

WORLD
NATION

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- Agitation over use of Tipu Sultan's image with offensive audio

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Arms, ammo, bombs recovered in Manipur

IMPHAL, June 7 (PTI): As many as 57 arms, 318 ammunition and five bombs have been recovered in Manipur, taking the total number of recovered arms and ammunition to 868 and 11,518, respectively, security advisor to Manipur government Kuldip Singh said on Wednesday.

Curfew relaxation has been made for 12 hours in five valley districts and for 10 to eight hours in neighbouring hill districts. There is no curfew in six other hill districts.

"In Manipur, during the last 24 hours, 57 arms, 318 ammunition and five bombs have been recovered from Porompat police station in Imphal East and Sugnu police station in Kakching districts. A total of 868 arms and 11,518 ammunition have been recovered till date," Singh said in a statement.

Movement of essential items along NH-37 is ensured. A total of 244 empty vehicles left Imphal for Jiribam on Wednesday besides 212 loaded vehicles left



Noney and 212 loaded tankers and trucks left Jiribam.

The National Eligibility cum Entrance Test (NEET) UG 2023 for entrance to MBBS/BDS courses was conducted on Tuesday at 22 centres (12 in Imphal West and 10 in Imphal East districts). The examination was conducted in a peaceful manner and the attendance was normal, it said.

State ministers and MLAs are visiting different areas of the northeastern state and appealing for peace and normalcy by meeting the public at large and civil society organisations, the statement said.

Security forces are also organising meetings with civil society organisations and various village heads, and making appeals for peace and normalcy besides doing their duties of area domination and patrolling, it said.

Violent clashes broke out in Manipur after a 'Tribal Solidarity March' was organised in the hill districts on May 3 to protest against the Meitei community's demand for Scheduled Tribe (ST) status.

So far, nearly 100 people have lost their lives and over 300 injured in the ethnic violence.

Congress declares expenditure of ₹130 cr on Gujarat, HP polls

BJP spent ₹49 cr on Himachal elections: Expenditure report

NEW DELHI, June 7 (PTI): The Congress spent over ₹130 crore for contesting the Gujarat and Himachal Pradesh assembly polls held late last year, according to an expenditure report submitted by the party to the Election Commission.

The BJP spent over ₹49 crore for contesting the Himachal Pradesh elections, the saffron party said in its expenditure report submitted to the poll panel.

The EC has not yet put in the public domain the BJP's election expenditure report for the Gujarat assembly elections.

The BJP retained power in Gujarat, while the Congress wrested power from the BJP in



Himachal Pradesh.

According to the election expenditure reports filed by the two par-

ties, money was largely spent on funding their respective candidates, advertisement and publicity,

and travel of star campaigners.

The Congress spent ₹27.02 crore in Himachal Pradesh and ₹103.62 crore in Gujarat, according to its expenditure report.

In Himachal Pradesh, the party spent ₹14.80 crore for funding its candidates, ₹2.74 crore on advertisements and publicity, and ₹5.28 crore on travel of its star campaigners, which includes expenditure on hiring special aircraft for its top leaders.

In Gujarat, the Congress spent ₹45.34 crore for funding its candidates; ₹18.08 crore on publicity, including posters and banners; ₹11.27 crore on advertisements and ₹9.88 crore on travel of its star campaigners. (CONTD. ON PAGE-9)

Cabinet approves ₹89,047 cr for 4G, 5G spectrum allocation to BSNL

NEW DELHI, June 7 (PTI): The Union Cabinet on Wednesday approved the third revival package for BSNL with a total outlay of ₹89,047 crore, primarily for expenses related to spectrum for 4G and 5G services, Telecom and IT Minister Ashwini Vaishnaw said.

With the third and last revival package, the total financial support extended to BSNL has crossed ₹3.22 lakh crore.

Vaishnaw said that the time has come when BSNL should be in the league of the major players.

"It should become a player, which should bring connectivity in the places where normal commercial consideration companies will not be able to go. It should be able to provide digital India services to the weakest of weak sections. With that thought process, today the Cabinet approved a package of ₹89,047 crore primarily for spectrum-related items," he said.

Also, the authorised capital of

BSNL will be increased from ₹1,50,000 crore to ₹2,10,000 crore.

The package comprises allotment of premium wireless frequencies 700 MHz band spectrum worth ₹46,338.6 crore; 70 MHz of frequencies in the 3300 MHz band worth ₹26,184.2 crore; frequencies in the 26 GHz band worth ₹6,564.93 crore; in the 2500 MHz band worth ₹9,428.2 crore and ₹531.89 crore for miscellaneous items.

The spectrum allocation will enable BSNL to roll out pan-India 4G and 5G services, 4G coverage in rural and uncovered villages under various connectivity projects, provide Fixed Wireless Access (FWA) services for high-speed internet and provide services/spectrum for Captive Non-Public Network (CNPN).

BSNL has already awarded a tender worth ₹19,000 crore for rolling out over 1.2 lakh mobile towers (CONTD. ON PAGE-9)

Sema seeks five basic food laboratories from Centre Nagaland to take action against adulterated food products

HT Correspondent

DIMAPUR, June 7: The Nagaland government is set to take action against the sale of adulterated and substandard food products in the state to detect, prevent, and mitigate food-borne risks.

Nagaland food safety commissioner Y Kikheto Sema said the Nagaland Food Safety Authority will carry out massive and effective surveillance and monitoring of food products in the state at the earliest for the safety of our people. He was speaking at the 5th World Food Safety Day observation by the Food Safety Authority and Nagaland Health and Family Welfare Department under the theme "Food Standards Save Lives" at Kendriya Vidyalaya Kohima on Wednesday.

Sema asserted that the Nagaland



Food Safety Authority will not allow the sale of adulterated and sub-standard food products in the market anywhere in the state, as everybody is entitled to enjoy food that is safe, meets high standards, and is good for health. He further said to provide safe food to people,

the state government has requested the Central government to set up five basic food laboratories and Modified Food Safety on Wheels (MFSW) with adequate manpower. He said the food safety expert team will be in the markets, schools, (CONTD. ON PAGE-9)

BJP dares Bihar government to handover bridge collapse probe to CBI

NEW DELHI, June 7 (PTI): The BJP on Wednesday dared the Bihar government to handover the probe into the collapse of an under-construction bridge in Bhagalpur district to the Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI), alleging that efforts are being made to protect the culprits.

The bridge over the Ganga river collapsed on Sunday. Bihar government officials said the bridge was pulled down as part of a preventive exercise following expert advice as it had design flaws.

The state government has directed the building construction department to initiate an inquiry into the incident.

"This is not the first time the bridge has collapsed... Who are those that the chief minister,

deputy chief minister and top officials are trying to protect by not letting the inquiry go in the right direction," union minister Gajendra Singh Shekhawat asked at a press conference at the BJP headquarters here.

The BJP condemns the way efforts are being made to protect those involved in the collapse of the bridge, he said.

The 3.16-km-long bridge, which was supposed to connect Khagaria district with Bhagalpur, has collapsed twice in 14 months. The first time it had collapsed on Bhagalpur's Sultanganj side in April last year and the second time on the Khagaria side. Shekhawat dared the Bihar government to hand over the probe into (CONTD. ON PAGE-9)



Triennial conference of KAHBCS and KAHBS to be held

HT Correspondent

BAKULIA, June 7: The Karbi Anglong Hindi Bhashi Chhatra Sanstha (KAHBCS) and Karbi Anglong Hindi Bhashi Sanstha (KAHBS) will jointly organise the 7th and 5th triennial conferences of the organisations on August 25, 26, and 27. The decision was taken in a joint meeting held at the Town Janata Hindi High School premises. For smooth conduct of the conference, a strong reception committee has been formed, with Dr Rambali Chauhan as president and Gobardhan Chauhan as secretary. More members of the reception committee will be added when the meeting is held. Town Janata Hindi High School has been selected as the venue for the conference. (CONTD. ON PAGE-9)

THE GARBAGE MENACE!



Greater Adjutant Storks seen on the top of a garbage-heap at Boraogon garbage dumping site, on the eve of World Environment Day, in Guwahati on June 4. UB Photos

3 killed after ambulance set on fire in Manipur

KOLKATA, June 7 (PTI): An injured eight-year-old boy was killed along with his mother and another relative when an ambulance with the three on board was waylaid by a mob and set ablaze in Manipur's West Imphal district, officials said.

The incident occurred at Iroisemba on Sunday evening when the boy was being taken to a hospital by his mother and their relative in Imphal after he sustained a bullet injury in his head during a shoot-out, they said.

Three have been identified as Tonsing Hangsing (8), his 45-year-old mother Meena Hangsing, and Lydia Lourembam, aged 37, the officials said.

A senior Assam Rifles officer confirmed the incident and said security has been beefed up in and around the camp where it happened.

Sources said Tonsing, the son of a tribal man, and his Meitei mother, were staying at an Assam Rifles relief camp at Kangchup.

On June 4 evening, a gunfight started in the area, and despite being in the camp, he was hit by a bullet.



"A senior Assam Rifles officer immediately spoke to police in Imphal and arranged for an ambulance. Since the mother was from the majority community, a decision was taken to take the kid to the Regional Institute of Medical Sciences in Imphal by road," sources said.

The ambulance was under Assam Rifles escort for a few kilometres, after which the local police took over.

"Around 6:30 pm, the ambulance was waylaid by civilians at Iroisemba and set ablaze. All three in the vehicle were killed. We still do not know where the bodies are," one of the sources added.

The Kangchup area has several Kuki villages and is on Kangpokpi district's (CONTD. ON PAGE-9)

Goods train derailed in Assam, none injured

GUWAHATI, June 7 (PTI): A goods train derailed in Assam's Kamrup district on Wednesday but no injuries were reported, a railway official said.

The incident took place near Boko when 20 wagons of the coal-laden train jumped the tracks at Singra near Boko, he said.

The derailed wagons were at the centre of the train which had a total of 60 wagons, the official said.

The train was bringing coal to Tetelia in Kamrup Metropolitan district from Asansol in West Bengal.

The cause of the derailment was yet to be ascertained and senior railway and police officials were camping at the spot, he said.

Four passenger trains in the Rangia-Lumding section were cancelled but express trains were not affected as rail traffic in the section was lean and confined mostly to goods trains, the official said.

Restoration work has begun and the plying of trains is expected to resume soon, the official added.

'Purple revolution' effect: Lavender oil fetches farmers ₹10,000 per litre

CSIR scientists looking into lavender's medicinal properties

BHADERWAH, June 7 (PTI): The 'purple revolution' that started with farmers planting lavender in the picturesque slopes of this Jammu and Kashmir town is gathering steam with scientists at the CSIR-Indian Institute of Integrative Medicine studying the medicinal properties of the aromatic, flowering plants.

Scientists at the Jammu-based institute are focusing on the residue left behind after oil is extracted from the flower using a steam distillation process known as 'marc'.

This could be a game changer for the many farmers of what has come to be known as 'Lavender Valley', named after the rows of purple-tinted blossoms colouring the hilly slopes of this town.

"Lavender oil already fetches farmers ₹10,000 per litre, but we are now focussing on some value-



addition interventions and also studies on the waste of the oil extraction process," Zabeer Ahmed, Director of the CSIR-IIIM, told PTI here.

Farmers in this idyllic town surrounded by the Sonbain and the Ashapati glaciers in the Himalayan ranges have embraced lavender farming with gusto since 2017

when the Council of Scientific and Industrial Research (CSIR) launched the Aroma Mission to harness the benefits of essential oils from aromatic plants.

Science and Technology Minister Jitendra Singh, who represents Udhampur in the Lok Sabha, has been steering lavender cultivation in this region by ensuring timely

supply of plants and processing facilities to the farmers.

Lavender oil has a calming effect and is a stress buster, besides being used in perfumes and cosmetics. The CSIR-IIIM has also tied up with the Hyderabad-based CSIR-Indian Institute of Chemical Technology to study the use of lavender oil in treating sleep disorders.

"We are trying to isolate and characterise what kind of molecules are present in the marc. Our scientists have isolated a couple of molecules. These molecules are new. We are doing bioactivity such as anti-cancer activity on these molecules," Ahmed said.

"The kind of molecules we are getting from the marc, definitely some new finding may be there in the future," he said. The health benefits of 'marc', if proved effective, could (CONTD. ON PAGE-9)

Governor takes stock of the development works of Chirang



HT Bureau

GUWAHATI, June 7: Assam Governor Gulab Chand Kataria on Wednesday visited Chirang district and held a review meeting with Deputy Commissioner, Chirang, Superintendent of Police, Heads of Security Agencies, and all Heads of the line Depart-

ments of Chirang district in the conference hall of the Deputy Commissioner's office, Chirang at Kajalgaon.

Governor reviewed the work status and assessed the progress of the flagship schemes of the Central and State governments in key departments such as Education, Health, Water Resources, Agriculture etc and expressed satisfaction with the overall progress made by the district. He extended his valuable suggestions for speedy completion of all ongoing government projects and schemes in a time-bound manner by maintaining quality as per guidelines of the schemes.

He also interacted with the superintendent of Police, Chirang and Head of the Security Forces regarding law and order issues of the district. He also stressed on creation of more green spaces by indulging in plantation in government offices and educational institutions, along the roads etc. P Vijaya Bhaskar Reddy, deputy commissioner, Chirang, (CONTD. ON PAGE-9)

Highest increase in moong at ₹8,558/qlt Cabinet approves ₹143 hike in paddy MSP to ₹2,183/qlt for 2023-24

NEW DELHI, June 7 (PTI): The government on Wednesday hiked the minimum support price (MSP) of paddy by ₹143 to ₹2,183 per quintal for the 2023-24 crop year (July-June) in order to encourage farmers to bring more area under the crop and boost their income.

The Cabinet Committee on Economic Affairs (CCEA), chaired by Prime Minister Narendra Modi, approved the increase in MSP for all mandated Kharif (summer) crops for the 2023-24 crop year.

Briefing media, Food and Consumer Affairs Minister Piyush Goyal said: "In agriculture, we have been fixing MSP from time to time based on the recommendations of the CACP (Commission for Agricultural Costs and Prices). The increase in MSP of kharif crops for this year is highest compared to the previous years." Farmers will benefit from the increase in the

MSP at a time when the retail inflation is on a declining trend, he added.

Goyal said the MSP of common grade variety of paddy has been increased by ₹143 to ₹2,183 per quintal for the 2023-24 crop year, from ₹2,040 in the previous year. The support price of 'A' grade variety of paddy has been hiked by ₹143 to ₹2,203 per quintal from ₹2,060, he said.

Highest increase in MSP was in moong by 10.4 per cent at ₹8,558 per quintal for 2023-24 crop year, as against ₹7,755 per quintal in the previous year.

Paddy is the main kharif crop, the sowing of which normally begins with the onset of southwest monsoon. The India Meteorological Department (IMD) has projected a normal monsoon for the June-September period despite the evolving El Nino conditions. The monsoon has missed its onset date of June 1 in Kerala.

Sensex rallies 350 pts to reclaim 63,000-mark; metal, energy stocks spurt



MUMBAI, June 7 (PTI): Equity benchmark Sensex climbed over 350 points to reclaim the 63,000 mark on Wednesday, propelled by robust buying in metal, energy and FMCG stocks amid a mixed trend in global equities. Fresh foreign capital inflows and a strengthening rupee also supported the domestic equity markets, traders said.

Rising for the fourth straight session, the 30-share BSE Sensex climbed 350.08 points or 0.56 per cent to settle at 63,142.96. During the day, it jumped 403.55 points or 0.64 per cent to 63,196.43. The NSE Nifty advanced 127.40 points or 0.68 per cent to end at 18,726.40. "Investors are becoming more optimistic due to the anticipation of a positive revision in the RBI's inflation forecast during the ongoing MPC meeting. It is expected that the RBI will maintain its pause on rate hikes, considering the significant improvement in inflation, which has now come within the RBI's comfort zone."

"Furthermore, the participation of FII as net buyers, after a brief halt, contributed to today's market rally, particularly driven by mid-and small-cap stocks," said Vinod Nair, Head of Research at Geojit

Financial Services.

Nestle was the biggest gainer on the Sensex chart, rising nearly 3 per cent, followed by Tata Steel, Tata Motors, Bharti Airtel, Larsen & Toubro, Power Grid, NTPC, Tata Consultancy Services, Tech Mahindra, Infosys and Axis Bank.

On the other hand, Kotak Mahindra Bank, Maruti, Bajaj Finance, Mahindra & Mahindra and ICICI Bank were the laggards.

In the broader market, the BSE smallcap gauge climbed 1.15 per cent and the midcap index climbed 1.09 per cent. "Markets rallied sharply and witnessed broad-based buying support ahead of the credit policy with the Sensex ending past the crucial 63000-mark. Upbeat moves prevailed throughout the session as investors are hoping for a rate hike pause amid an improving domestic macroeconomic situation. "All eyes will be on the RBI's growth outlook and inflation projection for the year, and in case there is any downgrade in inflation expectations, optimism is likely to persist," said Shrikant Chouhan, Head of Equity Research (Retail), Kotak Securities Ltd.

All indices ended in the green, where telecommunication jumped

2.99 per cent, metal jumped 1.70 per cent, realty (1.52 per cent), oil & gas (1.34 per cent), power (1.25 per cent), energy (1.06 per cent), FMCG (1.06 per cent), commodities (0.95 per cent), healthcare (0.93 per cent), consumer discretionary (0.81 per cent) and IT (0.83 per cent).

"Global stock markets were mixed on Wednesday as weak Chinese trade data had investors fretting about softening global demand, while at the same time expecting Chinese Govt to undertake measures to stimulate its economy," said Deepak Jasani, Head of Retail Research, HDFC Securities.

In Asian markets, Seoul, Shanghai and Hong Kong ended in the green, while Tokyo settled lower.

Equity markets in Europe were trading on a mixed note. The US markets ended in positive territory on Tuesday. The Reserve Bank's rate-setting monetary policy panel began deliberations on Tuesday and the decision would be announced on June 8. Global oil benchmark Brent crude climbed 0.10 per cent to USD 76.45 a barrel. Foreign Institutional Investors (FII) bought equities worth Rs 385.71 crore on Tuesday, according to exchange data.

The rupee gained 5 paise to settle at 82.55 (provisional) against the US dollar on Wednesday.

"Markets are gradually inching higher along with a lot of action in the mid and small-cap space. We expect the northbound journey to continue in the index on back better than expected macro data and supportive global cues. "Rural and agri-related stocks are likely to be in focus with the arrival of monsoon in India, which is expected to be normal this year," Siddhartha Khemka, Head - Retail Research, Motilal Oswal Financial Services Ltd, said.

NHPC inks pact for developing 7,350 MW pumped storage hydro power projects in Maha

The MoU was signed by Director (P), NHPC and Principal Secretary (E), Department of Energy, Maha, Abha Shukla

NEW DELHI, June 7 (PTI): State-owned power producer NHPC Ltd has signed an agreement with the Maharashtra government to build pumped storage hydro projects totalling 7,350 MW capacity with an investment of ₹44,000 crore. The MoU (memorandum of understanding) envisages development of four pumped storage projects aggregating to a total capacity of 7,350 MW, namely Kalu - 1,150 MW, Savitri - 2,250 MW, Jalond - 2,400 MW and Kengadi - 1,550 MW, a power ministry statement said.

Other renewable energy source projects too will be developed in the state under the agreement, it stated.

"A memorandum of understanding has been signed between NHPC Limited and department of energy, government of Maharashtra, for the development of pumped storage schemes and other renewable energy source projects in Maharashtra," it said.

The MoU entails harnessing the



pumped storage projects as energy storage solutions to help achieve the national objective of energy transition, i.e., to have 500 GW of installed capacity of renewable energy by 2030 and become net zero by 2070. NHPC Chairman and Managing Director R K Vishnoi expressed his gratitude to the government of Maharashtra for reposing their trust in NHPC for develop-

ment of pumped storage schemes in the state. He said in the statement that this will be a stepping start for NHPC in Maharashtra.

These projects will attract an investment of about ₹44,000 crore and generate indirect and direct employment for 7,000 people in the state, he added.

The MoU was signed in the presence of Maharashtra's deputy chief

minister Devendra Fadnavis.

The MoU was signed by Director (Projects), NHPC, Biswajit Basu, and Principal Secretary (Energy), Department of Energy, Maharashtra, Abha Shukla.

Pumped storage system utilises surplus grid power available from thermal power stations or other sources to pump up water from lower to upper reservoir and reproduces power during peak demand when there is scarcity of power.

NHPC is a central public sector enterprise and is the largest hydropower development organisation in the country with capabilities to undertake all the activities from conceptualisation to commissioning of hydro projects.

NHPC has also diversified in the fields of solar & wind energy development. The company is mandated to plan, promote and organise an integrated and efficient development of power in all its aspects through conventional and non-conventional sources in India and abroad.

Assam's first local mini Tractor 'Kumar-13' launched by Kumar Engineering



HT Bureau

GUWAHATI, June 7: An Assam-based automobile manufacturing company has developed a mini tractor, keeping in mind those farmers who dream of buying a tractor, but cannot afford one. The managing director, Kumar Gaurav, told the media that the objective is to serve small and middle class farmers with their single cylinder diesel operated 13 HP horizontal 888-D series engine, which is designed to deliver in the most economical way.

Mini tractors are known to be the most affordable tractors for farmers because they are suitable for handling a small amount of land labour and a small acre of agricultural land with a powerful, 4 foot-long, capable, and advanced rotavator and an innovative hydraulic system with a 1.5-tonne capacity. This mini

tractor has a cutting-edge design. During the briefing, Kumar Gaurav said that in Assam, this tractor will cost ₹2,25,888 only, and the company will offer a 1-year warranty on the product, the mini tractor KUMAR-13. Kumar further added that "with this tractor, our buyers will be able to own their buying investment within two months during soil preparation time, and the company is confident that by offering a world-class quality product, KUMAR-13 will be able to sell not less than 1200 units in Assam."

