for the Centre, said there were "bottle necks".

The bench, however, remarked, "This is your own legislation, people are losing lives, because there is no facility for cashless treatment. This is for the benefit of common people. We are putting you to notice, we'll take action under contempt. Ask your secretary to come and explain."

The official was directed by the top court to appear on April 28 for the explanation.

The bench also directed the sec-



retary of transport department to issue instructions in writing to all district magistrates to upload the claims of hidden hit-and-run cases on the General Insurance Council (GIC) portal.

On January 8, the top court directed the Centre to formulate the scheme for the cashless medical treatment of motor accident victims in the "golden hour" period mandated under the law.

It had referred to Section 162(2) of the Motor Vehicles Act, 1988, and ordered the government to provide by March 14 the scheme which could save numerous lives with prompt medical care to accident victims.

The golden hour, defined under Section 2 (12-A) of the Act, refers to a one-hour window following a traumatic injury under which a timely medical intervention will most likely prevent death.

The court had underscored the importance of providing immediate medical care during the critical period and said delays caused by financial concerns or procedural hurdles often cost lives.

It had underlined the statutory obligation on the Centre to frame a scheme under Section 162 for cashless treatment and said the provi-

sion sought to uphold and protect the right to life guaranteed by Article 21 of the Constitution.

The law therefore provides the insurance companies carrying on general insurance business in India to provide for the treatment of road accident victims, including during golden hour in accordance with the scheme made under the MV Act, it said.

It was noted despite the provision being in force since April 1, 2022, the government was yet to implement the scheme, prompting the court's intervention.

The Centre had submitted a draft concept note outlining a proposed scheme, which included a maximum treatment cost of ₹ 1.5 lakh and coverage for only seven days.

However, these limitations were criticised by counsel representing the petitioner, who argued they fell short of addressing the need for comprehensive care.

The GIC was tasked with administering hit-and-run compensation claims and developing a portal to streamline the process, it said.

The portal would enable the upload of required documents, inform states of deficiencies, and reduce delays in processing claims.

The order had said 921 claims under the hit-and-run compensation scheme remained pending as of July 31, 2024, due to document deficiencies, and asked the GIC to coordinate with claimants and address the issue.

The GIC was further instructed to expedite the development of the portal and report compliance by March 14, 2025. (PTI)

PM-led CCS clears ₹ 64,000 cr deal to procure 26 Rafale-M jets for Navy



NEW DELHI, April 9: The Cabinet Committee on Security (CCS) chaired by Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Wednesday cleared a proposal to procure 26 naval variants of Rafale fighter jets from France at a cost of around ₹ 64,000 crore for deployment on board aircraft carrier INS Vikrant, sources in the defence establishment said.

The delivery of the jets will begin around five years after the signing of the contract under an inter-governmental framework between India and France.

In July 2023, the defence ministry accorded the initial approval for the mega acquisition following a se-

ries of deliberations and evaluation tests of the platform.

Under the deal, the Indian Navy will also get associated ancillary equipment including weapon systems and spares from Dassault Aviation, the manufacturer of Rafale (Marine) jets.

The Indian Air Force bought 36 Rafale fighter aircraft in fly-away condition.

There is a thinking in the IAF that it should go for at least two more squadrons of Rafale jets.

The defence and strategic ties between India and France have been on an upswing in the last few years. In July 2023, India and France announced a raft of ground-breaking defence cooperation projects including the joint development of jet and helicopter engines.

The two strategic partners also had expressed commitment to cooperate in the co-development and co-production of advanced defence technologies, including for the benefit of third countries.

The defence ministry also approved a proposal nearly two years back to procure three Scorpene submarines to further crank up India's naval prowess.

However, the CCS has yet to clear the project.

Under the Indian Navy's Project 75, six Scorpene submarines have already been constructed in India by Mazagon Dock Limited (MDL) in cooperation with the Naval Group of France. (PTI)

Meet to chalk out legal measures to wriggle out of NEET all set to be chaired by CM Stalin

CHENNAI, April 9: A meeting of the legislature party leaders to be chaired by Chief Minister M K Stalin to deliberate legal measures in order to secure exemption for Tamil Nadu from conducting National Eligibility cum Entrance Test for medical admissions is all set to be held Wednesday.

The main opposition AIADMK had already dubbed the meeting a "drama," that could serve no purpose as people are outraged over the ruling party's alleged failure to get it scrapped.

AIADMK chief Edappadi K Palaniswami has made it clear that his party will not attend the meeting. The meeting comes against the background of Pres-

ident Droupadi Murmu withholding assent to the Tamil Nadu anti-NEET bill and this was informed by CM Stalin on April 4.

BJP Tamil Nadu chief K Annamalai too described the meeting a drama to deceive the people and said his party would not take part in it.

"It is the Supreme Court's judgment that led to the nation-wide implementation of NEET," the BJP leader said adding if the DMK does not want NEET, it must have approached the Supreme Court.

Annamalai wondered why the DMK, which is in power for the past four years in the state has

been "enacting dramas" such as Assembly resolution and all-party meeting over NEET and has not gone to court to get an exemption from the national test.

Only after NEET's introduction, those from ordinary families and students from government schools have got the opportunity to pursue medical education. The DMK has been opposing NEET only to facilitate income for the private medical colleges run by the party people, Annamalai alleged. "Not just NEET, it may be any test, our students will ace any exam...hence, please stop your dramas and allow Tamil Nadu students to study peacefully," Annamalai said on 'X.' (PTI)

Ancient Nalanda was also centre for cultural diplomacy: Abhay K



NEW DELHI, April 9: The ancient university of Nalanda was an "institution without borders" and a great magnet that attracted scholars from across the world, but it was also verily a "centre for cultural diplomacy", says diplomat and author Abhay K.

In his new book, "Nalanda: How It Changed the World", he charts the rise, fall and re-rise of the famed seat of learning in a new avatar besides its seminal contribu-

tions to the world at large for several hundreds of years uninterrupted.

Currently serving as the deputy director general of the Indian Council for Cultural Relations (ICCR) under the Ministry of External Affairs, the diplomat hails from the ancient town of Rajgir in Bihar's Nalanda district.

During a video interview to PTI on the sidelines of an interaction held at the India International Centre here on Tuesday evening, he also said, "I think there is a need for more excavations at the site."

The ruins of Nalanda University or the Nalanda Mahavihara is a UNESCO World Heritage Site, a coveted tag it earned in 2016.

According to the UNESCO website, the Nalanda Mahavihara site comprises the archaeological remains of a monastic and scholastic institution dating from the third century BCE to the 13th century CE.

