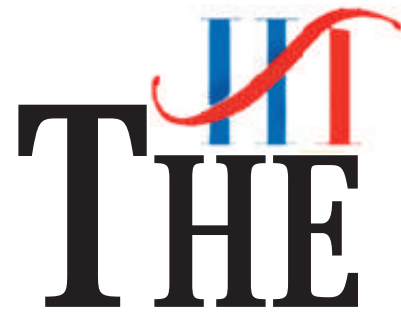




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Death toll stands at six ●NFR cancels several trains to Barak Valley

State's flood scene grim, over 2 lakh affected

GUWAHATI, May 31: The state's flood situation remained grim on Friday with over two lakh people affected in nine districts, following incessant rainfall in the aftermath of cyclone Remal, officials said.

Altogether six people died in the flood, rain and storms in the state since May 28, they said.

Nagaon, Karimganj, Hailakandi, West Karbi Anglong, Cachar, Hojai, Golaghat, Karbi Angling and Dima Hasao districts were severely affected.

Meanwhile, Union home minister Amit Shah on Friday spoke to chief minister Himanta Biswa Sarma over the phone to enquire about the flood situation in the state and assured of the Centre's support.



Sarma posted on X. Road connectivity of Cachar, Karimganj and Hailakandi districts of Barak Valley with other parts of the state and the northeast region has been affected with vehicles

stranded, following 20 metre-stretch of the National Highway-6 being washed away by heavy rain in Lumslum area of Meghalaya.

Cachar is the worst affected with 1,12,246 people reeling under the deluge, followed by 37,000 in Karimganj, 22,058 in Hojai and 14,308 in Hailakandi.

A crop area of 3238.8 hectares has also been submerged, while 2,34,535 animals have been affected.

The Brahmaputra and Barak rivers along with their tributaries are flooding above the danger mark at several places in the flood-hit districts.

Altogether, 35,640 affected people have taken shelter in 110 relief camps (CONTD. ON PAGE-2)

Final phase of Lok Sabha polls in 57 seats today, PM Modi in fray

VARANASI/CHANDIGARH, May 31: 57 seats across seven states and the Union territory of Chandigarh will go to polls in the seventh and final phase of Lok Sabha elections on Saturday that include Varanasi, from where Prime Minister Narendra Modi is seeking a third consecutive term.

Polling is scheduled in all 13 seats of Punjab and four of Himachal Pradesh, 13 constituencies in Uttar Pradesh, nine in West Bengal, eight in Bihar, six in Odisha and three seats in Jharkhand besides Chandigarh. Polling for the remaining 42 assembly constituencies of Odisha and bypolls to six assembly seats in Himachal Pradesh will also take place simultaneously.

Other prominent candidates among the total 904 contestants in fray are Union minister Anurag Thakur, Mamata Banerjee's nephew Abhishek Banerjee, Lalu



Prasad's daughter Misa Bharti and actor Kangana Ranaut. Over 10.06 crore citizens, including nearly 5.24 crore men, 4.82 crore women and 3,574 third gender electors are eligible to vote in this phase. Saturday's voting will mark the end to the marathon polling process that began on April 19 and has already covered 486 Lok Sabha seats in 28 states and Union territories. The assemblies of Andhra Pradesh, Arunachal Pradesh and Sikkim also went to polls. Counting of votes will be taken up on June 4. In Arunachal Pradesh and Sikkim, the counting for the assembly polls will be held on June 2. (CONTD. ON PAGE-2)

Newly-elected LS members to be welcomed in Parliament Annexe

NEW DELHI, May 31: The newly-elected members of the 18th Lok Sabha will be welcomed in the Parliament House Annexe and provided transit accommodation in Western Court till they are allocated houses in the national capital, the Lok Sabha Secretariat said on Friday.

This time the secretariat has made registration arrangements of the new members in the Parliament House Annexe. Till last time, such arrangements used to be made in the old Parliament House building (now Samvidhan Sadan).

A slew of measures are in place to ensure seamless registration of the new MPs, the secretariat said.

Transit accommodation in the Western Court Annexe or state bhavans will be provided to the newly-elected members who don't

already have a government house here till they are provided regular accommodation by the Lok Sabha's House Committee, it said.

A team has been assigned the task of keeping a close tab on the Election Commission website on June 4 when the votes are counted and entering the contact details of successful candidates on a near real-time basis.

The team, using a software application, would be able to check whether the successful candidate is a new MP or a re-elected one.

The same information would be shared with the liaison officers through a software application to make further data entry of their tour programmes.

The Central Government Health Scheme (CGHS) medical posts will (CONTD. ON PAGE-2)

Power backup, alternative net arrangements for glitch-free counting in Assam

GUWAHATI, May 31: Installation of additional backup measures to ensure uninterrupted power supply are among special arrangements to be made for smooth counting of votes in parts of the state, where communication links have been hit due to incessant rain in the aftermath of cyclone 'Remal' and the onset of monsoon, an official said on Friday.

Addressing a press conference, Assam chief electoral officer (CEO), Anurag Goel announced that comprehensive measures, including power backup and arrangements for feeding data to the official portal from alternative locations, will be in place to ensure glitch-free counting of votes and declaration of results for the 14 Lok Sabha seats in the state. Counting will begin at 8 am on June 4 in 152 halls across 52 centres in the state, he said.

"In West Karbi Anglong and Dima Hasao districts, there are some issues due to the damage



caused by heavy rainfall. Surface communication has been disrupted and internet connectivity is also not reliable," Goel added.

The Assam Power Distribution Corporation Ltd (APDCL) has assured of restoring uninterrupted power supply to the counting centre in Haflong, the headquarters of Dima Hasao, he said.

His office has also arranged for additional generators and invertors for power backup, the CEO said.

With the leased internet line still not restored in Haflong, arrangements have been made to feed counting data for Dima Hasao onto the portal from Diphu, he added.

"BSNL has assured us of restoring the leased internet line, but we have our plan ready of feeding the details from Diphu," he said.

Dima Hasao falls under the Diphu Lok Sabha seat and the official declaration of results for the constituency (CONTD. ON PAGE-2)

Will win Dhubri seat comfortably: Badruddin Ajmal

HT Bureau GUWAHATI, May 31: AIUDF chief Badruddin Ajmal on Friday asserted that he will win comfortably from the Dhubri Lok Sabha seat, turning down the claims by Congress leaders of winning this parliamentary constituency.

Ajmal has been representing the Dhubri constituency in the lower house of the parliament since 2009. He has won this seat thrice and the AIUDF leader is looking for a straight fourth term as an MP from Dhubri.

However, Congress has fielded former state minister and Samaguri MLA Rakibul Hussain in Dhubri seat in the recently concluded Lok Sabha polls and according to poll watchers, Ajmal may find it difficult this time to win this time.

But Ajmal told reporters here, "Let the Congress workers continue with their claim of winning Dhubri seat. I will win with a



huge margin. People will see it on June 4." According to him, Congress could not give a fight to the BJP in Karimganj—another minority-dominated Lok Sabha seat in the state.

"I have received reports that BJP will win in Karimganj. In Nagaon Lok Sabha seat, there will be a tough contest between the Congress and AIUDF, but we are confident that our candidate will win there," Ajmal said.

AIUDF fielded Aminul Islam, the legislator from Dhing assembly segment in Nagaon Lok Sabha seat against the incumbent Congress MP Pradyut Bordoloi.

Man arrested in drugs case shot by police

GUWAHATI, May 31: A man arrested on the charge of drug peddling in Hojai district in the state was injured as police shot him when he allegedly tried to escape, officials said on Friday.

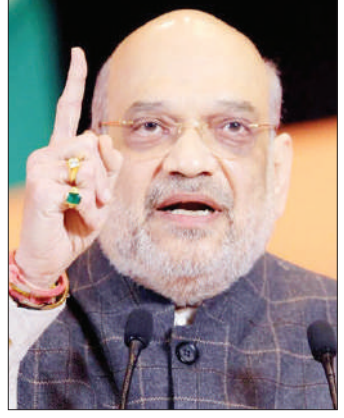
The man was arrested from Ramsingh village with 10 boxes of heroin on Thursday night, they said. The man, identified as Sahabuddin, allegedly attempted to flee while he was being taken to the police station. The police fired on his leg to stop him from escaping, they added. He was admitted to the Nagaon Medical College and Hospital in Nagaon with gunshot wounds, a police officer said. (PTI)

Union home minister takes stock of state's flood situation

HT Bureau GUWAHATI, May 31: Union Home minister Amit Shah has called chief minister Himanta Biswa Sarma on Friday to take stock of the flood situation and the post-impact of cyclone Remal that has ravaged the state.

Taking to his X handle, Sarma wrote, "Hon'ble Home Minister Shri @AmitShah Ji telephoned me to enquire about the flood situation in various parts of Assam, following the impact of Cyclone Remal. He has assured us the complete support of the Government of India in these trying times. We are grateful for his proactive efforts."

Shah has briefed about the situation to Prime Minister Narendra Modi as well.



The Union Home minister posted on X handle, "Deeply concerned about the natural disasters triggered by Cyclone Remal in Assam, Tripura, Manipur, Meghalaya, Mizoram, Tripura and West Bengal have witnessed natural disasters in the aftermath of Cyclone (CONTD. ON PAGE-2)

laya, and Mizoram. Also briefed PM Shri @narendramodi Ji on the situation, who expressed solidarity with those affected."

"Spoke to the respective state Chief Ministers, took stock of the situation, and assured them of all possible help. Our thoughts are with those who have lost their loved ones and prayers with those injured for a speedy recovery. The situation is being closely monitored and authorities are providing all possible assistance to the affected," he added.

Meanwhile, PM Modi mentioned in a social media post, "Unfortunately, Assam, Manipur, Meghalaya, Mizoram, Tripura and West Bengal have witnessed natural disasters in the aftermath of Cyclone (CONTD. ON PAGE-2)

Flood waters pose threat for local residents in Karbi Anglong



HT Bureau DIPHU, May 31: Flood waters are still posing a danger to human life particularly to villagers living close to the embankment of Kopili River in West Karbi Anglong district.

Kopili and Bithung Renthama Member of Autonomous Council (MAC) constituencies are the worst affected in West Karbi Anglong. 351 families in Bithung Renthama MAC constituency and 61 families in Kopili MAC constituency have been affected by flood. Rations like rice, dal and edible oil were being provided to affected families.

Informing the media this morning at his official

bungalow the Chief Executive Member (CEM) of Karbi Anglong Autonomous Council (KAAC), Tuliram Ronghang said he has directed the land and revenue department and officials of KAAC to take a joint survey of affected families in the flood.

CEM said, "The worst affected is my constituency Bithung Rengma and Kopili. So far 351 families in my constituency and 61 families in Kopili have been affected by the floods. We are providing immediate relief measures to the affected families. Each family is being provided with 10 kgs rice, 1 kg dal, 1 litre edible oil and 1 kg. salt."

He also informed that executive members (EMs) of KAAC, MACs and principal secretary of KAAC are involved in the joint survey.

Ronghang further said that the state water resource department has sanctioned a special financial package of 100 crores to check erosion by protecting the embankment of the Kopili River in Bithung and Kopili MAC constituency. Work has already begun, though it has been halted temporarily and will resume after the elections are over. (CONTD. ON PAGE-2)

2 held with contraband shan flower in Dimapur

HT Correspondent DIMAPUR, May 31: Two persons, including a woman from Assam have been arrested by police with contraband shan flower, also called sunflower at the Dimapur Railway Station platform here.

One of the accused, Abdul Suhid of Bowalgiri village in Morigaon district of Assam, was apprehended on May 29 from the railway platform area with 56 grams of shan flower, which were hidden in five plastic soap cases, Dimapur commissioner of police Kevithuto Sophie said on Friday.

The woman, Mazada Begum (52), wife of Jakir Hussain of Kunusa village in Morigaon district, was apprehended with shan flower weighing 21 grams, which were hidden in two soap boxes.

Separate cases have been registered against the two in this connection. Sophie said the Dimapur police commissionerate covering the three districts of Dimapur, Chukoukima and Nialand, would continue its war against drugs to combat illegal trafficking of narcotics and psychotropic substances through stringent force deployment.

KAAC CEM refutes allegations of violating MCC

HT Bureau DIPHU, May 31: Chief Executive Member (CEM) of Karbi Anglong Autonomous Council (KAAC), Tuliram Ronghang has refuted the allegation brought by All Party Hills Leaders Conference (APHLC) president and APHLC backed independent candidate, JI Kathar that the BJP has violated the model code of conduct by withdrawing ₹ 14 crores from the panchayat and rural development department for a tour to Vietnam.

After the conclusion of the second phase of elections in 6-Diphu (ST) parliamentary constituency on April 26, the KAAC team comprising of the chief executive member, executive member (EMs), member of autonomous council (MACs), KAAC officials and BJP party members had gone for a tour to Vietnam. It was an eight day tour from May 13 to 20.

Clarifying on the issue, the CEM said, "Every year budget allocation is made in the agriculture, forest and tourism department for a study tour to different places and countries to know about how agriculture and tourism are developed. This year also I have sanctioned ₹ 3 crores for a study tour. The first group went to Vietnam to know about the agricultural revolution taking place there and how tourism is being promoted. The whole expenditure has not crossed more than ₹ 1.5 crores. The second group will go now." "How can Kathar say KAAC has withdrawn ₹ 14 crores for Vietnam tour. He knows nothing about KAAC," the CEM stated.

Canopy bridges to facilitate easy movement of arboreal species from one part of the railway track to the other inside the wildlife sanctuary

NFR to install canopy bridges in Hollongapar Gibbon Sanctuary

HT Bureau GUWAHATI, May 31: The North-east Frontier Railways (NFR) will install canopy bridges over railway tracks inside the Hollongapar Gibbon Sanctuary in Jorhat district to facilitate the movement of the endangered Hollock Gibbon.

Railway tracks pass through the wildlife sanctuary, which at times obstruct in the movement of these highly arboreal species. The NFR in consultation with the state forest department, Wildlife Institute of India and all stakeholders will soon be installing canopy bridges at several identified points of the sanctuary to ensure the easy movement of the apes from one part of the railway track to the other.

"Wherever railway tracks pass through forest area or sanctuaries, the



railway authorities take necessary steps are taken to prevent mishaps. Canopy bridges will soon be installed at strategic points over railway tracks in the Hollongapar Gibbon Sanctuary

for the easy and safe movement of arboreal species inhabiting it," said a senior railway official.

The state forest department has already submitted its design with estimates for installation of such canopy bridges over the railway tracks. The design was prepared by the Wildlife Institute of India in consultation with NFR, which has already deposited the estimated amount in February this year.

The ends of these canopy bridges as well as the knots will be secured and clamped using appropriate and high-grade fastening materials and techniques. As a fail-safe mechanism, safety nets will be installed below the main twin-rope bridge to save the species from accidentally falling off it. The canopy rope bridges will be installed in such a way that over the long-term lianas and creepers will be guided along them in such a manner as to help them creep and form part of a hybrid (or semi-artificial) design centred around them.

Modi Govt turned around banking sector, over ₹ 10 lakh cr bad loans recovered in 10 years: FM

NEW DELHI, May 31: Finance minister Nirmala Sitharaman on Friday said the Modi government has turned around the banking sector through various reforms and improved governance which has led to banks recovering more than Rs 10 lakh crore from bad loans between 2014 and 2023.

She said the Enforcement Directorate has investigated around 1,105 bank fraud cases, which resulted in the attachment of Rs 64,920 crore worth of proceeds of crime. As of December 2023, assets amounting to Rs 15,183 crore have been restituted to the Public Sector Banks (PSBs).

"Recently, India's banking sector achieved a significant milestone by recording its highest-ever net profit, crossing Rs 3 lakh crore. The banking sector turned around due to PM Shri @narendramodi's strong and decisive leadership. Our government atoned for the UPA's sins in the banking sector through comprehensive and long-term reforms," Sitharaman said in a post on X.

She said there has been no leniency in recovering bad loans, especially from large defaulters, under the Modi government and the process is ongoing.

This is in stark contrast to the situation before 2014 when @INCIndia led UPA government turned the banking sector into a



cesspool of bad loans, vested interests, corruption and mismanagement.

