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Arunachal among top 3 states with largest forest and tree cover: ISFR

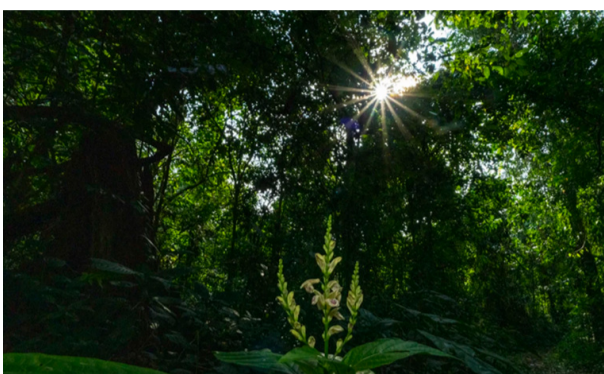
*** Rare yaw trees under threat for no regulation**

ITANAGAR, Jan 03: The India State of Forest Report (ISFR 2023) has enlisted Arunachal Pradesh among the top three states with largest forest and tree cover in the country.

Arunachal is followed by Madhya Pradesh and Maharashtra. It may be mentioned here that in terms of area, Arunachal with 65,882 sqkm is the second state with the largest forest cover after Madhya Pradesh with 77,073 sqkm, 75% of its geographical area under forest coverage, Chief Minister Pema Khandu posted on microblogging site X.

The CM appreciated efforts by all stakeholders, including the Team Department of Environment and Forests of Arunachal Pradesh (DEFAP) in preserving and expanding forests and tree cover.

"I sincerely compliment



all stakeholders including Team DEFAP for their concerted efforts in preserving and expanding forests and tree cover, which is so crucial to maintaining ecological balance and supporting life on the earth. They act as natural air purifiers by absorbing carbon dioxide and releasing oxygen, mitigating the effects of climate change," he said with conviction.

Khandu also encouraged the state people to make ef-

forts to ensure "a healthy environment and sustainable development for future generations."

Informed about many benefits and resources that could be gained by protecting natural resources, he said, "By going green, we protect soil from erosion, regulate water cycles and support biodiversity by providing habitat for countless species. In return, we get resources, like wood, fruits, and medicinal plants

along with huge recreational benefits."

The CM is true as state with its diversified forest boasts of about 20% species of country's fauna, 4,500 species of flowering plants, 400 species of pteridophytes, 23 species of conifers, 35 species of bamboos, 20 species of canes, 52 species of Rhododendron, more than 500 species of orchids and numerous herbs, like yew (*Taxus baccata*), a primary source of taxol used in treatment of ovarian, breast cancers and kaposi's sarcoma (an AIDS related cancer) and over 20 such other indications, having huge demand in the pharma industry.

Regrettably, yew trees due to over-exploitation are under threat of disappearance for want of regulation, as highlighted by a national daily, quoting researcher s. Contd. p.3

Vaishnav flags off 3 new trains from Guwahati railway station

GUWAHATI, Jan 03: Union Railway Minister Ashwini Vaishnav flagged off three significant train services from Railway Station here on Friday, marking another milestone in enhancing connectivity in the NE and the new services include Guwahati-New Lakhimpur Janshatabdi Express, New Bongaigaon-Guwahati Passenger Train and Tinsukia-Naharlagun Express.

Focus on connectivity & infrastructure development: The minister's visit underscores the government's commitment to bolstering infrastructure and connectivity in the region. Among the highlights of his itinerary, Vaishnav will dedicate the Tetelia Road Over Bridge (ROB) at Dispur, Guwahati, to the public, improving road and rail connectivity Contd. P.3

Arunachal achieves Category 1 status in malaria control efforts: WHO report

***Efforts for zero indigenous cases by 2027: CM**



ITANAGAR, Jan 03: Arunachal Pradesh has achieved significant progress in controlling malaria transmission and moved to Category 1, signifying an annual parasite incidence (API) of less than one case per 1,000 population.

This information was revealed in the latest World Malaria Report 2024, released by the World Health Organization (WHO).

The WHO report also revealed that along with Arunachal Pradesh,

Andaman & Nicobar Islands, Madhya Pradesh and Dadra and Nagar Haveli also advanced to Category 1.

Appreciating the recent development, Chief Minister Pema Khandu, on his official X handle said, "India is moving very fast towards a malaria-free future. Thanks to the concerted efforts of all stakeholders, malaria cases have declined to two million and deaths have plummeted to just 83 by 2023, underscoring our collective resolve to im-

prove public health for our citizens."

Sharing the information which accredits Arunachal amongst top states credited for combating the spread of malaria, he further said, "Arunachal Pradesh along with Andaman & Nicobar Islands, Madhya Pradesh and Dadra and Nagar Haveli have moved to Category 1 in 2023, reporting an API of less than one case per 1000 population."

CM Khandu attributed India's public health infrastructure to Prime Minister

Narendra Modi's guidance. "Given the efficacy of targeted interventions under the visionary guidance of Prime Minister Narendra Modi ji, our robust public health infrastructure will help India achieve malaria-free status by 2030," he said, and exalted Arunachal's commitment to make every possible effort to "ensure that we have zero indigenous cases by 2027."

Coincidentally, Arunachal has contributed to India's drastic reduction in both malaria cases and deaths by around 80% from 2015 to 2023, with cases going down from 11,69,261 in 2015 to 2,27,564 in 2023, while deaths falling from 384 to just 83 against global data of estimated 2023 API of around 60.4 cases per 1,000 population at risk based on an estimated 263 million malaria cases worldwide, signifying a significant burden of the disease, particularly concentrated in the African region.