"It was a place where people from all across the world came, gathered, received knowledge and then took that knowledge back and spread it in their own countries. So, what could be a greater centre for cul-

tural diplomacy than Nalanda itself," Abhay K told PTI.

"But we also have an example of King of the Pala dynasty through his ambassador Bala Barman to dedicate five villages for the upkeep of a monastery, which housed monks from Swarnadweepa," the diplomat said.

And there are several other examples such as a scholar coming from Tibet and studying at Nalanda, taking back knowledge and shaping a Tibetan script and grammar, and then the examples of Santa Rakshitha, Padma Sambhava, all of these going from Nalanda to Tibet and spreading knowledge there, he added.

Noted author and historian William Dalrymple also took part in the interaction on the topic "Nalanda: How It Changed the World" with Abhay K's new book being the pivot for the public discourse.

Spread over an area of 23 hectares, an ancient site of Nalanda is located about 98 km from Bihar's capital Patna. The property is owned, protected, maintained and managed by the Archaeological Survey of India (ASI), an autonomous institution under the

Ministry of Culture.

"It includes stupas, shrines, viharas (residential and educational buildings) and important artworks in stucco, stone and metal. Nalanda stands out as the most ancient university of the Indian subcontinent. It engaged in organised transmission of knowledge over an uninterrupted period of 800 years," reads its description on the UNESCO website.

The diplomat said Nalanda was the "first global institution or an institution without borders", as it had students from various countries, teachers from several countries, its teachings and philosophies that influenced the cultures and civilisations of the rest of the world.

"So, the idea of a university itself was born at Nalanda. You have several contributions of Nalanda, in a way it acted as a cultural melting pot of the world," he added.

He cited Chinese traveller Xuanzang's visit to Nalanda in ancient era to "copy sutras from the great sutra library of Nalanda", so Nalanda was "a great magnet" and it attracted people from all across the world. Asked what motivated him to write this

book, Abhay K said, "We need to know more about Nagarjuna or Dharmakirti or Aryabhata and others. We have forgotten our own great masters. This book is an intervention in that direction."

The book is about "contributions of Nalanda" and how "Nalanda changed the way". At the same time, through its eight chapters, "it takes you to the very origin of Nalanda, how did the university, monastery university originate, why did it become so famous and who studied there?"

The nearly 200-page book also covers the "great continuity of Nalanda even after its decline in the 13th century or even at least the idea of Nalanda, which has not only survived, but thrived rather, as we see in institutions named after Nalanda, all across the world today, from Brazil to Australia, Canada to Malaysia, so Nalanda named institutions are found everywhere", he added.

The diplomat mentioned the attempts in recent years to revive Nalanda's great glory and the inauguration of the campus of the new Nalanda University by Prime Minister Narendra Modi last year. (PTI)

2 transport infrastructure projects get CCEA nod

NEW DELHI, April 9: The Cabinet Committee on Economic Affairs (CCEA) on Wednesday approved two infrastructure projects related to the transport sector that are aimed at removing congestion and enhancing integrated transport development. Union minister Ashwini Vaishnaw said.

It approved the construction of the 19.2-km, six-lane, access-controlled Zirakpur bypass worth ₹ 1,878.31 crore in Punjab and Haryana on the "hybrid annuity mode".

The primary purpose of the project is to ease up congestion in Zirakpur, Panchkula and surrounding areas by diverting traffic from Patiala, Delhi and Mohali Aerocity, and providing direct connectivity to Himachal Pradesh.

The proposal aims at reducing the travel time and ensuring hassle-free traffic movement in the congested urban section of national highways 7, 5 and 152, an official statement said.

The CCEA also gave its nod for the doubling of the Tirupati-Pakala-Katpadi single railway-line section of 104 km in Andhra Pradesh and Tamil Nadu with a total cost of ₹ 1,332 crore, Vaishnaw said.

This is an essential route for transportation of commodities such as coal, agricultural commodities, cement and other minerals.

The capacity-augmentation work will result in an additional freight traffic of magnitude-4 MTPA (Million Tonnes Per Annum).

"The railways being an environment-friendly and energy-efficient mode of transportation will help both in achieving the climate goals and minimising the logistics cost of the country, reducing oil import (four crore litres) and lowering CO2 emissions (20 crore kg), which is equivalent to the plantation of one crore trees," the minister said. (PTI)

IIT Madras, Ziroh Labs to set up AI Research centre

NEW DELHI, April 9: Indian Institute of Technology (IIT) Madras has partnered with Ziroh Labs, a California-based innovation-driven deep tech startup, to establish a Centre of AI Research (COAIR) to solve India's compute accessibility challenges, officials said on Wednesday.

The COAIR will focus on developing practical, efficient AI solutions focusing on CPU and edge device inferencing. In a significant step towards making AI models solve accessibility problems, Ziroh Labs unveiled the first version of "Kompact" AI at IIT Madras, they said.

Kompact AI is an AI platform that enables foundational models to be built and served using CPUs without requiring Graphics Processing Units (GPUs), which are expensive and hard to obtain. (PTI)

Statue of SRK-Kajol from 'DDLJ' to be installed at UK's Leicester Square

NEW DELHI, April 9: A bronze statue of Bollywood superstars Shah Rukh Khan and Kajol striking a pose from their 1995 superhit "Dilwale Dulhania Le Jayenge" will be erected at the Leicester Square in London, in a first for an Indian movie.

It will join the 'Scenes in the Square' movie trail in Leicester Square, the Heart of London Business Alliance announced on Wednesday.

The statue from the film, commonly called "DDLJ", will be unveiled in spring this year, months ahead of its 30th release anniversary on October 20, 2025. "DDLJ" marked the directorial debut of Aditya Chopra and was produced by his filmmaker-father Yash Chopra under the Yash Raj Films banner.

The film, which was prominently shot in the UK, follows the love story of two young non-resident Indians Raj and Simran who fall in love during a vacation through Europe with their friends. It's around Leicester Square in the film where Raj and Simran first cross paths, albeit unbeknown to one another.

According to a press release, the new statue will be positioned along the eastern terrace, outside the Odeon cinema, honouring the scene from the film. Other London locations featured in "DDLJ" include Horseguards Avenue, Hyde Park, Tower Bridge and King's Cross Station.

Mark Williams, deputy chief executive at the Heart of London Business Alliance, said it's fantastic to have the opportunity to add "titans of international cinema" Shah Rukh Khan and Kajol to their trail.