Speaking to the media, Kumar Gaurav said, "We are very thankful to the thousands of our buyers in Assam, those who trusted us and bought Kumar's E Rickshaw and Power Tiller." That is why we got the strength to build the most innovative and economic tractor, the KUMAR-13, which is badly needed for small and medium farmers. We are very sure that our tractor, KUMAR-13, will play a vital role in Assam for mechanisation in the agricultural sector, where the CM of Assam and the Govt of Assam are very keen on the development of the agriculture sector in Assam state. Keeping that in mind, the company has made an effort, and we are very much sure that KUMAR-13 will delight the respected farmers through its performance."

Talking about the financing issue of the product, Kumar said that the company has a tie-up with Echo Finance in order to ease the financial load for the farmers and provide them with up to three-month interest-free loans. As of now, the company has claimed to have 3000 potential customers who are interested in acquiring this product.

As chief guest, Partha Sarathi Mahanta, DIG Assam Police Administration, and STF were also present in the event and appreciated the effort made by Kumar Engineering. He is very hopeful that the company will honour his commitment towards the buyer and that finally the objective will be achieved.

Amazon India launches 'Yoga Store'



HT Bureau

GUWAHATI, June 7: Amazon India has launched a new initiative called the 'Yoga Store' to promote a healthy and fit lifestyle in alignment with the Government of India's vision. The store offers a wide range of yoga essentials from Indian sellers, aiming to support the growth of emerging Indian brands and manufacturers in the health and fitness category. The launch event was attended by Sarbananda Sonowal, the Minister of AYUSH and Minister of Ports, Shipping & Waterways, Government of India, who commended Amazon India for its contribution to the Prime Minister's vision of a healthy India.

Manish Tiwary, the Vice President & Country Manager, Consumer Business, Amazon India, expressed excitement about supporting the government's initiative and providing high-quality yoga products, equipment, and resources to customers. "The Yoga Store not only promotes physical, mental, and spiritual wellness but also emphasizes Amazon India's commitment to nurturing and supporting local manufacturers and sellers," he added.

The Amazon India Yoga Store offers access to thousands of sellers and over 10,000 different products. Customers can enjoy a holistic shopping experience and find great deals on various yoga essentials, including yoga mats, blocks, yoga wheels, and accessories from top brands. Additionally, the store plans to expand its offerings in sub-categories such as Aerial Yoga, Iyengar Yoga products, Yoga mats for Kids, Travel Yoga mats, and more. This initiative aims to encourage more people to adopt a healthier lifestyle and contribute to the growth of the Indian e-commerce and entrepreneurship sectors.

Meesho unveils new brand identity

HT Bureau

GUWAHATI, June 7: Meesho, India's leading e-commerce marketplace, has recently unveiled its new brand identity, aiming to reinforce its commitment to providing absolute joy to every Indian through value-first purchasing decisions. The revamped brand aims to highlight Meesho's inclusivity by offering a vast collection of value-first products, catering to consumers across various income segments, geographies, languages, genders, and age groups, helping them achieve their shopping aspirations.

The new color palette chosen by Meesho incorporates the hues of 'Jamuni' and 'Aam', symbolizing the vibrancy and diversity of India. The iconic 'M' logo of Meesho remains intact in the brand's new identity, albeit in a more colorful and interconnected form, maintaining its strong association with the brand since its establishment in 2015.

In addition to visual elements, Meesho has also leveraged auditory touchpoints to create an emotional connection with its users. This brand revamp by Meesho reflects the company's dedication to meeting the diverse shopping needs of Indian consumers and showcasing inclusivity through its extensive product range.

Megha Gas expands distribution network to 100 CNG stations

NEW DELHI, June 7 (PTI): Megha City Gas Distribution Private Limited (MCGDPL) on Wednesday said it expanded its distribution network to 100 compressed natural gas (CNG) stations, reaching 25 per cent of its target for 2024.

In a statement, MCGDPL said it has inaugurated its 100th CNG station at Keesara, Telangana.

"MCGDPL popular as Megha Gas, the second largest gas supply company in India, is credited with setting up 100 CNG stations in a short span," it said.

Megha Gas has ambitious plans to establish an additional 400 CNG stations and about 2 lakh piped natural gas (PNG) connections nationwide by 2024.

So far, 64 CNG stations have been set up in Telangana, 28 in Andhra Pradesh, 12 in Karnataka, 4 in Uttar Pradesh, 4 in Madhya Pradesh, 3 in Tamil Nadu and 3 in Punjab, the statement said.

EEPC to focus on WANA region for engineering goods exports

KOLKATA, June 7 (PTI): Engineering Exports Promotion Council on Wednesday said it would focus on the West Asian and North African countries for enhancing exports to the WANA region.

The EEPC, in a statement, said there is ample scope for increasing bilateral trade with the WANA countries, especially for engineering exports.

The council is also holding an exhibition 'INDEE' at Jordan, which is India's fourth largest trading partner in the region. In 2022, India's engineering exports to Jordan stood at USD 136.4 million, which was 33 per cent higher than the target of USD 109 million for the period.

"Jordan is strategically located in the western Asian region," the statement said, quoting EEPC chairman Arun Kumar Garodia.

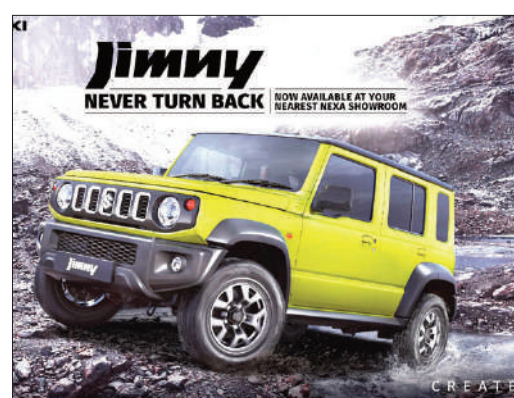
Maruti Suzuki launches iconic Jimny

HT Bureau

GUWAHATI, June 7: Maruti Suzuki India Limited (MSIL) has unleashed excitement among thrill-seekers and adventure enthusiasts with the highly anticipated launch of the Jimny off-roader. Priced at a starting point of ₹12,74,000, this exceptional SUV is now available for delivery across all NEXA showrooms in India.

The 5-door Jimny will be offered in Zeta and Alpha variants, with both automatic and manual transmission choices, targeting passionate SUV enthusiasts, whether they are professionals or adventure seekers. Embodying NEXA's design philosophy of 'Crafted Futurism', the Jimny adds a new dimension to NEXA's SUV portfolio, showcasing a distinctive design character. It also embodies the three key pillars of NEXA's philosophy: NEXAtech, and NEXperience.

During the announcement of the Jimny's prices, Hisashi Takeuchi, the Managing Director & CEO of Maruti Suzuki India Limited, expressed his privilege in introducing the legendary Jimny to the Indian market. Renowned for its timeless design and exceptional off-road capabilities powered by Suzuki's ALLGRIP PRO (4WD) technology, the Jimny has been challenging stereotypes since its global debut in 1970. The introduction of the Jimny (5-door) marks a thrilling milestone in Maruti Suzuki's SUV portfolio and plays a crucial role in their ambition to become the country's



largest SUV manufacturer. The Jimny has garnered positive feedback from both prospective customers and critics.

India holds significant importance for Suzuki Motor Corporation, serving not only as a domestic market but also as a global export base. It brings immense pleasure to announce that India will serve as the mother plant for the Jimny (5-door) and be the first market for its launch. This reaffirms Suzuki's commitment to the 'Make-In-India' initiative for the world, showcasing their dedication to manufacturing excellence and quality production.

Warehousing demand in Bengaluru at 16.34 mn sq ft during 2018-22, exceeding new supply by 55pc: Report

NEW DELHI, June 7 (PTI): Leasing of warehousing space in Bengaluru exceeded new supply by 55 per cent during 2018-22 period, resulting in lower vacancy level and increase in rental, according to India Sotheby's International Realty report.

Property consultant India Sotheby's International Realty on Wednesday released a white paper 'Ahead of The Curve - Bengaluru Warehousing'.

The IT city is likely to witness a surge in investment for development of premium warehousing park to meet growing demand for storage space from e-commerce and third-party logistics players, the paper said.

The consultant has taken inputs from real estate data research company CRE Matrix in the white paper.

"The demand-supply trend of

the last five calendar years (2018-22) shows that demand has outstripped new supply by far, resulting in very low vacancy levels in existing warehousing parks and a decent growth in rentals," the consultant said.

The cumulative absorption of warehousing space in Bengaluru during the 2018-22 period stood at 16.34 million square feet, while new supply was 10.5 million square feet.

"Bengaluru will be in the spotlight for investments in warehouses with greater capacity for e-commerce fulfilment. Based on the anticipated rise in demand, we project that more than 250 acre of land would be required in the periphery of Bengaluru city to develop new warehousing facilities," said Gagan Randev, Executive Director - Capital Markets, India Sotheby's International Realty.



In 2022, market rentals experienced a remarkable increase of 10 per cent, surpassing the average rental hikes of 5-6 per cent witnessed in previous years.

"This upward trajectory indicates a further tightening of the market. As a result, owners have gained the advantage of negotiat-

ing more favourable rental terms with new occupiers. The considerable rise of 10 per cent in market rentals, compared to the in-place rental increase of 2 per cent in 2022, clearly reflects this positive trend," said Harikesh Ananthamurthy, Senior Vice President - Capital Markets, India Sotheby's

International Realty.

He said manufacturing, logistics players, e-commerce, and retail sectors will continue to drive the warehousing demand, with logistics players and e-commerce emerging as major occupiers.

Randev said the involvement of larger organised players in the sector has driven a shift towards automation, IoT integration, enhanced warehouse management systems, security measures, and a focus on creating greener and sustainable environments.

Prominent players such as All Cargo, Welspun, IndoSpace, Prolaxis, Panattoni, RMZ, The House of Hiranandani, Lodha (Macrotech), ESR, CapitaLand, Morgan Stanley, Horizon Industrial Parks, and Greenbase are aggressively expanding their presence in the warehousing segment, the consultant said.

Jorhat Samagra Siksha led awareness programme on basic literacy & numeracy

HT Correspondent

JORHAT, June 7: The 4th G20 Education Working Group Meeting will be held in Pune, Maharashtra from June 19 to 22, 2023 and in this context, a special objective has been undertaken to raise awareness on the importance of basic literacy and numeracy through public participation programs from national level to school level.

Under this programme, various programs are being conducted at schools and district levels from June 1 and it will end on June 15. The programs specifically scheduled for Jorhat district are reading, mathematics, games, quiz, discussion on the role of parents in the development of basic literacy and numeracy. Through this programme, parents, school management committees, working groups, friends, schools will focus on the use of mother tongue in primary education at school level on the basis of National Education Policy-2.

Several programmes like interaction with local institutions, nearby high schools, retired teachers, alumni, distinguished educators, taking oath of basic literacy and numeracy in morning meetings, learning language and mathematics through the use of various resources of folk literature such as malits, folk songs, fairy tales through elders in local language, use of various books in the school library in reading programmes, poetry recitation, yoga/meditation programmes, etc., are going on and will be held till June 15.

The event was attended by Tridip Bardoloi, professor, Post Graduate Training College, principals and trainers of Normal School, Jorhat, trainees, teachers of various schools and district group of basic literacy and numeracy of District Mission Office. In conjunction with the event which is being held at district level and will conclude on June 15, an online quiz competition among teachers and display of learning materials will be organised.

JCI national president inaugurates several projects



HT Bureau

GUWAHATI, June 7: National president of Junior Chamber International (JCI), MK Karthikeyan is on his official visit to Guwahati. To showcase the JCI movement through its slogan – 'Guided by Purpose' and to establish public relations with the help of the esteemed media houses of the region, he inaugurated a number of community development projects. He also held a meeting with the JCI members on Saturday in the Multi LO Meet at Hotel Rajmahal. On Saturday, Karthikeyan visited a project to inaugurate a children's park and a basketball court at Changsari with deputy commissioner, Amingao. And after lunch, he visited Uzanbazar for adoption of Harijan colony, installation of water boring, solar lights and learning center, and at 5:00 pm, he visited Shantipur, a remote area to install solar lights. On Sunday, Karthikeyan visited a project of JCI Guwahati Humar at Sonapur for the installation of a water boring system, water tank, children's park and a tea stall. After that, he visited Noonmati for the adoption of a school, inauguration of skill development center, installation of water filter, water tank and water pump by JCI Guwahati Pathfinders. He visited Sanganeria Dharamsala for 'Kanyadaan Mahadaan' On Monday, a grand PR program 'Walky Talky, Walk with NP Sir' was conducted. Several projects were inaugurated by JCI Dispur Capitals, Karthikeyan, on the last day visited JCI Barpeta for the inauguration of 2 classrooms at the adopted school at Madulijhar and 2 toilet blocks in a park.

Noted artist Kanika Das passes away in old age home at Jorhat

HT Correspondent

JORHAT, June 7: Kanika Das, an eminent violinist and a singer passed away at Amaravati Old Age Home on the outskirts here on Tuesday last due to old age ailments. The octogenarian artist who was the widow of well-known tablist Promod Das, leaves behind two daughters, one of whom reside abroad and the other outside the state. Kanika, who had performed with Sudhakanta Dr Bhupen Hazarika as a singer and also as a musician, had performed in a large number of functions in the past decades and also taught music to many students.

Originally a resident of Jail Road area here, the artist since March 2021 was staying at the old age home after her daughters brought her for receiving proper care as she was staying alone following her husband's demise. Kanika's daughters had kept coming to the old age home to meet their mother in the past two years, and most recently one of them came in April this year and enquired about the health condition of their mother.

BJP Maha Jansamparka prog held at Sootea

HT Correspondent

BISWANATH CHARIALI, June 7: To strengthen the party before the Lok Sabha election, the saffron party has initiated many grass root level activities in every nook and corners of the nation.

A morchha sanmilan under the Biswanath Bidhan Parishad area was held in the conference hall of Mahila Samiti, Gereki Sootea on Wednesday. The meeting was convened by Biswanath district BJP and was attended by office bearers, party workers of various morchha committees of the party. The session was held with Pares Borkakaty, vice chairman of Animal Husbandry cum former district president of BJP, Biswanath district in the chair.

District level training on emergency response concludes in Haflong

HT Correspondent

HAFLONG, June 7: The two day – 'District Level Training on Children and Women Care in Relief Camps & Temporary Shelter During Emergencies' which was held in collaboration with Assam State Disaster Management Authority (ASDMA) concluded here in Haflong on Tuesday. The training program started from Tuesday at Circuit House Haflong, Dima Hasao.

Kishore Dutta, ASDM, Ankur Bikash Dev, ASDMA, Annie Lalchhingpui Choral, gender specialist, DHEW, Dima Hasao and Kimjibika Bathari, gender specialist, DHEW, Dima Hasao were present as resource person in the program. Earlier, the training was inaugurated by Riki B Phukan, the DPO of DDMA Haflong. Altogether, fifty numbers of Anganwadi workers from five blocks across Dima Hasao district took part in the training programme. During the two-day training program, the resource person interacted with the participants and was able to learn various challenges during disaster and trained them about the ways to respond during certain situations.



HT Correspondent

TEZPUR, June 7: The District Development Committee meeting for the month of June 2023 was held on Tuesday at the conference hall of the deputy commissioner's office. The meeting was chaired by DC Deba Kumar Mishra where he reviewed the progress of various ongoing schemes and projects being implemented by various government departments in the district. Urging the heads of all government departments to expedite the implementation of these schemes, he asked all officials to maintain inter departmental co-



ordination. The meeting was attended by CEO, ZP, Karabi Saikia Karan, DDC Gaya Prasad Agrawal, ADCs Twahir Alam, Garga Mohan Das, Kabita Kakoti Konwar, Raj Boruah, Pankaj Borah and heads of various line departments.

Meanwhile, deputy commissioner Deba Kumar Mishra also took part in an interaction with the students from the St Joseph's Convent, Tezpur on the occasion of World Environment Day 2023. A street play with the message 'Beat Plastic Pollution' to avoid the use of plastic and to educate the students on the hazards of plastic use on the environment was also staged on the occasion. Keeping in view the extreme heat conditions. The event was held indoors in the new conference hall of the DC's office. Later, the deputy commissioner also took part in a Q&A session where the students posed several questions to him ranging from environmental issues to career guidance topics.

The training emphasised on 'Do's and Don'ts' before, during and after disasters, CFS, necessity of children-friendly-space (CFS), MHM, importance of menstrual hygiene management, nutrition apart from requirements of nutrition to pregnant women, lactating mothers, adolescent girls and children.

He said very few people in the world get the chance to work with such an ancient and precious animal, the one-horned Indian Rhino and hence encouraged the forest field staff to put up an all-out effort to secure the Rhino habitat. He said Aaranyak and IRF remain committed to complement rhino conservation efforts and would always stand by the forest department in this regard.

Veteran conservation leader, Dilwar Hussain talked about the magnificent past of the WL sanctuary and hoped that those glorious days would be back soon.

Aaranyak official Arif Hussain co-ordinated with the Forest department in organising the field gear distribution programme at Dhania range office in the WL Sanctuary.

Jayanta Deka and Nripen Kalita urged the forest field staff to work wholeheartedly for protection of the WL Sanctuary now after eviction of encroachers that was possible because of the strong will of the present regime in the state led by the chief minister Himanta Biswa Sarma.

Forest rangers - S K Gupta (Dhania range) and Arup Kalita (Gorajan range) commended Aaranyak and IRF for the support they have been providing to boost conservation efforts and called upon the field staff to work fearlessly post eviction of encroachers and under the supportive government.

The CEO of Aaranyak and senior adviser (Asian Rhinos) of IRF Dr Bibhav Kumar Talukdar said that post eviction of encroachers rhinos are most likely to be back in Burhachapori Sanctuary.

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QUOTE OF THE DAY

A man does not seek his luck; luck seeks its man.
-Turkish Proverb

Violence continues in Manipur

Despite increased deployment of security personnel in riot-hit Manipur during the last 48 hours, sporadic violence has continued in several areas. On June 5, a major clash in the Serou area resulted in the death of one Border Security Force (BSF) sepoy, while two Assam Rifle personnel were injured as they came under fire from suspected armed Kuki attackers. Officials in the state capital Imphal have revealed that certain Kuki groups were apparently violating commitments made by their leaders during talks held in the presence of Union Home Minister Amit Shah. These commitments included surrendering arms and maintaining peace. While a large quantity of arms and ammunition were seized, anti-police attacks and group violence continued in pockets, disregarding the agreements made. In response to the escalating situation, both Shah and Chief Minister N. Biren Singh issued general instructions calling upon people to surrender any illegal weapons in their possession to the police. Those who failed to comply with this directive would be liable to be arrested. Shah also announced the formation of a high-power committee tasked with studying the present situation and suggesting remedies.

However, clashes between groups in the Kangchup area in Imphal and Sugnu have continued to claim lives. In the past couple of days, at least three more lives were lost, and four individuals sustained injuries. Unconfirmed reports suggest that the death toll has risen to eight since last week. The violence has also resulted in the torching of the house of Congress MLA K. Ranjit, along with 200 other houses. Local Meitei politicians allege that the attackers include illegal infiltrators from Myanmar who crossed the border to assist their Kuki relatives with arms and other support. Kuki delegations had previously met with Shah in Delhi, including members from the ruling BJP in Manipur. Surprisingly, Naga tribal groups expressed their support for the Meiteis, considering them as the sons of Manipur's soil, just like themselves.

In the midst of this tense situation, an uneasy truce has been established between the warring communities. Both the central government and the state government have vehemently rejected the demand for the creation of a separate state or union territory for the tribes. Importantly, the Kuki demand for a separate state has not garnered significant support from other tribal groups, bringing relief to the BJP-led state government.

Efforts are underway to restore peace and harmony in Manipur. The deployment of additional security personnel, combined with intensified search operations and the seizure of illegal weapons, aims to quell the sporadic violence. The committee formed by Home Minister Amit Shah will play a crucial role in analyzing the situation and proposing effective solutions. As the government imposes curfew orders and limits internet access to prevent the spread of violence, it is crucial to ensure that these measures do not exacerbate tensions or impede communication channels necessary for dialogue and understanding. Balancing security measures with efforts to engage with communities and address their concerns will be pivotal in restoring peace in Manipur. The road to long-term peace in Manipur may be challenging, but concerted efforts from all stakeholders, including the government, tribal groups, and community leaders, can pave the way for a more harmonious and inclusive future. It is essential to address the root causes of ethnic tensions, promote cultural understanding, and foster a sense of belonging and security for all residents of Manipur. Only through collective action and sustained dialogue can the region regain its reputation for cultural diversity and ethnic harmony.

United States-China rivalry in space leading to a big technology war

By: Girish Linganna

The intensifying rivalry between the United States and China in the realm of space has become a significant challenge as the world enters a new era where space is seen as an essential battleground. Global leaders are increasingly concerned about China's rapid advancements in space capabilities, which could potentially surpass America's space technology. A senior official from the U.S. Space Force recently warned about China's sophisticated military satellites and reusable technology, highlighting the threat it poses to America's longstanding dominance in this sector.

These developments also present an opportunity to re-evaluate India's role in the field of space technology, particularly in terms of its military applications. The unprecedented technological progress in space has made it a crucial component in modern warfare, seamlessly integrating with land, sea, air, and cyberspace. As a result, space has become a testing ground for kinetic energy direct ascent anti-satellite weapons, and China has emerged as a prominent player in this arena. The country's rapidly expanding civil space.

India recognizes the imperative to actively engage in the space domain, considering it not just an option but a necessity. However, there are evident disparities that need to be addressed.

China has adopted a significant strategy known as military-civil fusion (MCF), which plays a crucial role in its space endeavours. By elevating space capabilities to a national priority, China aims to lead the global space race. President Xi Jinping solidified this ambition in 2016 by calling for China to become the foremost global space power by 2045.

While China is promoting the growth of private space companies, the military remains the primary driver of the nation's space activities. State-owned enterprises with a focus on defense are responsible for carrying out these endeavours. An example of this military-civil fusion approach is the China National Space Admin-

istration (CNSA), which operates under the State Administration for Science, Technology, and Industry for National Defense.