Rationalize GPCs zone-wise, create separate DoTE: APTTA

ITANAGAR, Jan 03: Appreciating decision of the GoAP led by Chief Minister Pema Khandu for approving to start academic activities of Ziro Govt Polytechnic College (GPC) from 2025-26, Arunachal Pradesh Technical Teachers' Association (APTTA) has termed it as a new year gift for the state people.

It would meet growing demand for skilled professionals and contribute to the state's economic prosperity while reflecting the GoAP's commitment to higher & technical education (THE). Thus, the APTTA placed following demands: 1) Rationalization of number of GPCs: The Ziro GPC is part of this expansion plan to set up one polytechnic college or diploma level-Govt engineering college in each district under the GoI's Mission on Polytechnics scheme.

While six of 14 sanctioned GPCs are operational at Itanagar (Rajiv Gandhi Govt Polytechnic College), Pasighat, Roing, Namsai (CPNGPC), Laying & Dirang, starting of remaining eight, including one at Ziro, is in the pipeline, the APTTA claimed in a release.

Expressing concern about intake of students and quality of education in some of these GPCs since last few years, Directorate of HTE (DHTE) and GPCs have been criticized for less intake, inadequate faculties, staff and lack of industry connections due to poor infrastructures.

While analyzing less intake of students, the APTTA has found that state's low population of about 13.8 lakh (2011 Census) with 9.5 lakh STs (69%) and poor performance of students in schools, particularly in science & mathematics, have

largely contributed to this syndrome, besides growing number of GPCs in comparison to state's population.

Thus, it suggested to upgrade and rationalize the existing ones in North, South, East, West and Central regions with additional funding for infrastructures, faculty training and industry partnerships instead of setting up of new ones.

2) Two degree level-Govt engineering colleges (DLGECs) are under construction at Toru & Tezu, it said and urged to expedite the works.

The RGGPC is the first & premiere technical institute in the NE and accredited to National Board of Accreditation (NBA) in two programmes. As per NBA's recommendation, RGGPC had applied for upgradation from diploma level to degree level with no objection certificate from Contd. P.3

Bigg Boss 18

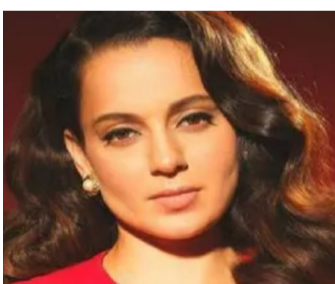
Chum's journey to victory brightens as Ranaut names her the 'Leading Lady'

*** She deserves Godspeed wish!**

Chum Darang's journey in Bigg Boss 18 is becoming stronger with each passing day and more captivating. From the beginning of the show, the actress has consistently demonstrated her capabilities by never shying away from expressing her views or entertaining the audience.

Recently, in an episode on the eve of New Year-2025, Bollywood actress Kangana Ranaut referred to Chum as the 'leading lady' of the show. Kangana was promoting her upcoming movie *Emergency* on Salman Khan's show when she had entered the house and said, "Aap logo ne dekha, iss ghar ki leading lady jo hai, right now, woh Chum hai. (Did you see who is the leading lady of the house, now she is Chum)".

Expressing her gratitude, Chum said, "Trophy jeetu na jeetu, but I am really happy with whatever I got.



Thank you, guys." Chum Darang, who hails from North-East of Arunachal Pradesh, has been receiving massive support for her stint in Bigg Boss 18.

In fact, Ranaut, member, had declared Karan Veer Mehra and Chum Darang leading man and lady of the house giving all fans a happy surprise as she had left no stone unturned in making the episode memorable for netizens and contestants. Kangana brought her signature charm to the show

and was seen interacting with the contestants. She indulged in laughter and some playful banter.

You spoke very well, Salman lauds Chum

With fans glued to ongoing Bigg Boss-18 in this film city to watch performances of contestants in the reality show, host ever charismatic Salman Khan had appreciated Chum Darang, saying "I watched a new slide, you speaking very well which was satisfying. Show it once again," as reported in December 18 edition of this

daily.

"It was acting, Sir, but I can't do it again," quipped Chum. On Salman's insistence, Chum said: "Karan why are you sitting depressed? *Fat geyi hey kya?*"

Salman asked again - Do you have to say anything to Shilpa Shirodkar? Chum came to her form and said: What to talk about this mad girl?, when all contestants burst into laughter as seen in the video posted on X (@chumdarang).

The event has been captivating audiences with its thrilling mix of drama, controversy and entertainment. As one of India's most popular reality shows, it consistently keeps viewers on the edge of their seats with charm of diverse group of contestants, including celebrities, influencers and reality show veterans, all vying for the coveted title. With unexpected twists, intense rivalries Contd. P.3



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CBI doesn't need state consent for FIR against Centre officials: SC

NEW DELHI, Jan 03: The Supreme Court has said the CBI does not require the permission of state governments to register an FIR against Centre's officials posted in the different jurisdictions of states.

A bench comprising Justices C T Ravikumar and Rajesh Bindal on January 2 overturned the Andhra Pradesh High Court's order quashing the CBI investigations against two Central government employees over corruption.

"Irrespective of the place of posting, the aforesaid factual position would go onto show that they were Central government employees/Central government undertaking employees and allegedly committed serious offence under PC Act, which is a central act," it said.

The case stemmed from the CBI FIRs against the Central government employees working in Andhra Pradesh.

They had challenged the CBI's jurisdiction in the Andhra Pradesh High Court, arguing the general consent granted to the CBI under the Delhi Special Police Establishment Act, 1946 (DSPE Act), by the undivided state of Andhra Pradesh did not automatically extend to the newly formed state of Andhra Pradesh post-bifurcation.