"Dilwale Dulhania Le Jayenge" is one of the most successful and important Bollywood films of all time, and we're excited by the prospect of bringing to the trail the first film that actually features Leicester Square as a location.

"The statue is a fitting tribute to the global popularity of Bollywood and a celebration of London's rich diversity. We're in no doubt it will attract fans from all around the world to Leicester Square, the home of film and entertainment," Williams said in a statement.

When "DDLJ" released 30 years ago, the film became a defining moment for Indian cinema, capturing the hearts of everyone who saw it all over the globe, said Akshaye Widhani, CEO of Yash Raj Films.

"We're thrilled to be the first Indian film to be represented in 'Scenes in the Square'. It also marks 30 years of 'DDLJ', a film that has spread love and joy globally and shows the cultural impact it has had in UK.

"We are honoured that our superstars and our film are being recognised on the world stage alongside the Hollywood elite, from Gene Kelly to Laurel & Hardy to Harry Potter. This statue will be a great way to express the international appeal of Indian movies and build bridges amongst communities through cinema," Widhani added. Over the years, "DDLJ" has emerged as a pop culture phenomenon, with a new musical based on the film, "Come Fall In Love - The DDLJ Musical" set to premiere at the Manchester Opera House on May 29. (PTI)



Sonakshi Sinha wraps filming of Telugu debut 'Jatadhara'

NEW DELHI, April 9: "Heeramandi" star Sonakshi Sinha has completed shooting for the upcoming supernatural thriller "Jatadhara", which marks her Telugu debut.

Headlined by Sudheer Babu, "Jatadhara" is directed by Venkat Kalyan, best known for "Cheddi Gang Tamasha" (2023).

Also starring Shilpa Shirodkar, the movie is produced by Zee Studios.

Sonakshi shared a series of pictures from the film wrap in an Instagram post on Tuesday night.

"Aaaaand one more down!! A film wrap for me on #Jatadhara my first Telugu filmu and my team has killed it on this one!!! bohot mazza ayaa, bohot dhamaal kiyau cant wait for you all to see!!! (sic)

"Thank you for the amazing shooting experience @pprernaarora @esskaygee.entertainment @zeestudioofficial, @shilpashirodkar73 #Sudheerbabu #UmeshKRBansal Arunaji, Venkat sir, Abhishek, @shivin7, Sameer sir, @akshaykejriwal @divyavij @ikussum @bhavinigoswami and the ENTIRE team!!! #JATADHARA," she captioned her post.

Production banner Zee Studios shared the news of Sonakshi's casting on the occasion of International Women's Day last month. (PTI)



'Mission: Impossible - The Final Reckoning' headed to Cannes Film Festival

NEW DELHI, April 9: Tom Cruise-starrer Mission: Impossible - The Final Reckoning will be presented Out of Competition at the 78th annual Cannes Film Festival. According to a press release from the organisers, the premiere of the eighth film in the popular spy thriller film franchise will be held at the Grand Theatre Lumiere on May 14.

Cruise, who also serves as producer on the film, will walk the steps of the Palais des Festivals along with long-time col-

laborator, screenwriter, and director Christopher McQuarrie and the cast.

The Hollywood action legend previously came to the Cannes Film Festival with Ron Howard's "Far and Away" (1992) and "Top Gun: Maverick" in 2022.

"Mission: Impossible - The Final Reckoning" also stars Hayley Atwell, Esai Morales, Henry Czerny, Simon Pegg, Pom Klementieff, Vanessa Kirby, Hannah Waddingham, Nick Offerman, Katy O'Brian and Tramel Tillman.

Presented by Paramount Pictures and Skydance, the film will be released in Indian cinemas on May 23 in English, Hindi, Tamil and Telugu in IMAX. Cannes Film Festival will run from May 13 to May 24, with French cinema star Juliette Binoche serving as jury president for the main competition. (PTI)

Jr NTR to begin shooting for Prashanth Neel's film on April 22

NEW DELHI, April 9: Telugu cinema star Jr NTR will start shooting for his upcoming movie with filmmaker Prashanth Neel on April 22, the makers said on Wednesday.

The official X page of the currently untitled movie shared the announcement.

"#NTRNeel is entering its most explosive phase Man of Masses @Tarak9999 steps into the destructive soil from April 22nd #PrashanthNeel @MythriOfficial @NTRArtsOfficial @NTRNeelFilm," the post read.

Billed as a pan-India film, the project is produced by Mythri Movie Makers and NTR Arts.

Neel, best known for the "KGF" franchise and "Salaar Part 1: Cease-fire", has also penned the script for the untitled movie with the "RRR" star.

Jr NTR was last seen in "Devara: Part 1", directed by Koratala Siva. (PTI)

EKTA KAPOOR CONFIRMS REMAKE OF 'KYUNKI SAAS BHI KABHI BAHU THI' IN THE WORKS

MUMBAI, April 9: Producer Ekta Kapoor has confirmed she is set to remake her groundbreaking 2000 daily soap "Kyunki Saas Bhi Kabhi Bahu Thi", teasing that show's lead star Smriti Irani, now a politician, may return.

The show, which ran for about eight years between 2000 and 2008, was co-produced by Shobha Kapoor and Ekta Kapoor under their banner Balaji Telefilms. It ran for a total of 1,833 episodes.

"Kyunki Saas Bhi Kabhi Bahu Thi", which defined the dynamics of Indian family dramas in the early 2000s, revolves around Irani's Tulsi, who was the ideal daughter-in-law of the wealthy Virani family. Kapoor, who tasted massive success with the Star Plus series, said she hopes to hit the 2000-episode milestone with the remake.

"I'm re-making the biggest show I ever made. It gave me an identity, and then I had to fight a lot to make other things. But it became what I was known for. But because of my problems as a production house with another big corporate, the programme ended (with) 160 episodes less before it completed its big 2000 (episode milestone).

"The love we have received for this programme has brought everyone who is attached to it back to complete just those episodes to reach that 2000 (number). The show deserves that," she said on day two of India Global Forum here on Tuesday evening.

What can fans expect from the remake version of "Kyunki Saas Bhi Kabhi Bahu

Thi"? "We're bringing politics into entertainment or a politician," the producer said in an apparent reference to Irani, a former cabinet minister in the ruling BJP government.

Kapoor said the popular show had "an authentic nature", which was in stark contrast from the content being produced today.

"If we slip from our authenticity, we might not cater to anyone. So, let's do what we believe in, give it those episodes of nostalgia, no real action, but a nostalgic form of storytelling that people remember from their younger days, and come back just for that, and not make it a part of the number game, not make it struggle to be a form of content that is being made today," she added.