China's remarkable accomplishments in space infrastructure serve as a testament to its progress. These achievements include the successful launch of the BeiDou Navigation Satellite System, the establishment of a high-resolution earth observation system, the development of a reliable satellite communications network, and the completion of its three-step lunar exploration program.

The BeiDou system, in particular, has allowed China to propose a "Space Silk Road" as part of its Belt and Road Initiative, offering global navigational autonomy that could be crucial in potential global conflicts.

China's advancements in various technologies, such as jammers and lasers, pose a potential threat to India's satellites. These developments enhance China's offensive capabilities in space, enabling activities like satellite hacking, outcome manipulation, and the deployment of "parasitic microsatellites." Moreover, China's BeiDou satellite navigation system, consisting of 35 orbiting satellites, provides broader global coverage compared to India's Navigation with Indian Constellation (NavIC), which operates with eight satellites and offers regional coverage of up to 1,500 km from India's borders.

In light of China's growing offensive counter-space capabilities, which include the use of jamming techniques, offensive cyberspace capabilities, and directed energy weapons to target adversary satellites, it becomes imperative to closely assess India's space program. For instance, when comparing the payload capacity of China's Long March 5 rocket to India's GSLV-Mk3, China's rocket can accommodate payloads that are five times greater. Additionally, China demonstrated its capacity by launching a total of 55 satellites in 2021 alone.

India, while proud of its existing launch capabilities, recognizes the need for increased focus, technological advancements, and budgetary allocation in the space domain. (IPA Service)

Indian economy far away from recovery

The current GDP (gross domestic product) figures have been released. Economists who model their work after the Darbari stock market are happy, as are their TV supporters. We not only overcame the Covid setback, but we are also well on our way to a mega growth phase, they claim. Even sarkari data analysts are accused of having an overly pessimistic outlook. Not only have they increased their projected GDP for 2022-2023, but they have also increased their estimates for 2021-2022 as well. Are we really out of the woods, though?

We must separate our economy into the pre-Covid and post-Covid eras in order to evaluate that. Due to the fact that nobody could have prevented the recession in 2020-21, we will disregard that year from the calculation. Our economy's typical growth trajectory was accidentally and externally disrupted. So, I'll contrast the final two years after Covid, 2021-2022, and 2022-2023, when the lockdowns were lifted, with the first six "Modi" years prior to Covid, from 2013-2014 to 2019-2020. The first will provide us with a medium-term glide path of growth. The average recovery growth rate will be provided by the second.

In the pre-Covid period of our analysis, our GDP grew at an average annual rate of 6 point 8 percent, and over the last two years, it has grown at an average annual rate of 8 point 1 percent. Our real GDP would have been approximately ₹ 177 lakh crore in 2022-2023 if we assume that the economy would have continued to grow at the old glide path without Covid's interference. However, it has only just surpassed ₹ 160 lakh crore. This is almost 10% less than it would have been in the absence of the Covid recession.

It will still take us an additional seven years to catch up to the old glide path, even if we assume that our GDP will grow at the current rate of recovery of 81 percent for the foreseeable future. Our GDP would have reached approximately ₹ 300 lakh crore in



2030-31 at the old 6.8 growth rate, if Covid hadn't occurred. If it continues to grow at a rate of 81 percent, that is also the date when our post-Covid GDP will reach that level.

There is currently no reason for us to think that the 81% rate can continue. This is as a result of the GDP growth rate dropping from 9.1% in 2021-2022 to 7.2% in 2022-2023. This year, there haven't been any Covid disruptions, but there are still indications that Covid-related investments and stalled consumption are beginning to move forward. This suggests that for the upcoming few years, our GDP growth rate will probably stabilize in the 7% to 8% range. The RBI's 6 point 5% forecast for 2023-2024 is higher than this. It will actually take us eight years to reach the previous pre-Covid GDP glide path if we assume that 7% growth over the next ten years is more likely. Only in 2031-32 will the two graphs come together.

The full story is not provided by this, though. To do that, we must examine the national income and output data in greater detail and segment it into different sectors. For instance, Covid had no impact on agricul-

ture. Even in 2020-21, the year of lockdowns and global supply chain disruptions, agricultural output grew, if anything. Gross value added in the agricultural sector is currently greater than it would have been in the absence of Covid. This is mainly because lockdowns were never implemented in rural areas and we were fortunate to have three years of good monsoon.

On the other hand, manufacturing has completely collapsed. Between 2013-14 and 2019-20, it grew at a rate of 6-4% annually. The gross value added (GVA) for the factory sector would have surpassed ₹ 27.2 lakh crore in 2022-23 if that growth rate had persisted. According to recent estimates, manufacturing's GVA is currently at ₹ 26.02 lakh crore. To 61%, the average growth rate has decreased. We will therefore continue to stray further from where our factory sector ought to be if the current rate of recovery holds. The difference between the manufacturing sector's actual and potential GVA by 2030-31 will be close to ₹ 2.5 lakh crore.

If the current rate of recovery growth holds true for services as a whole, it will

take us another 13 years to retrace our steps. This is also due to the broad category of "trade, lodging, transportation, communication, and broadcasting services". The majority of jobs in the service sector are concentrated in this industry, which also contributes almost one-fifth of our GDP. By 2026-2027, this sector will return to its previous glide path if it grows at the same rate as it has the last two "post-Covid" years.

However, there is serious trouble in the major white-collar sectors. There are two categories: public administration, defense, and other services; and financial services, real estate, and professional services. Less than 10% of all jobs are in these sectors, which together make up about one-third of our GDP. Though most white-collar jobs are located here, these include all positions associated with banking and finance, real estate service providers, attorneys, medical professionals, IT experts, educators, and public servants.

Compared to the previous pre-Covid period, these two sectors have slowed down considerably. Between 2013-14 and 2019-20, they expanded collectively at a rate of 7.6% annually. They decreased by 1.5 percent in the Covid year, increased by 6.5 percent in 2021-22, and then by 7 point 2 percent in 2022-23. The average recovery growth rate is only 6.8%. These two segments can never return to the pre-Covid glide path at this rate. As a result, the white-collar middle class in India will experience a significant change in how difficult it is for them to realize their goals. This will then have a detrimental effect on the sales of goods that the middle class purchases, including small cars, durable goods made in India, affordable homes, as well as on their savings. The top 1% will continue to do well and take home an increasing share of the national income thanks to their business, trade, and asset-based income. (The writer is a journalist and commentator based in Guwahati, can be reached at dipaknewsthe@gmail.com)

Developed nations should appreciate India's work in fighting pollution



By: Dr. Gyan Pathak

Though India is currently the third largest polluter in the world in terms of CO₂ (Carbon Dioxide) emission as estimated in 2020 after China and the United States, its pollution is less than half of the US and one-fourth of the China. Moreover, if taken historically, India's contribution in pollution between 1750-2020 is merely 2.3 per cent. Therefore, targeting India as one of the largest polluters of the world on the World Environment Day is totally unfair while ignoring the challenges India is facing today. More so because failure of India in overcoming the challenges would shatter the dream of the world to face the climate crisis successfully. India, in this backdrop, needs greater global support, both financially and technologically, rather than mere criticism, because India alone cannot overcome its challenges.

The most shocking criticism of India came from the United States, that is the second largest polluter of the world emitting 5416 million tonnes of CO₂ in 2020, as against India's 2654 million tonnes. China was the largest polluter in the world emitting 10,065 million tonnes of CO₂. Moreover, the criticism came from an India-origin presidential candidate of the Republican Party Nikki Haley of the United States, who said, "If we want to be serious about saving the environment, we need to confront India and China. They are some of the biggest polluters."

Nikki Haley's criticism of India is unfair on another ground if we look at the emissions historically. United States is the top polluter contributing to 24.5 per cent in the world CO₂ emission in 2020, followed by China 13.9 per cent, Russia, 6.8 per cent, Germany 5.4 per cent, UK 4.6 per cent, Japan 3.9 per cent, and India 2.3 per cent. Rest of the countries of the world contributed 2 or less than 2 per cent in global emission. India is well aware that the

country is one of the most vulnerable to the effects of the climate crisis, and already experiencing deadlier and greater number of extreme weather events, such as floods, droughts, and heatwaves. It is bringing devastation to its people both in the planes and the coastal areas.

All these crises are contributing to miseries of the people in India making almost all SDG targets off track. If the situation continues, the world may miss the 2030 targets. And the challenges remain despite the country has taken several steps to address the environmental challenges, chiefly because lack of enough investment and technology deployment in environmental protection and sustainable development. India needs to rein in the corrupt and the greedy who are contributing to the degradation of the environment is a well accepted fact, but global community, especially the developed nations, cannot absolve themselves of their responsibility of supporting India in fight against climate crisis that has been chiefly the result of their own unbridled industrialisation in the last 200 years.

India has begun its journey in its growth path and industrialisation. The country is still in the category of lower-middle income group that houses the largest number of poor in the world. Its growth needs are obvious, and the development requirement would push up its electricity needs for which it depends on use of fossil fuels, chiefly coal. For energy security it also depends on oil imports for transport vehicles.

India has taken number of steps for green transition. Encouraging EVs, solar energy, et al are only few of them. India has made ambitious energy targets to be achieved by 2030, while targeting net-zero carbon emissions by 2070. If global support comes forward in the right earnest, India can even achieve net zero much before. World must appreciate India's steps that it has taken on its own even with the limited resources it has. It includes installation of 500 GW renewable energy capacity by 2030, which would cater to 50 per cent of India's electricity needs.

It must not be forgotten that the climate crisis can only be overcome by global support to developing nations both in terms of finance and technology. Implementation of the measures against the crisis and achievement of global goals would also depend on goodwill and commitment among nations, not on criticism and conflict. If interests of the common people are taken care of, it would be easy to get required political support from them to implement stricter measures against the violators of environmental norms. (IPA Service)

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Rahul's engagement with Indian Diaspora in USA has been productive

By: Kalyani Shankar

Why do Indian politicians woo the Diaspora in the United States and elsewhere? Why does the Diaspora, who can't vote in India, take an interest in their homeland? It is perhaps because, as India's GDP grows, the Diaspora's role in India's foreign policy also rises.

The 32 million-strong global Indian Diaspora has emerged as one of the wealthiest minorities in many developed countries. Every year 2.5 million Indians (the highest annual number) migrate to other countries. Cumulative NRI deposits are at \$136 billion as of February 2023. Indian Americans like U.S. Vice President Kamala Harris, Presidential hopefuls Nikki Haley and Vivek Ramaswamy play an increasingly important political role. Indian Origin Rishi Sunak is now the Prime Minister of the U.K. In the Corporate world, Satya Nadella (Microsoft), Sundar Pichai (Google), and Shantanu Narayen (Adobe) now head giant American multinational corporations. Ajay Banga just became the President of the World Bank.

The B.J.P. realised the importance of the Diaspora long ago. Prime Minister Narendra Modi has also aggressively wooed them. Late Prime Minister A.B. Vajpayee appointed an Indian American as an 'ambassador at large' in addition to the regular U.S. envoy. However, he was withdrawn as the American government did not recognise him.

Interestingly Congress Party did not take the Diaspora seriously. That could be because the Grand Old Party ruled the country for more than five decades since independence. Indira Gandhi, Rajiv Gandhi, and Sonia Gandhi did not need this exercise for their international image. But, Rahul Gandhi has been reaching out since his successful U.S. tour in 2017. His visit to the United Kingdom in March and the US this week is part of that image-building exercise.

The dormant Overseas Congress, now headed by Sam Pitroda, has been activated. Rahul has acquired a raised profile after his successful 'Bharat Jodo Yatra' early this year. Added to that was the recent massive win in Karnataka assembly polls. Congress Party felt it must seriously engage with the Diaspora before the 2024 Lok Sabha polls.

Curiously, Rahul Gandhi visited the US three weeks before Modi's official visit. President Joe Biden will host the Prime Minister at the White House. Being the showman, Modi would make all efforts to hog the limelight in his last visit before the coming Lok Sabha polls.

Modi engaged with amazing success with the US diaspora in the past nine years with his Madison Square Garden meeting in New York in 2014 and his 'Howdy Modi rally' in Houston in 2019. He developed a first-name basis with the three American Presidents- Obama, Trump and Biden. Rahul tried to begin a new conversation with students, academicians, Congressmen and intellectuals in various meetings. Confident and cheerful, he poked fun at Modi and his government. Gandhi lavished praise on the Diaspora, "So thank you very much for holding up the Indian flag in America."

The thrust of his meetings in California, New York and Washington - the three cities he visited, was that there was a hidden undercurrent. "For one minute, I don't believe the B.J.P. cannot be defeated," he said. But in 2024 Lok Sabha elections, the opposition will make it possible- Prime Minister Narendra Modi will be removed from power.

At the National press club meeting in Washington, Gandhi expressed hope for a strong comeback of his party in the coming elections. Gandhi talked about India's relations with China and Russia. The only endorsement of the Modi government was its stand on Russia and Ukraine.

"To be nasty to people, to be arrogant, to be violent, these are not Indian values," Gandhi told an event at the Jacob Javits Center in Manhattan. He called for Indians in the US and back home to stand up for democracy and the Indian constitution. Scenes of his Bharat Jodo trip were displayed on the famous Times Square billboard, one of the world's busiest and most famous intersections in New York.

For a politician who is no longer a parliament member, the Indian Overseas Congress mobilised enough crowds for his events.

The BJP is upset at Gandhi's criticism of Modi abroad. The External Affairs Minister S. Jaishankar was critical of his remarks on foreign soil. Even earlier, during his March trip to the United Kingdom, several BJP ministers demanded an apology from Rahul Gandhi for flinging mud on India. Rahul told the Diaspora, "I need institutional structures to fight elections. I need a judicial system that protects me. I need a media that is reasonably free. I need financial parity. I need a set of institutional structures that allow me to operate as a political party." And Gandhi noted, "I do not have them."

Congress is happy about Rahul's US visit. But he needs to do more than Modi-Bashing. Also, he must improve his delivery. One part of the story is about visiting the US and the UK, and the other speaking his mind with the Diaspora. But Gandhi must clearly spell out his vision for India and address bread and butter issues for the Indian electorate. In short, Rahul should take this opportunity to impress the Diaspora and Indians back home that he is the right man to take on Modi. (IPA Service)

In a rapidly warming world, India should focus on effectively managing forest fires

By: Vishwas Chitale & Shravan Prabhu

So far this year, India's erratic weather patterns have made headlines with non-seasonal rainfall in March-April followed by intense heat waves in May. However, one of the most dangerous threats to the environment, forest fires, have gone unnoticed yet again.

The frequency of forest fire incidents in India has increased by 52% in the last two decades, from 2000 to 2020, according to a 2021 analysis by the Council on Energy, Environment and Water. This year too, there have already been fires in the non-fire-prone wet forests of Goa, and in the forests of Karnataka, Odisha, and Uttarakhand.

There are concerns that forest fires may increase with the prediction of El Niño between June and September and the World Meteorological Organization warning of warm and dry weather in the latter half of 2023. According to the World Meteorological Organization, El Niño is a climate pattern associated with the warming of the ocean surface temperatures in the central and eastern tropical Pacific Ocean.

While forest fires in India are mostly man-made, unseasonal high temperatures and deficient rainfall can lead to severe dryness in the vegetation and make the conditions conducive for the rapid spread of fires. The World Meteorological Organization in May published its Global Annual to Decadal Climate Update that predicted the world breaching the 1.5 degrees Celsius threshold during the next five years.

This means an increase in both the intensity and frequency of heat extremes as well erratic rainfall patterns leading to droughts and floods. During the Paris climate agreement in 2015, countries set 1.5 degrees Celsius as the threshold to limit global warming as temperatures beyond this would mean heightened risks for life on earth. In 2023, India already saw the warmest February and recorded a mere 7.2 mm rainfall, the sixth lowest for the month in over 120 years. Following this, India saw a near 115% increase in satellite-detected forest fires in early March compared to last year. Forest fires can be expected to increase significantly in the coming years as temperatures increase.

Leveraging technology, involving local com-



munities, scaling early warning systems, and disaster management planning are some suggestions that might help tackle this.

Technology: First should be tapping the revolution in internet and geospatial technologies to effectively manage fires in all three phases. In the pre-fire phase, a detailed forest fire risk assessment should be conducted and incorporated in fire management plans to prioritise actions and areas. This assessment should utilise fire occurrence-based hotspot data along with other landscape indicators such as proximity to infrastructure, economic reliance on forests, and social factors.

During the fire season, SMS-based and app-based fire warning and alert systems should be developed and implemented locally. These systems should be built on the local specific forest

fire susceptibility indicators and be suited to varied vegetation types. Fire weather forecasts that are readily available from global portals, like the Global wildfire information systems, should be integrated into these warning systems. Lastly, post-fire, a rapid damage assessment should be carried out using pre- and post-fire satellite imagery. This can play a crucial role in providing precise estimates of loss of forest and property due to fires.

Capacity: The second is enhancing the capacity of local stakeholders to reduce fire risk and improve response. Given that the communities dependent on forests for their livelihoods are those most affected by fires, they need to be included in all levels of decision-making that pertain to their geography. There is an urgent need to build awareness among communities on

the controlled burning of dry vegetation.

Community action for forest fire response and mitigation can be leveraged by providing incentives and employment opportunities in local responses such as creating fire lines and fire risk assessment as highlighted in the national action plan on forest fire. This participatory model for forest management offers significant cost savings for the forest department too.

Scaling: Various community-level forest fire early warning systems exist in the country, for instance, in Odisha's Kandhamal district where volunteers from the Youth4Water Plus campaign have worked closely with the residents to educate them on preventing forest fires. Similarly, Kharkiya's women in Uttarakhand mobilised to form a Mahila Mangal Dal who put

out fires quickly through early warning alerts on WhatsApp.

The success of these examples can help scale the approaches to wider geographies in the country. However, as mentioned by Krishna Vatsa, member of the National Disaster Management Authority during a G20 Disaster Risk Reduction side event in Mumbai, scaling up the local risk management framework is not possible unless there is a strong public-private partnership.

Collaboration between the government, private entities and local non-profits can provide the necessary support and resources to implement and sustain these early warning systems on a broader scale.

Mainstreaming: While the 2018 national plan on forest fires encompasses various activities, there are significant challenges in terms of financial constraints and operational effectiveness. To deal with this, it is crucial to shift the focus of forest fire management from response to preparedness by institutionalising forest fire risk assessments in exposed state and district disaster management plans.

Moreover, given the damages faced by forests and dependent communities due to forest fires, the National Disaster Management Authority should also assess the feasibility of categorising forest fires as a disaster for relief and response. While the latest guidelines mention "fires" as a disaster, they do not distinguish between man-made and forest fires.

Including forest fires as a disaster will boost the national plan by allocating more financial resources and establishing a dedicated team of trained forest firefighters within the National Disaster Response Force and State Disaster Response Force.

Given that nearly 62% of Indian states have forests prone to fires, India, as it hosts the G20 presidency this year, has an opportunity to showcase its leadership in disaster risk reduction and developing the resilience of communities, ecosystems, and infrastructure.

By prioritising effective measures to address forest fires, India can protect its biodiversity and environment as well as boost its ambitious climate change mitigation and carbon sequestration efforts. (Courtesy: Scroll.in)

North America discarded over 5 billion kg of industrial waste in 2018 and most of it went to landfills

By: Nandita Banerji

Industries in North America disposed of over five billion kilograms of waste in 2018, an increase of about three per cent from 2014, a new report has found. Close to half of it — 41 per cent or over 2 billion kgs — was discarded in landfills.

Commission for Environmental Cooperation (CEC), which implements the environmental side of the accord to the North American Free Trade Agreement, looked into data for 2014-2018. It evaluated the national pollutant release and transfer registers for approximately 24,000 industrial facilities in Canada, Mexico and the United States.

The report reveals important gaps in the reporting and tracking of transfers to disposal across the region due to different reporting requirements and shared responsibilities across agencies and jurisdictions.

It also pointed out the lack of information about the fate of waste pollutants when they are transferred to third parties or across national borders.

The amount of waste that is treated or cleaned up off-site, also known as off-site stabilisation prior to disposal, saw a 30 per cent increase over five years, going up to a total of 12 per cent in 2018.

The US was the biggest polluter in North America and accounted for about 63 per cent of the total waste reported each year. Canadian facilities accounted for about 36 per cent of the total, the CEC paper said.

Mexico represented less than a per cent of



the North American total. However, the amount of industrial waste generated went up by almost 74 per cent between 2014 and 2018 due to changes in reporting norms, the report found.

Together, two categories — on-site disposal or releases to land and off-site transfers to recycling, accounted for approximately two-thirds of total releases and transfers reported in North America. Releases to air and water accounted for approximately 7 per cent and 4 per cent, respectively, it added.

About 80 per cent of the waste generated came from just 15 industry sectors — with the metal ore mining sector alone making up about one-third, the CEC found. Other high waste generators were the iron and steel mills/ferroalloy manufacturing, basic chemicals manufacturing, oil and gas extraction and waste management sectors.

North American industries reported a total of 538 pollutant groups in the 2014-2018 period. But just 20 accounted for approximately 88 per cent of total releases and transfers each

year. Zinc, manganese, lead, copper and nitric acid/nitrate compounds accounted for about 45 per cent of the annual totals, the report said. Many pollutants were also transferred across national borders. At least 75 per cent of the approximately 200 million kg each year of sulphuric acid from Canadian petroleum and coal products manufacturing facilities were transferred to the United States for recycling.

North American facilities transferred approximately 335 million kg of pollutants off-site for disposal each year, accounting for about six per cent of total annual releases and transfers.