"It's a pity that opposition leaders are still unable to distinguish between write-offs and waivers. After the 'write-offs' as per RBI's guidelines, banks actively pursue the recovery of bad loans. And, there has been no 'waiver' of loans for any industrialist. Between 2014 and 2023, banks recovered more than Rs 10 lakh crore from bad loans."

Slamming the Congress-led UPA's tenure for mismanaging the

sector she said the 'seeds' of the NPA crisis were sown during the @INCIndia-led UPA era through 'Phone Banking' when loans were given to undeserving businesses under pressure from UPA leaders and party functionaries.

"Under the UPA, obtaining loans from banks often depended on powerful connections rather than a solid business proposition. Banks were forced to neglect proper due diligence and risk assessment before sanctioning these loans," she said.

Sitharaman said the Modi gov-

ernment implemented a comprehensive 4R's strategy of Recognising NPAs transparently, Resolution and Recovery, Recapitalising PSBs, and Reforms after coming to power in 2014. "Our reforms addressed credit discipline, recognition and resolution of stress, responsible lending and improved governance. We replaced political interference in banks with professional integrity and independence," she said.

The minister said the Modi government will continue to take decisive measures to strengthen and stabilise our banking system, ensuring banks support India's growth path to Viksit Bharat by 2047.

"The UPA Alliance, dominated by dynastic parties, used banks for their own 'Parivar Kalyan' (family welfare). In contrast, our government has leveraged banks for 'Jan Kalyan' (public welfare)," she said.

Efforts to expand banking in India faltered for decades due to Congress's limited actions beyond bank nationalisation, which benefited mainly the educated and elite. Before 2014, banking access was largely restricted to cities, she said.

"We remain committed to further driving financial inclusion and empowering the underprivileged," Sitharaman said. (PTI)

India moves 100 metric tonnes of gold from UK to domestic vaults



MUMBAI, May 31: India has moved 100 metric tonnes of its gold stored in the UK to domestic vaults in FY24, sources said on Friday.

This is one of the biggest movements of gold undertaken by the country since 1991, when pledging a substantial part of the gold holding to tide over a foreign exchange crisis resulted in its movement out of vaults.

The country's overall gold holding increased 27.46 metric tonnes in FY24 and it stands at 822 metric tonnes, as per official data.

A substantial part of the precious commodity is stored abroad, the sources said, adding that India also had its holding with the Bank of England like other countries.

The movement of 100 metric tonnes into

India has taken the overall quantity stored locally to over 408 metric tonnes of gold, which means the local and foreign holding is now split almost evenly.

As per the annual report of the central bank for FY24 released on Thursday, over 308 metric tonnes of gold is held in India as backing for notes issued, while another 100.28 tonnes is held locally as an asset of the banking department.

Of the overall gold reserves, 413.79 metric tonnes are held abroad, the annual report said. According to the sources, given the gold buying over the last few years, a call was taken to reduce the holding abroad which is part of the standard review procedures.

In 2009, India had bought 200 tonnes of gold from the International Monetary Fund, after which it has been buying the precious commodity from the secondary market as part of its foreign exchange asset diversification efforts.

Officials from the Ministry of Finance, the RBI and other agencies took care of the movement of gold in complete secrecy given the high value, as per the sources.

At present, the gold held locally is stored at high security vaults and facilities in Mumbai and Nagpur, the sources added. (PTI)

GDP grows 7.8 pc in March qtr, 8.2 pc in FY24



NEW DELHI, May 31: India's economy grew 7.8 per cent in the March quarter, pushing up the annual growth rate to 8.2 per cent, according to official data released on Friday.

Growth in the January-March period was lower than the 8.6 per cent expansion in the December quarter.

The gross domestic product (GDP) had expanded 6.2 per cent in the January-March period of the 2022-23 fiscal year, according to data released by the National Statistical Office (NSO).

As per the data, the economy expanded 8.2 per cent in 2023-24 against a 7 per cent growth in 2022-23.

The NSO in its second advance estimate of national accounts had pegged the country's growth at 7.7 per cent for 2023-24.

China has registered an economic growth of 5.3 per cent in the first three months of 2024. (PTI)

Dr Sushil Jain honoured with Dr Bhupen Hazarika Award

HT Bureau

GUWAHATI, May 31: Dr Sushil Jain, senior consultant, general, Anorectal, Laparoscopy and Gastroenterology Surgery at Indraprastha Apollo Hospital, was honoured with the coveted Dr Bhupen Hazarika Award at the 45th Beltola Bohagi Utsav, in Beltola, Guwahati.

This prestigious award recognises Dr Jain's exceptional dedication to serving humanity and his remarkable contributions to the field of pediatric cancer care. Named after the legendary Assamese musician and Bharat Ratna awardee, Dr Bhupen Hazarika, this prestigious honour is bestowed upon individuals who have made extraordinary contributions to society while upholding Assam's rich cultural heritage.

The award comprises symbolic items like a memento of Dr Bhupen Hazarika, a 'Muga Gamosa', a 'Paat Challeng', a 'Rhino memento', a 'Jaapi', and cash prize of Rs 2 lakh.

Expressing his profound gratitude upon receiving the award, Dr Jain said, "I am deeply humbled and honoured to receive this prestigious award named after the legendary Dr Bhupen Hazarika, a true icon of Assam's cultural legacy. This recognition is a testament to the unwavering commitment, dedication, and compassion of our entire team at Indraprastha Apollo Hospital. We work tirelessly every day to provide the best possible care to our patients, striving to alleviate their suffering and offer hope to their families. This award is not just a personal achievement but a celebration of the collective efforts of all those who contribute to our mission of serving humanity."

The Beltola Bohagi Utsav is Assam's premier cultural festival celebrated annually to showcase the state's vibrant traditions, arts, and music. This year's three-day event, was a grand celebration featuring renowned artists, dance performances, and traditional ceremonies. One of the most anticipated highlights was the presentation of the esteemed Dr Bhupen Hazarika Award.

Launch of the UNOX Lounge in Guwahati is the third facility in India, following successful launches in Goa and Mumbai UNOX Ovens in collaboration with Opus Innovation launch UNOX Lounge in Guwahati

HT Bureau

GUWAHATI, May 31: UNOX, a leading Italian brand renowned for its high-performance commercial ovens designed for food service, retail, pastry, and bakery sectors in collaboration with its dealer Opus Innovation, recently inaugurated its cutting-edge UNOX Lounge in Guwahati.

This innovative Lounge by UNOX, offers potential customers a unique and immersive experience with UNOX's professional ovens before making a purchase.

The UNOX Lounge is meticulously designed to showcase the extensive range of UNOX's advanced baking and cooking equipment, including convection ovens, combi-ovens, speed ovens, and more.

The facility is equipped with modern amenities where professional chefs from UNOX will demonstrate the versatility, efficiency, and innovative features of UNOX ovens.

This aims customers to witness how UNOX products can elevate their culinary operations, empowering them to make informed purchasing decisions confidently.

The Guwahati lounge of UNOX is poised to serve a diverse clientele, including bakeries, cafes, hotels, restaurants, and catering businesses.

The launch of the UNOX Lounge in Guwahati is the third facility in India, following successful launches in Goa and Mumbai.

This underscores UNOX's commitment to delivering innovative culinary solutions across diverse regions in the country.

Vikram Goel, managing director, UNOX India, expressed his



enthusiasm, stating, "The North Eastern region, particularly Guwahati, is a very promising market where brands from metros are also showing interest in establishing their presence. With a burgeoning cafe culture and a thriving community of bakers, Guwahati holds immense potential for culinary growth in the baking world. The UNOX Lounge here will showcase a wide range of equipment from UNOX suitable for bakeries, cafes, hotels, restaurants, and catering businesses. This is our third UNOX Lounge in India, with the first two in Goa and Mumbai. Our innovative technology, globally renowned for its highly efficient and user-friendly cooking systems, has also been embraced in India.

The versatile cooking systems, tailored for busy professional kitchens, have significantly reduced chefs' lead time, making their work more enjoyable."

Jaydeep Goswami, managing director, Opus Innovation, further adds, "Our collaboration with UNOX for this Lounge is a testament to our shared vision of innovation and excellence in the culinary field. We are excited to offer this unique opportunity to our customers in the Northeast, allowing them to explore the capabilities of UNOX ovens in a dynamic and interactive environment."

The UNOX Lounge invites culinary professionals and enthusiasts to experience the future of cooking and baking with UNOX's groundbreaking technology.

Contd. from Page 1...

State's flood scene grim,

with the highest of 19,646 in Hojai, followed by 12,110 in Cachar, 2,060 in Hailakandi and 1,613 in Karimganj. Life came to a standstill in the three districts of Barak Valley and Dima Hasao, while intermittent rainfall and thunderstorms were reported from other affected districts on Thursday, officials said.

In Karimganj, Cachar, and Hailakandi districts, the Barak river and its tributaries Longai, Kushiara, Singla, and Katakhal were flowing above the danger level at several locations, maintaining a rising trend while four embankments were damaged in Karimganj. In Barak Valley's Silchar town, which had witnessed a devastating flood in 2022, several areas have been affected by waterlogging which led to snarl traffic movement.

Life has been hit due to relentless rain in Dima Hasao district, severely impacting road connectivity throughout the district. The Haflong-Silchar road has been completely cut off after a stretch was washed away near Harangajao, while the Haflong-Harangajao route has been blocked by multiple landslides.

Train services, cancelled or short-terminated due to landslides along the Haflong-Badarpur rail route, are yet to be restored, the officials said.

The railway station in Silchar's Tarapur locality, situated close to the river, has been engulfed by the rising waters, disrupting railway operations significantly. According to a spokesperson from the North East Frontier Railway, services to and from Silchar, a crucial hub in Barak Valley, have either been cancelled or short-terminated. The Silchar-Guwahati Express and the corresponding train from Guwahati along with the Silchar-Rangiya Express and the corresponding train from Rangiya will remain cancelled on Friday and Saturday.

Six more trains will remain cancelled on Friday due to high-water level and speed restriction between Jugijan and Jamunamukh of Lumding division, he said. These include Guwahati-Mariani BG Express, Guwahati-Nagaland Special, Guwahati-Ledo Intercity Express and its corresponding train from Ledo, Dibrugarh-Guwahati Nagaland Express and Shokhivi-Naharlagun Donyi Polo Express.

The southwest monsoon has entered Assam and other parts of the Northeast region ahead of its scheduled time due to the effect of cyclone Remal, according to the Indian Meteorological Department.

The Indian Meteorological Department has warned of heavy rainfall and thunderstorms in Goalpara, Bongaigaon, Sonitpur, Biswanath, Dibrugarh, Karimganj, Cachar, Hailakandi, Dima Hasao, Dhubri and South Salmara districts in the next two days. (PTI)

Final phase of Lok Sabha polls in

According to Election Commission guidelines, television channels and news outlets will be able to run exit poll data and its results on June 1 after 6.30 pm.

The EC said polling parties have been dispatched along with machines and poll materials to their respective polling stations. At the 1.09 lakh polling stations, basic facilities including ample shade, drinking water, ramps, and toilets are being provided to ensure that polling takes place in a comfortable and secure environment, it said. The poll panel has also directed CEOs and state machineries to take adequate measures to manage the adverse impact of hot weather or rainfall wherever predicted.

The commission called upon voters to turn out in greater numbers and vote with responsibility and pride. The turnout in the first six phases was 66.14 per cent, 66.71, 65.68, 69.16, 62.2 and 63.36 per cent respectively.

The campaigning for the last phase which ended Thursday evening saw BJP leaders led by Modi accusing the Congress and the INDIA alliance of being corrupt, anti-Hindu and engaging in loot, appeasement and dynastic politics. The Opposition parties have been claiming that the BJP is anti-farmer, anti-youth and will change and scrap the Constitution if they win the elections.

On Thursday evening, Modi headed to Kanyakumari where he is meditating till June 1 at the site associated with Swami Vivekananda. Modi had 206 public outreach programmes, including rallies and roadshows, since the Election Commission announced the Lok Sabha election schedule on March 16.

The parliamentary seats where polling will take place in Uttar Pradesh are Maharajganj, Gorakhpur, Kushinagar, Deoria, Bangaon (SC), Ghosi, Salempur, Ballia, Ghazipur, Chandauli, Varanasi, Mirzapur and Robertsganj (SC), spread across 11 districts.

Uttar Pradesh is a seeing a direct contest between the BJP-led NDA and the coalition of INDIA bloc members Samajwadi Party and Congress.

From Chandauli, Maharajganj and Mirzapur, Union ministers Mahendra Nath Pandey, Pankaj Chaudhary and Anupriya Patel respectively are contesting. Late Mukhtar Ansari's brother Afzal Ansari is in the fray from Ghazipur and former prime minister Chandrashekar's son Neeraj Shekhar is contesting from Ballia.

In Varanasi, those contesting against Modi are Ajay Rai (Congress), Ather Jamal Lari (BSP), Kolisetty Shiva Kumar (Yuga Thulasi Party), Gagan Prakash Yadav, (Apna Dal, Kameravadi), and independents Dinesh Kumar Yadav and Sanjay Kumar Tiwari.

The polls in South Bengal, a traditional TMC stronghold, will test the party's dominance amid an 'old versus new' power struggle, with the national spotlight on Sandeshkhali in Basirhat due to allegations of atrocities on women and land grabs.

The seventh phase will cover Dum Dum, Barasat, Basirhat, Jayanagar, Mathurapur, Diamond Harbour, Jadavpur, Kolkata Dakshin, and Kolkata Uttar, where the TMC secured victories in the 2019 elections.

TMC heavyweight Abhishek Banerjee, considered the party's de facto number two, is contesting from Diamond Harbour. Banerjee's performance in this seat, which the TMC touts as a 'model constituency', will be closely watched as the opposition attempts to paint it as a 'laboratory of violence'. The two-time MP faces CPI (M)'s Pratihar Rahaman and BJP's Abhijit Das in a three-way contest.

The minority-dominated Basirhat Lok Sabha seat, and specifically the Sandeshkhali segment, is a microcosm of the broader electoral battle as it garnered national attention due to allegations of atrocities on women and land grabs by local TMC leaders. The BJP has capitalised on these issues by nominating Rekha Patra, a prominent local protester, against TMC veteran Haji Nurul Islam. The CPI (M) has fielded former MLA Nirapada Sardar, making this a three-cornered contest.

In Punjab, prominent candidates in the fray are four-time MP Preet Kaur, former chief minister Charanjit Singh Channi, three-time MP Harsimrat Kaur Badal and Ravneet Singh Bittu.

The BJP and Shiromani Akali Dal are contesting the polls on their own for the first time since 1996 while two INDIA bloc parties - the Congress and AAP - have fielded their own candidates.

The prestige of Ranaut and Himachal Pradesh minister Vikramaditya Singh Singh, the heir of the erstwhile Rampur royal family and son of six-time former chief minister Virbhada Singh, is at stake in Mandi. (PTI)

Newly-elected LS members to

function on a 24x7 basis in North Avenue and South Avenue and near Western Court Annexe to extend Medical facilities to the members.

Ambulance services will also be available 24x7 for the members. To deal with health emergencies, nearby hospitals have also been sensitised.

To cut red tape, members would not be required to sign multiple physical forms with various branches. This would save a substantial amount of time for the members.

As many as 70 personnel have been trained to man the registration counter in shifts.

The liaison officers have also been imparted training to make data entry using tablets (tabs) as the MPs wait in the designated waiting area.

The intent is to minimise the registration time for MPs while they are in Parliament Complex for the purpose of registration, the secretariat said.

Guidenotes have been set up at all three domestic terminals at IGI airport and railway stations at Delhi, New Delhi, Nizamuddin and Anand Vihar from June 4 to June 9 to receive the elected members.

Liaison officers have been briefed to reach out to the members, specifically the newly-elected, to sensitise them to bring a specific set of documents.

Lok Sabha Secretary General Utpal Kumar Singh carried out an inspection of the preparations on Friday and is monitoring the arrangements on a day-to-day basis, it said. (PTI)

Power backup, alternative net

will be made from Diphu. In Barak Valley's Karimganj district, floodwaters were close to inundating the strong room and permission was taken from the Election Commission to move the EVMs and other materials to an upper floor of the building by following necessary protocols, the CEO said.

"The water level has receded now and we don't think it will be necessary to move the materials," he added. Another problem in Karimganj could be the movement of election officials who need to bring the signed result copy to the CEO's office here for submission in person at the Election Commission's office by June 6, Goel said.