The producer, who has also backed films such as "The Dirty Picture", "Once Upon a Time in Mumbai", "Shootout at Lokhandwala", and "The Sabarmati Report", said the dull performance of Hindi films at the box office is a "cyclical" phenomenon.

"When there were no movies in the theatre, old movies got a chance to (re)release, and music had worked because they were played so often in the last few years. People were like, 'Wow, what an amazing movie'," she said.

"Now, when the buyers have become fewer, people are again going to come into the market, make stories they believe in. Stars will charge lesser, eventually those movies will do well, the buyers will increase..." she added. (PTI)



Vishnu Manchu-starrer 'Kannappa' to release on June 27

MUMBAI, April 9: Telugu actor Vishnu Manchu on Wednesday announced that his upcoming feature "Kannappa" will now release on June 27.

The mythological epic, which narrates the story of the titular legendary devotee of Lord Shiva, was earlier slated to hit the big screen on April 25. The makers last month said the movie was postponed due to ongoing work on its visual effects.

The team of "Kannappa", including Manchu, actor and producer Mohan Babu, Prabhu Deva, and executive producer Vinay Maheshwari, met Uttar Pradesh Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath on Wednesday morning and showed a glimpse of the film's making to him.

Manchu said Adityanath resonated with the soul of their film. (PTI)

Bend it like Declan: Rice curls home two free kicks as Arsenal beat Real Madrid 3-0 in CL quarters

LONDON, April 9: Declan Rice put Arsenal on the brink of reaching the Champions League semifinals by curling home two free kicks that Real Madrid's most famous "galacticos" would have been proud of.

Rice opened the scoring by bending one free kick around the Madrid wall in the 58th minute and sent another into the top corner in the 70th as Arsenal won the first leg of the quarterfinals 3-0 at the Emirates Stadium.

With Madrid great Roberto Carlos looking on in the stands, Rice put on a display of power and bend reminiscent of the many free kicks scored by the

Brazilian defender in his day — or by his teammates David Beckham, Zinedine Zidane and Figo for that matter.

Unlike those names, Rice has not been known for his free kick prowess — until now. In fact, he had never scored from a direct free kick before in his career.

"It's been in the locker, but I've hit the wall too many times or it's gone over the bar," Rice told broadcaster Amazon Prime. "Originally we were going to cross it and then I've just seen the wall and the goalkeeper's position. So I thought just go for it."

Mikel Merino added the third

in the 75th to put Arsenal on the brink of returning to the semifinals for the first time since 2009.

In the other quarterfinal match Tuesday, Inter Milan won 2-1 at Bayern Munich.

Making matters worse for Madrid, key midfielder Eduardo Camavinga was sent off for a second booking in the final minutes and will miss the return leg at Santiago Bernabeu stadium on April 16.

Rice and Arsenal winger Bukayo Saka were both substituted after picking up knocks, but Arsenal manager Mikel Arteta said neither looked like a serious injury.

Only a handful of saves from Courtois prevented the scoreline from getting even bigger.

"The second half was amazing, we played with full gas from the side," Merino said. "When this side plays like that the crowd go with us."

While Madrid can never be written off at home, even coach Carlo Ancelotti didn't sound too hopeful of a comeback. "If you look at the game tonight, there is no possibility," Ancelotti said. "But in football everything can happen. We have to believe."

Kylian Mbappé had Madrid's best scoring chance in the 31st when he was played through on

goal by Jude Bellingham but the forward was denied by Arsenal goalkeeper David Raya.

It was the teams' first meeting since 2006, when Arsenal eliminated Madrid in the round of 16. That was also the last time Arsenal came close to winning the competition for the first time, losing the final to Barcelona.

Judging by this display, Arsenal could well be a contender again this year.

In one of the biggest European nights the Emirates has seen — the stadium opened for the 2006-07 season — Arsenal delivered one of its best performances of the season against

a team that has won the Champions League six times since 2014. And for once in this competition, Madrid simply didn't have an answer.

The 15-time European champions seemed content to sit back and wait for counterattacks in the first half but was pegged back for most of the second.

"In the second half we forgot how to play good soccer. I won't say we panicked, but we weren't comfortable with the ball," Courtois said. "They scored two great goals from free kicks and added a third. We didn't respond well, 3-0 is difficult but we have to believe

in this team. I believe it is possible."

And while Courtois pulled off two spectacular double saves in the game, he couldn't get close to either of Rice's free kicks.

"Maybe I could have put another man in the wall, but I didn't think he could bend it like he did," Courtois said. "And the second goal is simply spectacular."

Added Rice: "It's not going to hit me now because there's another leg to go. ... But in a few years time this will really hit me that what I've done tonight was really special." (AP)

Neeraj Chopra to begin season with Doha Diamond League on May 16



NEW DELHI, April 9: Double Olympic medallist Indian javelin thrower Neeraj Chopra on Tuesday confirmed that he will kick off his season at the Doha Diamond League scheduled for May 16 in the Qatari capital.

Chopra, who won gold at the Tokyo Olympics and then a silver at the 2024 Paris Games, said he

is looking forward to competing in front of one of athletics' most passionate crowds when he returns to the Wanda Diamond League meeting in Doha for the third year in a row.

Chopra had claimed victory at the Qatar Sports Club with a world lead of 88.67m in 2023. Ahead of his third appearance at

the meet, he said he was looking forward to more passionate support from Indian fans in Qatar.

"I'm always overwhelmed by the support I get from the Indian people in Qatar - there aren't enough words to thank them," said the 27-year-old who is now coached by Jan Zelezny of Czech Republic, the world javelin

record holder (98.48m) and a multiple Olympic and world champion.

A sporting icon, Chopra became the first Indian track and field athlete to win Olympic gold and World Championship gold, as well as the first Indian ever to win a Diamond League meeting and the Diamond League title.

He narrowly missed out on more glory last season, finishing second to Arshad Nadeem in the Olympic final and to Anderson Peters at the Diamond League Final in Brussels.

"Last year taught me a lot, but I was proud to be on the podium for India once again at the Olympic Games. I'm now fully fit and really enjoying the hard work that Jan Zelezny and I are putting in. I'm looking forward to opening my season in Doha," Chopra was quoted as saying on the Diamond League website.