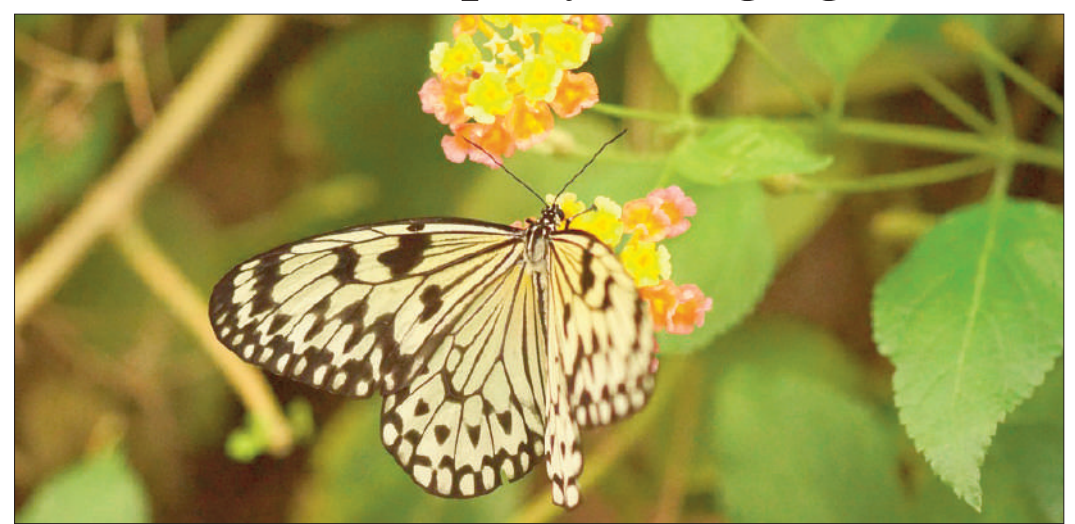
Transfers to disposal in Mexico represented a larger proportion of the total, accounting for 12 per cent in 2014 and increasing to 34 per cent in 2018, even as the number of reporting facilities stayed consistent at around 11,000.

About 155 million kg of waste, or 46 per cent of the total in 2018, is handled under the off-site transfers to disposal category, the report found.

The analysis highlighted both the importance and difficulty of tracking pollutants from their point of origin to their ultimate disposition.

Challenges relate to key differences among the three programmes in disposal terminology and definitions, as well as gaps in the details provided by facilities, particularly relative to the "other disposal" category and cross-border transfers of pollutants. (Courtesy: Down To Earth)

How butterflies can help protect natural habitats in a rapidly changing world



By: Charl Deacon

Natural landscapes are continually transformed to make room for agricultural and urban developments — often at the expense of important habitats and species. That's why, to avoid unnecessary species extinctions, it's crucial to know which habitats to protect. In a recent paper, we studied how changes to the landscape affected butterflies in a grassland area of South Africa's KwaZulu-Natal province.

The sheer speed at which landscapes are being transformed by human activity means that conservationists simply don't have the time to gather detailed information on all the species in a particular region. That slows down conservation responses. It's also not always possible to conserve entire landscapes and doing so is not always economically feasible. Butterflies are icons in the sky. On warm summer days, we can watch them dance elegantly from flower to flower. But they aren't just beautiful to look at. They are important pollinators, and are important in natural food chains. For scientists, they are sentinel species. By identifying how they interact with landscapes we gain a better understanding of how other insect species do, too.

Our research offers a closer look at how butterflies interact with the landscapes they roam. This, in turn, allows us to delve into how conservation measures can be adopted to better protect butterfly communities against the effects of people changing natural habitats. We found that a variety of different grassland types, in addition to flower diversity, is important for butterflies. When it's not possible to conserve whole grassland areas, a variety of smaller grassland patches can help protect butterflies and other insects against environmental transformation. This means that effective insect conservation is possible in areas earmarked for large-scale transformation — without sacrificing economic gain.

The landscape

Timber estates occupy a large proportion of the grassland landscape in the KwaZulu-Natal province, where we conducted our study. This leaves little habitat for grassland butterflies in some areas. To ensure that the biological impact of plantation forestry is minimised, forestry practitioners have moved towards leaving at least a third of natural grasslands untouched among timber plantations. This provides butterflies and other insects with enough habitat to roam the landscape while timber production continues in other sections.

But this approach raises an important question: does it matter which grasslands are set aside for conservation? Or is one grassland much the same as another?

The butterflies

Many butterfly species roam in high-elevation habitats, like the Mistbelt Grasslands of KwaZulu-

Natal province. The area also forms part of one of the world's biodiversity hotspots.

Inconspicuous species such as the Natal spotted blue (*Azamas natalensis*) and the Meadow blue (*Cupido cissus cissus*), along with large and showy species such as the Mountain pride (*Aeroptes tulbaghia*), frequent grasslands in the region. A keen eye might even spot some magisterial species briefly darting over, like the Flying handkerchief (*Papilio dardanus cenea*). Strikingly, these species and their counterparts rarely enter timber plantation compartments; they rely on grassland habitats.

We recorded and counted as many butterfly species as we could, allowing us to determine just how important natural grassland habitats are among plantation compartments. The results were clear — butterflies need grassland habitats to outlive human transformation.

Not that simple

There is a catch. Conserving only one or a few feature grassland types won't protect all butterfly species. Our results show that grasslands of similar types vary considerably. Each grassland has a set of characteristics that defines them such as availability of sunlight during the day, resistance to fire outbreaks and richness of flowering plants. These characteristics are important for attracting particular butterfly species that would avoid another type of grassland. Butterflies are highly mobile insects. Many species rely on small elevation variations to complete their day-to-day tasks. In particular, butterflies move up and down the elevation gradient to avoid, or catch, more sun. This means it's important for butterflies to have access to habitats at various elevations throughout the day. Butterfly population levels are also highly variable between seasons and from one year to the next. During times when feeding and breeding resources are scarce, butterfly populations may be more concentrated in areas where resources are more reliable. Resources are often more reliable in nature reserves, meaning that butterflies need to access them. When grassland patches among plantations are connected to nature reserves at the landscape level, they are more accessible to moving butterflies. This means that butterfly diversity is higher in grasslands that are close to, and connected to, neighbouring protected areas.

All of this is important information because it can help in guiding decisions about where to focus grassland conservation efforts in the region.

Next steps

Our study shows that landscape variety is best and that taking this landscape-scale variety into consideration in conservation practices can greatly counteract human impact on natural systems. In viewing butterflies as sentinels in conservation, we can use this information to decide which grasslands to conserve, or restore, to better protect all their insect residents. (Courtesy: The Wire)

Plastic Planet to a plastic-free planet



By: Biju Dharmapalan

Every year on 5th June we remember our environment, due to the environment day celebration conducted under the auspicious of the United Nations. The theme for World Environment Day 2023 is "Beat Plastic Pollution". In India, World Environment Day 2023 was celebrated with a focus on the Mission LiFE, which stands for Lifestyle for Environment, as envisioned by our Prime Minister Narendra Modi at the 2021 United Nations Climate Change Conference (COP26) in Glasgow. He has given a clarion call to adopt sustainable lifestyle practices. A sustainable lifestyle is possible

only if humans live in tune with nature.

Today the barrier between nature and humans is plastic. Every day human life is so impregnated with plastic that we find it difficult to find independence from it. Plastic as such is not a bad invention. It has made human life easier. Nobody in the present generation can think of carrying drinking water in large cans during our train journey. The invention of plastic has made human life more light by making lightweight comfortable household articles. It has truly revolutionized human civilization.

Plastic is a synthetic material made from polymers, which are long chains of molecules. It is a versatile material that can be

moulded and shaped into various forms when heated and then cooled. Plastics are commonly derived from petroleum, although they can also be made from other sources like natural gas or renewable materials. Plastic, as we know it today, is the result of the contributions of several inventors and researchers since 1862 when Alexander Parkes invented the first synthetic plastic.

The over-dependence on plastic has changed the structure of our planet itself. Every part of our planet air, water and land is polluted by plastic. Every year, more than 400 million tonnes of plastic are made, and about half of them are made to be used only once. Less than 10% of that is reused or recovered. Between 19 and 23 million tonnes of trash end up in lakes, rivers, and the ocean.

Plastic pollution has severe consequences for ecosystems and the environment. This accumulation disrupts ecosystems, harms wildlife, and threatens biodiversity. Recent scientific studies have shown the presence of plastic, known as microplastic in human breast milk and blood, making this a serious threat to look into. Microplastics are tiny plastic particles that are less than 5 millimeters in size. Studies

have shown that some plastic materials, including polypropylene baby bottles and polyethylene terephthalate tea bags, can shed microscopic and nanoscale particles into heated liquids. An average person drinking three regular cups of tea or coffee daily, in a paper cup, would be ingesting 75,000 tiny microplastic particles. Microplastics even affect soil micro and macrofauna.

If we didn't take strict measures to control plastic pollution, it would soon make our planet a plastic one, without any regeneration potential that is needed for the survival of life. A celebration like a world environment day would at least make us think of this menace at least for a day. The celebration should not be limited to publicity stunts by institutions and agencies. What is needed is a long-term initiative with collective commitment from individuals, businesses, governments, and organizations and a transition to a more sustainable and circular economy. By taking collective action and making conscious choices of living sustainably with nature, we can make a significant impact in beating plastic pollution and moving towards a more sustainable future. (Courtesy: The Pioneer)

Floodwaters engulf more areas of southern Ukraine after dam breach as hundreds evacuated

More than 1,800 houses were flooded along the Dnieper and that almost 1,500 people had been evacuated

KHERSON (UKRAINE), June 7 (AP): Floodwaters from a collapsed dam kept rising in southern Ukraine on Wednesday, forcing hundreds of people to flee their homes in a major emergency operation that brought a dramatic new dimension to the war with Russia, now in its 16th month.

Amid the disaster response, artillery shelling rang out as people scrambled to get out of the danger zone, climbing onto military trucks or rafts.

Officials said the flood's force was expected to slacken as the day wore on, a day after Tuesday's breach of the Kakhovka hydroelectric dam and reservoir, which is one of the largest in the world.

Even so, authorities said water levels were expected to rise by another metre (about 3 feet) over the following 20 hours and engulf more downriver areas along the banks of the Dnieper.

Some local residents spent the night on rooftops. Others, scrambling to flee the rising waters, were evacuated by buses and trains with the belongings they could carry.

"The intensity of floods is slightly decreasing," Oleksandr Prokudin, the head of Kherson Regional Military administration, said in a video. "However, due to the significant destruction of the dam, the water will keep coming."

He said more than 1,800 houses were



flooded along the Dnieper and that almost 1,500 people had been evacuated.

Residents sloshed through knee-deep waters in inundated homes as videos posted on social media showed scenes including rescue workers carrying people to safety, and what looked like the triangular roof of an entire building that had been uprooted drifting downstream.

Footage taken from the air showed waters filling the streets of the Russian-controlled city of Nova Kakhovka on the eastern side

of the river.

Nova Kakhovka's Russia-appointed mayor, Vladimir Leontyev, said seven people were missing but early signs indicated that they could be alive.

Officials in Russia-controlled parts of Kherson region said 900 Nova Kakhovka residents were evacuated, including 17 rescued from the tops of flooded buildings.

Ukraine accused Russian forces of blowing up the dam and adjoining power station, which sits in an area Moscow has controlled

for more than a year.

Russian officials blamed Ukrainian bombardment in the contested area for the collapse of the dam's wall, where the river separates the two sides.

The Institute for the Study of War, a Washington think tank, noted its earlier assessment that "the Russians have a greater and clearer interest in flooding the lower Dnieper despite the damage to their own prepared defensive positions."

Amid speculation that Ukraine may have secretly started its long-anticipated counteroffensive, the ISW said Russian forces may think breaching the dam could cover a possible retreat and delay Ukraine's push.

Experts noted that the dam, about 70 kilometres (44 miles) to the east of the city of Kherson, was believed to be in disrepair and vulnerable to collapse as water was already brimming over when the wall gave way.

It hadn't been producing power since November, according to officials.

Britain's Ministry of Defence, which has regularly issued updates about the war, said the Kakhovka reservoir was at "record high" water levels before the breach.

While the dam wasn't entirely washed away, the ministry warned that its structure "is likely to deteriorate further over the next few days, causing additional flooding."

S Secretary of State Antony Blinken meets Saudi Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman



DUBAI, June 7 (AP): US Secretary of State Antony Blinken arrived on Tuesday in Saudi Arabia and later met Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman amid strained relations between Riyadh and Washington.

Blinken's trip, his second to Saudi Arabia since becoming America's top diplomat, comes after the kingdom under Prince Mohammed has been more willing to disregard the US in striking its own decisions.

Riyadh has clashed repeatedly with President Joe Biden on its supply of crude oil to global markets, its willingness to partner with Russia in OPEC+ and reaching a détente with Iran mediated by China. Biden also pledged to make Saudi Arabia a "pariah" over the 2018 killing of Washington Post columnist Jamal Khashoggi.

However, Saudi Arabia still relies — like other Gulf Arab nations — on the US to be the security guarantor for the wider Middle East as tensions over Iran's nuclear program in recent years have spilled over into a series of attacks.

Riyadh and Washington also have been working in tandem to try and strike a lasting cease-fire in Sudan, which has been elusive during weeks of fighting between that country's military and a rival paramilitary force. And Saudi Arabia wants to end its war in Yemen, something also sought by the U.S.

"Under the hood, especially when it comes to security and a few other matters like that, the relationship is stronger than it was a year ago," said Hussein Ibish, a senior resident scholar at the Arab Gulf States Institute in Washington. "It looks more strained — and in some superficial ways it is — but it is overall stronger."

Blinken arrived to a Saudi Arabia more eager to engage internationally, particularly after being involved in prisoner swaps in Moscow's war on Ukraine. The kingdom hosted Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy last month at an Arab League summit, then Russia's sanctioned interior minister immediately after.

With oil prices well below \$100 a barrel, the Biden administration doesn't have an immediate concern over prices at the pump in the summer driving season. Washington likely does hope to leverage its security relationship with Saudi Arabia as it gets warmer with China and Russia. However, the Saudis likely want guarantees that Biden can't provide when it comes to Congress stopping arms sales to the kingdom, Ibish said.

"Khashoggi still haunts the halls of Congress. I don't think that's over in Washington," Ibish said. "The rest of the world has moved on, but I don't think that Congress has moved on."

Asked about Blinken bringing up human rights issues, including Khashoggi's death, Deputy Assistant Secretary for Arabian Peninsula Affairs Daniel Benaim told journalists last week that "human rights are a pillar of how this administration engages with countries around the world and in this region." Benaim declined to discuss specifics.

"I think what you'll see on this trip is a vision of the U.S.-Saudi relationship that's both rooted in our historic mainstays of cooperation in areas like defense and security and counterterrorism, includes ongoing important regional diplomacy when it comes to Yemen and Sudan, and looks for opportunities for regional de-escalation and regional integration," Benaim said.

He added: "We will not leave a vacuum for our strategic competitors in the region."

Blinken met Prince Mohammed early Wednesday, with State Department saying they discussed their "shared commitment to advance stability, security, and prosperity across the Middle East and beyond."

"The secretary also emphasized that our bilateral relationship is strengthened by progress on human rights," a statement added.

A Saudi statement acknowledged the meeting, but offered no specifics.

Blinken's visit comes after Biden's national security adviser, Jake Sullivan, traveled to Jeddah in May and met Prince Mohammed. The prince also hosted Venezuelan President Nicolás Maduro, a longtime foe of America, for a meeting late Monday, Saudi state television reported.

Outside of meeting Prince Mohammed and other Saudi officials, Blinken also will attend an anti-Islamic State meeting in Riyadh and meet with foreign ministers from the Gulf Cooperation Council. The six-nation GCC includes Bahrain, Kuwait, Oman, Qatar, Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates.

"A deeper diplomatic engagement by the United States is likely to produce better outcomes in the long run than simply washing our hands and pulling back from the region," wrote Brian Katulis, the vice president of policy for the Washington-based Middle East Institute.

First India-Sri Lanka defence exhibition held in Colombo for boosting bilateral relations between both countries

COLOMBO, June 7 (PTI): The High Commission of India organised the first India-Sri Lanka Defence Seminar and Exhibition here on Wednesday to promote and identify newer areas of cooperation and collaboration between the two countries in the defence sector.

The event will witness participation from the Indian Defence Industry, Sri Lankan entrepreneurs, Sri Lanka Armed Forces, Police and Special Task Force, the High Commission said on Wednesday.

"The grand event includes a seminar highlighting the capability and capacities of the two countries in defence equipment manufacturing and would also exhibit a wide variety of defence products," the release said.

The exhibition organised with the aim to deepen ties with Sri Lanka through inclusive and collaborative engagement, aims to identify newer areas of cooperation for economic revival whilst ensuring capacity building of Sri Lanka Armed Forces.

Pope Francis to undergo intestinal surgery under general anaesthesia

ROME, June 7 (AP): Pope Francis went to the hospital on Wednesday to undergo abdominal surgery to treat an intestinal blockage, two years after he had 33 centimetres (13 inches) of his colon removed because of a narrowing of the large intestine.

The Vatican said Francis, 86, would be put under general anaesthesia for the procedure Wednesday afternoon and would be hospitalised at Rome's Gemelli hospital for several days.

Francis' Fiat 500 car pulled out of the Vatican shortly after 11 am with an escort, and arrived at the Gemelli some 20 minutes later.

The pope is undergoing what the Vatican said was a "laparotomy and abdominal wall plastic surgery with prosthesis" to treat a "recurrent, painful and worsening" constriction of the intestine.

A laparotomy is open abdominal surgery. It can help a surgeon both diagnose and treat issues. The statement said Francis was suffering from a blocked laparocoele, which is a hernia that formed over a previous scar.

"The stay at the health facility will last several days to allow for

the normal post-operative course and full functional recovery," the statement said. An update was not expected until after the procedure.

Francis remains in charge of the Vatican and the 1.3-billion strong Catholic Church, even while unconscious and in the hospital.

In July 2021, Francis spent 10 days at Gemelli to remove 33 centimetres (13 inches) of his large intestine. He had suffered what the Vatican said was a severe inflammation and narrowing of the colon.

In an interview with The Associated Press in January, Francis said the diverticulosis, or bulges in his intestinal wall, that had prompted the 2021 surgery, had returned.

Francis had come out of the 2021 surgery saying he could eat whatever he wanted, but he lamented that he hadn't responded well to the general anaesthetic used in the longer-than-expected procedure.

That reaction in part explained his refusal to have surgery to repair strained knee ligaments that have forced him to use a wheelchair and walker for over a year.

The fact that he is going back for



surgery suggests he had little choice but to treat the intestinal issue, especially given the rigorous upcoming travel schedule this summer.

The Argentine pope had part of one lung removed when he was a young man. He also suffers from sciatica nerve pain.

In late March, Francis spent three days at Gemelli for an acute case of bronchitis, during which he was treated with intravenous antibiotics. He emerged April 1 saying "Still alive!"

UK PM Sunak unveils anti-obesity drug pilot to support health service

LONDON, June 7 (PTI): British Prime Minister Rishi Sunak on Wednesday unveiled a two-year pilot scheme to reduce pressures on the state-funded National Health Service (NHS) which will see general practitioners (GPs) prescribe "game-changer" anti-obesity drugs to patients with at least one weight-related health condition.

The British Indian leader, whose father Yashvir is a retired GP, said obesity puts additional pressure on the NHS and helping people lose weight would help cut waiting lists for access to procedures in the health service.

Under the GBP 40-million two-year pilot scheme, the NHS will explore how approved drugs can be made safely available to more people by expanding specialist weight management services outside of hospital settings. "Obesity puts huge pressure on the NHS," said Sunak.

"Using the latest drugs to support people to lose weight will be a game-changer by helping to tackle dangerous obesity-related health conditions such as high blood pressure, diabetes and cancer — reducing pressure on hospitals, supporting people to live healthier and longer lives, and helping to deliver on my priority to cut NHS waiting lists," he said. According to NHS data, obesity is one of the leading causes of severe health conditions such as cardiovascular disease, diabetes, and cancer and costs the health service GBP 6.5 billion a year. Earlier this year, the UK's National Institute for Health and Care Excellence (NICE) recommended the use of Semaglutide (Wegovy) for adults with a Body Mass Index (BMI) of at least 35 and one weight-related health condition — such as diabetes or high blood pressure. Other drugs are also under consideration in clinical trials, which had indicated that when prescribed alongside diet, physical activity and behavioural support, people taking a weight-loss drug can lose up to 15 per cent of their body weight after one year.

Author Haruki Murakami says pandemic, war in Ukraine create walls that divide people

'Writing Fiction in the Time of Pandemic and War', was released in The Shincho Monthly literary magazine published by Shinchosha Co.

TOKYO, June 7 (AP): Japanese writer Haruki Murakami says walls are increasingly built and dividing people and countries after Russia's invasion of Ukraine and the COVID-19 pandemic fuelled fear and scepticism.

"With feelings of suspicion replacing mutual trust, walls are continually being erected around us," Murakami said in late April at Wellesley College.

That speech, "Writing Fiction in the Time of Pandemic and War", was released on Wednesday in The Shincho Monthly literary magazine published by Shinchosha Co.

"Everybody seems to be confronted with a choice — to hide behind the walls, preserving safety and the status quo or, knowing the risks, to emerge beyond the walls in search of a freer value system," he

said. Like the protagonist in his new novel.

"The City and Its Uncertain Walls" was released in April in Japan and an English translation is expected in 2024.

The protagonist, as Murakami described, faces a tough choice between two worlds: an isolated walled city of tranquility with no desire or suffering, and the real world beyond the walls filled with pain and desire and contradictions.

The novel is based on a story he wrote for a magazine soon after becoming a novelist but was never published in book form. He said he knew it had important ideas and put it aside because he wanted to rewrite it. Some 40 years later, he discovered "this tale fits perfectly with the age we live in now."

Murakami started rewriting the



book in March 2020, soon after COVID-19 began spreading around the world, and finished it two years later, as the war in Ukraine passed its one-year mark.

"The two big events combined and changed the world in dramatic ways," he said.

The sense of safety that came with a common belief in globalism and mutual economic and cultural dependency "crumbled with Russia's sudden invasion of Ukraine", Murakami said, spreading fear of similar invasions elsewhere.

Many countries, including his home Japan, have since bolstered their military preparedness and budgets.

As the war continues without an end in sight, so do the high walls being built around people, between countries and individuals, Murakami said. "It seems to me that the psychic condition — if someone isn't your ally, he is your enemy — continues to spread."

"Can our trust in each other once more overcome our suspicions? Can wisdom conquer fear? The answers to these questions are en-

trusted to our hands. And rather than an instant answer, we are being required to undergo a deep investigation that will take time," Murakami said.