The high court agreed with the accused, who were booked under the Prevention of Corruption Act, and quashed the FIRs insisting a fresh consent from Andhra Pradesh was required.

Justice Ravikumar, who authored a 32-page judgement, differed with the high court's interpretation, and ruled the latter had erred in asking for a fresh state consent for CBI's investigations.

"In such circumstances and in the light of the con-

clusion already arrived at, the terms of the provisions under circular memo dated May 26, 2014 all 'laws' applicable to the undivided state of Andhra Pradesh on June 1, 2014 would continue to apply to the new states, namely, Telangana and Andhra Pradesh despite the bifurcation of the erstwhile Andhra Pradesh till such time they were altered, repealed or amended," it said.

The judgement relied on precedents, including the 1990 government order granting general consent to the CBI and subsequent extensions of this consent in Andhra Pradesh, to justify its decision.

The top court framed a question -- if the CBI required the state government's consent to register an FIR against a Central government employee under a central act simply because the employee worked within the territory of a state -- as the central issue.

It held no such consent was necessary as the offences in question were under a central legislation and involved Central government employees.

The consent regime under Section 6 of the DSPE Act was not designed to obstruct investigations into central offences only because they transpired within a state's territorial limits, it said.

The bench said the general consent granted by a state under the DSPE Act was sufficient for the CBI investigations involving central offences and state-specific formalities, such as a fresh consent, was not required.

"We are of the firm view that the impugned judgment whereunder subject FIRs and further proceedings in pursuance thereof, were quashed cannot be sustained," it said and allowed CBI's appeal. (Agency)

40 girl cadets in NCC phase-wise expansion planned 2 bands from Corps to take part in Parade

NEW DELHI, Jan 03: The strength of girl cadets in the NCC has risen to 40 per cent and a phase-wise expansion has been planned for the Corps in the next few years, senior officials said on Friday.

At a press briefing here, NCC Director General Lt Gen Gurbirpal Singh shared details about the ongoing NCC Republic Day Camp at Delhi Cantonment and the future course of the Corps.

A total of 2,361 NCC cadets from across the country are taking part in the month-long camp which began on December 30. The annual event will witness the participation of 917 girl cadets, the largest so far.

Out of 2,361 NCC cadets, 114 are from Jammu and Kashmir and Ladakh and 178 from the northeast region.

Late in a statement issued by the defence ministry, the DG was quoted as saying that nearly 135 cadets from

Another official said the strength of girl cadets has risen manifold in the last 10 years, and a phase-wise expansion has been planned for the NCC.

The official said "four bands" have been shortlisted from all over India to participate in the NCC R-Day Camp.

These four bands are from Birla Balika Vidyapeeth, Pilani (Rajasthan Directorate of the NCC), Scindia School (Madhya Pradesh & Chhattisgarh Directorate), Mizo High School (NER Directorate), and Newman College (Kerala & Lakshadweep Directorate), he said.

"Two bands out of these four would be selected to participate in the Republic Day Parade. The selection process is, however, not yet complete. Among the two bands that would be selected to participate in the parade, one band will be an all-girl band," he added.

Bands from Birla Balika Vidyapeeth and Newman College are all-girl bands. Mizo High School band is a mixed band, while Scindia School has an all-boy band, the official said.

The Republic Day Camp serves as a platform to offer cadets opportunities to train and engage in cultural activities and participate in social service initiatives.

During his briefing the NCC DG also shared some powerpoint slides detailing the journey of the Corps over the last one year.

One of the slides were related to some of the mountaineering expeditions undertaken by the NCC cadets in the past, including to "Mt Kang Yatse II (6,250m) -- team of 24 cadets" and "Mt Abi Gamin (7,335m) -- team of 34 cadets."

The slide also mentioned that the NCC has planned an expedition to the Mt Everest -- the world's highest peak -- later this year during April-June. (Agency)

PM Modi likens AAP to 'aapda' for Delhi, Kejriwal hits back as poll battle heats up

NEW DELHI, Jan 03: Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Friday launched a scathing attack on AAP, calling it an "aapda" (disaster) that has gripped Delhi for the past 10 years, prompting its chief Arvind Kejriwal to return the barb by claiming that the BJP is facing the real "aapda" as it "lacks" a CM face and issues for the assembly polls.

Taking a jibe at Kejriwal after inaugurating several key development projects for Delhi at an event here, the prime minister said he could have also built a "Sheesh Mahal" for himself, but chose to prioritise the people by constructing houses for them.

The BJP has been targeting Kejriwal for allegedly spending extravagantly on his official residence when he was chief minister, describing his erstwhile home as "sheesh mahal".

Hitting back at Prime Minister Modi, the Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) chief said that the BJP is faced with "aapda" in the national capital as the saffron party has "no CM face, narrative or issues" for the Delhi Assembly elections due next month.

Responding to PM's "Sheesh Mahal" remark against him, the former Delhi chief minister said, "The talk of Sheesh Mahal does not behave a person who built Rs 2,700-crore house for himself, travelling in a Rs 8400-crore plane and wearing a Rs 10-lakh suit."

Kejriwal asserted that Delhi is facing "aapda" of "break-down" in law and order and

people are demanding safety and security.

On Friday, Modi inaugurated several development projects, including 1,675 flats for residents of JJ clusters and the World Trade Centre, in Delhi, just days before the announcement of the assembly election schedule.

Slamming the AAP government, he said the situation in the national capital would worsen if its reign continued.

On the one hand the Centre is making a lot of efforts, on the other the Union Territory government stands for brazen lies, Modi said, accusing the AAP government of committing corruption in various sectors ranging from school education to fighting pollution and the liquor trade.

With assembly elections due in the city next month, the prime minister said Delhi had launched a war on this "aapda (disaster)" and decided to get rid of it.