"The crowd at the Qatar Sports Club is always loud, and I think that brings out the best in all of us. I know the fans expect big things from me when I compete here - and with good conditions and a great atmosphere that's definitely possible - but I pride myself on my consistency, which I believe is one of my greatest strengths. For me, that's more important than just chasing a number." The Wanda Diamond League is the elite one-day meeting series in global athletics. It comprises 15 of the most prestigious events in global track and field. Athletes compete for points at the 14 series meetings in a bid to qualify for the two-day Wanda Diamond League Final, which will be held in Zurich on August 27 and 28.

After Doha meet, Chopra will compete in 'Neeraj Chopra Classic' javelin event on May 24 in Panchkula. (PTI)

Kane misses, Frattesi scores as Inter beat Bayern 2-1 in 1st leg of Champions League quarterfinals



MUNICH, April 9: Inter Milan's treble chances are still very much on after it won 2-1 at Bayern Munich in the first leg of the Champions League quarterfinals to inflict the German team's first home defeat in the competition in almost exactly four years.

Lautaro Martínez scored in the first half, shortly after Harry Kane had hit the woodwork for Bayern in an uncharacteristic miss that had the England forward clutching his face in disbelief.

Substitute Thomas Müller, who announced on Saturday that he was leaving the German club at the end of the season, appeared to have rescued a 1-1 draw for Bayern with the equalizer five minutes from time but Davide Frattesi scored the winner three minutes later.

"Tonight wasn't a walk in the park and we weren't expecting one," Müller told broadcaster Prime Video. "We had a fair few chances, but unfortunately the last counter makes it 2-1."

"(Or) else it's 1-1, a good fight-back and the Müller story would have played out. I'll have to complain to Inter."

The result ended Bayern's 22-match unbeaten home run in Europe — a streak stretching back to April 7, 2021, against Paris Saint-Germain — and kept up Inter's hopes of returning to the same stadium for the Champions League

final on May 31.

But first up it has to face Bayern in the return leg next Wednesday at San Siro, with the winner playing either Barcelona or Borussia Dortmund in the semifinals.

"It's a great sign, above all for us," said Inter defender Alessandro Bastoni, who was named player of the match by UEFA. "We have great self-esteem and we know that we can do great things if we play like this."

"Maybe from an individual point of view there are teams that have more talent, that are stronger than us. But playing together we can cause problems for everyone."

Arsenal stunned Real Madrid 3-0 in Tuesday's other game, leaving the English team on the verge of a semifinal matchup against either Aston Villa or PSG.

Inter had lost its last two meetings with Bayern 2-0 in the Champions League group stage in 2022-23 — the season the Italian team went on to reach the final.

However, it had beaten Bayern in the 2010 final to clinch a treble of the Champions League, Serie A and Italian Cup — something the Nerazzurri are looking to repeat this year.

Bayern was decimated by injuries, including to attacking midfielder Jamal Musiala after the Germany star tore a hamstring last weekend. (AP)

Top scorers meet as Barcelona host Dortmund in Champions League

BARCELONA (SPAIN), April 9: The two top scorers in the Champions League meet when Barcelona hosts Borussia Dortmund in the first leg of the quarterfinals on Wednesday. Raphinha, having a standout season with 11 Champions League goals for Barcelona, will face Dortmund forward Serhou Guirassy, who has 10 along with Bayern Munich's Harry Kane.

Both scored when Barcelona won 3-2 at Dortmund in the league phase in December.

Barcelona, trying to reach a Champions League semifinal for the first time since the

2018-19 campaign, will also count on Robert Lewandowski, the Spanish league's top scorer with 25 goals. The 36-year-old striker has nine goals in the European competition this season. Lewandowski scored 17 of his 103 career goals in the Champions League for Dortmund over three seasons from 2011-14. Schlotterbeck out Dortmund will be without defender Nico Schlotterbeck because of a meniscus tear in his left knee. The club announced Monday he will miss the rest of the season. In-form teams also Wednesday, Paris Saint-Germain, seeking

an elusive first Champions League title, hosts Aston Villa in a meeting between two of Europe's hottest teams. PSG finished only 15th in the league phase in January — the lowest of any of the quarterfinalists — but since then has 16 wins in 17 games across all competitions. The lone setback was an unlucky 1-0 loss to Liverpool at Parc des Princes in the first leg of the round of 16, when it outplayed its opponent for most of the match. Villa, coached by Unai Emery, has won seven straight coming into its first game at this stage of the competition for 42

years. Emery was previously PSG's coach for one of the biggest humiliations in Champions League history, when it squandered a 4-0 first-leg lead against Barcelona in the round of 16 eight years ago. The Spanish side won the second-leg 6-1, eliminating PSG. In the 2018-19 season after Emery's departure, PSG experienced another Champions League blow when current Villa forward Marcus Rashford scored a penalty deep into stoppage-time as Manchester United eliminated the French club in the last 16 on away goals. (AP)

Brazil get late goal for 2-1 victory over the US women

SAN JOSE (CALIFORNIA), April 9: Amanda Gutierrez scored in stoppage time and Brazil defeated the United States 2-1 for the team's first victory over the Americans since 2014.

It was the second of two exhibition matches between the teams, meeting for the first time since the United States downed Brazil 1-0 in the gold medal game at last summer's Paris Olympics. Catarina Macario put the U.S. in front just 34 seconds into the match. After Alyssa Thompson raced the ball down the left side, Macario picked it up and got around Brazil goalkeeper Natascha, who was making just her fourth start. It was Macario's 10th goal for the national team.

Brazil drew even with Kerolin's goal from distance in the 24th minute that U.S. goalkeeper Mandy McGlynn couldn't reach. It was just the ninth goal that the United States allowed since Emma Hayes took over as coach last May.

Gutierrez, who came off the

bench in the second half, scored off a cross from Luany deep into stoppage time. It was the first victory for a CONMEBOL team over the Americans on U.S. soil. Brazil had not defeated the Americans since December 14, 2014.

"I feel like in the first half we had a lot of chances that we could have put away," Thompson said. "I think the game got away from us in the second half. In the second half, we needed to get more control of the ball and kind of take the momentum away from them."

McGlynn was making her third start for the national team. Hayes started Phallon Tullis-Joyce in the first match against Brazil, as she evaluates goalkeepers following the retirement of Alyssa Naeher.

"We just kept Brazil hanging in it, and obviously with a very passionate team, they take it all the way," McGlynn said. "I think we could have been a little more front-footed all the way through the second half." (AP)

Strive to survive on court: film shows the pressure ball kids face to earn an Australian Open spot

BRISBANE, April 9: Formula 1 has done it, so has professional golf, the National Hockey League and the elite tennis tour. Now it's time for ball boys and ball girls to take center court in a reality-style documentary.