He says that, while there's not much a novelist can do, "I sincerely hope that novels and stories can lend their power to such an investigation. It's something that we novelists dearly hope for."

Murakami has made other efforts to encourage people to think, combat fear or tear down walls. He hosted the radio show "Music to put an end to war" a month after Russia invaded Ukraine.

His Japanese translation of "The Last Flower", former New Yorker cartoonist James Thurber's 1939 anti-war picture book, will be released later this month from Poplar Sha.

NATO allies prepare unprecedented air deployment exercise over Europe in show of force to Russia

BERLIN, June 7 (AP): Germany is preparing to host the biggest air deployment exercise in NATO's history, a show of force intended to impress allies and potential adversaries such as Russia, German and American officials said on Wednesday. The Air Defender 23 exercise starting next week will see 10,000 participants and 250 aircraft from 25 nations respond to a simulated attack on a NATO member country. The US alone is sending 2,000 US Air National Guard personnel and about 100 aircraft to take part in the training manoeuvres.

"This is an exercise that would be absolutely impressive to anybody who's watching, and we don't make anybody watch it," US Ambassador to Germany Amy Gutmann said.

"It will demonstrate beyond a shadow of a doubt the agility and the swiftness of our allied force in NATO as a first responder," she said. "I would be pretty surprised if any world leader was not taking note of what this shows in terms of the spirit of this alliance, which means the strength of this alliance," Gutmann said.

Fiji reconsiders security ties with China amid Pacific tensions

WELLINGTON (NEW ZEALAND), June 7 (AP): Fiji's leader indicated on Wednesday his nation is reconsidering its security ties with China at a time that geopolitical tensions in the Pacific are rising.

Prime Minister Sitiveni Rabuka said Fiji was reviewing a contentious police cooperation agreement it signed with China in 2011 that has allowed Chinese police officers to be stationed in Fiji.

At one point during a news conference in Wellington with his New Zealand counterpart Chris Hipkins, Rabuka appeared to go one step further by referring to Fiji's "discontinuation" of the agreement.

"If our systems and our values differ, what cooperation can we get from them?" Rabuka said, referring to China.

"We need to look at that again before we decide whether we go back to it, or if we continue the way that we have in the past by co-operating with those who have similar democratic values and systems."

Rabuka said Fiji was finalizing a defense agreement with New Zealand, which he expected to complete next week. He said the new agreement would allow Fiji's military to build its capacity and skill and be exposed to new technolo-



gies.

He said there has been a lot of geopolitical focus on the region, but that Pacific countries only worry about militarization "when diplomacy and common neighborly discussions fail."

Fiji expanded its policing agreement with China in 2013 to include some military cooperation, but Rabuka on Wednesday didn't directly address that arrangement.

China has previously said the security agreements have benefited Fiji and it hopes to continue the collaboration.

Rabuka won a tense election in December over Frank Bainimarama, who had held power in Fiji for 16 years. Rabuka has moved since then to distance himself from some of Bainimarama's policies, including moves to forge closer ties with China.

2 dead in shooting after high school graduation ceremony in Virginia capital

RICHMOND, June 7 (AP): Seven people were shot, two fatally, when gunfire rang out on Tuesday outside a downtown theater in Richmond, Virginia, where a high school graduation ceremony had just ended, causing hundreds of attendees to flee in panic, weep and clutch their children, authorities and witnesses said.

A 19-year-old suspect tried to escape on foot but was arrested and will be charged with two counts of second-degree murder, Interim Richmond Police Chief Rick Edwards said during a nighttime news conference at which he confirmed the two fatalities.

Five others were wounded by the gunfire outside the state capital's city-owned Altria Theater, which is across the street from a large, grassy park and in the middle of the Virginia Commonwealth University campus. At least 12 others were injured or treated for anxiety due to the mayhem, according to police.

HC sets aside Nagaland govt's order banning dog meat sale & consumption

KOHIAMA, June 7 (PTT): The Kohima Bench of Gauhati High Court has set aside the 2020 Nagaland Government order banning commercial import and trading and sale of dog meat in markets and dine-in restaurants.

On July 4, 2020, the Nagaland Government through its chief secretary had banned the sale, trade and import of dog meat after a photograph of incapacitated dogs tied to gunny bags went viral on social media. However, the High Court in a recent order said the state or its executive officers cannot interfere with the rights of others unless they can point to some specific rule of law which authorises their acts.

The judgment was passed by Justice Marli Vankung after hearing a petition by three persons - Neizevolie Kuotsu, Abei Zatsu and Ketounyuu.

The petition was filed under Ar-



Article 226 of the Constitution for issuance of the appropriate writ for violation of the petitioners' Fundamental Rights and for violation of principles of natural justice, it said.

"The petitioners have an Import/Export permit, dated 03.06.2020, issued by the Kohima Municipal Council, which allows

the petitioner to import dogs to Kohima and have been earning their livelihood by selling dog meat for the past many years," the high court said.

"The counsel for the petitioners submitted that Food Safety and Standards (Food Product Standards and Food Additives) Regula-

tion, 2011, has not expressly or impliedly prohibited slaughter of any specific animals. Likewise, the Food Safety and Standards Act, 2006, has also not prohibited the slaughter of animals not mentioned in the regulation," it said.

However, the regulation has been wrongly interpreted by the Food Safety Authority of India and the state respondents, therefore the impugned notification dated February 4, 2020 is not in consonance with the Food Safety and Standards Act, 2006.

After hearing the counsels, the court said it was constrained to set aside and quash the July 4, 2020 order issued by the state.

Meanwhile, Nagaland chief secretary J Alam said the state is yet to receive the official court order and that further decisions would be taken after going through the judgment.

M'laya Communities Benefit from Union Ministry of New and Renewable Energy and MNREDA's Collaborative Sessions

HT Bureau

SHILLONG, June 7: The Union Ministry of New and Renewable Energy, in collaboration with the Meghalaya Non-Conventional & Rural Energy Development Agency (MNREDA) hosted an enlightening series of sessions to commemorate World Environment Day. The event, held at the State Convention Centre in Shillong, aimed to share comprehensive, data-driven progress with the communities of Meghalaya and promote the utilization of renewable energy sources in the state. Experts from the Meghalaya Non-Conventional & Rural Energy Development Agency delivered captivating insights into the latest advancements in the field of renewable energy and their potential applications within the state. The attendees were treated to a cultural program performed by local artists, followed by a detailed awareness presentation by Ms. Elizabeth Kharrana, Project Officer at MNREDA.

As part of the celebration, students from four Shillong high schools - Brookside Adventist Higher Secondary School, St. George Higher Secondary School, Laban Assamese Girls Higher Secondary School, and Bhanu Bhakta Nepali Pro. Secondary School, participated in a drawing contest with the theme "Renewable Energy for a Better Tomorrow." Their imaginative artwork demonstrated the students' comprehension and vision for a sustainable future. The event also included a display of prototype devices, allowing attendees to interact with the real-time impact of the Government of Meghalaya's upcoming Solar Mission. These devices are a representation of the state's commitment to renewable energy, as well as a glimpse into the future possibilities of sustainable living.

The event also featured an exhibition on Renewable Resources, led by Arup Chakraborty Junior

Engineer, MNREDA, providing valuable insights into the various renewable energy options available. Additionally, a sensitization session was conducted for village headmen from villages such as Sunny Hill, Lumdiengtri, Lama Villa, Jaiwai Langsning, Dym-miw, Lumkshaid, Mawprem, Qualapaty, Nongsophoh, and Laitumkhrah. The session focused on the PM Kusum scheme and Biogas scheme with Arup Chakraborty and Assistant Director (Planning) of MNREDA, Shri Danseng M. Sangma highlighting the potential benefits. A dedicated awareness session on solar energy was also hosted by the Assistant Director (SOLAR) of MNREDA, Shri Rafikul Islam. The Union Ministry of New and Renewable Energy and MNREDA remain committed to driving sustainable development and promoting the adoption of renewable energy sources in Meghalaya.

ENGAGEMENT UNDER SAMAGRA SHIKSHA, ASSAM

No. SSA/Esst/Engagement/SMO/1/2007/5421

The Samagra Shiksha, Axom invites online applications from Indian Citizens (as defined in Articles 5 to 8 of the Constitution of India) for the under mentioned positions under Samagra Shiksha, Axom on contractual basis. The online applications will be received from 0810612023 to 2210612023. The posts are temporary in nature and the selected candidates will be initially engaged for a period of 11 (eleven) months only. The contractual engagement will neither be regularized under Samagra Shiksha, Axom nor will be absorbed under any job/programme of Government of Assam in future and no person (s) so engaged shall have any right (s) to claim for permanent abortion in any post (s) in the government or in the Samagra Shiksha, Assam.

Age for categories of post : The candidate should not be less than 18 years of age and not more than 62 years of age as on 01-01-2023.

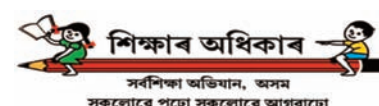
The age limit of the candidates will be calculated on the basis of the Matriculation/H SLC Admit Card or Pass Certificate issued by a recognized Board/ Council and no other document shall be accepted in lieu of the mentioned documents.

Sl No	Name of the Post	Essential Qualification and Experience	Pay in Pay Band in Rs.	Grade Pay in Rs.	No. of Post	Place
1	Senior Consultant (Audit)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Graduate in commerce from any recognized university Atleast in the rank of senior financial adviser and above of Govt. of Assam or minimum 15 years of experience in senior grade position in any Govt. deptt./undertaking. 	30,000/- to 1,10,000/-	13300/-	01	State Mission Office
2	Officer In-charge (Pre-Primary & Early Child Care Education)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Post Graduate Degree in Child Development/ Psychology/ Developmental Psychology or Education from any recognized university Degree/ Diploma in Pre-Primary Education from any recognized university or reputed national level organization. At least 5 years experience in relating to child development in Govt. Institution, Govt. recognized Society, Govt. Recognized Higher Education Institution, Reputed Research Organization. Candidate must have proficiency in use of ICT in educational purpose. 	30,000/- to 1,10,000/-	13300/-	01	State Mission Office
3	Officer In-charge (Vocational Education-VE)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> M.A./M.Sc./M.Com from any recognized university. B.Ed from any recognized university. At least 5 years experience in vocational education/Skill education in Govt. Institution, Govt. recognized Society, Govt. Recognized Higher Education Institution, Reputed Research Organization. Candidate must have proficiency in use of ICT in educational purposes. Preference will be given to candidates having B. Voc. qualification from recognized institution. 	30,000/- to 1,10,000/-	13300/-	01	State Mission Office
4	Quality Expert - Mathematics (Teachers Training)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Post Graduate Degree in Mathematics from any recognized university B.Ed from any recognized university. At least 5 years teaching experience in Govt. Institution, Govt. recognized Society, Govt. Recognized Higher Education Institution, Reputed Research Organization in the area of Mathematics. Candidate must have proficiency in use of ICT in educational purposes. 	30,000/- to 1,10,000/-	13300/-	01	State Mission Office
5	Quality Expert - Foundational Literacy and Numeracy (FLN) (Teachers Training)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Post Graduate Degree in Arts/ Science from any recognized university. B.Ed. from any recognized university Atleast 5 years teaching experience in Govt. Institution, Govt. recognized Society, Govt. Recognized Higher Education Institution, Reputed Research Organization. Candidate must have proficiency in use of ICT in educational purposes. Preference will be given to the candidates having Degree/ Diploma in Pre-Primary Education from Govt. recognized institutions/ organization. 	30,000/- to 1,10,000/-	13300/-	01	State Mission Office
6	Community Expert (Community Mobilisation)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Post Graduate Degree in Social Work/ Sociology from any recognized university. Diploma in Community Mobilisation- Desirable At least 5 years experience in the areas of community mobilization in Govt. Institution, Govt. recognized Society, Govt. Recognized Higher Education Institution, Reputed Research Organization Candidate must have proficiency in use of ICT in educational purposes. 	30,000/- to 1,10,000/-	13300/-	01	State Mission Office
7	Equity Officer In-charge (Girls Education, Residential School and Kasturba Gandhi Balika Vidyalaya)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Post Graduate Degree in any discipline from any recognized university At least 5 years experience in programme management in Govt. Institution, Govt. recognized Society, Govt. Recognized Higher Education Institution, Reputed Research Organization. Candidate must have proficiency in use of ICT in educational purposes. 	30,000/- to 1,10,000/-	13300/-	01	State Mission Office
8	Expert (Consultant, Planning)	<p>Essential Qualification & Experience:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> Master Degree in any discipline/MBA with minimum 55% marks (50% in case of ST/SC Candidates) from a UGC recognized University Minimum 4-years relevant experience at District or State Level Position in any Government Department, Society, University, College, reputed Research Organization. Complete proficiency in MS-OFFICE, especially in MS-Excel & PowerPoint. <p>Desirable qualification:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> Minimum 3-years' experience as Educational Consultant in any reputed Organization/Society. Experience in preparing project proposals related to Education, such as establishment of educational institutions, proposals for creating amenities/facilities towards students, teacher and educational institutions and proposals for fund raising etc. 	30,000/- to 1,10,000/-	13300/-	01	State Mission Office
9	Consultant (MIS)	<p>Essential qualification</p> <p>1st Class BE/B.Tech in Computer Science/ Electronics/Information Technology or 1st Class MCA from Institutions recognized by AICTE and recognised university.</p> <p>Essential Experience</p> <p>Minimum 03 (three) years of mobile app development experience in Android</p>	30000/- to 110000/-	12700/-	01	State Mission Office

Sl No	Name of the Post	Essential Qualification and Experience	Pay in Pay Band in Rs.	Grade Pay in Rs.	No. of Post	Place
10	Senior Auditor	<p>Essential skill set :</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Java/ Kotlin/ C# and Oracle / Microsoft SQL Server/ MongoDB/ PostgreSQL/ MySQL <p>Desirable skill set :</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Python/ React Native / Flutter / Xamarin 	22000/- to 87000/-	12700/-	01	State Mission Office
11	Internal Auditor	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Graduate in commerce from any recognized university with minimum 15 years of working experience in Accounts related works of Govt. Deptt./Undertaking/Public Sector Organization/ Reputed Private Organization. Must be Computer Literate 	22000/- to 87000/-	11500/-	01	State Mission Office
12	Project Engineer	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> BE (Civil) Engineering /Architect Engineering from Institutions recognized by AICTE and recognized university with minimum 03 years of working experience in Govt. Deptt / Organization /Pvt. Reputed Agencies/Firm etc. Having experience in building design preparation, drawing and estimate Candidate having experience in Auto Cad will be an added qualification. Must be Computer Literate with proficiency in MS Office. 	30000/- to 110000/-	12700/-	04	State Mission Office
13	Accounts Officer	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Graduate in Commerce from any recognized university with minimum 05 years of relevant experience under Government/ Semi Government/ Government Bodies/ PSUs/ Large Private Institute/ Organization. Must be Computer Literate 	22000/- to 87000/-	11500/-	01	State Mission Office
14	Associate Officer Research	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Post Graduate Degree in Education/ Sociology/ Geography/ History from any Govt. recognized university. At least 5 years of working experiences in Research Institutions/ Organizations Experience of working in the area of Educational Research, in Govt. Institution, Govt. recognized Society, Govt. Recognized Higher Education Institution, Reputed Research Organization Candidates must have proficiency in use of ICT in educational purpose specially data analysis. Preference will be given to the candidates having publication of research papers in national/ international research journal 	22000/- to 87000/-	11500/-	01	State Mission Office
15	Associate Officer (P&M)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Master Degree in English/Master with Social Science / Master in Business Administration from any recognized university Candidate must have proficiency in MS Office (Well versed in MS Excel & MS Word. At least 3 years of working experiences in Research Institutions, Organizations Experience of working in the area of Research, Evaluation, Programme Implementation, Community Participation and Monitoring in Govt. Institution, Govt. recognized Society, Govt. Recognized Higher Education Institution, Reputed Research Organization 	22000/- to 87000/-	11500/-	01	State Mission Office
16	Associate Officer (Equity)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Master Degree in Science / Master in Business Administration from recognised university. Candidates must have proficiency in MS Office (Well versed in MS Excel & MS Word. At least 3 years of working experiences in Research Institutions, Organizations Experience of working in the area of Research, Planning, Evaluation, Programme Implementation, Community Participation and Monitoring in Govt. Institution, Govt. recognized Society, Govt. Recognized Higher Education Institution, Reputed Research Organization 	22000/- to 87000/-	11500/-	01	State Mission Office
17	Associate Officer (Composite School Grant/Sport & Physical Education)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Master Degree in Arts /Master Degree in Science / Master in Business Administration from recognised university. Candidates must have proficiency in MS Office (Well versed in MS Excel & MS Word. At least 3 years of working experiences in Research Institutions, Organizations Experience of working in the area of Research, Planning, Evaluation, Programme Implementation, Community Participation and Monitoring in Govt. Institution, Govt. recognized Society, Govt. Recognized Higher Education Institution, Reputed Research Organization 	22000/- to 87000/-	11500/-	01	State Mission Office

N.B. -

- The link of the recruitment portal will be available in the Samagra Shiksha website <https://ssa.assam.gov.in>
- Read the User Guidelines carefully which is available on the recruitment portal on how to submit the online application form.
- Claims for any correction will not be entertained after submitting the online registration and online application.
- Before filling the on-line application, applicant has to go through the User Guidelines for online registration and online application.
- Only eligible candidates will have to appear in test/interview, the exact date of which will be communicated separately.
- A candidate must be in good mental and bodily health and free from any physical defect likely to interfere with the efficient discharge of his/ her duties as an Officer of the service.
- The exact date & time of the Test/ Interview will be communicated to the shortlisted candidates separately.
- Marking pattern will be on General Awareness, Personality & Aptitude, Subject matter in relevant field, Relevant Experience, etc. for the post. The applicant has to obtain minimum 50% of the total marks on the above in the interview and only then the candidates will be short-listed.
- The office will not be responsible for any non submission of online application due to any error or other problem.
- The decision of the Selection Committee in all aspects and all respects pertaining to the application and its acceptance or rejection as the case may be, conduct of test and at all consequent stages concluding in the selection or otherwise of any candidate shall be final in all respects and binding on all concerned. The Mission also reserves its right to alter and modify time and conditions laid down in the notification for conducting the various stages up to selection or withdraw the Notification at any time, duly intimating details thereof to all concerned, as warranted by any unforeseen circumstances arising during the course of this process, or as deemed necessary by the Mission at any stage.



Janasanyog/DF/491/23

Sd/-
Mission Director,
Samagra Shiksha, Assam
Kahilipara, Guwahati-19

Engineers' body demands structural audit of bridges in Bihar

'State government was planning to demolish the under-construction bridge because of structural flaws'



PATNA, June 7 (PTI): Three days after the collapse of the four-lane Sultanganj-Aguwani Ghat Bridge in Bhagalpur, the Bihar Engineering Services Association (BESA) on Wednesday demanded a structural audit of all recently completed and under-construction bridges in the state. The BESA, which is an association of members of the Bihar Engineering Services as well as other state government undertakings, said the audit will identify flaws, weaknesses and deficiencies, if any, in the structures of all recently completed and under-construction bridges. The Khagaria side of the bridge collapsed on Sunday around 14 months after its Sultanganj side pillar number 5 had fallen on April 30 last year.

BESA general secretary Rakesh Kumar told PTI, "We must learn lessons from such incidents. A team of BESA members is collecting all relevant information from the ground. We will soon come out with our own report." "We, however, demand that the state government orders structural audit of all completed and under-construction bridges in the state," he said.

He said the audit will identify the flaws, weak-

nesses and deficiencies, if any.

The exercise will also safeguard properties and human lives, besides enhancing the longevity of structures, Kumar said.

Commenting on the Bihar government's decision to suspend the executive engineer of Khagaria division following the incident, he said, "The BESA is not questioning the government's action... but why no action was taken against the authority engineer of the project? It is the responsibility of the contractor and the authority engineer for any lapses in execution and quality work at the site."

"There are several questions that need to be answered," he said, adding that the body also demands specialised training for engineers before engaging them in the construction of bridges involving modern technology and high-technology construction techniques.

The Haryana-based company, which was awarded the contract, has already been served with a show-cause notice by the Bihar Rajya Pul Nirman Nigam (BRPNN) and asked to give its reply within 15 days of the incident.

The department concerned also suspended the

executive engineer for his failure to keep an eye on the quality of the work.

In a statement issued on Monday, the Canadian design and engineering firm behind the bridge, McElhanney, had said, "McElhanney is aware of the partial collapse of the Aguni-Sultanganj Ghat Bridge over Ganga River in India. We are deeply concerned about the safety and well-being of all affected by this incident and will cooperate with any investigation related to this incident. While we are unable to comment on the specifics of the incident at this time, we are committed to our core values of safety and care of our communities."

The under-construction bridge, a portion of which collapsed on Sunday, involved a cost of over ₹ 1,700 crore and was supposed to be completed by 2019. The foundation stone of the structure was laid in February 2014 by Chief Minister Nitish Kumar.

Soon after the collapse, Bihar deputy chief minister Tejashwi Yadav had said that the state government was anyway planning to demolish the under-construction bridge because of structural flaws. "It may be recalled that a portion of this bridge had collapsed on April 30 last year. We had, thereafter, approached IIT-Roorkee, which is esteemed for its expertise in construction matters, to conduct a study. It is yet to come up with a final report but experts who had studied the structure had informed us that there were serious defects," Yadav had said.

However, according to the latest data uploaded by the BRPNN on its website on May 29, the administrative approval of the project was given on November 14, 2013 by the then Nitish Kumar-led Bihar government and the project was supposed to be completed by November 2019, later rescheduled to June 30, 2023. "Till April 2023, work related to foundation and sub-structure of the bridge had been fully completed, but only 84.3 per cent of work related to super-structure was completed till April 2023," according to the latest BRPNN data.

Centre gives clearance to Delhi minister Atishi for UK visit

NEW DELHI, June 7 (PTI): The Centre on Wednesday informed the Delhi High Court that it has given clearance to city education minister Atishi to travel to the United Kingdom for an official visit next week.