"For that, we have held discussions with neighbouring Meghalaya officials. We also made arrangements for our officials to walk through the landslide areas, if needed, to bring the papers on time," he added. With a number of incumbent MLAs in the fray in the Lok Sabha polls in the state, the CEO was asked whether re-election, required if the legislators win the Parliamentary elections, will be conducted in the newly-drawn Assembly segments.

"We have asked the EC about it. It is still not clear whether re-election will be as per new constituencies," Goel replied.

Delimitation of all constituencies in the state was done last year, with the ongoing Lok Sabha polls being the first election after the exercise.

The CEO said security and counting personnel have been briefed of the arrangements through several training sessions for a smooth counting process.

Altogether 5,823 counting staff and 64 general observers are being engaged in the process, he added. Goel said 1,28,299 postal ballots have been received till Thursday.

The state had registered an overall voter turnout of 81.56 per cent with polling conducted in three phases. (PTI)

Union home minister takes

Remal. My thoughts and prayers are with all those who have been affected there."

He further said, "Took stock of the prevailing situation. The central government has assured all possible support to the states and is continuously monitoring the situation. Officials are working on the ground to assist those affected."

Flood waters pose threat for

The CEM also said that the NHAI will take up road construction from Nillie to Silchar via Baithalangso, Dongkamukam, Kheroni and Haflong. The RCC bridge over Kopili River at Kheroni has lost its durability and a new bridge will be constructed under this package.

It may be mentioned here that the RCC bridge over Kopili River at Kheroni was constructed way back in 1968 and was inaugurated in 1972 by former minister late Dhoniram Rongpi. Over the years the bridge has become weak and could not support a load of more than 9 tons.

A local resident of Kheroni Biren Enghi informed that water has not reached the bridge. "Water is receding slowly. If there is no rain in the next two to three days the water level might go down. Due to the weak bridge trucks carrying 30 to 40 tons of goods were stopped at Kheroni," he said.

Meanwhile, West Karbi Anglong water resources division on May 31 has shown the water level of Kopili flowing at danger level of 66.79 M, and Karbi Langpi flowing at danger level of 64.75 M.

MSDE secretary Atul Kumar Tiwari commends IIE's entrepreneurship initiatives

HT Bureau

GUWAHATI, May 31: Atul Kumar Tiwari, IAS, secretary, MSDE, government of India, visited the Indian Institute of Entrepreneurship (IIE) on Wednesday to take stock of the various activities undertaken by IIE to boost entrepreneurship across the north-eastern region.

Tiwari was apprised in detail about the various programmes undertaken by IIE in the region in recent years and the positive outcomes that have created a number of first-generation entrepreneurs and provided respectable livelihoods to thousands of families, mostly belonging to tribal communities. Taking part in the discussions and interacting with the officials, Tiwari not only appreciated IIE for taking pioneering steps in the field of entrepreneurship creation in the region but also gave valuable suggestions for exploring new areas of skill development and entrepreneurship in the prevailing ecosystem of the north-eastern region. Tiwari particularly praised IIE for its efforts in bringing about women empowerment



through entrepreneurship and said that economic empowerment of women can bring about amazing positive changes in the community as a whole.

Tiwari, during his visit, interacted with a diverse group of trainees undergoing different training programmes at IIE, including beneficiaries of the Vandhan Kendras, retiring defence

personnel, faculty members of ITIs, and officers of the Meghalaya State Rural Livelihood Mission. Addressing the participants after taking feedback about their experience, Tiwari called upon them to take full advantage of the training programmes conducted by IIE and to positively contribute to the development of the north-eastern region. He assured that the

Ministry of Skill Development & Entrepreneurship shall provide all possible support for developing skills and entrepreneurship development in the north-eastern region to bring about unprecedented socio-economic benefits to the communities of the region.

Tiwari also inspected the various existing infrastructure facilities and incubation centres at IIE and called for utilising the latest technology to upgrade the skills of the budding entrepreneurs. He also appreciated the vibrant team of IIE and remarked that maintaining a vibrant team spirit and a cohesive environment were keys to achieving the set goals.

Earlier, Tiwari was warmly welcomed by Dr Lalit Sharma, director, IIE, along with senior officials and employees. Members of the Vandhan Kendras, along with IIE officials, felicitated Tiwari with unique traditional products. Tiwari, during his visit, also planted an Arjun tree sapling to enhance greenery at the campus. His visit encouraged and motivated all the trainees and employees of IIE.

France island school signs pact with biologist Purnima Devi

HT Bureau

GUWAHATI, May 31: A reputed educational institution of Mayotte island of France, Iycee des Lumieres, has signed a two-year agreement with senior conservation biologist of Aaranyak, Dr Purnima Devi Barman, to work together towards the conservation of biodiversity in tune with the community-based model adopted by the latter for the conservation of the endangered greater adjutant stork (hargila in local parlance in Assam).

The school in Mayotte island, one of the 18 regions in France, has been immensely impressed by the hargila conservation model driven by the grassroots community movement, Hargila Army, dominated by village women from the conservation project site in twin villages of Dadara and Pachariya in Kamrup district, which signed the pact with the Aaranyak's reputed conservation biologist who has been in the lime-light of late after being conferred with the coveted Whitley Gold Award 2024.

The agreement is focused on education and research on the community-dominant model of hargila conservation successfully



adopted by Dr Purnima Devi; character, origin, health, and diet of the stork species; discovering the commitment of Indian women in safeguarding the stork; making the conservation army of the community women a mascot of Iycee des Lumieres; making students of the school (Iycee des Lumieres) ambassadors for the preservation of environment and biodiversity; supporting the values and ideals of UNESCO.

Iycee des Lumieres will use the knowledge and expertise of Dr Barman, winner of the UNEP

Champion of the Earth 2022 award, and her army of women conservation workers to create an "army of students" within the school, trained to protect species and biodiversity as a whole.

The France-based school expects that the experience and knowledge of Dr Barman, based on her experience of prolonged community-driven conservation work, will provide cultural enrichment and knowledge in terms of protecting Hargila and support the students by sharing her knowledge.

Trains cancelled due to track damage & waterlogging

HT Bureau

GUWAHATI, May 31: Due to the high-water level and imposition of speed restrictions between Jujigian and Jamunamukh section, damage of track between New Hafong – Chandranathpur section, and waterlogging at Silchar station of Lumding division under NF Railway, some of the trains are being cancelled and partially cancelled.

Trains scheduled to depart on May 31, 2024, have been cancelled. These include: Train No 15665 (Guwahati – Mariani Jn.) BG Express, Train No 05601 (Guwahati – Lumding) Special, Train No 15603 (Guwahati – Ledo) Intercity Express, Train No 15604 (Ledo – Guwahati) Intercity Express, Train No 15670 (Dibrugarh – Guwahati) Nagaland Express, Train No. 15817 (Shokhuvi – Naharlagun) Donyi Polo Express, Train No. 05682/05683 (Silchar – Maishashan - Silchar) Passenger, Train No 05688 (Silchar - Dullabcherra) Passenger, Train No 05677 (Silchar - Dharmaganagar) Special, Train No 05693/05694 (Dullabcherra – Badarpur - Dullabcherra) Special.

Trains scheduled to commence their journey on June 1, 2024,

have been canceled. These include: Train No 05678 (Dharmaganagar - Silchar) Special, Train No 05687 (Dullabcherra - Silchar) Passenger, Train No. 15888/15887 (Guwahati – Badarpur - Guwahati) Tourist Express, Train No 15617 (Guwahati - Dullabcherra) Express, Train No 02518 (Guwahati – Kolkata) Special, Train No 05659 (Silchar - Sribar) Passenger, Train No 05567 (Silchar - Bhairabi) Passenger, Train No 15641 (Silchar – Dullabcherra - Silchar) Passenger, Train No 05684 (Silchar – Maishashan) Passenger, Train No 05681 (Maishashan - Silchar) Passenger, Train No 15616 (Silchar - Guwahati) Express, Train No 15641 (Silchar – New Tinsukia) Express, Train No 15664 (Silchar - Agartala) Express.

Trains scheduled to commence their journey on June 2, 2024, have been cancelled. These include: Train No 02501 (Kolkata - Agartala) Special, Train No 05660 (Sribar - Silchar) Passenger, Train No 05568 (Bhairabi - Silchar) Passenger, Train No 15615 (Guwahati - Silchar) Express, Train No 15642 (New Tinsukia - Silchar) Express. Train No 13173 (Sealdah – Agartala) Kanchanjunga Express

commencing journey on May 30, 2024, will be short terminated at Guwahati and will remain cancelled between Guwahati and Agartala, Train No 15927 (Rangiya – New Tinsukia) Express commencing journey on May 31, 2024, will be short terminated at Guwahati and will remain cancelled between Guwahati and New Tinsukia, Train No 05606 (Shokhuvi – Guwahati) Passenger commencing journey on May 31, 2024, will be short terminated at Lumding and will remain cancelled between Lumding and Guwahati, Train No 15666 (Mariani Jn – Guwahati) Express commencing journey on May 31, 2024, will be short terminated at Furkating Junction and will remain cancelled between Furkating Junction and Guwahati, Train No 15968 (Ledo – Rangiya) Express commencing journey on May 31, 2024, will be short terminated at Furkating Junction and will remain cancelled between Furkating Junction and Rangiya, Train No 15669 (Guwahati – Dibrugarh) Nagaland Express commencing journey on May 31, 2024, will be short originated from Dimapur and will remain cancelled between Guwahati and Dimapur.

Sonitpur Zila Sahitya Sabha opens call for manuscripts

HT Correspondent

TEZPUR, May 31: Sonitpur Zila Sahitya Sabha has announced a call for manuscripts for the Nandeswar Keot Memorial Novel Competition. In a press note signed by the secretary of Sonitpur Zila Sahitya Sabha, Dulal Nath, intending authors from the undivided Sonitpur district, including Biswanath district, are requested to submit manuscripts of their novels for the competition by November 15 of the current year.

Manuscripts should be sent to the address Nath Enterprise, ThelamraTinali, Sonitpur, 784149.

Nath also added that the best manuscript will be awarded a cash prize of ₹ 10,000 along with a certificate at the biennial session of the Sonitpur Zila Sahitya Sabha.

NTPC Bongaigaon Salakati observes World No Tobacco Day



HT Correspondent

KOKRAJHAR, May 31: NTPC Bongaigaon Salakati commemorated 'World No Tobacco Day' with a series of impactful events aimed at promoting a tobacco-free workplace and lifestyle. The program, hosted by the Medical Cell under the leadership of Dr D Paul, CMO, NTPC Bongaigaon Salakati, commenced with a pledge ceremony where Akhilesh Singh, business unit head of NTPC Bongaigaon, administered a pledge to all employees, committing to abstain from tobacco in both their professional and personal lives. The pledge ceremony was followed by a signature campaign, spearheaded by Akhilesh Singh, which garnered significant participation from employees and associates, highlighting the collective com-

mitment to a tobacco-free environment.

This initiative was not only limited to the main office but extended to various departments within the organisation. At the new service building, Induri S Reddy, general manager (O&M), and Asutosh Biswas, general manager (Operations), administered the 'no-tobacco pledge' to the operations & maintenance employees and associates. Their leadership and participation further motivated the workforce to embrace the no-tobacco ethos. The hospital within the NTPC Bongaigaon premises also actively participated in the campaign. Medical and nursing staff joined in the signature campaign, demonstrating widespread support for the cause.

Notably, the 'World No Tobacco Day' is observed globally to highlight the health risks associated with tobacco use and to advocate for effective policies to reduce tobacco consumption. NTPC Bongaigaon's initiatives align with this year's theme, reinforcing the organisation's commitment to fostering a healthier, tobacco-free workplace and community. The enthusiasm and participation in the activities reflect NTPC Bongaigaon's dedication to promoting health and well-being among its employees and associates. The successful observance of 'World No Tobacco Day' marks another milestone in NTPC Bongaigaon's ongoing efforts to create a safer and healthier environment for all.

Drowning incident claims lives

HT Correspondent

KOKRAJHAR, May 31: In a tragic incident, two members of a family, including the father, were found dead after drowning in a pond on Friday afternoon in Kokrajhar district. The incident occurred at Sesapani village under Kokrajhar Police Station.

According to local people, both the father and his youngest son went for a bath at a village pond on Friday afternoon where they encountered a mishap. Locals attempted to rescue them within a few minutes of the incident but found both of them dead in the pond, and according to their lifeless bodies were recovered.

The bodies were identified as Rajaram Narzary, 49 (father), and his son Khwrwmjit Narzary (7). The bodies have been sent for post-mortem examination. Rajaram Narzary was the former village headman of Sesapani village and was a social worker in the area.

People from all castes and communities have expressed deep shock and extended their condolences and mourning for the untimely demise of Rajaram Narzary and his youngest son.

Forest fringe villagers in Kaziranga & Manas receive vital eye care support

HT Bureau

GUWAHATI, May 31: The region's leading biodiversity conservation organisation, Aaranyak, organised free eye-care camps for village communities, with special attention given to forest fringe weavers and artisans from marginalised categories in Kaziranga-Karbi Anglong Landscape (KKL) and Manas Landscape (ML) of Assam from May 27-28 last. The camps in Kaziranga-Karbi Anglong Landscape were conducted in collaboration with Vision Spring, a social enterprise, and local women collective groups in the landscape and held in Chandrasing Rongpi and Sivoram Terang villages of Karbi Anglong.

In total, 123 people from 10 villages came to get their vision checked up in the two camps. The camps were a collective initiative by the women collectives of 10 villages, which played a pivotal role in communicating with and compiling the list of individuals requiring eye check-ups and coordinating the event's logistics.

This initiative was undertaken after consulting with the 10 Rong Asar Amei (RAA), a traditional village institution in Kaziranga-Karbi Anglong landscape. The collaboration between the women's collectives, Aaranyak, and Rong Asar Amei ensured a well-planned and inclusive approach to the eye check-up camps. Partha Nath from Vision Spring led the eye check-up process, which involved registration and counseling.

In contrast, the free eye checkup camps held in Manas Landscape were organised in collaboration with women catering and tailoring students with the participation of 150 villagers.

The camps were organised in Daodhara village and Bhuyanpara village by two separate groups, the former by the members of the Daodhara Dwisa Sher Boro Cuisine group and the latter by the students of the Tailoring School in Bhuyanpara. The groups were actively involved in assisting patients from registration to counseling, and Lebia Mohanand from Vision Spring spearheaded the eye check-up activities. The eye camps organised in both landscapes concluded with the distribution of prescribed eyeglasses to those in need at a reasonable price of ₹ 100 per pair of eyeglasses. This initiative aligns with Vision Spring's core objective of ensuring affordable and high-quality vision correction solutions are accessible to underserved communities.

Gossaigaon Police raid nets two suspected KLO link men

HT Correspondent

GOSSAIGAON, May 31: Gossaigaon Police, acting on a tip-off, nabbed one KLO link man identified as Gautam Roy (30) from Koliya village under Amguri Police Station in Chirang district.

Police sources disclosed that a team of police led by Hiren Kumar Deka, sub-divisional police officer (SDPO) of Gossaigaon, raided Bhawraguri and successfully apprehended one of the suspected KLO link men, Dayal Roy. After thorough interrogation, his counterpart Gautam Roy was arrested from Chirang district.

It is noteworthy that the arrested KLO link man, Gautam Roy, was earlier a member of the KLO militant group and had surrendered, returning to the mainstream in 2017. However, he is currently detained and interrogated by the police as he is suspected to be in touch with KLO.



HT Correspondent

NAGAON, May 31: A day-long district-level stakeholder workshop on 'Decentralised renewable energy technologies to strengthen the fishery value chain in Assam' was organised at Hotel Rishiraj on Thursday last here.

The workshop was organised by 'Kalong-Kapili', a pioneer NGO working to promote aquaculture among grassroots people in Assam and the north-east region, and also serving as the brand ambassador of the Department of Fisheries, government of Assam, supported by the Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit (GIZ) GmbH, the German Agency for International Cooperation.

The workshop was initiated with a brief note by Jyotish

Workshop explores decentralised renewable energy for strengthening fishery value chain

from Nagaon, Sonitpur, Biswanath, and East Karbi Anglong district participated in the workshop here.