Tennis Australia this week said "Ballkids," a 65-minute film, is set to "lift the lid on the unsung heroes of the Australian Open." It was filmed at the season-opening Grand Slam tournaments in 2023 and 2024 at Melbourne Park and will premiere May 3 at the Gold Coast Film Festival in Queensland state.

While it won't have the high-profile, episode-style format of FI's "Drive to Survive," which will start its seventh season this week, "Full Swing" in golf or "Faceoff."

Inside the NHL, which is now in production for its second season, the makers of "Ballkids" say it will chronicle the often cut-throat selection process and rigorous training

program.

Indeed. The documentary says that of 3,000-plus applications, only 420 are chosen as Australian Open ball kids in any given year.

And that's for the right to cope with the stress of performing, at times, in front of 14,000 to 15,000 people in the main Rod Laver Arena, with millions of people watching on television or streaming sites around the world.

Tennis already had "Break Point," which ran for two seasons on Netflix and featured players from the ATP and WTA Tours. But "Ballkids" is set to show the "unsung heroes who only share the court with the world's best players."

Friendships are made early on in the qualifying process, but the kids know they're competing against each other for those coveted spots on the team.

"Nothing will fully prepared you for the pressure," an Aus-



tralian Open official says in the documentary. "A rookie's first AO experience is like a really friendly smack in the face!"

That's particularly true near

the end of the tournament when the so-called "Top Gun" winners are announced. They're the ball kids who get to work the championship finals in men's

and women's singles, doubles and mixed doubles. At that point, perhaps some friendships made, and some lost.

"Ballkids" was produced by Run Wild Productions in association with Mischief Media and is narrated by Australian comedian-actor Celia Pacquola.

"We've always known that the ball kids are integral to the smooth running of the tournament, but Ballkids' shows just how much effort, skill, and determination it takes to make it to the top," said Scott Baskett, a director and producer at Run Wild Productions.

"This documentary is not just about tennis, it's about resilience, teamwork, and the pursuit of perfection — values that transcend the sport."

A trailer for "Ballkids," which will be available to watch on the Australian Open's YouTube channel and possibly for a limited release in cinemas or streaming later in the year, can be found here. (AP)

RCB vs DC: Interesting personal match-ups on cards

BENGALURU, April 9: An intriguing battle is on the cards when fearless Royal Challengers Bengaluru and Delhi Capitals clash in an IPL match, where the outcome will be governed by a clutch of exciting personal match-ups, here on Thursday.

The Capitals have three wins from as many matches, and the Royal Challengers bagged three victories from four games. That record testifies their wonderful shapeshifting ability according to opponents and conditions.

Royal Challengers have mastered conditions as distinct as Kolkata, Chennai and Mumbai and their lone stumble came at home against Gujarat Titans.

It was more to do with a rather out of character Chinnaswamy pitch taking them by surprise than any sudden erosion in skills.

The RCB will be wiser for that experience against the Delhi side, who have wins at varied Visakhapatnam and Chennai tracks.

But the hosts will be a confident group as star batter Virat Kohli made a return to run-making ways after an all too brief blip.

If the 22-yard strip here retains its nature from that GT match,



then Kohli's form will be crucial for RCB.

The 36-year-old Indian star will have two formidable foes to negate in this match — pacer Mitchell Starc and left-arm wrist spinner Kuldeep Yadav.

Kohli has an edge over Starc in T20s as he has scored 72 runs off 31 balls, but the Aussie is in fine fettle this season taking nine wickets from three matches at an average of 11.

So, Kohli's battle with Starc in the Power Play will have a massive influence on RCB's initial charge. Kohli will come up against Kuldeep (6 wickets at an economy of 6) if he bats a bit deeper, and it will be an interesting battle.

Kohli is a much-evolved batter in T20s after shedding his reticence to play lofted and sweep shots against spinners.

It has allowed him to bat with more liberty against slow bowlers,

and Kuldeep's endless bag of tricks will challenge the senior pro, especially the one the slides away from the right-hander.

Here, in-form RCB skipper Rajat Patidar too will have a big role to play as he is a superb player of spin, and, in that context, DC will hope for a heavier contribution from left-arm spinner Axar Patel.

The Delhi captain has bowled just eight overs across three matches, and is yet to take any wickets.

Without being spectacular, Josh Hazlewood and Bhuvneshwar Kumar have given RCB control over their rivals in the Power Plays.

They will have to do an encore against Delhi keeping KL Rahul, who knows the conditions here to the hilt, silent. Rahul is now trying to maximise his stay at the crease rather looking to bat deep as he has often done in the past, and it has made him a more dangerous customer.

The Delhi outfit will also closely watch the fitness of Faf du Plessis, who missed the previous match against Chennai Super Kings.

If Du Plessis, another player with first-hand knowledge of the conditions here, joins Rahul atop then it will become imperative for RCB new ball bowlers to fall into their rhythm straightaway.

Teams:
Royal Challengers: Rajat Patidar (c), Phil Salt, Virat Kohli, Devdutt Padikkal, Liam Livingstone, Jitesh Sharma (wk), Tim David, Krunal Pandya, Bhuvneshwar Kumar, Josh Hazlewood, Yash Dayal, Suyash Sharma, Rasikh Dar Salam, Manoj Bhandage, Jacob Bethell, Swapnil Singh, Abhinandan Singh, Romario Shepherd, Lungi Ngidi, Nuwan Thushara, Mohit Rathee, Swastik Chikara.

Delhi Capitals: Axar Patel (c), Jake Fraser-McGurk, Faf du Plessis, Abhishek Porel(w), Sameer Rizvi, Tristan Stubbs, Ashutosh Sharma, Vipraj Nigam, Mitchell Starc, Kuldeep Yadav, Mohit Sharma, Mukesh Kumar, Karun Nair, Donovan Ferreira, Tripurana Vijay, Darshan Nalkande, Dushmantha Chameera, KL Rahul, T Natarajan, Ajay Yadav Mandal, Manvath Kumar L, Madhav Tiwari.

Match starts at 7.30 pm. (PTI)

Batting is never about ego, I want to play according to situation: Virat Kohli



NEW DELHI, April 9: Champion cricketer Virat Kohli said curbing the ego and playing as per the demands of a match situation form the core principle of his batting.

One of the most successful batters of the modern era, Kohli recently flew past another milestone while becoming the first Indian player to score 13000 runs in T20s.

"It's (batting) never about ego. It was never about trying to overshadow anyone. It's always been about understanding the game situation — and that's something I've always taken pride in. I want to play according to what the situation demands," Kohli told JioHotstar.