Giving a call for AAP's defeat, Modi raised the slogan, "Aapda ko nahi sahenge, badal karahenge (we will not tolerate 'aapda', we will remove it)."

"The situation is such that even half of the funds allocated under the Samagra Shiksha Abhiyan were not spent on the children's education by the state government. The past 10 years have been marked by corruption and scams in various sectors such as liquor contracts, school education, healthcare for the poor, pollution control, and recruitment," Modi charged.

He said some "hardcore corrupt individuals, using social activist Anna Hazare as a front, have pushed Delhi into this crisis".

Modi said the city has always envisioned good governance but the AAP government has failed to deliver on its promises and has only worsened the situation. As a result, the people of Delhi are determined to fight against this crisis, vowing to bring change and rid the city of this corruption.

Taking a swipe at Kejriwal, Modi said he could also have built a "sheesh mahal" for himself but his dream was to ensure homes for everyone in the country.

"These people commit corruption and then glorify it," he said, accusing AAP of shamelessness and making false promises.

Soon after the PM's accusation, the AAP chief held a press conference and said he did not want to go into a blame game as he never engages in "abusive politics and personal attacks".

In his 43-minute long speech, Modi "only abused Delhi people and the elected government having their huge mandate but could not mention anything done by BJP led Centre for the city", he said.

"I want to request Modi ji to ask Amit Shah ji (Union Home minister) to pay attention to resolving law and order issues instead of breaking parties and poaching opposition leaders," Kejriwal charged.

Further, the AAP supremo took a dig at the BJP saying the party was facing "Aapda" (disaster) as it lacked a CM face, narrative and issues for the Assembly elections.

The works done by Kejriwal appear as a "disaster" to the BJP but it's like a blessing for the people of Delhi, the AAP national convener asserted.

Accompanied by Delhi Chief Minister Atishi in the press conference, Kejriwal spoke on the initiatives taken by the AAP government in Delhi.

"We have a government that works for the people rather than laying foundation stones at the time of elections," he said in a jibe at Modi for inaugurating the projects.

The BJP doubled down against Kejriwal-led party policies, saying it has become the "biggest burden and liability" on the people of Delhi.

The AAP is nothing more than a "newer version of the Congress", senior BJP leader Rajeev Chandrasekhar charged at a press conference here at the party headquarters.

"They promised a corruption-free government... simple political leadership, (which) would not use a house (government bungalow), cars, wouldn't align with the Congress or indulge in corrupt politics, has done exactly 180 degrees reversal of every one of its position," Chandrasekhar said.

Rationalize ...

From P.I... DHTE. But for reasons best known to the higher authorities, the upgradation process is still pending. ActionpPlan for upgradation is also with the higher authorities where it is clearly mentioned manpower, infrastructure & other requirements are least as compared to opening of a new Degree Level-Government Engineering College.

Therefore, APTTA requests Honorable Chief Minister to look into the matter and take necessary action please. It is pertinent to mention that once the higher authorities approve, the RGGPC would be the first DLGEC.

3) Separate Directorate for Technical Education (DoTE): There are 28 states in India which have separate DoTE each except Arunachal Pradesh, Mizoram & Meghalaya for which these three states are lagging behind in economic development. Small states with IE esser technical institutes, like Sikkim and Nagaland have separate DoTE, but Arunachal does not have.

Thus, the APTTA demanded early separation of DoTE from DHTE to facilitate better management and coordination of technical education institutions to improve quality of technical education to boost employability of the youth as technical experts, and academic leaders, the release added.

REC pledges ...

From P.I... locations, like Leh, Itanagar, Dehradun, Lucknow, and Naryanpur will significantly enhance healthcare delivery. This initiative will enable faster diagnostics, better patient care, and timely medical interventions, especially in high-altitude and underserved areas, including those residing in Naxalite areas.

Approximately 1,50,000 ITBP personnel and local civilians will benefit from these upgraded facilities. The improvements will reduce patient wait times, enhance critical care and ensure the continuity of essential medical services. This means that both ITBP personnel and the local communities will have access to the quality healthcare they deserve, bringing peace of mind and better health outcomes to those living in these challenging environments. (Agency)

Vaishnawi ...

From P.I... in the area. He also virtually inaugurated a 10-kw FM transmitter at Akashvani Kokrajhar.

Officials noted that this addition will expand FM coverage within a 70-km radius, offering high-quality broadcasts to over 30 lakh residents in Kokrajhar and nearby districts, including Dhubri, Bongaigaon, and Chirang. This marks a significant upgrade from the 20-kw medium wave transmitter Akashvani Kokrajhar has been operating with since 1999.

‘Promoting technology and industry, Vaishnaw also virtually inaugurated the National Institute of Electronics & Information Technology (NIELIT), a deemed-to-be university, further supporting education and technological advancement in the region. Later in the day, he visited the Tata Semiconductor factory at Jagoirad, reflecting the GoF's emphasis on fostering industrial development in the NE.

The Union minister during his visit also reviewed ongoing projects under the Northeast Frontier Railway, reinforcing the GoF's efforts to expedite development initiatives in the region. (Agency)

India pledges support to Maldives to help it navigate economic issues

NEW DELHI, Jan 03: The Maldives is a "very concrete" expression of India's neighbourhood first policy, External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar said, pledging New Delhi's support the Indian Ocean archipelago as its economy is reeling under some stress.

In his opening remarks at the meeting with Maldivian Foreign Minister Abdulla Khaleel, Jaishankar noted finalisation of a framework to promote the use of local currencies for cross border trade between India and Maldives and listed New Delhi's financial assistance to Male to help it deal with economic issues.

Both sides signed a Memorandum of Understanding for implementation of high impact community development projects under phase-III in Maldives through grant assistance from India.