The main objective of the project is to promote and implement self-sustainable decentralised renewable energy technologies that include solar water pumps, solar aerators, solar dryers, solar refrigerators to enhance extension services in FVC, reduce reliance on diesel in rural settings, and create a scalable as well as a replicable business model for fish farmers, farmer producer organisations, financial institutions, and NGOs, as asserted in a press note here.

While addressing the occasion, Dr Pradeep Chandra Bhuyan, Dean Raha Fisheries College, and Dr Niranjan Deka mentioned that DRE has high potential and importance in the field of the fishery value chain and expressed their willingness to extend full support from their end for the betterment of the fish farmers of the district too. Meanwhile, DDM NABARD, Rajendra Perma, also assured support in replicating the DRE technologies for the benefits of the fish farmers of the district, as stated further in the press note here.

Over a hundred fish farmers

WWF-India's ECHO prog cultivates sustainable urban innovations in Guwahati summit

HT Bureau

GUWAHATI, May 31: ECHO - Building Environment Conservation Heroes - is a university engagement programme by WWF-India. ECHO is an annual innovation platform that engages interdisciplinary teams of university students to explore and ideate innovative solutions to accelerate environment conservation efforts. Through this programme, we build the capacity of youth to contribute to the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), enhance their leadership qualities, and develop entrepreneurial skills.

The ECHO 2023-24 theme is SDG 11 titled 'Sustainable Cities and Communities'. The objective of SDG 11 is to make cities and human settlements inclusive, safe, resilient, and sustainable. WWF-India's Assam state office, led by state coordinator Archita Baruah Bhattacharyya, conducted the State Level Summit of ECHO for students participating to showcase their innovations and ideas to build more inclusive, safe, and sus-



tainable cities. The event was held at MCB Conference Hall, Cotton University, Guwahati, with seven finalist teams from prestigious institutions: Handique Girls' College, Cotton College Zoology department, USTM Guwahati, and NLU Guwahati presenting their pilot projects on environment-friendly Dwij Paper from paper waste, biodegradable

cutlery for sustainable food habits, waste to wealth: egg shells as animal feed, EcoChar: turning weeds into warmth, eco-friendly food vending, natural latex water bottles.

The jury members Dr Merry Baruah Bora and Shirshendu Sekhar Das judged the projects presented based on several ECHO parameters such as innovation and scalability. After a tough competition, Gauhati Com-

merce College emerged as the state-level summit winner followed by USTM as first runner's up from Assam. The winning team from GCC will now represent Assam in the national summit. Their project 'A Holistic Development of a Slum' aligns with Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 11, encouraging people to reduce cloth waste through upcycling and reuse of materials, promoting sustainable urban development, and reducing environmental impact. They provided income opportunities to slum dwellers through eco-friendly business ideas, focused on community involvement, and slum women empowerment.

Several dignitaries, including Prof Ranjit Chowdhury, chairperson WWF Assam Advisory Board, Prof Ramesh Ch Deka, the vice chancellor of Cotton University, Dr Arindam Garg, the registrar of cotton University, and Prof Mala Dutta, HOD Geography department, graced the event and interacted with the participants.

QUOTE OF THE DAY

Make each day your masterpiece.
— John Wood

Reforming India's Political and Social fissures

The 2024 Lok Sabha election campaign has revealed deep fissures within India's political and social fabric. The opposition's grievances about EC's partiality, highlighted by delayed and inconsistent polling data, have raised serious concerns about the integrity of the electoral process. Furthermore, the use of stringent laws to detain opposition leaders and financial crackdowns on opposition parties suggest a climate of political intimidation that threatens the democratic process. The similarity between the election campaign of 2019 and 2024 is the focus of PM Narendra Modi on jingoism in relation to Pakistan and on Muslim terror modules, so as to inject a sense of fear of a national security threat among the majority Hindu community to unite them to vote for BJP. It worked in 2019, and BJP could win an unprecedented 303 seats. Only the result on June 4 will show if this strategy worked this time. National security did not emerge an issue, though the Prime Minister Narendra Modi repeatedly mentioned that the opposition INDIA bloc has conspired to take away the properties of Hindus, and reservation of STs, SCs, and OBCs to give them to Muslims. It was a direct violation of the Model Code of Conduct since it was nothing but instigating Hindus against the Opposition and the Muslims, - instigating one section of the population against the other.

Opposition INDIA bloc has raised the issue before the Election Commission of India (ECI), which brought the issue of falling credibility of the ECI, and a suspicion that ECI has compromised its independence to the ruling establishment. The issue of providing timely polling data, which was delayed for several days, and the final data was much higher than the initial data released on the polling day, giving rise to a suspicion of data manipulation. These are some of the serious matters in relation to conducting free and fair elections by the ECI. The apparent threat to democracy was brought into focus by the opposition, several of whose leaders were put behind bars under draconian PMLA for money laundering and corruption. Opposition cried foul and raised the issue before the court and made it an issue during the election campaigns. One can't deny the fact that the Centre has unleashed central investigating agencies against the political parties and their leaders during the election. The Supreme Court of India has even given relief in the form of interim bail to AAP supremo Arvind Kejriwal to campaign for election, who was arrested by the Enforcement Directorate after the announcement of election by ECI. The Department of Income Tax even blocked the account of the chief opposition political party Congress, which is leading the opposition INDIA bloc.

There are some of the incidents suggesting perils in democracy, the threat to the Constitution of India. During the election campaign several BJP leaders said that they need more than 400 seats to change the Constitution of India, though BJP leadership said that they don't have any such plan. The clarification was not believed by the people, since the RSS-BJP clan has all along been working on Hindutva line and they have a dream to make India a Hindu Nation, as against the present socialist, secular, and federal republic. The BJP leadership has been talking about "One nation One election", "One nation, one civil code", and so on. PM Modi's functional behaviour implies "One Nation, One Party, One Leader" the opposition allege. Former Prime Minister Manmohan Singh has even appealed to the voters that it was their last chance to save democracy and the Constitution from the clutches of a despotic leader PM Narendra Modi, who delivered such hate speeches that no other prime minister earlier had said. Hate speeches remains it is a serious threat to Indian society's secular fabric. Whichever government takes oath after June 4 results, it should address such important issues to avoid the peril that the country is facing.

INDIA bloc leaders have put up solid campaign to take on PM in Varanasi

By: Pradeep Kapoor

Irrespective of outcome of Lok Sabha polls in Uttar Pradesh, credit goes to India Alliance to make BJP struggle in all the 13 seats in Poorvanchal part of state. Knowing fully well the outcome of most VIP constituency Varanasi where PM Narendra Modi is contesting for third term. Samajwadi Party and Congress mobilised all resources in favour of INDIA alliance candidate Ajay Rai. All these constituencies are going to the polls on June 1, the last day of the seven phase polling.

The road show of Priyanka Gandhi and Dimple Yadav in favour of Ajay was a grand success in term of the public response in Varanasi. Similarly joint rally of two poster boys of the opposition Rahul Gandhi and Akhilesh Yadav three days after the road show of Priyanka and Dimple was also a big success which was visible through the huge response of the public.

Rahul Gandhi told the gathering that the election in Varanasi was witnessing clear divide between rich people and poor people. He further said that PM Modi was contesting to look after the interests of rich while Ajay Rai was representing poor people.

Akhilesh Yadav said that PM Modi failed to convert Varanasi to Kyoto and clean Holy river Ganga. He miserably failed to fulfill two promises made to voters of Varanasi, Akhilesh alleged. He claimed several schemes of development in Varanasi were initiated during Samajwadi Party regime.

The high profile campaign by INDIA bloc in Varanasi unnerved the campaign managers of PM Narendra Modi which resulted in deployment of BJP-RSS workers from all over the country to Varanasi.

So much so film actor Arun Govil who played the character of Lord Ram in iconic serial Ramayana was brought to Varanasi to campaign for PM Modi.

The campaign for PM Modi is being supervised by high profile BJP-RSS leader Sunil Bansal who was architect of party's victory in UP during 2014 and 2019 Lok Sabha polls. BJP is unnerved at the manner in which Akhilesh Yadav and Rahul Gandhi succeeded in weaning away large number of dalit voters from Mayawati in the name of saving the constitution.

The strategy of Rahul Gandhi for caste census and Akhilesh Yadav working on PDA (backward, dalit and minorities) is making BJP candidates struggle in all the constituencies.

Even in Gorakhpur, hometown of chief minister Yogi Adityanath BJP candidate Bollywood actor Ravi Kishan is facing Kajal Nishad from Samajwadi Party contesting as INDIA bloc candidate. Significantly, Nishad backward community has very good presence in Gorakhpur which helps the candidate from backward community to win the seat.

Similarly in weaver belt of Goshi and carpet belt in Mirzapur, there is keen contest between BJP and INDIA bloc. The impact of the death of local powerful personality and alleged mafia Mukhtar Ansari will also be felt in the voting in eastern UP.

Although PM Narendra Modi held the mega road show and addressed the meeting the day he filed his nomination in Varanasi but all the top leaders of NDA and BJP visited the VIP constituency and campaigned. Prevailing heat wave in UP will also be one of the important factors during polling in last phase for 13 Lok Sabha seats on June 1. (IPA Service)

Challenges to democracy: An analysis of India's 2024 Lok Sabha election

Two key aspects stand out in the 2024 Lok Sabha election, marking it as a significant event. Firstly, the election outcome, and secondly, the electoral process itself, are both set to profoundly influence the political landscape for years. The incumbent government entered the campaign with high confidence, anticipating an unchallenged third term.

Some officials even speculated about surpassing the 400-seat mark in Parliament, which would grant them a substantial mandate to potentially pursue constitutional amendments. The government's optimism was bolstered by several advantages: substantial media influence, freezing the main opposition party's bank accounts, arresting two Chief Ministers on longstanding charges, and a significant resource gap favoring the government over its competitors. These factors combined to create a strong expectation of an easy and decisive victory for the ruling party.

As the election progressed into its third phase, a remarkable trend emerged: there was no discernible wave in favor of the government. Many voters, including the government's core constituencies in Uttar Pradesh (UP), appeared unenthusiastic and reluctant to vote. Even in strongholds like Bareilly and Unnao, BJP workers struggled to mobilize their core supporters. Although Prime Minister Narendra Modi and UP Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath were spoken of positively, there was widespread dissatisfaction with local

representatives who had failed to fulfill their promises.

This low voter turnout poses a significant challenge for the BJP. Notably, in 115 constituencies, or 27% of the total, fewer people voted compared to the 2019 election, not just in percentage terms but in absolute numbers. Commentators like Sushant Singh have noted that this phenomenon is almost unparalleled in India's electoral history.

Voters were deeply concerned about rising prices, the impact of the Agniveer scheme, and, most importantly, the persistent lack of jobs. Unlike the 2019 election, which saw a decisive impact from the Pulwama attack, no such polarizing event has occurred this time. Furthermore, the BJP's position is weakened by the loss of most of its coalition allies, particularly in key states like Maharashtra. The party enters the polls with few formal pre-poll alliances, a factor that could significantly count against it.

Predicting election outcomes is notoriously tricky and has often led to the downfall of seasoned analysts. However, it appears evident that the BJP's ambitions of surpassing its 2019 majority are now out of reach. The party is likely to struggle even to secure a majority on its own. It's important to remember that the BJP's majority in 2019 was only 31 seats, though their subsequent dominance created the illusion of a much larger mandate. Having already secured its heartland regions, the BJP faces significant

challenges in expanding into the southern and eastern parts of India, where it has traditionally had limited appeal.

Should the BJP secure a third term, it will likely be part of a coalition, which would restrict its ability to freely pursue its Hindu nationalist agenda. This would hinder its long-term goals of transforming the political and social landscape. An even greater setback would be a term in opposition, though this would not entirely extinguish its ambitions for long-term change.

The integrity of the electoral process in India has always been a challenge, with political parties constantly trying to manipulate procedures to their advantage. However, the 2024 election has seen a disturbing escalation in both traditional and modern malpractices. Alongside longstanding issues like booth capturing and voter intimidation, new tactics such as overspending, disinformation campaigns, and communal rhetoric have become rampant.

Reports from M Rajshekar, particularly his analysis in The Wire titled "Decoding: 28 Reasons for the Shrinking Credibility of the Electoral Process," highlight the extent of these malpractices. Instances of rival candidates being coerced to withdraw, booths being captured, and voters facing intimidation have become distressingly common.

In some constituencies like Surat and Indore, opposition candidates withdrew, effectively

granting victory to BJP candidates uncontested.

Moreover, archaic practices like suppressing the votes of marginalized communities have resurfaced. In Sambhal, Muslim voters were subjected to lathi charges, while Dalits in Kaushambi faced assaults for not supporting the BJP. Instances of voter suppression, such as names missing from electoral lists, further undermined the democratic process. In Khajuri, North East Delhi, many long-time voters found their names inexplicably deleted from the voter list, leading to disenfranchisement.

Even during the act of voting, manipulation persisted. In Fatehpur, Uttar Pradesh, a voter was forced to cast her ballot for the BJP despite expressing her preference for the Samajwadi Party symbol. Similarly, in Bhubaneswar, Odisha, a polling officer repeatedly directed voters to vote for the BJP, only stopping when confronted by a vigilant voter.

These alarming incidents underscore the urgent need for electoral reform and vigilance to safeguard the democratic principles of free and fair elections.

While it's challenging to precisely quantify the extent of electoral malpractices, collectively they suggest a notable bias in favor of the BJP. In the 2019 election, the BJP secured numerous seats with narrow margins, indicating their advantage in closely contested races. This pattern implies that only significant margins of victory can dislodge the BJP from winning positions.

However, the more concerning

issue is the erosion of fair practice norms. In the Chandigarh mayoral election, for instance, a BJP-affiliated returning officer was caught defacing ballot papers to ensure the victory of the BJP candidate. Despite this blatant violation, the Punjab and Haryana High Court initially declined to intervene, prompting the case to escalate to the Supreme Court. The Supreme Court's swift intervention and subsequent overturning of the election result underscored the severity of the situation, with the Chief Justice condemning the incident as a "mockery of democracy" and recommending the prosecution of the returning officer.

What's alarming is not just the audacity of the vote-rigging but the lack of accountability from the BJP itself, despite clear evidence of wrongdoing. The integrity of the voting process is essential in giving voice to all participants, particularly the marginalized and vulnerable. It serves as a collective expression of individual choice and acts as a check on the power of the state and those who control it.

Preserving the integrity of the electoral process is crucial for ensuring democratic principles. As the saying goes, "When government fears the people, there is liberty. When the people fear the government, there is tyranny." Upholding fair electoral practices is essential for fostering a democratic society where citizens feel empowered and the powerful are held accountable. (The writer can be reached at dipakkurmigupta@gmail.com)

Coalition of black trade unionists maps strategy for 2024 and beyond

By: Cameron Harrison

Staying neutral means staying silent. It means risking the rights of workers and the civil rights of all. It means the continuation of unemployment and poor wages while the powerful continue to get richer." That's the warning from Fred Redmond, Secretary-Treasurer of the AFL-CIO and the highest-ranking Black trade unionist in the country.

Redmond was speaking to over 1,200 Black, Latino/a, Asian, Arab, Indigenous, and white delegates and guests at the 53rd International Convention of the Coalition of Black Trade Unionists (CBTU) that filled the Houston Marriott Marquis Hotel convention center on Thursday morning.

Founded in 1972, the CBTU has been a driving force for trade union militancy and diversity and has been holding the labour movement accountable since its inception. The theme of this year's convention is "Never Back, Always Forward: Hate Cannot Erase Us." With the 2024 elections looming, setting up a re-run between President Joe Biden and former twice-impeached president and fascist Donald Trump, the convention brought into stark relief the high stakes facing the working class and the trade union movement.

"Whether we like it or not, this election comes down to us: Black people and the labour movement," Redmond continued. The upcoming election determines "the future of this country and the future of our labour movement." What's at stake in the 2024 election, according to Redmond, is the continued ability for the working class to fight for "worker's rights, voting rights, civil rights, healthcare, water rights, the right to live and have a good-paying union job."

"We have an opportunity to continue to build towards a Third Reconstruction...or usher in the second Confederacy," a CBTU Region 7 delegate and member of the UAW told People's World. "Yes, Joe Biden isn't the best president we've ever had, but let's not get amnesia about what Trump was about when he was president."

That this year's conven-

tion was held in Texas, a state that Republicans have turned into a bastion of right-wing and anti-immigrant, anti-labour, and anti-women fervour, is significant. Rick Levy, President of the Texas State AFL-CIO told delegates, "We need to proclaim our message loudly for all of Texas" to hear.