"If I was in rhythm, in the flow of the game, I naturally took the initiative. If someone else was better placed to take the lead, they would do it," he added.

Kohli is the highest run-getter in the IPL with 8168 runs from 256 matches with eight hundreds, the most by any batter.

The 36-year-old said he decoded the demands of the format from the 2011 edition onwards.

"In my first three years with Royal Challengers Bengaluru, I didn't get many opportunities to bat in the top order. I was usually sent lower down. So, I wasn't really able to crack the IPL in a big way.

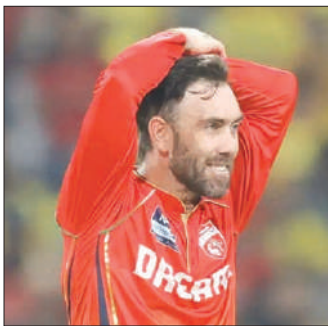
"But from 2010 onwards, I started performing more consistently, and by 2011, I was regularly batting at number three. That's when my IPL journey really began to take shape," he added.

Kohli admitted that spending 18 years in the league helped him polish his skills in the short-term version of cricket.

"IPL challenges you in a very unique way because of how the tournament is structured. It's not like a short bilateral series, it spans several weeks, and your position on the points table keeps shifting. That constantly changing scenario brings different kinds of pressure.

"This dynamic nature of the tournament pushes you mentally and competitively in various ways other formats don't. It's also driven me to constantly improve and evolve my T20 skill set," he noted. (PTI)

Punjab Kings' Glenn Maxwell fined, handed one demerit point



MULLANPUR, April 9: Punjab Kings' all-rounder Glenn Maxwell has been fined 25 per cent of his match fee and handed one demerit point for breaching IPL Code of Conduct during the match against Chennai Super Kings here.

The 36-year-old Maxwell has admitted to the Level 1 offence under article 2.2 which relates to abuse of fixtures and fittings during the match which was played here at the New PCA Stadium on Tuesday.

"Glenn Maxwell, All-rounder, Punjab Kings has been fined 25 per cent of his match fees and has also accumulated one demerit point for breaching the IPL Code of Conduct during his team's match against Chennai Super Kings at the New PCA Stadium, New Chandigarh on Tuesday," the BCCI informed in an email.

"Glenn Maxwell admitted to the Level 1 offence under article 2.2 (abuse of fixtures and fittings during the Match) and accepted the Match Referee's sanction. For Level 1 breaches of the Code of Conduct, the Match Referee's decision is final and binding," it added.

Maxwell, who has been struggling for form both with the bat and the ball, fell for one run, giving a return catch to CSK spinner Ravichandran Ashwin on the second ball he faced to be dismissed for one.

Punjab Kings, however, went on to win the high-scoring match by 18 runs and are placed fourth on the points table with three wins and one defeat in four matches so far. (PTI)

DK is trying to create a new player in me: RCB's Jitesh credits mentor Karthik for revival

BENGALURU, April 9: Jitesh Sharma attributed his ongoing renaissance as a T20 batter to the efforts put in by Royal Challengers Bengaluru mentor Dinesh Karthik who believes that the wicketkeeper can develop into a true '360' degree player.

Jitesh had a lukewarm IPL 2024 for Punjab Kings, scoring just 187 runs from 14 matches at a measly average of 17 and at a reduced strike-rate of 131.

But at RCB, the 31-year-old has already made handy 85 runs from four matches, and his strike-rate has touched 185, a sign of him regaining confidence.

"It's been a great journey till now because in the off-season, I really worked hard with him. I think whichever shot that I am playing right now is the replica of what he used to play. He is trying to create a new player in me," said Jitesh on the eve of the match against Delhi Capitals.

Jitesh said Karthik, a former wicketkeeper batter for RCB, has a lot of trust in his abilities with the bat.

"He believes in me that I can play all around the circle — 360 angles,

Iyer wants fearless, free-flowing attitude from his batters

MULLANPUR, April 9: Punjab Kings skipper Shreyas Iyer on Tuesday said he wants his batters to play with an aggressive, fearless, and free-flowing mindset, something young opener Priyansh Arya showcased during his sensational maiden IPL century against Chennai Super Kings.

Arya rode on his luck and power-hitting to slam 103 off 42 balls — the fifth fastest century in IPL history as PBKS posted 219/6 despite half their side returning to the dugout in the first eight overs.

"Absolutely. This is going to be the template, irrespective of the ground. We have variety in the batting line-up. Great hitters, great timers, scintillating to watch Priyansh bat from the outside.

"When I had a chat with him in the last game, he was a bit timid in his decision-making against Jofra (Archer). Tonight, he was backing his instincts," Iyer said at the post-match pres-

entation. "It was free-flowing and that is the mindset I want in everyone. Today, he kept on going, he was fearless and it was basically one of the top knocks I have seen in the IPL so far."

Yuzvendra Chahal bowled just one over giving away nine runs and Iyer said it was a tactical move to hold back the experienced leg-spinner.

"That was a tactical call, because (Shivam) Dube had already played a few deliveries, and also Conway. With Yuzi coming in, we know how destructive he (Dube) can be. But Yuzi is a smart bowler. My instincts felt that pacers bowling slower balls into the wicket (would work), and we basically wanted pace against Dube.

"We delayed a bit but eventually, it worked out."

CSK skipper Ruturaj Gaikwad lamented his side's missed chances in the field, admitting that dropped catches have cost them dearly in

recent games.

"I think the last four games, the only point of difference, it has been critical, the catches we have been dropping, the same batsman is scoring 15, 20, 30 runs," he said after CSK lost by 18 runs against Punjab Kings.

Gaikwad was full of praise for young PBKS opener Arya.

"Priyansh played well. High risk batting and it came off well. We were getting wickets at regular intervals but they kept the momentum going. 10-15 runs lesser would have helped us. But it comes down to dropped catches. It was spot on in the batting perspective," he said.

Chasing an imposing 220-run target, CSK could manage 201 for 5.

"Two of our best batters who play pace well went at the top of the order. They had a good powerplay. Lot of positives in the batting department. We were two three hits away today," Gaikwad said. (PTI)

We batted a bit better, but it's been a frustrating season for CSK: Stephen Fleming

MULLANPUR, April 9: Head coach Stephen Fleming was relieved to see Chennai Super Kings' top-order producing some runs, but, for him, the failure of his side to cross the line in the fourth consecutive IPL match this season remained a "frustrating" element.