In his comments, Khaleel reaffirmed President Mohamed Muizzu's firm commitment to work closely with New Delhi in realising the joint vision for India-Maldives comprehensive economic and maritime security partnership.

Khaleel arrived here on Thursday on a three-day visit to explore ways to bolster bilateral ties in several key areas including trade and investment.

The Maldives has been reeling under some financial stress.

"I see that the framework to promote the use of local currencies for cross border transactions has been

signed," Jaishankar said.

"We have increased our engagement in various sectors and I do want to say that India has always stood by Maldives. For us, you are a very concrete expression of our neighbourhood first policy," he added.

Jaishankar noted the assistance extended by India last year to help the Maldives deal with a debt crisis. This included the resubscription of treasury bills and currency swap lines of USD 400 million and 3,000 crore rupees.

"We have also facilitated the export of essential commodities to Maldives. That has been very much a tradition in our relationship," he said.

"We certainly hope that our relationship has helped you to navigate through these difficult times," he added.

The Maldives is one of India's key maritime neighbours in the Indian Ocean Region and the overall bilateral ties including in areas of defence and security witnessed an upward trajectory under the previous government in Male.

The Ministry of External Affairs (MEA) said Jaishankar and Khaleel took stock of progress made on the understandings reached during the visit of President Muizzu to India in October.

"External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar reaffirmed the importance India attaches to its bilateral ties with Maldives and assured continued support to Maldives,

under India's 'Neighbourhood First' policy and Vision SAGAR," it said.

SAGAR stands for Security and Growth for All in the Region.

The ministry said Khaleel, on his part, appreciated the timely emergency financial assistance extended by India to Maldives in times of need, reflecting India's role as the "First Responder" to Maldives.

"Foreign Minister Khaleel reaffirmed President Muizzu's and the Government of Maldives' firm commitment to work closely with the Government of India in realizing the Joint Vision for India-Maldives Comprehensive Economic and Maritime Security Partnership," the MEA said in a statement.

The visit of Khaleel provided an opportunity to further deepen the bilateral ties for the mutual benefit of two countries and the Indian Ocean Region, it said.

The ties between India and the Maldives came under severe strain after Muizzu, known for his pro-China leanings, took charge of the top office in November 2023.

Within hours of his oath, he had demanded the withdrawal of Indian military personnel from his country. Subsequently, the Indian military personnel were replaced by civilians.

However, there was a thaw in the relations as Muizzu vowed to boost the bilateral ties with India during his visit to Delhi in October. (Agency)

Chum's journey to victory ...

From P.I... and memorable moments, many have been eliminated, but Arunachal daughter Chum continues to maintain her charm and hopefully turn out to be winner!

"Previously, Bigg Boss alum Khanzaadi aka Firoza Khan shared a video voicing her support for her fellow North Easterner", Khanzaadi wrote in facebook, adding "I hope you're doing great. I'm here to support Chum Darang from the North-East. It's amazing to see her on the show because she's really strong and confident. Also, she's representing our region. It's a proud moment for all Northeastern people. Let's support her and make her win the game," she said.

In a recent episode, Salman Khan also backed Chum while criticizing Vivian. "Vivian *kamaal ke bande hain. Inko khud ke involvement ka idea nahi hai, aur Chum ko baitha ke yeh samjha rahe the ke aapka involvement nahi dikh raha. Jabke* clearly, at that point of time, Chum ka involvement *iss ghar ke muddo mein aapse kahi zyada tha,*" he had remarked.

Chum gets offer for *Nagin-7*

Ekta Kapoor, film and television producer and director of Hindi cinema and soap operas as joint managing director and creative head of Balaji Telefilms Limited since inception in 1994 impressed with Chum's incredible performance, during Weekend Ka Vaar, had lauded Chum for maintaining balanced relations with all contestants and not getting irritated for silly things to reflect her real character. Mostly those come to reality shows project themselves in unrealistic manner far from reality. "But, you have proved otherwise with your genuine personality. Thus, I offer you the main role of my serial Nagin," she had said to the applause of all contestants.

It is worth mentioning here that actor-politician Ravi Kishan praising her strong personality and underdog status had believed that she has the potential to reach the finale.

Other celebrities like Sanya Malhotra and Kishwer Merchant have also expressed their support for Chum, further solidifying her growing fan base and potential for victory.

This season of Bigg Boss began with host Salman Khan predicting Vivin Dsena and Alice Kaushik as top two contenders. However, Alice was evicted early in the game and Vivian has been struggling to make his mark. While every contestant has their share of fans and critics, one contestant who has consistently won hearts is Chum Darang, the strongest female contestant, Hindustan Times reported on December 31.

Recently, Avinash Mishra questioned whether Chum deserved to be crowned the "Time God" after Shrutika Arjun declared her the winner of the task. The answer is a resounding yes. From the first week, Chum has proven herself to be an all-rounder, excelling in tasks, forming genuine relationships, and captivating the audience with her authenticity.

The contestant who were eliminated based on voting are none (week-), Hema Sharma (week-2), Nyraa (week-3), Shehzada (week-4), Arfeen (week-5), none (week-6), Alice (week-7), none (week-8 and 9), Bagga (week-10), Digvijay, Edin & Yamini (Week 11), Sara (week-12) before entering week-13.

Every week contestants get to nominate each other and nominated contestants are held to public voting for that particular week from Monday to Friday since voting lines opened on Jio Cinema from October 06 last.