The message: Despite defunding of schools, the criminalization of abortion, the rollbacks of voting rights, and the fascistic assault on immigrants, Texas is also home to the "boldest union fighters who struggle every single day for justice and equality."

"We gotta be honest about the reaction that is so severe," said Levy. In Texas, the effort to outlaw diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) policies in public institutions is "absolute madness," he said. "Since when does equality make you an enemy of the State?" Levy pointed out how this ultra-right assault is "installed and promoted by corporate America. They are scared of union workers fighting for economic justice. They are scared of democracy."

Claude Cummings, Jr., who was recently elected to head the Communication Workers of America (CWA), making him the first Black president of that union, emphasized the importance of educating and mobilizing the labour movement in response to Project 2025-the fascist agenda proposed by the far-right Heritage Foundation.

The doomsday plan seeks to undermine and eliminate the hard-won democratic gains of working people throughout the course of the country's history in favour of white supremacy, company unions, "Christian" nationalism, and a loss of basic democracy.

Cummings called on CWA and CBTU to fight to "protect democracy and protect our unions." He declared in no uncertain terms, "We will defend our unions!" The president of the Labour Council for Latin American Advancement (LCLAA), Evelyn DeJesus, also the first Latina Executive Vice President of the American Federation of Teachers (AFT), spoke about the unity needed between all working-class people to defend our hard-won rights and fight towards a new, more just society.

For DeJesus, the collective power of the working class is the driving force for all of our country's social progress. "Racial unity is our strength," she said, "and we need this unity to dismantle all systems of oppression!"

The main report delivered by Rev. Terrence L. Melvin, International President of CBTU, was met with lively cheers from the audience. "We are not here to pacify our oppressors," he stated. "We are here to uplift our families and our communities!"

"The union movement is on fire!" shouted Melvin. "It is rooted in the new militancy in workers who are saying, 'We ain't taking this shit no more!'" Black workers are front and center in the current resurgence of organized labour, and they are increasingly being elected to positions of leadership in the trade union movement. "Black folks are kicking some ass!" Melvin remarked to a round of applause from the delegates.

Turning to the issue of peace, Melvin said, "Our hearts flinch for every child shot in Gaza" just like "our hearts flinch for every police killing in America," said Melvin. The ceasefire sentiment among convention delegates was expressed in the form of peace and solidarity buttons, ceasefire stickers, keffiyehs, and bracelets in the colours of the Palestinian flag.

It was clear that CBTU, and the delegates of the convention more broadly, were not entirely pleased with the Biden administration's first four years. They mentioned a dearth of movement on police accountability and reform, the support for the genocide against Palestinians, slow-motion on voting rights legislation, and a lack of political mobilization against the Jan. 6th coup-plotters.

However, "MAGA is democracy's grave digger" and "Project 2025 is the billionaires' plan to enshrine white supremacy and turn our country into an apartheid state," asserted Melvin. "The MAGA cult has democracy on life support and we say, hell nah! We ain't standing for that!" "We need to bury MAGA and defend our hard-earned gains. This is a game of inches...not a game of perfect. The stakes are just too high." (IPA Service)

Political pressure from all sides puts Jordan King in a hopeless situation

By: James M Dorsey

Jordan's King Abdullah is caught between a rock and a hard place. Hamas and its regional supporters, as well as Israeli politicians and vigilantes, are pressuring King Abdullah from both ends of the political spectrum. Iranian-backed Syrian and Iraqi militants seek to draw the kingdom, in which Palestinians account for at least 50 per cent of the population, into the Gaza war. Hamas, the Muslim Brotherhood, and Iran want to turn Jordan into a regional flashpoint and funnel for weapons for Palestinian militants on the West Bank. "The Iranians have instructions to recruit Jordanians and penetrate the Jordan arena through agents. Their recruitment efforts span all segments of society," said Saud Al Sharafat, a former senior Jordanian intelligence official.

In support of Hamas, Iranian-backed Iraqi groups in January attacked a US military base, killing three American soldiers and wounding at least 34 others. Iran was quick to rein in the militias after the United States retaliated with a series of airstrikes. At the other end of the political spectrum, vigilante Israeli settlers have attacked Jordanian humanitarian truck convoys as they traversed the West Bank en route to Gaza.

At the same time, Israeli politicians, with far-right National Security Minister Itamar Ben Gvir in the lead, complicate King Abdullah's life with provocative visits to the Jordanian-administered Temple Mount or Haram ash-Sharif, Islam's third holiest site. Jordan is Haram ash-Sharif's custodian. King Abdullah has put himself in the firing line by intercepting Iranian drones traversing Jordanian airspace in the Islamic Republic's massive April 19 drone and missile attack on Israel and cracking down in March and April on pro-Palestinian demonstrations. He defended the downing of Iranian drones violating Jordanian airspace as an act of self-defence, insisting "Jordan will not be a battlefield for any party." Even so, King Abdullah, dependent on US military and economic support, may not have had a choice but to take down the drones.

Critics posted concocted images on social media of the king wrapped in an Israeli flag or donning an Israeli military uniform with comments such as "traitor" and "Western puppet." The crackdown and assistance in Israel's defence have drowned out the fact that Jordan is the only Arab country to have withdrawn its ambassador to Israel and consistently sends aid to Gaza. Jordan is one of five Arab countries that maintain diplomatic relations with Israel. Meanwhile, Jordanian sources assert the Muslim Brotherhood organised the protests.

With an unemployment rate of approximately 22 per cent and nearly half of young people unable to find a job, officials feared that the pro-Palestinian demonstrations could morph into social and economic protests. Long a close US ally, King Abdullah's predicament highlights the Gaza war's potential to further destabilise the Middle East. Jordan's geography doesn't help with the West Bank on its Western border, Syria in the north, and Iraq in the east.

The pressure on King Abdullah comes as politics could spark paradigm shifts in several key Middle Eastern states, including Israel and Iraq. King Abdullah likely

sees benefit in Binyamin Netanyahu's space to manoeuvre narrowing as a result of mounting Israeli public pressure to free Hamas-held hostages by ending the Gaza war and international courts acting to force Israel to halt its offensive in Gaza and hold the prime minister and Defence Minister Yoav Gallant accountable for its war conduct. Hamas's recent rocket attack on Tel Aviv will probably offer Netanyahu a brief relief, if at all.

King Abdullah may also see mileage in popular Iraqi Shia cleric Moqtada Al Sadr's decision to re-enter politics and compete in next year's elections in a move that would challenge the pro-Iranian Coordination Framework, the backbone of Prime Minister Mohammed Shia al-Sudani's government. For now, King Abdullah's crackdown on mass pro-Palestinian protests has reduced domestic pressures, even if widespread anger continues to bubble at the surface.

Even so, Jordan sources said earlier this month that security services had foiled a suspected Iranian-led plot to smuggle weapons into the kingdom to help King Abdullah's opponents carry out acts of sabotage. The sources said an Iranian-backed Syrian militia had sent the weapons to Jordanian Palestinian members of the Muslim Brotherhood with links to Hamas, a Brotherhood affiliate.

In March, Israel's Shin Bet domestic security agency said it had foiled attempts by Iran to smuggle large amounts of advanced weapons into the West Bank. Shin Bet said the smuggling was organized by Unit 4000, the intelligence unit of the Special Operations Division of the Islamic Revolutionary Guards Corps, and the Special Operations Unit 18840 of the Guards' Quds Force in Syria. The agency said Munir Makdiah, a senior Lebanon-based official of Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas' Al Fatah movement, was involved in the foiled smuggle.

In response to the most recent plot, Hamas insisted it had "no ties to any acts targeting Jordan." A Jordanian Muslim Brotherhood official said its arrested members had acted independently. Even so, Hamas leaders have repeatedly called on Jordanians since the Gaza war erupted in October to step up to the plate.

Senior Doha-based Hamas official Khaled Mishaal, who survived an Israeli assassination attempt in Amman in 1997, told a women's gathering in Jordan in a video address that "Jordan is a beloved country, and it is the closest to Palestine, so its men and women are expected to take more supportive roles than any other people towards the land of resistance and resilience." Iranian-backed Iraqi militants asserted in April that they stood ready to arm 12,000 fighters of the Islamic Resistance in Jordan that would open a new front against Israel. Abu Ali al-Askari, a Kataib Hezbollah security official, suggested the offer was inspired by Hamas and Palestinian Islamic Jihad's assessment that all Jordanian militants needed was access to weapons.

There is no evidence of an Islamic fighting force in tightly controlled Jordan despite mounting public anger, a limited number of border incidents, and the efforts by Hamas, the Muslim Brotherhood, and Iranian-backed groups. Much of the threat of renewed protest and increasing militancy may be more bluster than real. (IPA Service)



By: **Kaustov Kashyap**

Corporate Law is a specialised field in the field of Law, and has a great scope for the graduates. This degree applies to sole proprietorship, partnership, association and corporations. The day-to-day activities of a Corporate Lawyer include safeguarding the commercial transactions, preparing corporate agreements, filing taxes and managing government reporting. A degree in the Corporate Law domain can be pursued at both undergraduate and postgraduate level. Corporate Law is a specialisation that one can pursue while taking up a degree course in Law.

Degrees like LL.B (Bachelor of Legislative Law) and B.A.,

LL.B, BBA, LL.B BBA, LL.B (Hons) in B.Com, LL.B, B.Sc, LL.B can be pursued in Corporate Law. The recent decades have been a trendsetter for "Corporate" since we are living in a corporate era. Most people are ambitious to get a corporate job in a top-notch organisation, but their thoughts are limited to software and IT only. The growth in this sector brought lots and lots of career avenues worldwide. Corporate Law is a highly reputed and rewarding career in the corporate world.

Eligibility Criteria
Eligibility criteria for UG courses in Corporate Law

Before applying to the UG courses in the field of Corporate Law, candidates must ensure that they meet the eligibility criteria

A career in Corporate Law

of the course. They must have completed their 10+2 examination with a percentage of 45% there will be a relaxation of 10 percent for the candidates belonging to the reserved categories.

Candidates applying for the admissions to the UG programmes in the field of Corporate Law must clear the eligibility criteria of the course. They must achieve a minimum aggregate score of 45%, there will be a relaxation of 10 percent for the students belonging to the reserved categories.

The top entrance exams for UG courses in India are SET SLAT - The Symbiosis Entrance Test and CLAT- Common-Law Admission Test. The SET SLAT is organised by the Symbiosis Law School (SLS), Pune to help students in seeking admission to the university's law courses. Whereas, the CLAT is an entrance test in the area of law that is conducted by the National Law University at a national level in India. It is an offline examination and is widely accepted in most law institutions and colleges.

Eligibility criteria for PG courses

Candidates applying for the

PG courses must meet the eligibility requirements of the desired institute. They can study the eligibility criteria by visiting the official website of the same. Candidates require a Bachelor's degree in the field of law or related discipline with an aggregate score of 45 percent.

Mentioned below is the eligibility criteria for PG courses in the field of Corporate Law. A Bachelor's degree in the field of Law or relevant discipline is also necessary for the admissions to the PG courses in the Corporate Law field. Students should also clear the LSAT- The Law Student Admission Test and CLAT- Common-Law Admission Test PG any one of these two exams to enter in the field of Corporate Law.

LSAT is the most popular entrance exam at the global level for law aspirants. It is conducted by the Law School Admission Council. It is a half-day standardised test held about seven times each year. CLAT PG is a national level law entrance examination conducted by Consortium of National Law Universities (NLU's) for admission to the postgraduate programmes in the field of Law.

Scope of Corporate Law

The scope of a Corporate Law

course is very diverse in both India and abroad. The Corporate Industry is growing in India and there is increasing demand for corporate lawyers due to high dependability on them.

The salary of a Corporate Lawyer is handsome, which varies on their experience and knowledge. Graduates can work in law firms, corporates, banks or any other government or private sectors. Law abroad has always been a top-ranking and high-paying career; many countries like the USA hire qualified legal lawyers provided they are eligible for the same.

Careers in Corporate Law

Corporate Law is an emerging career in the law field as well as the corporate field. This is a versatile choice of career. The demand for corporate Law will never come down as the corporate sectors are growing at a very rapid speed. The corporate sector contributes 53 per cent of GDP to the Indian Economy. Corporate Law plays a major role in corporate governance as it includes involvement in major decisions to commercial transactions and solving disputes to negotiating settlements.

Corporate Law generally involves around overseeing all

legal and external affairs. As the knowledge, experience, and potentiality of the corporate lawyer increases, it increases his/her prestige and demand in the corporate world. One can become a Corporate Lawyer, Legal Advisors, Corporate Events Associate, Associate Advocate, Legal Counsellor and Law Administrator by studying corporate law.

Top Corporate Law colleges in India

The admission to corporate law colleges is based on the entrance examination or direct admission based on past academic performance. The fee for private colleges is generally higher as compared to government colleges. A few private Corporate law colleges are-Babu Banarasi Das University, Lucknow, GITAM School of Law Visakhapatnam, Hemchandracharya North Gujarat University, Patan, SLCU Bangalore, Symbiosis Law School, Nagpur, Indian Law Institute, New Delhi, NLU Jodhpur - National Law University, Jodhpur to name a few.

Upcoming trends

The demand for Corporate Law courses is rapidly increasing in the corporate sector. But corporate Law has nailed its place to serve a large number of compa-

nies. The upcoming trends in this area include:

Virtual Law Firm

Virtual Law firms, as the name suggests are legal companies who don't have a physical presence and are mostly operated from the home of a Lawyer. A virtual law firm is a very beneficial innovation that reduces the cost of setting up an office, the location and time both are flexible, lawyers can operate it from anywhere in the world. The client reach also increases.

Legal Search Engines

Legal Search Engines is an online platform that allows the legal professionals, lawyers and law students to access the legal information easily. Finding legal information online can be a bit overwhelming, but due to Legal Search Engines now the individual can access the information very easily and quickly.

There are some other innovations in the field of law such as Web- Based Legal Services and Corporate Secretarial Services Market. These trends and innovations make the corporate field a rapidly-developing field. *(The author is an HR & Career Consultant based in Jorhat, Assam. He can be reached at 9957663224)*

Jorhat Judiciary Recruitment – 2 Office Assistant & Peon Posts

Last Date: 02 & 30/06/2024.

District Legal Services Authority (DLSA), Jorhat has released an employment notification for the recruitment of 2 Office Assistant and Peon posts on contractual basis in the office of the Legal Aid Defence Counsel System at District Legal Services Authority, Jorhat as per the LADCS Modified Scheme, 2022 of NALSA. Interested and eligible candidates may apply.

1. Office Assistant

No of posts: 1

Monthly Salary: ₹ 18,000

Educational Qualification:

Graduation.
Knowledge in Basic Computer Applications like MS Office, Word, Excel, Power Point, DTP (English & Assamese) and Internet etc.

2. Peon

No of posts: 1

Monthly Salary: ₹ 12,000

Educational Qualification: Minimum Class VIII Passed but not Graduate.

Age Limit:

Minimum: 21 years

Maximum: 40 years as on date of advertisement.

Age Relaxation as per Govt. Rule

How to Apply for Jorhat Judiciary Recruitment?

Interested and eligible candidates will have to appear in the walk-in-interview as per the schedule mentioned below:

Walk-in Schedule:

Date:

Office Assistant: 02/06/2024

Peon: 30/06/2024

Time: 10 AM

The registration process for Walk-in-Interview in both selections will start at 8.30 am till 10.30 am. No candidate will be allowed to register for the walk in interview after 10.30 am in any circumstances.

After completion of Walk-in-Interview for the engagement of post No - 01, short listed candidates from the Walk-in-Interview process will be called for Computer Skill Test. The result of Walk-in-Interview for both engagements along with date, time and place of the Computer Skill Test will be informed in due course of time only via the official website of Jorhat District Judiciary (<https://jorhat.dcourts.gov.in/>).

Required Documents:

To appear in the Walk in Interview in both engagements, the candidates will have to bring self certified/attested copies of the following documents:
a. Standard Form as published in Assam Gazette in part IX to the issuing authority.

b. H.S.L.C admit card for age proof (Post No - 01).

c. H.S.L.C admit card / School Certificate for age proof (post No - 02).

d. Educational qualification certificate.

e. Computer education certificate. (Post No - 01)

f. Certificate of higher education, if any (Post No - 01).

g. 02 (Two) nos of passport size photographs,

h. Employment Exchange certificate.

i. Experience certificate, if any.