CSK batters gave a better account of themselves in pursuit of 220 set by Punjab Kings, but still fell short of the target by 18 runs here on Tuesday. "It (has been) a frustrating season so far," Fleming told the media after the match.

"The catching has been poor, but it was poor from both sides. Whether it was something in the light, I'm not sure, but certainly for us that was an area of concern. If you want to pick up 20 runs, it's probably that and (the) drop catches," he said.

Fleming had a point there because CSK have so far dropped 11 catches in five matches, with three of them occurring against Punjab Kings.

The Kiwi then touched upon CSK's improved batting effort as openers Devon Conway and Rachin Ravindra put on 69 runs, following which the former added another 89

runs for the third wicket with Shivam Dube (42).

"Well, positive-wise, we batted a bit better. We got some substance from the top order, which has been lacking so we were able to then construct the chase," Fleming said.

"We just weren't able to keep the run rate at a good level through the middle, and it just left too much towards the end. But we've been out of games, so to be in a game for a lot longer is a positive aspect. The game was really lost in the field," he added.

Fleming heaped praise on Punjab Kings' batter Priyansh Arya, who made a 42-ball 103 despite regular fall of wickets at the other end.

"Well, firstly, he had a day out, didn't he? He played very well right from the first ball. It's very brave when you come off a first ball dismissal to look to play a shot like that," Fleming said.

"Our fault was we were too wide. The plan was to bowl straight at the stumps and create some pressure that way. The first ball we bowled straight, we created a caught and bowled chance, and that changes the night quite drastically.

"We were just a little bit sloppy. We were put under pressure, and the young man had some amazing shots. We succumbed a little bit to that pressure by putting the ball in areas that he was stronger in, and we just didn't adjust quick enough," he said.

Punjab Kings' Shashank Singh, who struck a 36-ball 52 and forged two vital partnerships to help his side recover from a perilous position of 83/5, said state-based T20 competitions are important to discover talents like Arya.

"I am really in favour of these leagues because you see today Priyansh Arya, then Digvesh Rathi in Lucknow (Super Giants)... the players who did well for the state league," he said.

"These (competitions) are really good because obviously you get an opportunity to play under lights, play with Kookaburra ball and play in those pressure situations.

"You get to know the character of the player as well apart from skills, because skills obviously most of them have but the mental toughness, the character you get to see in the state leagues," Singh added. (PTI)

World Boxing establishes interim committee to oversee BFI affairs, lists down responsibilities

NEW DELHI, April 9: World Boxing has formed an interim committee to oversee the affairs of the Boxing Federation of India (BFI) to ensure administrative continuity and management of domestic and international competitions.

World Boxing President Boris van der Vorst has written to BFI chairman Ajay Singh, conveying the appointment of a six-member committee.

The committee will be headed by Singh for "a period not extending 90 days."

The six-member committee includes BFI Vice President Narendar Kumar Nirwan, Executive Director Arun Malik and Olympian L Sarita Devi.

One of the remaining two members of the committee would be a nominee of the India Olympic Committee (IOA), "to be nominated in consultation with the President IOA - Member," the letter dated April 7 said.

IOA President PT Usha is yet to nominate a member. Singapore Boxing Association's president Fairuz Mohamed is also a part of the committee. He will also serve as a representative from World Boxing as an observer, "to validate the work of this committee."

Factionalism and infighting has become prevalent in the federation in the recent months leading up to the elections which have faced multiple delays and controversies.

The BFI elections, originally scheduled for February 2, have been marred by legal disputes and procedural delays. Additionally, Singh suspended BFI secretary Hemanta Kalita and treasurer Digvijay Singh after an inquiry led by former Delhi High Court judge Sudhir Kumar Jain found the duo guilty of "financial irregularities."

Both Kalita and Digvijay have challenged the decision in court.

The infighting among the federation had led several state units to boycott the women's nationals last month, where Singh announced several national championships.

"This Interim Committee is being formed to provide administrative continuity and safeguard the rights and interests of Indian boxers until elections are held and a new democratic executive committee is elected," the letter from van der Vorst read.

The interim committee has been tasked with multiple responsibilities including day-to-day management of the BFI to ensure administrative continuity; organise domestic competitions including national championship in "a fair, transparent, and inclusive manner and taking all steps necessary to ensure participation."

The committee will select Indian teams for international events on the basis of selection policy in a timely manner and coordinate with SAL, IOA and other national stakeholders for protecting the interest of Indian boxing and its athletes.

It is learnt that several members of the BFI, including two Vice Presidents, had approached van der Vorst raising concerns over Indian boxing, prompting the World Body to take action.

"Overseeing financial matters, including the operation and management of BFI's bank accounts, to ensure transparency and discipline; representing BFI in all ongoing and future legal proceedings, with the authority to act in the best interests of the Federation" were also listed as the responsibilities. (PTI)

Priyansh Arya: Six-hitting wonder arrives on the IPL stage



him."

Just before IPL, Priyansh trained at an academy near Ratapani Wildlife Sanctuary which is close to Bhopal.

"I have a residential academy in Bhopal near the jungles. Priyansh trained over there before IPL and worked on his game, ranging hitting before he joined Punjab Kings camp," said the coach.

"His parents, both government school teachers have inculcated good values in

easy to get the breakthrough and Bhardwaj remembers how he had to actually ensure that a hefty club tournament entry fee of ₹ 50,000 was paid so that his ward gets a shot at Delhi U19 trials.

"The tournament is organized by a former India player. Priyansh was 16 back then. 50,000 entry fee for a club like ours is a lot of money. But glad I paid it and Priyansh scored 93 and Gursharan Singh, then in

charge of U19, put him in Cooch Behar squad and he scored nearly 400 runs."

"He was selected for India U19 and played a tri-series game against Proteas colts."

Priyansh's forte is T20 and he can muscle any bowler without a lot of footwork.

Bhardwaj's aim is to ultimately see his ward in India whites.

"Abhi uss pe bahot kaam baaki hai (He is a work in progress). We will work at my academy in Bhopal after IPL so that he can become a Delhi regular in Ranji Trophy," Bhardwaj said.

But what made him smile was a gesture from his student on Tuesday.

"I normally never request for passes but there was someone I couldn't turn down and I sent him a request for a couple of tickets. He texted me photo of the envelope and my acquaintances could watch the match," he said.

Having got a good look at Priyansh during the pre-season camp, Punjab Kings support staff did not take long to be convinced of his special talent.

"He played about eight balls in a practice game before the IPL. That was enough for us to say that he has to play the first game," assistant coach Brad Haddin told the host broadcaster soon after Priyansh's sizzling innings. (PTI)