In week-12, Kamyaj Punjabi, Bhumi Pednekar, Shalini Passi, Ravi Kishan, Ayesha Khan, and Sanya Malhotra extended their support to Chum Darang, who has proved *hum kisise kum nehi hey*. Thus, I wish her Godspeed! (Pics: Instagram)

PUBLIC UTILITY				
Route	Departure	Schedule	Distance (KM)	Fare
NIGHT SERVICES				
Itanagar-Shillong	4.00 pm	Daily	516	550/-
Ita/Nlg-Daporijo	12 noon	Daily	399	560/-
Itanagar-Khonsa	1.00 pm	Monday & Thursday	677	740/-
Itanagar-Namsai	1.00 pm	Daily	655	690/-
Itanagar-Bomdila	4.30 pm	Daily	350	420/-
Itanagar-Aalo	2.30 pm	Daily	325	420/-
Itanagar-Dimapur	3.00 pm	Daily	460	460/-
Itanagar-Liromoba/Kamba	1.00 pm	Daily	350	460/-
DAY SERVICE				
Itanagar-Guwahati	6.00 am	Daily	395	420/-
Itanagar-Pasighat	6.00 am	Daily	270	300/-
Itanagar-Pasighat	11.00 am	Daily	270	300/-
Itanagar-Aalo	6.00 am	Daily	325	420/-
Itanagar-Lilabari	3.30 pm	Daily(Except Sunday)	80	220/-
Itanagr-Bomdila	6.00 am	Alternate day (Except Thursday)	350	420/-
Itanagar-Jote	6 am & 12 noon	Daily (Except Sunday)	30	60/-
Naharlagun-Leporiang	7.00 am	Alternate day (Except Saturday)	145	240/-
Nlg-Pakke-Kessang	6.00 am	Alternate day (Except Sunday)	165	270/-
Naharlagun-Sonajuli	11.00 am	Daily(Except Sunday)	43	100/-
Naharlagun-Balijan	1.00 pm	Daily(Except Sunday)	87	110/-
Naharlagun-Hawa camp	12 noon	Daily(Except Saturday)	78	120/-
Naharlagun-Kakoi	1.00 pm	Daily(Except Sunday)	85	140/-
Naharlagun-Gohamukh	1.00 pm	Daily(Except Friday)	134	160/-
Itanagar-Roing (Sumo)	6 AM	Daily	-	1000/-
Itanagar-Koliriang(Sumo)	6 AM	Daily	372	550/-
ENQUIRY/CONTACT NOS.-				
1.Itanagar Counter (9774034571 / 8729868842)				
2. Naharlagun Counter (03602351490)				

Arjuna Award is a milestone my goal now is to break into top 10: Vantika

NEW DELHI, Jan 03: India's rising chess star, Vantika Agrawal, has described winning the Arjuna Award as one of the "most defining moments" of her career and her next big goal is to break into top 10 women player's global rankings and secure the Grandmaster title.

"I am deeply honoured to receive the Arjuna Award. Winning this award is one of the most defining moments of my career and a major personal milestone in my life," Vantika said.

"This recognition is a testament to my hard work, the dedication of my coaches, and the unwavering support of my family and mentors, who have been guiding lights throughout my journey," she added, expressing her gratitude to the Pravaha Foundation and MGD1 for their support.

Vantika, who currently holds 2411 points, delivered

an outstanding performance during India's historic Chess Olympiad victory in 2024. As a result, she climbed 12 places in the global rankings and earned 13 ELO points.

"Chess has given me the privilege to represent my country, and this honour fuels my ambition to elevate Indian chess to even greater heights," said the 39th ranked player in the world women's classical rankings.

"My goals include breaking into the top 10 women players worldwide, earning the Grandmaster title, and inspiring a new generation of Indian chess players, especially women, to believe in their potential and strive for excellence," she added.

Arjuna Award a great achievement, but emotion hasn't hit yet: Abhay

Indian squash player Abhay Singh was enjoying a quick nap in a cab on his way to training in England

when he received a congratulatory message also bearing the news of him being chosen for the Arjuna honour.

The 25-year-old, who aims to break into the top 30 of world rankings this year, termed the honour a significant achievement but admitted that the emotion has yet to fully sink in.

"Yeah, it's a great achievement, maybe it'll hit me hard when I'm actually there on the 17th. I'm tucked away in a training camp in the cold in England right now, so it's a little hard to have this sink in," said world number 54 Abhay, who won a team gold and a mixed doubles bronze in 2023.

"It's more for the sacrifices my team and family have made and their investment in me. I hope they're happy and proud," he added.

When asked how he came to know about the award,

Abhay shared, "I was sleeping in an Uber on the way to training, and someone sent me a congratulations message, which is how I found out, to be honest. The emotion hasn't hit yet, maybe soon when it's all happening in Delhi."

On his parents' reaction, Abhay, who had helped India secure a fifth-place finish at the recent World Squash Team Championships, said their excitement was typical.

"Parents are always the same, dad was excited just like he was after the Asian Games final, and mom's excited but I think just more so waiting to have me back home from all my long trips away."

Abhay, currently training in England, will be competing in several events in the USA in the upcoming season before heading back to India for the National Games in Dehradun. (Agency)

WFFI begins talent hunt across India: Rajput



By A O News Service
ITANAGAR, Dec 03: Young girls have started preparations across the country at the initiative of state units of Women Football Federation of India (WFFI) to make themselves fit to hit the target, i.e., to get selected initially to be in state team while targeting to be part of national team, said central coordination committee chairman Rajesh Singh Rajput, adding the talent hunt from village level has begun.

"We have a genuine goal of making WFFI a springboard to produce talented state, regional, national and international level footballers with the cooperation of all stakeholders and confident of achieving the objective soon which would be visible in the field across the country," he told this daily over telephone.

"The newly elected body is committed to achieve the goal as numerous corporate

bodies of the country, even operating across the world, have assured to extend financial support from their social corporate responsibility head funds". He informed.