Dr. Radhakrishnan School Dibrugarh Recruitment – 4 Posts

Last Date: 03/06/2024

Dr. Radhakrishnan School of Arts, Commerce and Science, Dibrugarh has released an employment notification for the recruitment of 4 Non-teaching posts. Interested and eligible candidates may apply.

1. Arts Coordinator

No of posts: 01

Pay: ₹ 12,000 to ₹ 35,000 (Salary will be commensurate with merit and experience)

Educational Qualification: B.A. / M.A.

Experience: Preference will be given to 1-2 years of experience.

2. Accounts Officer

No of posts: 01

Pay: ₹ 12,000 to ₹ 35,000 (Salary will be commensurate with merit and experience.)

Educational Qualification: B.Com / M.Com / MBA in Finance

Experience: Preference will be given to 1-2 years of experience.

3. Public Relation Officer

No of posts: 01

Pay: ₹ 12,000 to ₹ 30,000 (Salary will be commensurate with merit and experience.)

Educational Qualification: B.Sc. / M.Sc.

Experience: Preference will be given to 1-2 years of experience.

4. Security

No of posts: 01

Pay: ₹ 8,000 to ₹ 15,000 (Salary will be commensurate with merit and experience)

Educational Qualification: Class X Passed.

Age Limit: 18 to 35 years.

Experience: Preference will be given to 1-2 years of experience.

Application Fee: Nil.

How to Apply for Dr. Radhakrishnan School Dibrugarh Recruitment ?

Potential candidates having the requisite qualification & experience can send their (CVs) at hrkschool@gmail.com or submit the same at the front office of Dr. Radhakrishnan School of Arts, Commerce & Science, Amolapaty, Dibrugarh, Assam – 786001 on or before 3rd June 2024.

For any query, please contact H.R. Department @ 8822400362/ 7099069263 from 9.00 am to 4.00 pm.

PWD Assam Recruitment 2024 – 80 JE (Mechanical) Posts

Last Date: 05/06/2024

Assam Public Service Commission (APSC) has released an employment notification for the recruitment of 80 Junior Engineer (Mechanical) posts under joint cadre of Public Works Roads (PWRD) and Public Works (Building & National Highway) Department [PW(B&NH)D]. Interested and eligible candidates may apply online.

Name of post: Junior Engineer (Mechanical)

No of posts: 80 posts

Category-wise vacancy:

UR: 44

OBC/MOBC: 25

OBC/MOBC (Tea Tribe & Adivasi Community): 1

SC: 1

STP: 5

STH: 4

Name of department: Public Works Roads (PWRD) and Public Works (Building & National Highway) Department [PW(B&NH)D]

Scale of Pay: PB-4 ₹ 14, 000 to ₹ 60,500 GP: ₹ 8,700

Eligibility Criteria of PWD Assam Recruitment

Age Limit: The candidates should not be less than 21 years of age and not more than 38 years of age as on 01/01/2024.

Age Relaxation: The category-wise age relaxation is as mentioned below.

SC: 5 years

ST: 5 years

OBC/ MOBC: 3 years

PwBD: 10 years

For more details pl read the official notification.

Educational Qualification:

The candidate must have a Three year Diploma in Mechanical Engineering from any technical institute recognized by the Government.

The Diploma must be a Regular course. Diploma courses obtained through Distance Mode of Education, by whatever name called, will not be accepted.

Local Language Proficiency: Apart from English, the candidate should have adequate knowledge of at least 1 (one) official language of the State of Assam (i.e. Assamese/Bengali/Bodo) except candidates belonging to Karbi Anglong Autonomous Council and Dima Hasao Autonomous Council.

Citizenship: Candidates must be Indian Citizens as defined in Articles 5 to 8 of the Constitution of India.

Residenship:

(i) The candidate must be a permanent resident of Assam.

(ii) The candidate must produce PRC issued in Assam for educational purpose/

Employment Exchange Registration certificate as proof of residency along with the application form.

Application Fee:

General/EWS: 297.20

SC/ST/OBC/MOBC: 197.20

BPL: 47.20

PwBD: 47.20

Payment Mode: Online

Important Dates of PWRD Assam Vacancy 2024

Starting date of submission of online application: 6th May 2024

Last date of submission of online application: 5th June 2024

Tezpur University Faculty Recruitment 2024 – 40 Faculty Posts

Last Date: 15/06/2024

Tezpur University has released an employment notification for the recruitment 40 Faculty Vacancy in various departments/ Centres. Interested and eligible candidates may apply online.

1. Professor

No of posts: 22 posts

Subject-wise vacancy:

Civil Engineering: 1

Computer Science & Engineering: 4

Electrical Engineering: 1

Electronics & Communication Engineering: 1

Food Engineering & Technology: 1

Applied Sciences (Physics): 1

Physics: 1

Chemical Sciences: 1

Molecular Biology & Biotechnology: 1

Cultural Studies: 1

Social Work: 1

Education: 1

Law: 1

Commerce: 1

Assamese: 1

Foreign Languages: 1

Design: 1

English: 1

Linguistics & Language Technology: 1

2. Associate Professor

No of posts: 13 posts

Subject-wise vacancy:

Computer Science & Engineering: 1

Electrical Engineering: 1

Molecular Biology & Biotechnology: 1

Education: 1

Business Administration: 2

Foreign Languages: 2

Design: 2

Commerce: 1

Mass Communication & Journalism: 2

3. Assistant Professor

No of posts: 5 posts

Subject-wise vacancy:

Mechanical Engineering: 1

Chemical Sciences: 1

Education: 1

Food Engineering & Technology: 1

Mass Communication & Journalism: 1

Eligibility Criteria of Tezpur University Faculty Recruitment

Age Limit: For more details about Age Limit, candidates are requested to check official advertisement.

Educational Qualification: For more details about Educational Qualification, candidates are requested to check official advertisement.

Advertisement NO.: 04 / 2024

Application Fee:

Others: ₹ 1,000/- (Rs. One thousand only)

SC/ ST/ PWD: Nil

Mode of payment: Through Payment Gateway (as provided in the CU-Chayan Portal)

Important Dates of Tezpur University Faculty Vacancy 2024

Starting date for submission of application: 22nd March 2024

Last date for submission of application: 15th June 2024

Last date for submission of duly signed hard copy of the online application: 25th June 2024

Trump's sentencing is scheduled for July 11, 4 days before the Republican National Convention in Milwaukee, Wisconsin, where he will be formally nominated as the party's presidential candidate against incumbent Biden in the Nov elections

Donald Trump becomes first former US president to be convicted of felony

NEW YORK/WASHINGTON, May 31: Donald Trump has become the first former US president to be convicted of a felony after a grand jury in New York found him guilty on 34 counts of falsifying business records to cover up a payment to silence a porn star ahead of the 2016 presidential election, mounting his legal challenges amidst his bid to return to the White House in November.

In a historic verdict, a panel of 12 Manhattan jurors on Thursday said they unanimously agreed that Trump, 77, falsified business records to conceal a USD 130,000 hush money payment to adult film star Stormy Daniels to influence the 2016 contest.

The decision came after about a day and a half of deliberations. The conviction does not prevent Trump from standing in November's election, but he is almost certain to ap-

peal against it regardless. Over a six-week trial, the court heard from 22 witnesses, including Daniels, whose alleged sexual encounter with the former president was at the centre of the case.

As the verdicts were read, Trump remained silent and still. But the former president spoke to reporters outside the courtroom, calling the trial a "rigged, disgraceful trial" and saying that the "real verdict" will be rendered on Election Day.

Prosecutors had argued that, by approving a scheme to disguise the money as legal expenses, Trump broke election law.

Trump's sentencing is scheduled for July 11, four days before the Republican National Convention in Milwaukee, Wisconsin, where he will be formally nominated as the party's presidential candidate against incumbent Joe Biden, an 81-year-old De-



mocrat, in the November 5 elections. For now, Trump has been released without having to pay bail.

"This was a disgrace. This was a rigged trial by a conflicted judge who was corrupt. It's a rigged trial, a disgrace. They wouldn't give us a venue change. We were at 5 per cent or 6 per cent in this district, in this area. This was a rigged, disgraceful trial," said Trump shortly after the verdict was read.

"The real verdict is going to be November 5th by the people. And they know what happened here, and everybody knows what happened here. You

have a Soros-backed DA, and the whole thing, we didn't do a thing wrong. I'm a very innocent man, and it's okay, I'm fighting for our country. I'm fighting for our Constitution. Our whole country is being rigged right now," Trump said.

Trump alleged that this was done by the Biden administration to wound or hurt a political opponent.

"And I think it's just a disgrace. And we'll keep fighting. We'll fight till the end, and we'll win because our country has gone to hell," he said.

No former president or presumptive party nomi-

nee in the US has ever faced a felony conviction.

During the trial, the prosecution set out to prove that Trump had falsified records when he repaid his former lawyer Michael Cohen for a hush-money payment to Daniels. They said he had recorded the reimbursements as legal expenses to circumvent campaign finance laws. Todd Blanche, Trump's lead lawyer, told Justice Juan Merchan that the court should not allow the verdict, arguing that Cohen committed perjury on the stand.

The Trump team's motion to acquit, however, was denied by Justice Merchan. The Biden Harris campaign welcomed the jury's verdict. "In New York today, we saw that no one is above the law," said Biden-Harris 2024 Communications Director Michael Tyler.

"Donald Trump has always mistakenly believed

he would never face consequences for breaking the law for his gain. But today's verdict does not prove the fact that the American people face a simple reality. There is still only one way to keep Donald Trump out of the Oval Office: at the ballot box. Convicted felon or not, Trump will be the Republican nominee for president," he said.

"The threat Trump poses to our democracy has never been greater. He is running an increasingly unbridled campaign of revenge and retribution, pledging to be a dictator 'on day one' and calling for our Constitution to be 'terminated' so he can regain and keep power. A second Trump term means chaos, ripping away Americans' freedoms and fomenting political violence - and the American people will reject it this November," Tyler said. (PTI)

Houthi rebels say at least 16 killed, 35 others wounded in joint US-British airstrikes in Yemen

DUBAI, May 31: Joint British-US airstrikes targeting Yemen's Houthi rebels killed at least 16 people and wounded 35 others, the rebels said on Friday, the highest publicly acknowledged death toll by the rebels from the multiple rounds of strikes carried out over their attacks on shipping.

Three US officials, speaking on condition of anonymity to describe a then-ongoing attack, described the strikes on Thursday as hitting a wide range of underground facilities, missile launchers, command and control sites, a Houthi vessel and other facilities.

They called it a response to a recent surge in attacks by the Iran-backed militia group on ships in the Red Sea and Gulf of Aden over the Israel-Hamas war.

The US F/A-18 fighter jets involved in the strikes launched from the USS Dwight D. Eisenhower aircraft carrier in the Red Sea, officials said. Other US warships in the region also participated.

But the Houthis focused Friday morning on just one of the strikes, which they said struck a building housing Hodeida Radio and civilian homes in the port city on the Red Sea. Their Al Masirah satellite news channel aired images of one bloodied man being carried down stairs and others in the hospital, receiving aid.

The Houthis described all those killed and hurt in Hodeida as civilians, something The Associated Press could not immediately confirm. The rebel force that's held Yemen's capital, Sanaa, since 2014 includes fighters who often are not in uniform.

Other strikes hit outside of Sanaa near its



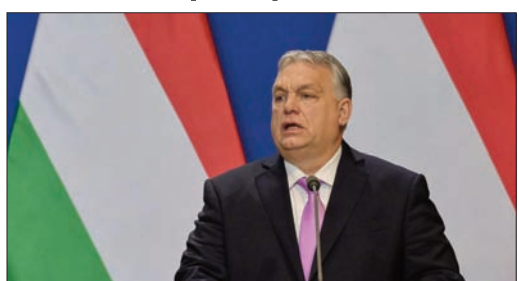
airport and communication equipment in Taiz, the broadcaster said. Little other information was released on those sites — likely signaling that Houthi military sites had been struck.

"We confirm this brutal aggression against Yemen as punishment for its position in support of Gaza, in support of Israel to continue its crimes of genocide against the wounded, besieged and steadfast Gaza Strip," Houthi spokesman Mohammed Abdulalam wrote on the social media platform X.

In the United Kingdom, the country's Defense Ministry said Royal Air Force Typhoon FGR4s conducted strikes on both Hodeida and further south in Ghulayfiyah. It described its targets as "buildings identified as housing drone ground control facilities and providing storage for very long range drones, as well as surface-to-air weapons."

"The strikes were taken in self-defense in the face of an ongoing threat that the Houthis pose," British Prime Minister Rishi Sunak said. "There's an ongoing threat that the Houthis pose." (AP)

Hungary's Orban pushes back on EU and NATO proposals to further assist Ukraine



BUDAPEST, May 31: Hungarian Prime Minister Viktor Orban on Friday pushed back against some NATO proposals that would allow Ukraine to use Western weapons to strike targets within Russia, saying that such plans have Europe "inching closer to destruction."

The nationalist leader has long opposed Western countries supplying Ukraine with military aid, and threatened to derail European Union financial support to Kyiv and the passing of sanctions against Moscow.

He has also maintained close ties with Russian

President Vladimir Putin despite his full-scale invasion of Ukraine, while ramping up energy deals with Moscow at a time when most EU countries have sought to limit the use of Russian fossil fuel.

During a Friday interview on state radio, Orban said that French President Emmanuel Macron's stance that he wouldn't rule out sending troops to Ukraine, as well as a NATO proposal that would allow Kyiv to strike military bases inside Russia with sophisticated long-range weapons provided by Western partners, risked

escalating the war in Ukraine into a global conflict.

"War is a monster that is constantly hungry, it must be fed, and it must be fed with money. And I see that the Americans and the Democratic government of the United States, and the leaders of the European Union, are ready to feed it," he said.

Orban is campaigning for the European Parliament election, which will be held in Hungary on June 9. He has cast the election as an existential struggle between war and peace, and focused his campaign on fears that Western support for Ukraine could cause an escalation of Russia's war. He has portrayed his party as unique in calling for an immediate end to the fighting in Ukraine. But critics say his proposals amount to capitulation to Moscow, which

would allow Russia to retain territories it has occupied in Ukraine and embedden it further.

The question of whether to allow Ukraine to hit targets on Russian soil with Western-supplied weaponry has been a delicate issue since Moscow launched its full-scale invasion on Feb. 24, 2022.

Western leaders have mostly shrunk from taking the step over fears it could provoke Putin, who has repeatedly warned that the West's direct involvement could put the world on a path to nuclear conflict.

But the Kremlin's forces in recent months have exploited Ukrainian shortages in troops and ammunition after a lengthy delay in U.S. military aid, and Western Europe's inadequate military production slowed crucial deliveries to the battlefield. (AP)

Former Iranian parliament speaker Ali Larjani registers as a possible presidential candidate

DUBAI, May 31: A former speaker of Iran's parliament registered on Friday as a possible candidate in the Islamic Republic's June 28 presidential election to replace the late Ebrahim Raisi, who was killed in a helicopter crash earlier this month with seven others.

Ali Larjani is the first high-profile candidate to register for the contest. He and other serious contenders against Raisi had been barred from running in the 2021 election.

Larjani, 66, is viewed as a conservative within Iran's narrow political scene. However, he has increasingly allied himself with former President Hassan Rouhani, whose administration reached a 2015 nuclear deal with a group of world powers. Larjani had positioned himself as a pragmatic candidate in the 2021 vote in which hard-liner Raisi, a protégé of Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei, was elected.

Larjani had posted online and made comments in recent days all but confirming he would be a candidate. The Larjani family has long been powerful in Iran's Shiite theocracy. (AP)

Russian missiles kill 4 people in Kharkiv after Biden OKs a Ukrainian response using US weapons

KYIV, May 31: Russian ballistic missiles slammed into an apartment block in Kharkiv and killed at least four people in a night-time attack, Ukrainian officials said on Friday, a day after US President Joe Biden gave Kyiv a green light to strike back with American weapons at Russian military assets targeting the country's second-largest city.

Russia launched five S-300/S-400 ballistic missiles at Kharkiv overnight, Ukraine's air force said. One of them struck a residential building close to midnight and was followed by another missile 25 minutes later that hit first responders, according to regional Gov. Oleh Synyehubov. At least 25 people were injured, he said.