The counsel for the Centre said the proposal has been sent to the economic affairs department for further approvals, which would also be processed and the petitioner can apply for requisite visa permits.

While Atishi's lawyer said the clearance was given by the ministry of external affairs (MEA) on Wednesday morning, the counsel for the Centre said it was granted on Tuesday itself.

"It was given yesterday on 6th. Political clearance has been granted. No need for any direction," the lawyer said. A vacation bench of Justice Chandra Dhari Singh told the Centre to clear the pending approval as well as it was "just a formality" after the MEA's nod. Agreeing with the judge, the Centre's counsel said, "Once political clearance is done then no department comes in the way".

In her petition, the AAP leader informed that she has been invited in her official capacity by Cambridge University to speak at a conference on 'India at 100: Towards Becoming a Global Leader' to be held on June 15. It also claimed that the petitioner has arranged multiple visits to primary schools in the UK to "ensure that Delhi's children gain from best practices in primary school education abroad" and that the trip would be "crucial for a for exchanging ideas on improving urban governance and showcasing Delhi's own progress in urban design".

Advocate Shadan Farasat, the lawyer appearing for the petitioner, said she has to travel to the UK from June 14 to 20 and urged the court to direct the finance ministry to process the pending proposal within a day.

Centre's counsel Pavan Narang asked the petitioner not to make "political statements" when clearance has been given in ordinary course and cast "aspersions on department" to show that the same was granted because of the petition.

"MEA requires 10 days' time. They come within 3 days and you start pressurising and filing frivolous applications before court without waiting for any deci-

sion. In normal course, within 10 days a decision is made, which is in their favour. Why are they in such a hurry when political clearance has been given," he argued.

Asking the petitioner to proceed with visa formalities on the basis of the MEA approval, he said, "Only certain clarification was sought from you. You supplied those information and we cleared."

Atishi, in her plea, stated that while the Delhi government accorded administrative clearance for travel last month, the central government "has only been responding" with queries and clarification after the lieutenant governor forwarded the proposal to it, thus delaying the whole process, including applying for a visa. "In the present matter, the respondents' non-decision on the matter till 06.06.2023, has left only eight days for all further formalities and visa approval, serving in effect as an arbitrary non-decision of the proposed visit," the plea said.

The petition - filed through lawyers Hrishika Jain, Aman Naqvi and Bharat Gupta - argued that restricting the petitioner's right to travel abroad on a discretionary basis impinges on her personal liberty.

It also contended that requiring constitutional functionaries and ministers in state government to seek the Centre's "political clearance" for travelling abroad violates the dignity and independence of a constitutional office.

A separate petition by city finance minister Kailash Gahlot challenging the provision which requires state government ministers, including the chief minister, to seek political clearances from the Centre for foreign visits is currently pending before the high court.

The petition was filed last year in the backdrop of Delhi chief minister Arvind Kejriwal being denied permission for his visit to Singapore for the 8th World Cities' Summit from July 31 to August 7, 2022.

Gahlot's petition has sought the issuance of guidelines to channel and guide the implementation of several Office Memoranda issued by the Cabinet Secretariat, empowering the Centre to grant or deny permission to state government ministers for foreign visits in their official capacity.

Chargesheet against outgoing WFI chief to be submitted by June 15: Thakur



NEW DELHI, June 7 (PTI): Sports minister Anurag Thakur on Wednesday said a chargesheet in the case into the allegations of sexual harassment against outgoing WFI chief Brijbhushan Sharan Singh will be filed by June 15. Addressing a press conference after a marathon meeting with the protesting wrestlers, Thakur also assured that the elections to the Wrestling Federation of India (WFI) will be held by June 30. Noting that the government has accepted every demand of the wrestlers, he said WFI will also have an internal complaints committee, headed by a woman. Thakur said the wrestlers had also demanded the withdrawal of cases against various academies and sportspersons as well as not allowing Singh and his associates to participate in the election process.

"All these issues were agreed by consensus," the sports minister said. Asked about the wrestlers' demand for Singh's arrest, Thakur said the investigation into the case will be completed and a chargesheet will be filed by June 15. This was the second meeting between the government and protesting wrestlers in a span of five days. The wrestlers had met home minister Amit Shah on Saturday night and apprised him of their demands.

Kolhapur Stone Pelting: Agitation over use of Tipu Sultan's image with offensive audio

Police send proposal to suspend internet



MUMBAI, June 7 (PTI): Wielding lathis, police in Maharashtra's Kolhapur on Wednesday dispersed hundreds of protesters after they pelted stones during a demonstration against the alleged use of Tipu Sultan's image along with an objectionable audio message as social media "status" by a few locals, an official said. A proposal to suspend internet services from Wednesday afternoon till Thursday evening, or depending on the situation, has been sent to authorities, a senior police official said. While personnel from the State Reserve Police Force (SRPF) have been deployed in the city, police have sought more cops from Satara, he said. Prohibitory orders have been issued till June 19 banning assembly of five or more persons, he said.

Tension rose in the city on Tuesday after two men allegedly put 18th-century Mysore ruler Tipu Sultan's image along with an offensive audio message as their social media "status".

A group of right-wing activists demanded action

against both men following which a case was registered against the two persons, said another official. Police registered another first information report (FIR) in the evening and arrested seven persons after more protests were held, the official said.

The protesters again hit the streets on Wednesday. "Some organisations had called for a Kolhapur bandh and the members of these organisations gathered at Shivaji Chowk today. After their demonstration ended, the crowd began to disperse but some miscreants started pelting stones, forcing police to use force against these people to disperse them," said Kolhapur Superintendent of Police Mahendra Pandit.

The SP said he informed the demonstrators about the action taken by police in the objectionable post case and appealed to them to maintain calm. He said force and teargas were used only after stones were hurled at houses and vehicles damaged.

Pandit said police have started tracing and detaining the miscreants.

Kolhapur collector Rahul Rekharwar said the district is known for its progressive approach. "I appeal to all the people to ensure that the image of Kolhapur as a progressive district remains intact. I urge them not to believe in rumours," he said. The collector said the situation is under control and additional police forces have been brought in, even as he requested the public to cooperate with the authorities and resolve issues through dialogue. Dipak Kesarkar, the guardian minister, said that action has been taken against those who had used Tipu Sultan's image along with an objectionable audio message.

Gehlot inaugurates Kaliteer lift, Silavat Anicut projects in Rajasthan

JAIPUR, June 7 (PTI): Rajasthan chief minister Ashok Gehlot on Wednesday inaugurated Kaliteer lift project and the Silavat Anicut project in the Dholpur district.

On this occasion, he called upon the people to conserve water and adopt more farming methods with less water.

Gehlot laid the foundation stone of the Kaliteer lift project and inaugurated the Silavat Anicut project through video conferencing from his residence.

He said these projects would increase the water level in the Dholpur district. Farmers will get sufficient water for irrigation for a long time, due to which they will be able to do farming throughout the year and their income will also increase.

According to a statement, Gehlot instructed the departmental officers to get the work of the Kaliteer lift project done in a timely and quality manner.

He said that water is a limited and priceless natural resource and urged people to adopt the method of water conservation and more farming with less water.

A total of ₹ 643 crore will be spent on the construction of the Kaliteer lift project in the Saranathur taluk of Baredi assembly. Parvati Dam and Ramsagar Dam will be filled to their full capacity every year by lifting about 180 metres of excessive water in the Chambal River during the rainy season. With this, irrigation facilities will be ensured in the command area. With the filling of these dams, water will always be available in Bamni, Parvati and Utangan rivers of the district.

With this project, necessary drinking water will also be available for 3 urban and 433 rural areas of Dholpur district. With the increase in the groundwater level of the district, the farmers will be able to have easy access to drinking water for irrigation and for the common people and animals.

Similarly, a 100-metre-long and 2-metre-high anicut has been made on Utangan river in Silavat village of Rajkheda taluk of Dholpur district. This anicut will benefit 12,000 people in villages, including Silavat, Jawahar ka Pura, Katarpura and Kasiapura.

CBI raids multiple locations in Bengal linked with 'job scam' in civic bodies

KOLKATA, June 7 (PTI): The Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI) on Wednesday conducted raids at multiple locations in West Bengal in connection with its probe into alleged irregularities in recruitment in civic bodies, an official said.

Slueths of the central agency started search operations this morning in 14 municipalities, including South Dum Dum, Panihati, Kanchrapara, Chinsurah and Dum Dum. The CBI teams also raided the office of the state urban development department in the Salt Lake area, he said. According to the official, allegations of cash-for-jobs had surfaced over appointments of personnel in these civic bodies for which the search operations were taking place. Reacting to the CBI raids, state Municipal Affairs and Urban Development Minister Firhad Hakim said this is "part of a conspiracy" hatched by the BJP.

"There are reasons to believe that it is an act of revenge by the BJP which has been using central agencies against its political opponents. We have nothing against fair investigations but we believe that such raids are part of a conspiracy. We want the truth to come out," he told reporters.



BJP state spokesperson Samik Bhattacharya claimed that the CBI is investigating the alleged job scam in municipalities on the direction of the Calcutta High Court, and thus, the TMC's claim about conspiracy is "baseless".

"Hakim is aware of the fact that sections of TMC workers are disgruntled for not getting jobs in local civic bodies and they are happy with the court's order and CBI searches,"

Bigger agitation than anti-farm laws stir needed on MSP issue: Tikait

CHANDIGARH, June 7 (PTI): Bharatiya Kisan Union leader Rakesh Tikait on Wednesday said an agitation bigger than the one against the now repealed farm laws will have to be launched for a legal guarantee on the minimum support price. Tikait condemned Haryana Police's lathicharge on protesting farmers who had blocked a national highway in Kurukshetra's Shahabad on Tuesday demanding that the government procure sunflower seeds at Minimum Support Price (MSP).

"This is the first lathicharge in the country on those demanding MSP," he said, while adding that MSP for crops is a pan-India issue.

He said the struggle that began in Shahabad would reach the national level as every farmer is concerned about the MSP for different crops. "An agitation bigger than the one in Delhi (farmers' agitation against now repealed farm laws) will have to be undertaken for MSP," he told reporters in Karnal.

Tikait reached Shahabad to meet the farmers and support their demand for MSP on sunflower seeds.

Nine leaders of the Bharatiya Kisan Union (Charuni), including its president Gurnam Singh Charuni, were arrested after farmers blocked the highway in Shahabad. Speaking on the ongoing wrestlers' protest in the national capital, he said the farmer unions are in favour of talks being held between the government and the grapplers to resolve the issue.

A meeting between the wrestlers, led by Olympic medalist Bajrang Punia, and Sports Minister Anurag Thakur was held at his Delhi residence on Wednesday morning. Thakur called the meeting to break the deadlock as the wrestlers have been adamant that they will continue their stir till Wrestling Federation of India (WFI) chief Brij Bhushan Sharan Singh, who has been accused of sexual harassment by grapplers, is arrested. Tikait too demanded that Singh be arrested. "We've said talks should be held between the government and the wrestlers. They held a meeting with Union home minister (Amit Shah) earlier and now with the sports minister," he said.

Experts panel meet on conservation, restoration of Jantar Mantar postponed: ASI officials

Being a national monument, Jantar Mantar must be preserved by all concerned: SCI

NEW DELHI, June 7 (PTI): The meeting of a fresh expert committee constituted by the ASI for the conservation, preservation, restoration and proper functionality of the Jantar Mantar observatory, which was scheduled to take place on June 7, has been postponed due to some "administrative reasons", officials said on Wednesday.

The meeting is now expected to take place in the next few days, they said.

"Some of the members of the new expert committee, including a top ASI official, were not available for the meeting on June 7. Efforts are being made to schedule the meeting on the next feasible date," a senior official of the ASI told PTI.

So, the meeting has been postponed due to administrative reasons, he said.

The Archaeological Survey of India (ASI) had set up the panel more than a month ago. Late April, the ASI had informed the Delhi High Court that an expert committee has been formed for the conservation, preservation, restoration and proper functionality of the Jantar Mantar observatory here.

Jantar Mantar was built by Maharaja Jai Singh of Jaipur in 1724. Jai Singh had found the existing astronomical instruments too small to take correct measurements and so



he built these larger and more accurate instruments.

A listed monument under the ASI and a public landmark, it is a popular tourist destination in Delhi and lends name to a prominent street near it.

"By August 31, we expect to have a couple of meetings of the new panel, and get the work going," the official said.

The fresh expert committee includes a few of the current and former ASI officials, and two experts -- Dr Alok Pandya, professor and Head of the Department of Physics at

the Indira Gandhi National Tribal University, Amarkantak, and Sandeep Bhattacharya, director (retired) of the BM Birla Planetarium, Jaipur, he said.

Noted astronomy communicator and former director of the Nehru Planetarium, Nandivada Rathnasree, was member of a panel earlier, but she died in 2021, the official added.

In April, the court had said it "reasonably" expects the committee to hold its meeting at the earliest for taking steps towards the preservation, restoration and proper func-

tionality of the monument and sought a status report indicating the measures taken by it in this regard.

The court's order came on a contempt petition seeking action against authorities for the non-compliance of a September 2010 high court order, in which the ASI had given an undertaking that Jantar Mantar shall be made functional and be restored to its original glory to the best of its ability.

Earlier this year, the court had directed the ASI to file a report on the existing status of the functionality of the instruments at Jantar Mantar.

The court also asked the superintending archaeologist to remain present before it on the next date of hearing on August 31.

The petitioner had earlier submitted that the central issue in the present proceedings is that the instruments at the Jantar Mantar monument are not in a functional state and added that despite the passage of 12 years, "things remain unchanged".

The 2010 order was passed on a petition raising the grievance that Jantar Mantar in Delhi was not in a functional position due to various reasons.

The court had said being a national monument, Jantar Mantar must be preserved by all concerned.

Inebriated miscreants attempt to kidnap JNU students from campus

NEW DELHI, June 7 (PTI): The Jawaharlal Nehru University Students' Union (JNUSU) on Wednesday alleged that some inebriated men in a car entered the campus and attempted to kidnap two students.

The incident took place on Tuesday night and police have registered two cases based on complaints from students of the university.

The JNU administration said it has taken "serious note" of the matter and demanded the "strictest punishment" against the perpetrators.

"Two complaints -- one regarding physical assault and another on molestation, attempt to kidnap -- have been received from JNU students. Cases have been registered," Deputy Commissioner of Police (southwest) Manoj C said.

"In both cases, the accused and the vehicle are the same and have been identified. Further investigation is on," he said.

Demanding that the vice-chancellor lodge a police complaint as well, the JNUSU said, "JNU VC also should file the complaint with the Delhi Police on the incident that has happened. The VC should



also address the JNU community on the repeated security failure that has been happening on the campus."

One of the students who was attacked underwent a medical examination and filed a complaint, the JNUSU added.

Condemning the incident, the JNU administration said, "We have taken serious note of the incident and a police complaint has been lodged. The JNU administration has been closely coordinating with the police in the process of investigation. It has recommended strictest punishment to perpetrators of the crime."

"In case of any information related to this incident, residents are advised to immediately contact the security branch (011-26742878, 011-26704742) or the police," the statement added.

The administration also asked the stakeholders to remain vigilant while the investigation is underway, adding that it has taken steps to bolster the security of the campus residents.

It said the varsity practices "zero tolerance" for any form of violence and is "committed towards providing a safe and secure environment to all".

"The safety and fearless move-

ment of women on the campus is our topmost priority and we are committed to stringent enforcement of the law dealing with sexual harassment in any form or by anyone," the statement added.

Hours after the incident, the security department of JNU announced that the entry of outside vehicles into the campus will be restricted from 10 pm to 6 am.

Condemning the incident, ABVP JNU said it stands in solidarity with the victims and demanded the resignation of the chief security officer (CSO).

"We vehemently condemn such events and stand in solidarity with the victims. JNU campus in Delhi has long been hailed as one of the safest places for women in the city. However, recent incidents have raised serious questions about the effectiveness of the security measures in place. We demand an immediate resignation of the incompetent CSO," it said in a statement.

The students' organisation also demanded a "secure and inclusive" campus environment where the safety of all students, particularly women, is considered a top priority.

Mukhtar Ansari's gang member shot dead in Lucknow court

LUCKNOW, June 7 (PTI): Gangster-politician Mukhtar Ansari's alleged aide Sanjeev Maheshwari Jeeva was shot dead on Lucknow court premises on Wednesday, police said. Two persons were injured in the shooting. The alleged assailant was caught on the spot, police said. Eyewitnesses said he was dressed as a lawyer.

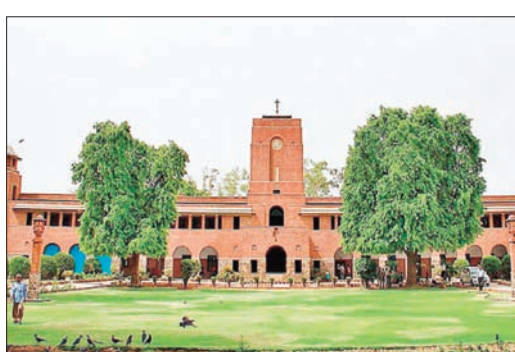
"Sanjeev Maheshwari Jeeva, who was held in Lucknow jail, was brought to the court for hearing in a case and was shot dead by an unknown assailant," a police officer said.

Jeeva (48) was a resident of Muzaffarnagar district. He was accused in the murder of BJP MLA Krishnanand Rai and then state minister Brahm Dutta Dwivedi as well as 24 other cases, including that of murder, fraud and criminal conspiracy. A two-year-old girl and a police constable who sustained gunshot injuries in the shootout were rushed to hospital, police officials said, adding the girl's condition was critical while the constable was in a stable state.

Brahm Dutta Dwivedi along with his gunner was killed on February 10, 1997, in Farukhabad district.

A trial court on July 17, 2003, convicted Jeeva for commissioning the killing of Dwivedi and his gunner and also committing a murderous assault on his driver. The court sentenced Jeeva to life imprisonment in the case.

Prominent citizens support Delhi University decision to include Savarkar in syllabus



NEW DELHI, June 7 (PTI): A group of former judges, bureaucrats, diplomats and generals on Wednesday came out in support of the Delhi University's decision to include V D Savarkar in its political science syllabus, contending that it was required for a fair narration of the history of India's national movement.

In a statement, the group also supported the varsity's decision to drop poet Mohammad Iqbal from the syllabus, arguing that his writings were associated with the idea of a separate Muslim nation, which led to the "tragedy of India's partition".

"Grave injustice was done to many historical personalities who laid down their lives for this country to help India break free from the clutches of British imperialism," said a statement, issued by 123 prominent personalities that include former Foreign Secretary Shashank, former High Court judges S N Dingra, M C Garg and R S Rathore, among others.

"It is particularly unfortunate that till the current inclusion of Savarkar's contribution and philosophy in the Delhi University syllabus, universities under Congress-Leftist influence intentionally suppressed his contribution and ideas for our great motherland," the statement said.

It noted that Savarkar was called "The Father of

Hindutva" for his enunciation of 'Hindutva' ideology in his remarkable piece of literature "Hindutva: Who is a Hindu".

"He propagated 'Hindutva' as a geopolitical concept, unifying diverse communities under a shared cultural and civilizational identity," the statement said.

It said Savarkar simultaneously championed Dalit rights and worked ardently towards caste eradication and promoting social equality, and his vision of India as one nation was central to the ideology of "Akhand Bharat".

"Savarkar's views on freedom, social reform, and national unity make him an enduring figure in Indian history. By studying Savarkar's political ideologies, students will gain insight into the factors that shaped India's nationalist movement and its subsequent trajectory," the statement said.

It described poet Iqbal, who had penned the song "Saare Jahan Se Achha Hindostan Hamara", as a "divisive figure" who sowed the seeds of secession in the country.

"As President of the then Punjab Muslim League, he (Iqbal) championed the cause of a separate Muslim nation. Iqbal who wrote 'Saare Jahan Se Achha Hindostan Hamara...' goes on to talk about Islamic Khilafat, recommended Islamic Ummah and changed 'Saare Jahan Se Achha Hindostan Hamara' to 'Chino-o-Arab Hamara, Hindostan Hamara, Muslim Hai Hum, Watan hai Saara Jahan Hamara'," the statement said.

"Iqbal became radicalised and as the President of the Muslim League, his ideas ran counter to democracy and Indian secularism. Many of Iqbal's writings have been associated with the idea of a separate Muslim nation, ultimately leading to the tragedy of India's partition," it said.

"This concept of the Two-Nation Theory played a significant role in the partition of India, resulting in the trauma and suffering of millions of displaced in India's East and West," the statement said.

Bajwa slams AAP for 'baseless' allegations

CHANDIGARH, June 7 (PTI): Congress leader Partap Singh Bajwa Wednesday said the ruling AAP is targeting him with "baseless" allegations as he opposed the support sought by the Arvind Kejriwal-led outfit from his party over the Centre's ordinance on control of services in the national capital.

Bajwa has rejected the allegations by AAP leaders led by finance minister Harpal Singh Cheema who have accused him of insulting the Dalit

community with his alleged comments against AAP legislator Labh Singh Ugoke. Bajwa was under fire from the Aam Aadmi Party leaders who had alleged that the leader of opposition in the Punjab assembly had "mocked" Ugoke who had once run a mobile repair shop.

Bajwa, while speaking at the office of a Punjabi daily in Jalandhar a few days ago, had reportedly said one of them (who became AAP MLAs) was a "mobile charger". He was referring

to Bhadaur legislator Ugoke who defeated former chief minister Charanjit Singh Channi in the 2022 assembly polls.

AAP leader Cheema had alleged that Bajwa was "unable to digest a mobile repairman becoming an MLA" and also asked the Congress leader to apologise for his statement within a week.

Addressing the media here on Wednesday, Bajwa said he did not say anything wrong nor made any casteist

remark and added that he was just meant to say that the AAP leaders have "double standards".

"FM Cheema levelled completely baseless charges against me and it really pained me. In 45 years of my political career, nobody has ever made such allegations against me," said Bajwa who was accompanied by party's Dalit MLAs including Aruna Chaudhary, Balwinder Singh Dhaliwal, Raj Kumar, Sukhwinder Singh Kotli, and party MP Amar Singh.