When contacted, WFFI president Mukesh Sharma said, "I believe in works not in words. The preparations are first step to produce reputed intentional players, like Marta, Brazil's all-time top goal scorer, record World Cup goal scorer and a six-time FIFA world player,

considered to be the greatest female footballer of all time being.

"India being world's most populous country now with its population likely to touch around 146.38 crore in 2025, about 17.78% of world's total population, this nation should gift prominent female soccer players to the world for which we are taking all possible steps without any ifs and buts," Sharma said without mincing any words.

Noval Djokovic beaten by big-serving Reilly Opelka in quarterfinals of Brisbane International

BRISBANE (Australia), Jan 03: Novak Djokovic was beaten 7-6 (6), 6-3 by big-serving Reilly Opelka in the Brisbane International quarterfinals on Friday.

Opelka served 16 aces — including one to finish off each set — to earn one of the biggest wins of the American's career.

"I was just focused on my spots," Opelka said. "If I hit them, it's hard to get them back. If there's anyone that can, it's him."

The 37-year-old Djokovic was playing his first tournament of the year. The 24-time Grand Slam champion is preparing for the Australian Open, which starts on Jan. 12 and which he has won 10 times.

"We have nothing to lose coming in against him. He's



the greatest player ever," Opelka added. "So you end up playing more free and you take a lot more risk. If you play your normal level or even above a normal

level, he's going to win every time. So it's tough in his position because he gets guys that are good players that they roll the dice. And on a on a day like this when

a lot of things go my way that's how it works out."

New coach Andy Murray will join Djokovic in Melbourne.

Opelka achieved a career-high ranking of No. 17 in Feb. 2022 before undergoing hip surgery later that year to remove a benign tumor. He's now No. 293.

"It was tough. A lot of uncertainty, a lot of doubt," Opelka said.

In the semifinals, Opelka will face Giovanni Mpetshi Perricard, who beat Jakub Mensik 7-5, 7-6 (5). The other semifinal will feature Jiri Lehecka against Grigor Dimitrov.

Lehecka beat Nicolas Jarry 6-4, 6-4 and Dimitrov advanced when Jordan Thompson retired while Dimitrov was ahead 6-1, 2-1. (Agency)

Manu Bhaker & D Gukesh among 4 to get Khel Ratna award: MoYAS

NEW DELHI, Jan 03: The drama surrounding Manu Bhaker's nomination for the Major Dhyan Chand Khel Ratna Award came to an end on Thursday after the double Olympic gold medalist was among four athletes finalised for the prestigious award along with chess sensation D Gukesh, who had recently been crowned world champion.

Besides Bhaker and Gukesh, India men's hockey captain Harmanpreet Singh and Paralympic gold-winning high jumper Praveen Kumar are the others who have been nominated for the highest sporting honour in the country.

Besides the four Khel Ratna nominees, the Ministry of Youth Affairs and Sports (MoYAS) also unveiled 32 nominees for the Arjuna Awards, including 17 para-athletes.

There had been a major furore ove Bhaker's perceived exclusion from the list of the Khel Ratna Award after pistol shooter made history in Paris Olympics by winning two bronze medals in three events — becoming the first Indian post-Independence to win more than one medal in the same edition of the Olympics.

While Bhaker questioned whether she was worthy of the award or not in a post on X that she quickly deleted afterwards, her father expressed regret at introducing her to shooting sports. Her coach Jaspal Rana too was furious with her alleged snub.

Bhaker, however, later



admitted that there might have a "lapse on her part" while filing for the nomination, while the MoYAS had clarified they had not finalised names for the award at that point.

Gukesh, meanwhile, made history in Singapore last month after defeating China's Ding Liren 7.5-6.5 to become the youngest world champion u=in chess history and only second after the legendary Viswanathan Anand. He was also the youngest champion in the history of Candidates Tournament in April and had played a key role in Indian Open team bulldozing their way to gold in the 45th Chess Olympiad in September.

However, Harmanpreet had played a central role in helping India win a 2nd consecutive Olympic bronze medal, first time for India to win back-to-back medals in the sport in more than 50 years.

The 28-year-old drag-flick expert finished as the leading goal-scorer in the tournament with a total of 10 strikes. He would then go on to help India win the Asian Champions Trophy for the 2nd consecutive time, his team defeating hosts

China 1-0 in the final.

Praveen also upgraded his silver medal at the Tokyo Paralympics to gold in the Parils Games in September in the high-jump T64 category, a classification for para-athletes who have one or both legs missing below the knee and rely on a prosthetic leg for running.

"The awardees will receive their awards from President of India at a specially organised function at Rashtrapati Bhavan on January 17 at 11am," read a release issued by Mansukh Mandaviya-led MoYAS..

List of 2024 National Sports Awardees

Major Dhyan Chand Khel Ratna: Gukesh D (Chess), Harmanpreet Singh (Hockey), Praveen Kumar (Para-Athletics), Manu Bhaker (Shooting).

Arjuna Award: Jyothi Yarraji (Athletics) Annu Rani (Athletics) Nitu (Boxing) Saweety (Boxing) Vantika Agrawal (Chess) Salima Tete (Hockey) Abhishek (Hockey) Sanjay (Hockey) Jarmanpreet Singh (Hockey) Sukhjeet Singh (Hockey) Rakesh Kumar (Para-Archery) Preeti Pal (Para-Athletics) Jeevanji Deepthi (Para-Athletics) Ajeet Singh

(Para-Athletics) Sachin Sarjerao Khilari (Para-Athletics) Dharambir (Para-Athletics) Pranav Soorma (Para-Athletics) H Hokato Sema (Para-Athletics) Simran (Para-Athletics) Navdeep (Para-Athletics) Nitesh Kumar (Para-Badminton) Thulasimathi Murugesan (Para-Athletics) Nithya Sre Sumathy Sivan (Para-Badminton) Manisha Ramadass (Para-Badminton) Kapil Parmar (Para-Judo) Mona Agarwal (Para-Shooting) Rubina Francis (Para-Shooting) Swapnil Suresh Kusale (Shooting) Sarabjot Singh (Shooting) Abhay Singh (Squash) Sajjan Prakash (Swimming) Aman Sehrawat (Wrestling).