Ukrainian officials have previously accused Russia of targeting rescue workers by hitting residential buildings with two consecutive missiles — the first one to draw emergency crews to the scene and the second one to wound or kill them. The tactic is called a "double tap" in military jargon. Russia used the same method in Syria's civil war.

A Russian onslaught this month in the northeastern Kharkiv region, including a Russian aerial bomb attack on a large construction supplies store that killed 18 people on May 25, has forced the evacuation of thousands of people and has stretched Ukraine's depleted forces in what is proving to be a critical period in the war, which is now in its third year.

Apart from Kharkiv, Moscow's troops are pressing

in the Donetsk region further south and are assembling a force for an expected attack in the Sumy region further north, according to Ukrainian officials. The Kremlin's bigger and better-equipped army is exploiting Ukrainian shortages in troops and ammunition after a lengthy delay in U.S. military aid. Western Europe's inadequate military production has slowed crucial deliveries of military aid to Ukraine.

Biden's decision allows for U.S.-supplied weapons to be used for "counterfire purposes in the Kharkiv region so

Ukraine can hit back against Russian forces that are attacking them or preparing to attack them," one Washington official told The Associated Press.

But the officials, who requested anonymity to discuss the sensitive matter, stressed that the U.S. policy calling on Ukraine not to use American-provided ATACMS or long-range missiles and other munitions to strike offensively inside Russia has not changed.

That restriction has frustrated Ukrainian officials as the military is unable to order hits on Russian troops massing across the border — Kharkiv city is only 20 kilometers (12 miles) from Russia — or Russian bases used to launch missile attacks.

The question of whether to allow Ukraine to hit targets on Russian soil with Western-supplied weaponry has been a delicate issue since Moscow launched its full-scale invasion on Feb. 24, 2022. (AP)



Top US and Chinese defense officials seek to restore communications as tensions rise in Indo-Pacific

SINGAPORE, May 31: US Defense Secretary Lloyd Austin met with his Chinese counterpart for more than an hour Friday, as the two countries seek to repair lines of communications between their militaries that could be critical as tensions continue to rise between the two in the Indo-Pacific region.

The meeting behind closed doors between Austin and Chinese Defense Minister Dong Jun was the first in person between the top defense officials since contacts between the American and Chinese militaries broke down in 2022 after then-US House Speaker Nancy Pelosi visited Taiwan, infuriating Beijing.

It came on the sidelines of the Shangri-La defense forum, Asia's premier security conference, which features defense officials, government leaders and diplomats from

around the world.

The weekend talks are being held as wars rage in Gaza and Ukraine, and at a time of increasing tensions and competition for influence between the United States and China in the Indo-Pacific region.

Beijing in recent years has been rapidly expanding its navy and is becoming increasingly assertive in pressing its claim to virtually the entire South China Sea, which has led to an increasing number of direct conflicts with other countries in the region, most notably the Philippines and Vietnam.

The US, meantime, has been ramping up military exercises in the region with its allies to underscore its "free and open Indo-Pacific" concept, meant to emphasize freedom of navigation through the contested waters, including the Taiwan Strait. China also claims the de-



mocratic self-governing island of Taiwan and has said it would not rule out using force to take it. Austin, who is due to address the conference on Saturday, reiterated the American position to

Dong during their talks, according to Pentagon spokesperson Maj Gen Pat Ryder. "The secretary made clear that the United States will continue to fly, sail, and operate - safely and responsibly - wherever international law allows," Ryder said. "He underscored the importance

of respect for high seas freedom of navigation guaranteed under international law, especially in the South China Sea." Since territorial hostilities with China surged last year in the South China Sea, Philippine President Ferdinand Marcos Jr's administration has taken steps to forge new security alliances with a number of Asian and Western countries and allowed a US military presence in more Philippine bases under a 2014 defense pact.

Marcos opens this year's conference, hosted by the International Institute for Strategic Studies, with a keynote address Friday. This week, Marcos already expressed concerns over a new law issued by China giving its coast guard license to seize foreign ships "that illegally enter China's territorial waters" and to detain foreign crews for up to 60 days. (AP)

South Africa heading for 'coalition country' as partial election results have ANC falling under 50%

JOHANNESBURG, May 31: South Africa was heading closer to the reality of a national coalition government for the first time on Friday as partial election results put the ruling African National Congress well short of a majority.

With more than half of votes counted across the country's nine provinces, the ANC had received just under 42% of the national vote, according to the early results as counting continued. That represented a huge drop from the 57.5% it received in the last national election in 2019, although the final results from Wednesday's election have not yet been declared.

The commission that runs the election said those would be announced by Sunday, although they could come sooner.

The count from more than 12,000 of the 23,000 polling stations raised the strong possibility that the ANC would need a coal-

ition partner to form a government and reelect President Cyril Ramaphosa for a second and final term. The frenzied negotiations were likely set to start behind closed doors.

The ANC was still leading the count and had the most votes by some way, as expected, with the main opposition Democratic Alliance on around 24%. The ANC is widely expected to still be the biggest party and to have the most seats in Parliament.

The ANC had a clear majority for all 30 years of South Africa's democracy since the party swept to power in a 1994 election which officially ended the apartheid system of white minority rule, leading Nelson Mandela to become the country's first Black president. It has been the dominant political force and its slipping below 50% would be a momentous change for Africa's most advanced economy.

The ANC's support has steadily declined from a high of nearly 70% of the vote 20 years ago as South Africa grapples with deep socioeconomic problems, including widespread poverty and now one of the worst unemployment rates in the world at 32%. Poverty and unemployment disproportionately affect South Africa's Black majority that make up 80% of the population and were the core of the ANC's support over the years.

While the inequalities of apartheid were always going to be hard to solve, the ANC has also been blamed by many for failures in basic government services, numerous government corruption scandals and most recently an electricity crisis that led to rolling blackouts across the country of 62 million.

This election is shaping up to be the tipping point when more South Africans choose another party. (AP)

Bruhat Soma earned more than USD 50,000 in cash and other prizes Indian-American seventh-grader from Florida wins Scripps National Spelling Bee title

WASHINGTON, May 31: Bruhat Soma, a 12-year-old Indian-American seventh-grade student from Florida, has won the Scripps National Spelling Bee after he spelt 29 words correctly in the tiebreaker, maintaining the dominance of the children from the small ethnic community in the prestigious competition.

Bruhat emerged victorious in the Scripps National Spelling Bee on Thursday, earning more than USD 50,000 in cash and other prizes.

This year's contest came down to a tiebreaker in which Bruhat spelt 29 words correctly in 90 seconds, beating Faizan Zaki, who managed to correctly spelt 20 words in the lightning round.

His championship word was "abseil", which is defined as "descent in mountaineering by means of a rope looped over a projection above."

Organisers calling for a spell-off to determine a winner following 14 rounds over three days at the national championships. Bruhat went first in the tiebreaker, and after he got through 30 words, it appeared he would be impossible to beat. Faizan's pace was more uneven at the outset. He attempted 25 words but flubbed four of them.

"Bruhat Soma rules the word! The Champion of the 2024 Scripps National Spelling Bee! The boy with the unbelievable memory doesn't miss a word all week and takes home the Scripps Cup!" the organisers said. "Bruhat Soma correctly spelt 29 out of 30 words attempted to earn the coveted champion title and beat the standing

spell-off record set by Harini Logan in 2022. Logan spelt 22 out of 26 words correctly during the competition's first-ever spell-off," the organisers said. "As the competition progressed, it was clear that

Faizan and Bruhat - our final two spellers - showed up tonight ready to take down the dictionary," said Corrie Loeffler, executive director of the Bee.

"Together, they were a powerful match. Bee officials activated the spell-off in the competition's closing minutes, giving these stellar spellers an opportunity to show even more of what they can do," Loeffler said.

The two final spellers each had 90 seconds to spell as many words as

they could from a predetermined list of words while the other speller was sequestered. He spelt every word thrown his way correctly over the 90-second duration: brouette, adelantado, hypercheme, bisellium, mycter, endechae, sericin, nycalotopia, ascham, wenzel, cebell, heautophany, kwazoku, panetiene, sagaie, nachschlage, exorhason, gicle, ashwagandha, pusza, asarotum, scintillante, myrabalanus, sciniph, voussoir, caizinha, ramoneur, aposiopsis and abseil. The 31th word was posology, but time is called before he can finish spelling it. He only spelt porphyrio incorrectly. While competing, his forehead was marked with a vermilion tika, a Hindu symbol of power and purity. His parents said that Bruhat memorised about 80 per cent of the sacred Hindu texts, the Bhagavad Gita. (PTI)



PM Modi performs 'Surya Arghya' at Vivekananda Rock Memorial

KANYAKUMARI, May 31: Prime Minister Narendra Modi, on the second day of his meditation on Friday, performed 'Surya Arghya' at the time of sunrise at the Vivekananda Rock Memorial, here.

Modi carried out 'Surya Arghya,' a ritual associated with spiritual practice involving salutations to the Almighty, manifest in the form of sun and offered prayers with folded hands.

A short video clip, 'Sunrise, Surya Arghya, Spirituality,' posted by the BJP on its 'X' handle showed the PM pouring little water from a traditional, beaker-like small vessel into the sea as an offering (Arghya) and prayed using his prayer beads (Japa mala).

The BJP also posted photographs of the Prime Minister, clad in saffron shirt, shawl and dhoti, engrossed in meditation at the Dhyan Mandapam, where incense sticks, in front of him, could be spotted burning slowly. Modi also walked around the mandapam with his japa mala in his hands. Photographs of Modi in meditative posture have been apparently



clicked during different times and similar is the case of video clips.

In view of the PM's stay, senior DMK leader and Water Resources Minister Duraimurugan alleged that tourists are not allowed in that area

which has seriously affected the local businesses and 'we have pointed out that this is not good.' Also, the vicinity has been declared out of bounds for ships and aircraft, he claimed during his interaction with journalists.

Tamil Nadu Congress president K Selvapandian, in a post on 'X', taunted Modi over release of video clips and photographs by the BJP that show him meditating. "How many angles! how many videographers! Swami Vivekananda is silent," the Congress leader said in his post.

Kanyakumari is famous for its sunrise and sunset and the memorial is located on a tiny islet near the shoreline. At the Vivekananda Rock Memorial, the PM embarked on meditation on the evening of May 30 and he is scheduled to complete it on the evening of June 1. (PTI)

Sexual abuse allegations: Prajwal Revanna arrested by SIT

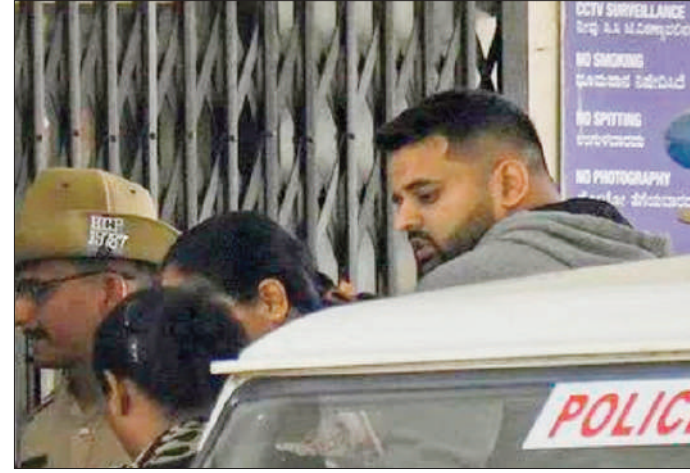
BENGALURU, May 31: Prajwal Revanna, the suspended JD(S) MP facing sexual abuse allegations, was arrested on Friday upon his return from Germany, a month after he left the country in the wake of explicit videos of his alleged actions doing the rounds in Karnataka's Hassan.

In a clear messaging by the SIT probing the allegations, a team of women police personnel 'welcomed' Prajwal Revanna upon his arrival here, as they were deputed to execute a warrant and take him to the CID office for interrogation.

After evading summons and staying out of the country for a little over a month, the 33-year-old grandson of JD(S) supreme and former Prime Minister HD Deve Gowda landed here past midnight from Germany's Munich, only to be arrested by the Special Investigation Team (SIT) minutes later and whisked away for questioning.

The NDA Lok Sabha candidate from Hassan, facing allegations of sexually abusing several women, was arrested after completing the due process, and further legal procedures will follow, Karnataka Home Minister G Parameshwara said. Prajwal's advocate said the former was extending full cooperation to the SIT probe and cautioned against any media trial in the case.

"Prajwal Revanna landed around 12.40-12.50 am from Germany's Munich. As there was an



arrest warrant against him, SIT accordingly arrested him and took him into custody and further legal procedures they will follow today," Parameshwara said.

Speaking to reporters here, he said, "...naturally he should have cooperated to the arrest. His immigration papers were cleared and he was brought out (of airport). As he had a diplomatic passport, things happened easily. After completing all the due process, he was arrested," he added.

Asked if the government will appeal to more victims to come forward following his arrest, Parameshwara said, "We have already said, those who have faced trouble from him to come forward and give complaints to SIT and police, and we will provide them all kind

of protection. We will have to wait and see further developments."

The SIT, sending out a message, deputed an all-woman police team to execute the warrant against Prajwal.

Soon after he alighted from the plane from Munich, he was received by women in Khaki, sources in the SIT said.

During the procedure of executing the arrest warrant, he was flanked by the women police personnel who were led by two IPS officers, Suman D Pennekar and Seema Latkar. He was then taken in a jeep in which only women police were present. They took him to the CID office.

"It was a conscious call to send women officers to arrest Prajwal, sending home a message that the

JD(S) leader exploited his seat and power as an MP with women. The same women have authority to arrest him through all legal proceedings," a source in the SIT said.

There was also a symbolic message to the alleged victims that women officers were not afraid of anyone, the source added.

The MP was later taken for medical examination under tight security. Escorted by female police officials, he was taken to Bowring and Lady Curzon Hospital here.

The SIT is also contemplating a potency test on Prajwal. A potency test is done to ascertain if a rape accused is capable of committing sexual assault on victims.

Meanwhile, Prajwal's advocate, Arun G, met him here.

"I went to speak to him. He has told to the media that he has come forward to cooperate with the investigation. So he has requested that there be no media trial. Let there be no negative campaign unnecessarily," Arun said.

Speaking to reporters after meeting Prajwal, he said the Hassan MP is before the SIT to give the fullest cooperation.

"Prajwal said -- I have come forward, the whole purpose of me coming to Bengaluru or before SIT is that I have to stand by my words. I have come forward. I will give the fullest cooperation -- these are his words," he added.

The advocate said he had explained to Prajwal about how the

court procedures would work.

Prajwal had on May 29 filed an anticipatory bail plea at the Principal City and Sessions Court for Elected Representatives, which issued a notice to the SIT to file objections before posting the hearing for Friday.

In the first case registered against him at the Holenarasipura Town police station in Hassan on April 28, Prajwal is accused of sexually harassing a 47-year-old former maid. He is listed as accused number two, while his father and Holenarasipura MLA, H D Revanna, is accused number one.

Prajwal has been so far booked in three cases of sexual assault. There are also charges of rape against him.

The Ministry of External Affairs (MEA) has served a show-cause notice to Prajwal asking why his diplomatic passport should not be cancelled as sought by the Karnataka government in view of allegations of sexual abuse against him.

Deve Gowda had recently issued a 'stern warning' to Prajwal, asking him to return to the country and face probe into the sexual abuse allegations, while asserting there will be no interference from him or other family members into the enquiry.

The JD(S) supreme had reiterated that his grandson should be given the harshest punishment under the law "if found guilty". (PTI)

Delhi seeks SC direction to Haryana to release water flowing in from Himachal to crisis-hit capital



NEW DELHI, May 31: The Aam Aadmi Party-led Delhi government on Friday moved the Supreme Court seeking a direction to Haryana to release surplus water provided by Himachal Pradesh to the parched national capital for urgent mitigation of its water woes compounded by scorching heat.

The plea, filed by Delhi's Water Minister Atishi, has made the Centre, BJP-governed Haryana and Congress-ruled Himachal Pradesh parties to the petition and said access to water is essential for survival and one of the basic human rights.