Toning up state organisation, NDA expansion on BJP's agenda

NEW DELHI, June 7 (PTI): The BJP is looking to inject a sense of cohesion in its organisation in election-bound states like Madhya Pradesh and Telangana, where factionalism has become an issue, and expand the ruling NDA amid the brainstorming among its senior leader over organisational matters.

Another issue on the party's agenda is the expansion of the ruling National Democratic Alliance, which has seen steady depletion in the recent years with traditional BJP allies like the Janata Dal (United) and Akali Dal leaving over organisational matters.

The recent meeting between Telugu Desam Party, which had left the NDA in 2018, supreme N Chandrababu Naidu and Home Minister Amit Shah has sparked buzz about the revival of ties, something the Andhra Pradesh leader has been pursuing assiduously.

An "expanded" NDA may meet soon, a BJP leader said. But it remains to be seen if the BJP will formally join hands with the TDP as it has also had good equations with the state's Chief Minister Jagan Mohan Reddy.

An alliance between the two parties may push Reddy's YSR Congress into the opposition camp. It is a call top party leaders will take, BJP sources said on the possibility of their alliance with the TDP.

While the party has been working on its plans to retain power at the Centre in the 2024 Lok Sabha polls, upcoming state polls are also an immediate priority, more so after the loss it faced in Karnataka from the Congress, which will be its main challenger in three of the four big assembly polls scheduled for this year.

Assembly polls are also due this year in Rajasthan and Chhattisgarh, both Congress-ruled states.

The term of BJP's Madhya Pradesh president V D Sharma has completed, and his less than warm relations with Chief Minister Shivraj Singh Chouhan means that its organisation, which has traditionally been known to be among its strongest state units, is not in the best of shape.

With an energised Congress eyeing a return to power in the state, the BJP leadership may effect some changes, sources said.

They said the BJP's rising graph in Telangana has suffered setbacks of late, with a number of local satraps complaining against the leadership style of its state president Bandi Sanjay Kumar.



A senior party leader praised Kumar's "ideological firmness" and "hardwork" to rejuvenate the organisation but added that he has been not able to take along everyone, especially strong local leaders who have joined the BJP from other parties in the last few years.

The Congress' win in Karnataka has energised its ranks and its focus to boost its presence in neighbouring Telangana after years of marginalisation has added to the BJP's worry, with the ruling Bharat Rashtira Samithi also going all out to retain power.

The BJP's drive to get bigwigs from other parties to join it in the state has not paid much dividends in the last few months, an issue which has been discussed within the organisation, sources said.

Incidentally, Kumar's three-year term as party president has got over and its national leadership has to decide, as in Madhya Pradesh too, if it will continue with him till the assembly elections or not.

Another state where the party has to take a call on organisational rejig is Karnataka where it is yet to appoint a leader of opposition.

It may also replace its state unit president Nalin Kumar Kanteel. His term has got over months back but the party continued with him due to the elections, which were held in May.

Home Minister Shah, BJP president J P Nadda and the party's national general secretary (organisation) B L Santhosh have held marathon meetings on Monday and Tuesday over a host of organisational issues.

Sources said the meetings took stock of the political situation and organisational affairs.

The BJP may affect some changes in its organisation in some states and assign new roles to its office-bearers.

Contd. from Page 1...

BJP spent ₹ 49 cr on Himachal

The BJP has shown its expenditure at ₹ 49.69 crore in Himachal Pradesh. The BJP spent ₹ 15.19 crore on travel of its star campaigners, ₹ 8.5 crore on publicity and ₹ 18.57 crore for funding its candidates, according to the party's expenditure report.

Cabinet approves ₹ 89,047 cr for 4G

for 4G and 5G to a consortium led by IT major Tata Consultancy Service and state-owned technology development organisation Centre for Development of Telematics (CDoT). State-owned ITI has been allocated 20 per cent of the work but it will also source technology from the TCS-CDoT-led consortium.

The minister said that the capex was part of the second package worth ₹ 1.64 lakh crore that was approved by the Cabinet in 2022.

The government provided the first revival package worth ₹ 69,000 crore for BSNL and MTNL in 2019. It provided financial support for capex, viability gap funding for rural landlines, financial support for distressing the balance sheet and settlement of AGR dues, merger of BBNL with BSNL, etc. As a result of these two packages, the total debt of BSNL has been reduced from ₹ 32,944 crore to ₹ 22,289 crore.

The minister said that with the help of the first and second package, BSNL posted an operational profit of ₹ 1,559 crore in the financial year ended March 2023 and it will become a debt-free company in the next three years. BSNL has started rolling out a 4G network with 200 sites, and after a three-month trial, it will launch an average of 200 sites per day.

BSNL Chairman and Managing Director PK Purwar said the tender that has been awarded to the TCS-CDoT consortium is sufficient to roll out services in all the spectrum bands that the company will get.

He said that BSNL has taken over mobile service operations of its debt-ridden sister concern MTNL in Delhi and Mumbai.

When asked about the expected timeline for the rollout of 4G and 5G services in Delhi and Mumbai, Purwar said it will be available after a year.

When asked about the revival status of MTNL, Vaishnav said that it is a complex issue and is being dealt with separately.

Nagaland to take action against

hostels, and restaurants very soon to check the food products, from fresh vegetables to fruits to dry commodities. He also said safety is no accident and everyone should be aware of it. "Let your food be your medicine, and your medicine be your food," he said. Sema added that Nagaland is not a dustbin for adulterated, substandard products from within and outside the country.

He said there is no food security without food safety, since it has a direct impact on health. He added that food safety has a positive impact on economies and livelihoods and protects both producers and consumers.

A demonstration on common food adulterant detection was also held during the programme. Officials from the health and family welfare department, Kohima Smart City Development Limited, and other departments were present at the programme. (With inputs from PTI)

BJP dares Bihar government to

the incident to the CBI. "The truth will come out if the state government hands over the case to the CBI for investigation," he said.

A comprehensive probe should be conducted into the incident to identify those involved and unravel the truth behind it, he added.

On Monday, Kumar had said strict action would be taken against those found guilty in the bridge collapse incident. He said he had also asked the department concerned to probe why the project, which was started in 2014, was running behind schedule.

Triennial conference of KAHBCS

The meeting for the formation of the reception committee was jointly chaired by president KAHBS, Ram Lal Chauhan, and president KAHBCS, Radheshyam Chauhan. Secretaries of both the association and the public were present during the reception committee formation meeting.

3 killed after ambulance set

border with Imphal West, close to the Meitei village of Phayeng. The area has been seeing heavy exchange of fire in the second wave of violence across the state since May 27.

Violent clashes broke out in the northeastern state after a "Tribal Solidarity March" was organised in the hill districts on May 3 to protest against the Meitei community's demand for Scheduled Tribe (ST) status.

Clashes were preceded by tension over eviction of Kuki villagers from reserve forest land, which had led to a series of smaller agitations.

Meiteis account for about 53 per cent of Manipur's population and live mostly in the Imphal Valley. Tribals — Nagas and Kukis — constitute another 40 per cent of the population and reside in the hill districts.

Governor takes stock of the

Shri Pranjit Borah, superintendent of Police, Chirang, Abhishek Jain, ADC in-charge SDO(C), Bijnai, addl deputy commissioners, circle officers, assistant commissions, and all heads of the departments of Chirang district were present in the meeting. Guardian minister of Chirang district and minister of Handloom and Textiles, Urkhao Gwra Brahma was also present during the media briefing.

CSIR scientists looking into lavender's

turn out to be a money spinner for the farmers. The other byproduct of the steam distillation process is hydrosol, or lavender-scented water, which can be used in making room sprays, bathroom fresheners and body sprays. Even dried stalks of lavender flowers have a good market as they retain their fragrance for two years.

Besides lavender, the Aroma Mission aims to inject scientific research and development into the cultivation of aromatic plants such as rose, lemon grass, rosemary and wild marigold.

The CSIR-IIIM introduced lavender and provided more than 30 lakh free plants to the farmers of different districts of Jammu and Kashmir.

The institute was also instrumental in providing an end-to-end technology package for cultivation, processing, value addition, and marketing of the lavender crop to the farmers.

It has also installed 45 fixed and five mobile distillation units at different locations across Jammu and Kashmir to support farmers in processing their produce. Lavender oil production by farmers in Bhandarwah has witnessed a five-fold increase from 300 litres in 2019 to 1,500 litres in 2022, an official said.

Kerala govt adopts divine route to fight climate change

THIRUVANANTHAPURAM, June 7 (PTI): The CPI (M)-led government in Kerala has adopted a divine way to tackle climate change and its negative impacts in the state.

It has launched an ambitious project to improve the green cover of over 3000 temples being managed by five Devaswom Boards under its control.

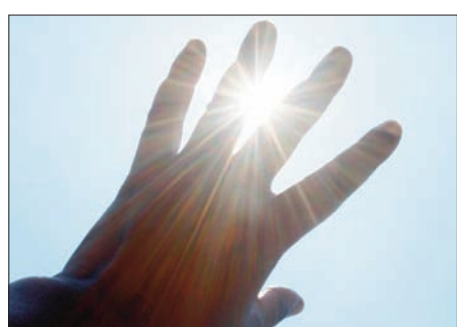
Besides, the project also envisages preserving the water resources by renovating the abandoned temple ponds and protecting the sacred groves in the state.

'Devankanam Charuharitham' (Beautiful Green Abodes of God), the project will be implemented in 3800 plus temples across the state that are managed by five Devaswom Boards.

State Devaswom Minister K Radhakrishnan inaugurated the project on June 5 on the occasion of World Environment Day by planting a sapling on the courtyard of the headquarters of the Travancore Devaswom Board (TDB) here.

Travancore Devaswom Board President K Ananthagopalan said that an order in this regard has been issued and circulated to all devaswom boards in the state.

"The Devaswom boards in Kerala have several temples that have good land banks. So, our idea is to grow trees in these lands so that we can improve the green cover," Ananthagopalan



told PTI.

The temples will also plant various flowering plants and fruit-bearing trees in temple compounds so that they can also produce flowers and fruits for daily use in the temple, helping these temples to be self-reliant, he said.

The TDB, which manages several temples, from the districts of Thiruvananthapuram to Ernakulam, has also directed all its assistant commissioners to collect data regarding the temple ponds that are in dilapidated condition.

"Temple ponds are a main source of water in various areas. So, these ponds will be renovated and preserved with funding from the government," Ananthagopalan said.

Devaswom Boards are also protecting vari-

ous sacred groves (places of worship with serpent deities kept in the open in a protected natural forest).

"We already have very big sacred groves that are preserved. Once the other temples also grow their own green cover, we can improve the green cover considerably," the Devaswom Board president said.

The idea is to make temples in the state symbols of environmental protection, and apart from the Travancore Devaswom Board, Kochi, Malabar, Guruvayur, and Koodalmanickam Devaswom Boards are also implementing this project in their temples.

As an extension, the properties belonging to the Devaswom Boards will also be made part of the project.

The Kerala government already has a project called 'Kavum Kulavum' (Sacred Groves and Ponds), where the government is providing a grant to private individuals for protecting sacred groves and ponds on their private properties.

"Temples are always environment-friendly, and they use only organic materials that are derived from nature for pujas and other rituals. So it is a natural extension to make these temples symbols of environmental protection and create awareness among the public," Ananthagopalan said.

'The Lunchbox' stimulates two basic urges of human beings, love and food: Nimrat Kaur on 10 yrs of film

NEW DELHI, June 7 (PTT): Love and food... Everyone has a story connecting these two fundamental needs and one such story is "The Lunchbox", says actor Nimrat Kaur on why the film continues to stay relevant even after a decade.

The movie, directed by Ritesh

nektion to both of these sentiments. And, it also addressed loneliness.

"It also addressed unrequited wishes, and it was such a love letter to Bombay. So it's a gift that's going to keep giving and I'm very, very grateful for it. For me, it's a turning point. It's a milestone in

around Ila, a neglected young homemaker (Kaur) who forms a bond with a stranger through a delicious change of fate when the lunchbox intended for her husband gets delivered to Saajan (Irrfan), a reclusive widower, who is about to retire from his accountancy job and has to train his replacement (Siddiqui).

Kaur, who was a relatively newer face in the industry back then, said every film has its journey and even director Batra and co-star Irrfan didn't visualise what a phenomenon "The Lunchbox" would go on to become.

"Every project has its destiny, which no one can foresee. I believe 'The Lunchbox' was genuinely one of those projects that no one would have expected (it to be) the kind of a rage it became.

"No one had expected that, including Irrfan, Ritesh or anyone. I was just a new face. I was just picked up for the

project because they were looking for a person who didn't carry the baggage of other jobs, a lot of exposure on screen," Kaur added.

Following "The Lunchbox", the actor went on to star in the acclaimed American TV series "Homeland". She currently stars in "School of Lies", a series currently streaming on Disney+ Hotstar.



Batra and also starring Irrfan Khan and Nawazuddin Siddiqui, had its world premiere at International Critics' Week at the 2013 Cannes Film Festival. It was released in theatres on September 20, 2013.

Kaur said the film resonates with the audience even today because of its relatable themes.

"I feel people relate to it ('The Lunchbox') because it stimulates the two basic urges of a human being, which is love and food. All of us have some stories, some con-



life. It's given me everything I am," Kaur told PTT.

"The Lunchbox" is a tender epistolary romance which revolves

Naga Chaitanya's 'Custody' set for streaming debut on Prime Video

MUMBAI, June 7 (PTT): Actor Naga Chaitanya's action-thriller "Custody" will make its OTT debut on Prime Video on June 9, the streamer announced Wednesday.

The Telugu feature, written and directed by Prabhu, was released in theatres countrywide in May. It also stars actor Kriti Shetty.

The film will be available for streaming in Telugu and Tamil along with dubs in Malayalam and Kannada, Prime Video said in a statement.

"Custody" sees Chaitanya playing the role of Shiva, a young con-

stable tasked with the high-risk responsibility of transporting a dangerous criminal named Raju (Arvind Swami) to the court in Bengaluru.

Unaware of Raju's role as a key witness against a powerful senior minister, Shiva finds himself becoming a target, along with the criminal he's escorting. As they navigate a treacherous journey, Shiva must protect Raju and ensure his testimony reaches the courtroom. Prabhu said "Custody" presents a unique "blend of drama, action, and thrill", catering to the tastes of the audience.

"With Naga Chaitanya in the lead, we have explored a new layer to the character, which he plays to perfection. And Kriti Shetty lights up the screen with her presence and charm..."

"Custody" is extremely special for me, and I am glad that with the exclusive global streaming premiere on Prime Video, audiences in over 240 countries and territories will be able to watch and enjoy it," the filmmaker said.

"Custody" is produced by Srinivasaa Chitturi through his production banner Srinivasaa Silver Screen.

DIDN'T WANT TO BE A BLOTCH IN HIS BEAUTEOUS CAREER GRAPH: KARAN JOHAR ON NOT DIRECTING IRRFAN

NEW DELHI, June 7 (PTT): The fear of being a "blotch" in late actor Irrfan Khan's otherwise beautiful career graph kept filmmaker Karan Johar from directing the "very sexy" star.

In an interview with journalist-author Shubhra Gupta for her book "Irrfan: Life in Movies", Johar admitted that Irrfan was way stronger than anything he could have ever offered him.

"He (Irrfan) was way stronger than anything I could have ever offered him. I never arrived at a screenplay, a film, a thought or an idea that would warrant the presence of the magnitude that Irrfan Khan brought to the table.

"That's the reason I've never had a film with Irrfan because I've never wanted to be that filmmaker that gave him a substandard mainstream film. I didn't want to be the blotch in his otherwise beautiful career graph," said Johar, as quoted in the book.

The filmmaker, known for directing blockbusters like "Kuch Kuch Hota Hai", "Kabhi Khushi Kabhie Gham", "My Name Is Khan" and "Ae Dil Hai Mushkil", said Irrfan's death in April 2020 from a rare form of cancer was a "terrible" loss.

Ironically, after Irrfan's death at least "five scripts" landed on Johar's table that the director believed would have been perfect for the "Paan Singh Tomar" actor.

"There are at least five scripts that landed on my table after he passed away that were screaming Irrfan Khan. I just feel terrible. And you know why those scripts came to my table now? Because now is the time that cinema is ready for that material and that material was all Irrfan Khan," he explained.

The 51-year-old filmmaker counts not directing Irrfan and Sridevi as the two regrets of his life.

Recalling how he and his friend, fellow director Zoya Akhtar, agreed that there was "no other actor like Irrfan Khan", Johar also spoke about the late actor's little discussed but "tremendous sex appeal".

"It's very important to say that women found him sexy; he had tremendous sex appeal. You know,

always, it's the actors who do the more cerebral, the more intellectual, the more critic-friendly cinema that you don't associate with sex appeal, somehow. I think Irrfan Khan was very sexy, and it was a huge icing on his terrific talent cake," he said.

Taking solace in the fact that he has at least one of Irrfan's movies, "The Lunchbox", on his roster -- even if he was just a presenter on that film -- Johar, one of India's most bankable producer-director, said to him the actor's "real breakthrough moment commercially" came with the 2017 film "Hindi Medium".

"Hindi Medium" did business of about seventy crores purely on account of a simple, high-concept, small film, and Irrfan did it entirely on his own... That's when I think everyone woke up to the fact that Irrfan Khan is a numbers man as well. "Up to the point, everything else -- Life in a... Metro and everything that you said -- had a great actor, great idea, he worked very well. But when 'Hindi Medium' came out and it did the numbers, that's when the industry woke up to his commercial possibilities," he added.

Unfortunately, it was as late as that, Johar said.

"Irrfan: Life in

Movies", published by Pan Macmillan India, hit the stands on Wednesday.

The book offers a compelling account of Irrfan's life and achievements -- starting from his days at the NSD to his nearly a decade-long stint in television and his gradual ascent in the film industry.

It engages key people, including Irrfan's wife Sutapa Sikdar, director Mira Nair, Vishal Bhardwaj, and Anurag Basu in conversation on the iconic actor's art, craft and legacy.



'ZARA HATKE ZARA BACHKE' BEYOND NUMBERS, SAYS VICKY KAUSHAL ON BOX OFFICE SUCCESS OF THE FILM

MUMBAI, June 7 (PTT): Actor Vicky Kaushal on Wednesday said he always knew that a "simple story" like "Zara Hatke Zara Bachke" will connect with people, which is why the love that the movie is receiving theatrically is "beyond numbers" for the team.

Directed by Laxman Utekar, best known for "Luka Chuppi" and "Mimi", the Kaushal and Sara Ali Khan-starrer film released in theatres on June 2. It has earned Rs 30.60 crore in India.

Kaushal said the film, about an Indore-based couple struggling for privacy in a joint family set up, was narrated to him during the second wave of the coronavirus pandemic when theatrical releases were not doing well.

"The film was narrated to us right after the second wave of COVID when the situation was a lot more tense. It was like, 'What will happen to Bollywood? What kind of films are coming, not coming?' Then a simple story like this came to me. I just knew this will connect with people," Kaushal told reporters here at the success event of the movie.

The actor said despite their belief that the family film would connect with the audience, there were times when the team was unsure.

"In between a lot of mind play also happens that this film has released and worked, so only that kind of film will work and others won't. In between all of this, maybe we forgot that we began with the thought that this film will connect with people.

"In the last five days, we have realised that this is what we would feel in all our meetings that people will connect with it. Now, that people are loving it, for us, it's even beyond numbers... To see families coming and watching the film is the real joy. Now that the film has worked in cinema halls, we are here to thank all of you."

Kaushal said Utekar was "most confident" about the film's theatrical potential.

"More than us winning, this is the victory of the audience. They have reiterated that only their power matters," he added. Expressing gratitude to audience and her producer Di-

nesh Vijan, Sara termed "Zara Hatke Zara

Bachke" as her second debut as it's her first theatrical release after her 2020 film "Love Aaj Kal".

"A lot of times during the pandemic I would often wonder, 'Will films release in theaters like before?' Like, will the day come back again when I will see myself on the big screen?"

"I believe in signs and positivity. I was in 'Kedarnath' and (now) Dino sir, he is bringing this film on big screen. I am so grateful to him. Honestly, it is my debut again because it's been half a decade," she said, adding, "thank you to the audience for accepting the film".

Sara, 27, also thanked her director for giving her the opportunity to play the role of Somya and co-star Vicky Kaushal for being the "most superb partner". "It was

outstanding to work with you. I don't want to talk about how talented you are because everyone knows that. You are so humble, gracious," she said.

Utekar said Vijan could have easily released the film on a streamer but he took the risk to release it theatrically.

"I want to thank Dino, I am so grateful to him. He had every logical reason to bring this on an OTT platform and he would have been completely correct in everyone's eyes. But he took that risk of getting a film like this to cinema halls in today's times... to take that call is a huge thing," the director said.

He further said the success of "Zara Hatke Zara Bachke" has broken the myth that only big scale spectacle films will click at the box office.

Utekar dismissed the notion that 'buy one get one ticket free' offer is the reason behind the success of "Zara Hatke Zara Bachke". He said a good film will always find its audience.

"They are saying, 'The film is working because of the buy one get one free offer on ticket...'. If a product is good, even if it's not free, people will buy. We did make a good film. Thank you so much Dino for taking the film to its audience," he said.

Co-produced by Maddock Films and Jio Studios, "Zara Hatke Zara Bachke" also stars Inaamulhaq, Sushmita Mukherjee, Neeraj Sood, Rakesh Bedi and Sharib Hashmi.



IPL is envy of world but pull out Test cricket from danger zone: Engineer

LONDON, June 7 (PTI): The IPL being the "envy of the world" delights former India wicketkeeper Farokh Engineer but he also wants the stakeholders to bring Test cricket out of "danger" zone.

While financially strong nations like India, England and Australia remain committed to Test cricket, players from smaller countries are preferring to ply their trade in franchise leagues around the world as they offer better money.