Arjuna Award (lifetime): Sucha Singh (Athletics) Murlikant Rajaram Petkar (Para-Swimming).

Dronacharya Award (regular): Subhash Rana (Para-Shooting) Deepali Deshpande (Shooting) Sandeep Sangwan (Hockey).

Dronacharya Award (lifetime): S Muralidharan (Badminton), Armando Agnelo Colaco (Football).

More from Sports

FIDE CEO launches fresh attack on Magnus Carlsen: 'Entire PR strategy is in play' World's oldest Olympic champion Agnes Keleti passes away aged 103 National Sports Awards 2024: A look at glaring omissions from the nominees list D Gukesh promises to continue delivering 'best moves on 64 squares and outside' after being nominated for Khel Ratna. (Agency)

Jasprit Bumrah continues to outshine stalwarts in BGT, levels Bishan Bedi's elusive overseas Test feat

SYDNEY, Jan 03: Pacespearhead Jasprit Bumrah is on the cusp of making history after he went level with former spinner Bishan Singh Bedi for most wickets in an overseas Test series for India.

"National Treasure," Bumrah has been on a hot streak of form since landing in Perth for the gruelling Border-Gavaskar Trophy against Australia.

Even though India's chances to qualify for the World Test Championship final have dimmed significantly, Bumrah has been flawless with the red kookaburra ball.

He has been Australian batters' worst nightmare throughout the five Tests, with his consistency and the everlasting appetite to take



wickets.

After forcing Usman Khawaja to give away a thick outside edge to KL Rahul on

the final ball of the opening day, Bumrah's wicket tally in the ongoing series jumped to 31 scalps.

With another wicket to his name, Bumrah levelled Bedi's record for most wickets by an Indian during an overseas tour. The legendary spinner ended India's 1977/78 tour of Australia with 31 scalps at an average of 23.87.

Bumrah, on the other hand, has been more clinical in his average. For 31 wickets, Bumrah has averaged 12.64.

With reputed speedsters featuring in the ongoing series, Bumrah has outbowled everyone with his art, which has set him apart from the rest of the others.

He has taken three fifers and has bowled 143.2 overs in the series, the most by an Indian bowler, with Siraj being the second one with 130.1 overs, 16 wickets and an average of 31.56.

Mein inaugurates DSK & NMB, announces additional funds

MECHUKHA, Jan 03: Deputy Chief Minister Chowna Mein inaugurated Dorjee Sempa Khorchen (DSK) and NCDS Multipurpose Building (NMB) here on Friday in presence of Education, Tourism, RWD, Library & Parliamentary Affairs the Minister Passang Dorjee Sona.

These milestones mark a significant step forward in development and cultural preservation while Mein also laid foundation stones of several development projects to boost local infrastructure and tourism potential.

The DSK has been built in memory of former minister late Pasang Wangchuk Sona and his wife Rinjin Drema Sona by Tezu's Lhagon Jhangchu Choeling Monastery abbot His Eminence Rev. Dzogchen Ganor Rinpoche.

This prayer wheel (Korchen), the tallest in India, houses 1.6 billion prayers and 16 Dungyur scrolls, each containing 10 crore prayers.

In his address, Mein extended his New Year greetings to state people, particularly of Mechukha, especially local lawmaker P.D. Sona & his family for their hospitality. He fondly recalled his association with late Wangchuk and



praised his invaluable contributions to Mechukha's development. "His son P.D. Sona continues to uphold his father's vision by championing progress and cultural preservation," Mein said and termed Sona's tenure as an exceptional Speaker of state Legislative Assembly.

Stressing importance of preserving Mechukha's unique cultural heritage, he highlighted the GoAP's efforts to safeguard indigenous traditions by setting up of Department of Indigenous Culture.

The inauguration of the DSK and the NMB makes stride in Mechukha's development, he said, adding "This magnificent monument will serve as a major tourist attraction and a place of pilgrimage for Buddhists from across the world."

Reaffirming the GoAP's

commitment to Mechukha's progress, Mein announced plans for additional funding for development initiatives and hinted at plans to explore a small hydropower project to address the area's growing energy needs.

Highlighting the growing popularity of Mechukha as a tourist destination, he said, "In recent years, we have seen a significant rise in tourists visiting from across the country. Mechukha is emerging as one of the most sought-after destinations" and expressed optimism about its bright future in regional development and tourism.

He laid foundation stones for Mechukha Adventure Park, a convention hall, Mechukha Cultural Haat, a motorable suspension bridge over Yargyapchu River at Thargelling village

and construction of a connecting road to Thargelling village PMGSY road to.

The newly inaugurated NBD, a three-story structure, features guest rooms for monks, a meditation hall, office of Neh-Nang Cultural Development Society (NNCDs) and a conference hall.

Minister Sona, in his address, lauded all those who supported in the construction of the DSK which will serve as a place of worship for local the people.

Earlier, Mein along with dignitaries visited civil terminal building of Mechukha ALG, indoor stadium and Buddha Park.

SP S.K. Thongdok, ADC Tana Yaho, Indian Army 13 Grenadier's commanding officer Lt. Colonel Anush Sharma, HoDs, PRI leaders, GBs and NNCDs members were present. (PRO)