"Test cricket being in danger is not a good thing. It is good that the game is prospering all over the world through T20 leagues but Test cricket should never be sacrificed," Engineer told PTI. "That is why the World Test

Championship is a showcase to the world that Test cricket can be just as interesting as limited overs cricket. "It is a game of chess depending on the conditions. It is the ultimate test for batters. There should be room for both Test and limited overs cricket," said the 85-year-old, who has travelled to London from his Manchester base to watch the WTC final between India and Australia.

The final is being played at The Oval, where India won their first ever Test in England back in 1971. Engineer had played a big part in that momentous win with a 59 in the first innings.

It is remarkable that even at this age, Engineer continues to watch the game closely, including the T20 leagues around the



world, as he feels it is important to keep up with the times.

He played the game when cricketers earned Rs 50 a day, but he could not be more happy that

the current generation is making millions in the IPL.

"India have taken a lead in Test cricket and in limited overs cricket we have IPL which is the

envy of the world. Indian cricket holds the strings and that makes me hugely delighted," said of one the few Parsi cricketers to have played for India.

He is also of the view that the game was hugely popular even in his heyday and now leagues have taken the game to different locations. "I watch cricket all the time. It is in my blood. Cricket is an Indian game accidentally invented by the British. I feel the game was just as popular back then but with T20 it has mushroomed to different places.

"IPL is huge money. We got Rs 50 per day for a five-day Test match," he said, recollecting a funny incident.

"I remember batting with Sunil Gavaskar, we had to get 15-20

runs on day four and half hour left, we were getting messages from the dressing room that don't finish the game today, we will lose out on the allowance for day five. We didn't play for money, we played for pride," he recollected fondly.

Engineer is a fan of Kohli and feels he is back to his best after a prolific IPL. He has also tracked Gill's rapid rise in international cricket over the last 12 months. He feels the two batters have shown that the shortest format is not just about a slam bang approach.

"It is too early to talk about Gill being heir apparent as Virat has got a few good years left in him. He has got nothing to prove anymore as he has been a superb

player and captain for India. He remains the best in the world. "Gill is a very good batter and is in the form of his life and I am sure he will do well in Tests as well. Gill has proved that T20 cricket is not all about slogging and you can play in conventional style as well."

Asked about his prediction about the WTC final, Engineer gave an emotional answer saying "As an Indian, I would always want my team to win."

There were no warm-up games ahead of the title clash, something which could have been quite "useful" for both the teams.

"Warm-up games are always useful, but they play so much cricket these days," concluded Engineer.

INDIA EXPECTEDLY OPTED TO BOWL IN OVERCAST CONDITIONS

Indian pacers remove openers as Australia reach 73/2 at lunch

LONDON, June 7 (PTI): India pacer Mohammed Siraj breathed fire in his opening spell before seamer Shardul Thakur got rid of a well-set David Warner to reduce Australia to 73 for two at lunch on day one of the World Test Championship final.

Having survived challenging conditions in the first hour at The Oval, Warner (43 off 60) and Labuschagne (26 batting off 61) were on course to see off the session until Thakur dismissed the left-handed opener with a short ball targeting his rib cage. Wicketkeeper KS Bharat took a well-judged catch down the leg-side.

India expectedly opted to bowl in overcast conditions and on a pitch with fair amount of grass. They made the tough call to leave out Ravichandran Ashwin from the playing eleven for a four-pronged pace attack including Shami, Siraj, Umesh Yadav and Shardul Thakur.

Both Siraj and Shami kept Australia in check in the first hour, sharing six overs six each and conceding only 29 runs.

Siraj breathed fire and got more out of the surface than Shami by bowling with a scrambled seam.

Usman Khawaja (0 off 10), who has an ordinary record in England, began the tour on a disappointing note as he got a faint edge off a ball that pitched out-



side the off stump and seamed away.

There was minimal feet movement and he paid the price for playing away from the body and the nick was taken easily by Bharat behind the stumps.

Warner, who has a point to prove in this game and cement his spot in the playing XI for the upcoming Ashes, battled with

grit and took his chances every time he was offered width. He slashed hard for the first boundary of the game.

After an engrossing opening hour, India took the foot off the pedal with Umesh Yadav offering plenty of scoring opportunities to Warner, who collected four boundaries off the pacer in the 15th over.

The going was much tougher for Labuschagne, who copped a nasty blow on his left thumb from a sharp delivery by Siraj. Later in the session, he was able to survive two close DRS lbw calls off Thakur's bowling.

As it often happens in England, the sun came out in the second hour and made batting easier.

Australia were looking to close the session strongly until Warner went for a pull off a delivery angled into him by Thakur who went wide off the crease while coming round the wicket as the batter cramped for room couldn't keep the pull down. Bharat testified his selection over Ishan Kishan with a diving catch.

Najam Sethi to ICC bosses: Pak don't want to play in Ahmedabad unless they are in WC final



KARACHI, June 7 (PTI): The Pakistan Cricket Board chairman Najam Sethi has intimated his ICC counterpart Greg Barclay about his apprehensions about playing the World Cup match against arch-rivals India at Ahmedabad's Narendra Modi Stadium, according to sources.

As it was reported by PTI initially, PCB wants its matches to be scheduled in Kolkata, Chennai and Bengaluru.

Barclay and ICC General Manager Geoff Allardice were recently in Karachi to seek assurance from PCB boss that they won't demand to play their ODI World Cup matches at a neutral venue since ACC is all set to reject its demand of playing Asia Cup on basis of 'Hybrid Model'.

According to a senior PCB source: "Sethi has conveyed to Barclay and Allardice that Pakistan doesn't want it matches to be scheduled in Ahmedabad unless it is a knock-out game like final."

"He requested ICC to schedule their games in Chennai, Bengaluru and Kolkata if national team gets clearance from Pakistan government to travel to India for the global event scheduled in October and November," the source added.

While Pakistan board is apprehensive about the security of

its players if they have to play India in Ahmedabad, it must be mentioned that Inzamam ul Haq led side had played at the Motera during its 2005 tour to India.

The PCB official also informed that Sethi has asked ICC officials to convince BCCI to accept Pakistan's Hybrid Model for Asia Cup, which is unlikely to see the light of the day.

He also confirmed that Sethi had also insisted that it would not accept the new revenue sharing model unless its share was increased in the new five year cycle.

"Sethi pointed out that it was unfair that Pakistan should get a lesser share of the ICC revenues in the new cycle compared to Australia and England," the source said.

"Sethi argued that Australia and England regularly get to play bilateral series with India and their players also take part in the Indian Premier League which means extra revenues for the two boards from the IPL management," he added.

The BCCI and ICC officials who are presently in London for the World Test Championship Final are expected to finalize the schedule and venues for the World Cup in the next few days before it is circulated to the member/participating countries.

KASA sr vice president Gautam Terang passes away

HT Bureau
DIPHU, June 7: Former chairman of Diphu Town Committee (DTC) now Diphu Municipal Board (DMB) and senior vice president of Karbi Anglong Sports Association (KASA), Gautam Terang passed away at Diphu Medical College & Hospital following a cardiac arrest on Tuesday evening around 7 p.m. He was 64 years old.

He was the son of the late Soisoi Terang and late Nirola Tissoi. Terang left behind his wife, former Principal Secretary, Jayshree

Daulaguphu, a retired ACS, son and daughter. After getting the news of the sudden demise, a large number of relatives and friends came to pay their last respects to late Terang at his residence here. As Terang was an active person in sports, many individuals from the sports fraternity, especially from KASA came to pay their last respects to him.



Executive Member (EM) of Karbi Anglong Autonomous Council (KAAC), Richard Tokbi and Madhuram Lekthe and MAC Johny Timung and government officials and other dignitaries came to offer their last respects.

Family sources said that late Terang started his schooling at St. Edmund, Shillong. He studied

upto Class-9 there. He later joined a school at Dimapur to complete his matriculation. He completed his higher secondary from Diphu Govt. College.

Late Terang was the founding president and managing director of Everest Club formed in 1992. He was also a president of the Greater Diphu Sports Association (GDSA). The GDSA organises a football league for A division in memory of Soi Soi Terang and B division in memory of Nirola Tissoi, where late Terang was the donor. Late

Terang is also the senior vice president, KASA.

Family sources said that late Terang was a music lover. Late Terang with his colleagues formed a blues rock band named 'War Head' in the late 1990s. He was a vocalist in the band. Other members in the band were Dilip Hazarika, Ronald Sangma as lead guitarist, Sarmen Hanse as Bassist and Sarat Teron as a drummer.

Late Terang will be cremated as per Karbi rites at Diphu public crematorium ground on Thursday.

Top wrestlers' crucial meeting with Anurag Thakur begins

NEW DELHI, June 7 (PTI): A crucial meeting between the top wrestlers, led by Olympic medalist Bajrang Punia, and Sports Minister Anurag Thakur began at his residence on Wednesday morning as the government continued its effort to strike a deal with the protesting grapplers, who are demanding arrest of WFI chief Brij Bhushan Sharan Singh.

The meeting was called by Thakur to break the deadlock as the wrestlers have been adamant that they will continue their agitation till Singh, who they have accused of sexual harassment, is arrested. Vinesh Phogat, a prominent face of the protest, is not attending the meeting as she is in her village Balali in Haryana to attend a pre-scheduled 'panchayat'. Punia, Rio Olympic bronze medalist Sakshi Malik and her wrestler husband Satyawart Kadiyan, arrived at the minister's house for the meeting. Bhartiya Kisan Union (BKU) leader Rakesh Tikait, who has been supporting the wrestlers in their protest, is not part of the meeting.

The wrestlers had resumed their protest against Singh and the national federation on April 23 at Jantar Mantar. They were removed from the protest site on May 28 when the police detained them for violation of law and order after they began their march to the new Parliament building without permission. It is the second round of meeting between the government and protesting wrestlers in a space of five days. The wrestlers had met Home Minister Amit Shah on Saturday night and apprised him of their demands. While the government is willing to accept most of their demands, the arrest of Singh, who is also a BJP MP, remains the bone of contention. The wrestlers had also resumed their duties with the Northern Railways, last week. Sakshi Malik and Punia are attached with Railways as OSD. "The wrestlers look positive in their approach. We are hoping for a resolution today. The idea is that the sport should not suffer," said a sports ministry official ahead of the meeting.

BENGALURU, June 7 (PTI): The USA Cricket (USAC) on Wednesday asserted that the T20 World Cup 2024 will not be taken away from them due to concerns around lack of proper cricketing infrastructure in the nation, saying a successful conduct of the Major League Cricket (MLC) will remove all the doubts.

It has been reported that the International Cricket Council (ICC) might shift the premier tournament, scheduled to be hosted jointly by the USA and the West Indies, to England next year.

However, a USAC official said they have not heard anything from the global governing body about the shifting of venue.

"We haven't had any discussions with the ICC in this regard. We are putting our best foot forward in preparing necessary infrastructure for the T20 World Cup, which is an year



away," a USA Cricket administrator told PTI.

"Concerns about makeshift venues etc are natural because the US does not host cricketing events regularly but we have the Major League Cricket coming

up and a successful hosting of the T20 tournament will ward off a lot of concerns," the official added.

The inaugural Major League Cricket T20 will begin on July 13 and conclude on July 30.

There will be six teams in the fray and the matches will be played at the Grand Prairie Stadium in Texas.

In fact, several leading cricket stars such as England's Jason Roy, Australia's Adam Zampa, Matthew Wade, Marcus Stoinis and Moises Henriques have signed for the MLC T20.

"We are ready for staging the MLC T20, and some frontline cricketers from across the world are participating in the tournament and that will go a long way in establishing our credentials as a big-ticket event host."

"We also have a taste of hosting high-profile cricketing events at Lauderhill (Florida) involving India and West Indies, and now we know what to expect when top teams are competing in terms of infrastructure and other facilities," the administrator added.

In fact, the ICC too played down the possibility of any such move to shift the T20 World

Cup venue from the West Indies and the USA.

"There has been no discussion on any ICC forum on shifting the T20 World Cup 2024 from the West Indies and the USA," an ICC Board member told PTI in response to recent reports.

"It (the tournament) will go ahead and an announcement on the venues will be made shortly," said the official.

The India cricket team has played a few of its international matches at the Central Broward Park in Lauderhill, Florida against the West Indies.

Oakland, Florida and Los Angeles are some of the cities that have been reced by the ICC Venue inspection team as prospective centres for the event. It is understood that ICC event's biggest box office fixture -- India versus Pakistan -- is likely to be held in the USA and not the West Indies, keeping in mind the crowd support for both teams.



Dr. Himanta Biswa Sarma
Chief Minister, Assam

Assam Police Seva Setu

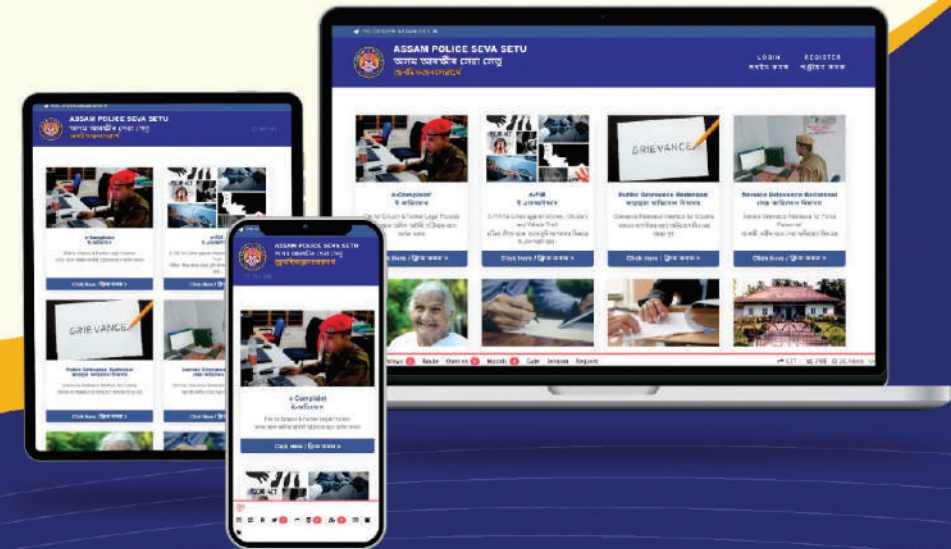
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Shri Keshab Mahanta
Hon'ble Minister
Health & Family Welfare, Assam

Swasthya Sewa Abhiyan - 9, Special Health Camp

An initiative by National Health Mission, Assam to facilitate comprehensive health services especially for Mother and Child Health including specialities like Ophthalmic, Dental among others, all in one location at identified Health Blocks in Assam.



Location wise list of Health Camps for the month of June, 2023

Sl.	District	Camp-1	Camp-2	Camp-3	Sl.	District	Camp-1	Camp-2	Camp-3
1	Baksa	18/06/2023 - Chenimara, Nizkaurbaha BPHC	22/06/2023 - Sontala Community Hall, Gandhibari	22/06/2023 - DTBM Nabajagaran High School, Bhakuamari	18	Jorhat	17/06/2023 - Pokamura Higher Secondary School, Bagchung BPHC	22/06/2023 - Kharikotia High School, Titabor BPHC	29/06/2023 - Mukti Yudha Rajput Model School, Moroocharai TE, Solmora BPHC
2	Bajali	22/06/2023 - 873 No. ADP Girls LP School, Bhawanipur BPHC	29/06/2023 - Kanimara HS, Kanimara, Nityananda BPHC		19	Kamrup	23/06/2023 - Pub Boragaon LPS, Ward no-11, Dhirenpara Zone	28/06/2023 - Santipur LP School, Ashram Road, West Zone	29/06/2023 - Marakdola LP School, Sonapur BPHC
3	Barpeta	20/06/2023 - 579 No. Chasra LP School, 2 No. Chasra, Mandia BPHC	22/06/2023 - 194 No. Pub Chatla LP School, Chenga BPHC	23/06/2023 - Katajhar High School, Barpeta Road BPHC	20	Kamrup	23/06/2023 - Patidarrang High School, Muktapur	23/06/2023 - Daspara LP School, Kalatoli	29/06/2023 - Tangunmari LP School
4	Biswanath	20/06/2023 - Kukurjan Milanjyoti ME School, Rajgarh, Gohpur BPHC	22/06/2023 - Nagsankar High School, Biswanath Chariali BPHC	23/06/2023 - Nakunia LP School, Behali BPHC	21	Karbi Anglong	14/06/2023 - Thong Nokbe English HS, Balipathar, Bokajan BPHC	20/06/2023 - Longsing Timung Club, Doldoli SC, Manja BPHC	27/06/2023 - Klurdung LP School, Howraghat BPHC
5	Bongaigaon	16/06/2023 - Nankargaon Bidyapur CHC, Bongaigaon	22/06/2023 - Olapara HS School, Srijangram BPHC	23/06/2023 - Lungjhar Pre Senior Madrassa, Manikpur BPHC	22	Karimganj	12/06/2023 - Rakesh Chandra ME School, Rakeshnagar	17/06/2023 - Lamajuar High School	27/06/2023 - Bidyanagar Community Hall, Bidyanagar GP
6	Cachar	17/06/2023 - Nehru MV School, Gossaiapur	20/06/2023 - Ballav High School, Kashipur	22/06/2023 - Narayanpur TE, Harinagar	23	Kokrajhar	13/06/2023 - Dangaimari ME School, Kachugaon BPHC	22/06/2023 - Jarigaon Tilapara LP School, Balajan PHC	30/06/2023 - Joyma High School, Gossigaon BPHC
7	Charaideo	20/06/2023 - Aideubari TE Hospital, Sapekhati BPHC	23/06/2023 - Humtai TE Hospital, Patsaku BPHC		24	Lakhimpur	07/06/2023 - Chakuli ME School, Ghilamora BPHC	13/06/2023 - Namani Dikrong Mukh High School, Temera SC	16/06/2023 - Badulipara LP School, Badhakora PHC
8	Chirang	22/06/2023 - No. 4 A Mwinaguri Hadan Library Oxiguri SC, Ballamguri BPHC	23/06/2023 - Selekhanguri Bazar, Khungring SC, Sidli BPHC		25	Majuli	23/06/2023 - Lachan Dhunaguri LP School Field		
9	Darrang	22/06/2023 - Dhalpur RPHC, Sipajhar BPHC	26/06/2023 - Bechimari NPHC, Kharupetia BPHC	27/06/2023 - Rangamati MPHC, Jaljali BPHC	26	Morigaon	10/06/2023 - GRB Charaihagi HS School, Laharighat Block	20/06/2023 - Uttar Jajori LP School, Bhurbandha Block	23/06/2023 - Dongabori High School, Jhargaoon Block
10	Dhemaji	17/06/2023 - Hiloipara High School, Dhemaji BPHC	23/06/2023 - Uttar Bordoloni HS, Sialmari, Gogamukh BPHC	27/06/2023 - Bhangidiya TMPK Office, Pipolguri, Sissiborgaon BPHC	27	Nagaon	20/06/2023 - Tarabari High School, Singimari BPHC	22/06/2023 - Beselimari HS, Pachim Kallabor Simonabasti BPHC	27/06/2023 - Manipurtup High School, Barapujia BPHC
11	Dhubri	20/06/2023 - Buchirachar ME Madrassa, Raniganj BPHC	24/06/2023 - Durahati Senior Madrassa, Dharmasala	26/06/2023 - 1871 No. Uttar Tokrachara LPS, Golakganj BPHC	28	Nalbari	17/06/2023 - Dotkuchi LP School	26/06/2023 - Chaprapara 1 No. LP School	27/06/2023 - Haribhanga Pipilbari LP School
12	Dibrugarh	17/06/2023 - Madhuting TE Hospital, Tengakhat BPHC	22/06/2023 - HazelBank TE Hospital, Lahowal BPHC	23/06/2023 - Moran TE Hospital, Khowang BPHC	29	Sivasagar	13/06/2023 - Lalismsiga LP School, Morabazar BPHC	20/06/2023 - Moutgaon LP School, Khelua BPHC	23/06/2023 - 1 no. Rupahimukh, Gaurisagar BPHC
13	Dima Hasao	21/06/2023 - Chotowapu Village, Gunjung BPHC	23/06/2023 - Nutundisao Baikhao, Langting BPHC	26/06/2023 - Boro Muolkoi LP School, Mahur BPHC	30	Sonitpur	13/06/2023 - Baligaon Namghar, Balipara BPHC	22/06/2023 - Bishnu Jyoti Rangamancha, Bam Besseria, Bihaguri BPHC	23/06/2023 - Mazrowmari High School, Dhekiajuli BPHC
14	Goalpara	13/06/2023 - Phukhuripara Indira High School, Lakhipur BPHC	15/06/2023 - Nobinagar, Baladmari	17/06/2023 - F R High School, Rakhysini, Mornoi BPHC	31	South Salmara	18/06/2023 - Nayagaon Dhenerkuti LP School, South Salmara BPHC	20/06/2023 - Kanaimara GP Office, Gazarikandi BPHC	
15	Golaghat	16/06/2023 - Letekujan Tea Estate	20/06/2023 - Negheriting Natya Mandir	26/06/2023 - Naharbari ME School, Gelabil	32	Tinsukia	15/06/2023 - Pengeree TE Hospital, Ketetong BPHC	17/06/2023 - Dinjan TE Hospital, Hapjan BPHC	23/06/2023 - Tara TE Hospital, Kakopothar BPHC
16	Hailakandi	15/06/2023 - Katlicherra Bagan Nachghar, Katlicherra	17/06/2023 - 173 Dholidahar Grant LP School, Kalinagar	24/06/2023 - Singalla ME School, Singalla TE Basti, Lala	33	Udalguri	15/06/2023 - Khusurabari High School, Orang	19/06/2023 - Jhargaoon High School, Khoirabari	20/06/2023 - Uttar Barpukhuri ME School, Udalguri
17	Hojai	23/06/2023 - Kharikhana Bazar LP School, Lanka BPHC	26/06/2023 - JMK Krishipam 2 No. LP School, Jugijan BPHC		34	West Karbi Anglong	22/06/2023 - Tumpreng Community Hall, Tumpreng, Donkamokam BPHC	27/06/2023 - Kungripi LP school, Kungripi, Baithalangso BPHC	30/06/2023 - Mosaldeng LP School, Umanai BPHC

(NHM/D/2023-24/929)