"Access to water is one of the basic human rights of an individual. Not only is water essential for sustenance, but access to water also forms an essential component of the guarantee of dignity and a quality of life guaranteed under Article 21 of the Constitution. "The current water crisis, which may only get worse given peak summers and ongoing water shortage, violates the right to a dignified and quality life of the people of the NCT of Delhi, who are unable to access even adequate clean drinking water," the plea said.

It, according to sources, has sought a direction to the Haryana government "for immediate and continuous release of water at the Wazirabad barrage, including but not limited to the full surplus water provided by the Respondent No. 2 (Himachal Pradesh) for the National Capital Territory of Delhi, in order to mitigate the water crises in the NCT of Delhi."

The city government said it was constrained to file the plea on account of acute shortage of water being faced by the citizens due to the ongoing severe heat conditions in north India, particularly Delhi.

"The record-high temperatures and heat wave in Delhi, which has resulted in maximum temperature rising up to around 50 degrees Celsius at some places, have caused an extraordinary and excessive surge in water demand in the city. As a result, the national capital is dealing with a water shortage which has led to frequent supply cuts in many parts of the NCT, and

has disrupted the daily life of the ordinary residents," the plea said.

The AAP government said it has taken all measures to ensure "optimisation, rationing and targeted" supply of water, yet, the shortage remains acute and "it is clear, by all indicators, that the NCT of Delhi is in dire need of additional water".

It said all treatment plants in the national capital are treating and supplying the water being sent, and to address the present crisis, it is necessary to augment water supply.

The city government said it has sought the direction as a one-time measure and not filed the plea for resolving any outstanding inter-state water dispute.

"The Petitioner is praying for the said relief of release of surplus water only as a stop-gap arrangement to remedy the current crisis till such time the monsoon season arrives and the temperature of the city goes down...thereby reverting the situation to normal," it said.

Without prejudice to the inter-federal rights of Delhi, especially as a lower riparian state to shared water resources, the plea is filed only because of the unprecedented surge in temperature, which has triggered a surge in the demand for water, it said.

"Such excessive and unanticipated demand has precipitated an emergency in the form of a full-fledged water and sanitation crisis and has necessitated an emergent solution," the plea said.

In order to deal with the demand in summer months, the Delhi government has devised a solution under which Himachal Pradesh has agreed to share its surplus water with Delhi, the petition said.

Since Himachal Pradesh does not share boundary with Delhi, the surplus water released by it has to be transported through the existing water channels in Haryana and released to Delhi at the Wazirabad barrage, it said, adding "Therefore, Haryana's facilitation and cooperation, which is not being provided as on date, is imperative."

"It is also necessary to point out that, presently, the water levels in the Sonia Vihar and Bhagirathi barrages, which constitute the other primary sources of water for the NCT of Delhi, are operating at their optimum level and meet the stipulated standards, therefore, any increase in water supply can only be considered at the Wazirabad barrage," it said.

During the day, chief minister Arvind Kejriwal urged the BJP to ask its governments in Haryana and Uttar Pradesh to provide water to the national capital for a month to ease the situation.

The national capital has been facing a severe water shortage and Water Minister Atishi has accused Haryana of not releasing Delhi's share of water. (PTI)

Will surrender tomorrow: Kejriwal

NEW DELHI, May 31: Delhi Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal said on Friday that he will be surrendering on June 2, and in an emotional appeal, asked the people to take care of his old and ailing parents after he is gone.

"I will leave my house around 3 pm (on Sunday) to surrender. It is possible that this time they will torture me more, but I will not bow down," he said.

He assured the people of Delhi that all the facilities available to them will continue even in his absence. "You take care of yourself, I worry a lot about you in jail. If you are happy, your Kejriwal will also be happy. I will not be among you, of course, but you don't worry, all your work will continue... And after returning, I will also start giving Rs 1000 every month to every mother and sister," he said in a virtual press conference.

Making an appeal to the Delhiites who stood by him in difficult times to look after his aged and ailing parents, he said he has always fulfilled his duty as a son "of your family".

"Today I want to ask something from you for my family. My parents are very old, my mother is very ill. I will worry a lot about her in jail.

"Take care of my parents after I am gone, pray for them, pray to God. Prayers have great power. If you pray for my mother daily, she will definitely remain healthy," he said. Kejriwal said his wife Sunita is very strong and has supported him in every difficult phase of life.

"When difficult times come, the whole family comes together, you all have supported me a lot in difficult times. It is because of your prayers that I am alive today and your blessings will protect me in the future too. In the end, I just want to say that if God wishes, your son will come back very soon," he said.

He assured the people that all facilities available to them, including 24-hour free electricity and women's bus travel, will continue.

The Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) national convener was granted interim bail by the Supreme Court till June 1 for the Lok Sabha election campaigning. After being released from the Tihar jail here, Kejriwal visited Uttar Pradesh, Punjab, Delhi and Maharashtra for campaigning.

"We are all fighting dictatorship together... If something happens to me while saving the country, if I even lose my life, do not be sad," Kejriwal said. "I will go back to the Tihar jail day after tomorrow. I do not know how many days these people will keep me in the jail this time. But my spirits are high.

"I am proud that I am going to jail to save the country from dictatorship. They tried to break me in many ways, tried to bow me down and tried to silence me. But they did not succeed," the chief minister said. The AAP supreme alleged that when he was in the jail recently, he was "tortured" in many ways. He said his medicines were stopped.

"I have been a serious diabetic (patient) for 20 years. For the last 10 years, I have been getting insulin injections daily. I get injections in my stomach four times every day," he said, alleging that in the jail, his insulin injections were stopped for many days. He said his sugar levels reached 300, 325 (mg/dL). If the sugar remains so high for so many days, the kidney and liver get damaged, he added. "I don't know what these people wanted and why did they do this," he said.

Talking about the unexplained weight loss during his incarceration, the AAP supreme said during his 50-day stay in the jail, he lost six kg of weight. "When I went to jail, my weight was 70 kg. Today it is 64 kg. Even after being released from jail, my weight is not increasing," he said.

Kejriwal said the doctors are saying that this can also be a sign of some major disease in his body. The ketone level in his urine has also increased considerably and many tests need to be done, he reiterated.

Delhi BJP chief Virendra Sachdeva hit back at Kejriwal and said he has a "disease of lying".

"Delhi CM (Arvind Kejriwal) has said that he has a serious disease. I agree with what he has said. He has a disease of lying," he said.

Sachdeva said Kejriwal did the election campaigning. However, when now the time has come for him to go to jail, he is reminding everyone of his diseases, the BJP leader added. (PTI)

With decisive mandate for INDIA bloc, many NDA constituents will be queuing up to join: Cong

NEW DELHI, May 31: The Congress on Friday exuded confidence that the opposition alliance will get a "clear and decisive" mandate on June 4 when the results of the Lok Sabha polls are announced and claimed that many NDA constituents will be queuing up to join the INDIA bloc. AICC general secretary Jairam Ramesh also claimed that his party would have a strong performance in several states in which it had been wiped out in the 2019 polls.

Asked to comment on RJD leader Tejashwi Yadav's remarks that Bihar Chief Minister Nitish Kumar could do another "palti", Ramesh said, "He has an old habit of 'palti' (volte-face). I do not have any information on what he will do on June 4 but we are going to get a mandate without him. INDIA 'janbandhan' is going to get the mandate, there will be no need of the JD(U)."

"You will see that the results from Bihar will be surprising and there would be no need of 'palti' but those who want to do 'palti' we cannot stop them," the Congress general secretary said at a press con-

ference at the AICC headquarters here. Asked about the reasons for the Congress confidence that it will secure people's mandate on June 4, Ramesh said that he had said after two phases that the INDIA 'janbandhan' is going to get a clear and decisive mandate.

"Rajasthan, Karnataka, Maharashtra, Uttar Pradesh, Bihar, Telangana, in states where in 2019 we had been wiped out, this time you will see we will have a strong performance. In Rajasthan our performance will be strong and in UP, Maharashtra and Bihar, we will have a strong performance as an alliance," he said.

"I am not saying this sitting here in Delhi, I have gone to these states, our leaders Mallikarjun Kharge ji, Rahul Gandhi ji and Priyanka Gandhi ji have gone to these states. The environment that was there in 2019 especially in these states," Ramesh said, adding that he would also add Haryana and Punjab to the list of states where the Congress would do well. (PTI)

Five TMC workers injured after bombs hurled by ISF supporters

KOLKATA, May 31: At least five Trinamool Congress workers were injured after bombs were hurled at them allegedly by ISF supporters at Bhongore in South 24 Parganas district of West Bengal, police said on Friday. Bhongore's Indian Secular Front (ISF) MLA Nawsad Siddique, however, dismissed the allegations and said that the TMC workers hurled bombs at ISF supporters but their own party men were injured in the incident. Bhongore under Jadavpur Lok Sabha constituency will go to polls in the last phase on Saturday.

The incident took place when the TMC workers were returning home on Thursday night. The injured TMC workers were admitted to a state-run hospital in Kolkata. State minister Aroop Biswas, Jadavpur's TMC candidate Saayoni Ghosh and party legislator Saikat Molla visited the injured persons at the medical establishment. Siddique dismissed the allegations, saying, "Fearing defeat in Bhongore, TMC is orchestrating such incidents on purpose and putting the blame on us. Yesterday, supporters of Saokat Molla hurled bombs at ISF workers but their own party men were injured in the incident." (PTI)

Avian influenza: Centre asks states to be vigilant

Isolation wards/beds at dedicated hospitals may be required to handle any suspect case of Avian Influenza if confirmation among birds occurs

NEW DELHI, May 31: The Centre has asked all states to be vigilant for any unusual deaths amongst the domestic birds and poultry, and share the information with the Animal Husbandry Department immediately so that public health action can be initiated as per the national action plan for Avian influenza.

A joint advisory issued on May 25 by the National Centre for Disease Control (NCDC) and Department of Animal Husbandry and Dairying stated that in 2024, four states -- Andhra Pradesh (Nellore), Maharashtra (Nagpur), Kerala (Alappuzha, Kottayam, and Pathanamthitta districts), and Jharkhand (Ranchi) -- have already reported outbreaks of Avian influenza in poultry.

"Given that Avian Influenza (H5N1) infection is highly pathogenic and has the potential to be transmitted to humans, it is imperative to take all necessary measures to minimize and prevent the spread of this infection," the joint advisory said.

The Avian Influenza virus (bird flu virus) is normally maintained in circulation in nature among mainly migratory birds and is known to cause outbreaks among domesticated poultry birds probably due to spill over events when migratory birds come in contact with poultry, it said.

The H5N1 is the main Avian influenza virus that has caused multiple outbreaks among poultry globally. Both types of viruses (HPAI and LPAI) may occasionally affect other mammalian species, including humans.

Human infections are primarily acquired through direct contact with infected poultry or contaminated environments, the joint advisory said.

Although there have been sporadic reports in humans and outbreaks among domestic and wild birds, since March 2024, there is a global concern over Avian influenza outbreaks in cattle from multiple states in the US that have resulted in one reported human case of H5N1, the joint advisory



stated. Avian influenza outbreaks from India in poultry have been reported since 2006 and have been jointly investigated by the Animal Husbandry and Health Departments (IDSP, NCDC).

The states and Union Territories have been advised to orient all the health care workers/private practitioners on case definitions, signs and symptoms of Avian influenza.

"Be vigilant for any unusual deaths amongst the domestic birds/poultry in your state, and if observed, please share the information immediately with the Department of Animal Husbandry so that public health action can be initiated as per the national action plan for Avian Influenza," the joint advisory said.

The states have been advised to

strengthen biosecurity measures in all poultry establishments, zoos, poultry markets, etc. after conducting a thorough assessment.

"Comprehensive biosecurity assessments on all poultry farms are recommended. Access to farms should be restricted and stringent hygiene protocols, including the use of disinfectant footbaths and protective clothing, should be enforced. Measures to prevent contact between wild birds and domestic poultry should be implemented," it stated.

The states have been asked to enhance information, education and communication tools among the general public regarding preventive measures such as minimizing the handling of dead or sick birds with bare hands and without adequate respiratory protection and following food safety measures while consuming products of animal origin.

Besides, they have been asked to be prepared for all preventive measures like stockpiling of an adequate number of antiviral drugs

(Oseltamivir), PPE, masks etc.

Isolation wards/beds at dedicated hospitals may be required to handle any suspect case of Avian Influenza if confirmation among birds occurs in your state, the joint advisory stated.

It also called for enhanced surveillance (in wet markets, abattoirs, poultry farm workers etc.) as well as expanded surveillance (in sewage samples, water bodies, crows etc.) for Avian Influenza in collaboration with National Centre for Disease Control (NCDC), Indian Council of Medical Research (ICMR) and Department of Animal Husbandry and Dairying (DAHD). It emphasised on timely sharing of information besides underlined the need for strict compliance with the SARI surveillance guidelines of the Ministry of Health and Family Welfare by all states and its monitoring at senior level.

For the states where there is an active outbreak of Avian Influenza, the joint advisory advised some additional measures.

They have been asked to collect

samples from cullers and surveillance workers (considered as 'at-risk' groups) on the 5th and 10th days following sanitization operations for H5N1 testing.

The joint advisory has stressed on conducting surveillance for suspected human cases and providing health check-ups for cullers and poultry workers, with a duration of 10 days and stated that recommended measures for chemoprophylaxis, management, and use of personal protective equipment (PPE) should be implemented.

It also advised following the SOPs for collecting and transporting samples from suspected cases to designated laboratories.

"A coordinated response involving experts from veterinary services, health departments, wildlife and forest departments, local authorities and other relevant stakeholders is required in all Avian Influenza outbreaks. Regular meetings should be conducted to share information, assess the situation and adjust strategies accordingly," the joint advisory said. (PTI)

T20 WC warm-up: A chance to test track and India's second pace-bowling option

NEW YORK, May 31: Yashasvi Jaiswal will aim to add his bit to the combination conundrum with a handy contribution while Arshdeep Singh and Mohammed Siraj need to put their best foot forward during India's only T20 World Cup warm-up game against Bangladesh ahead of their tournament opener on June 5.

With all 15 cricketers being regular playing XI members of their respective IPL franchises, the team is certainly not short on game

time but an assortment of 15 high-calibre players and finding that perfect combination will be key to ending India's 13-year global trophy drought.

In the warm-up game, it is expected that save for Virat Kohli, who is expected to touch down some time before the practice game, all other 14 players will be given a go as it doesn't have an official status.

It will be an opportunity to check everyone's rhythm after most of the core team members enjoyed a two-

week break.

There will be two areas where skipper Rohit Sharma and outgoing head coach Rahul Dravid need to take a judicious call.

Even if Jaiswal is in good nick, how to fit him in the side will be an issue as it would mean keeping a power-hitter like Shivam Dube out of the playing XI.

It is a foregone conclusion that Jaiswal might have to sit out as it would not only allow Virat Kohli and Rohit Sharma to open but could also open the door for Dube

at the back end of the tournament.

"Shivam Dube is a six-hitting machine. He can be the 'x-factor' in the T20 World Cup. But if Shivam has to be in the XI, then you can't play that call and I prefer to take Yashasvi. Rohit has to take that call and I prefer both pace-bowling all-rounders in the XI. If Shivam plays, he can take on the opposition wrist spinners in the latter half," Suresh Raina, one of India's premier T20 batters of his time, said on Friday when asked about a possible combination.

The second teething problem for India would be to find Jasprit Bumrah's opening pace-bowling partner. Both Arshdeep Singh and Mohammed Siraj have blown hot and cold in the IPL and their form has left a lot to be desired.

RP Singh, one of the heroes of India's inaugural edition victory, feels that Hardik Pandya's four overs will be very important. Besides, he feels that Arshdeep should be the second front-line pacer on the newly-laid drop-in track.

Talking about the length to be bowled on the tracks in the US during an early morning start, he felt variations will be important, which make Arshdeep a better bet compared to Siraj.

"As per my understanding, there should be a bit of slowness in the wicket. So, the ideal length will be somewhere around just short of good length. There will not be a lot of swing for the bowlers but the bowlers with variations, not only yorkers but also slower ones, leg and off cutters..." RP replied

to a PTI query during a promotional event in Delhi.

"These deliveries will be utilised a bit more by Arshdeep, so the success rate will be automatically higher for him and that's what I understand the wickets in the US," he explained.

Against Bangladesh on a slowish track, it would also be a challenge for the middle-order as to how they deal with Shakib Al Hasan and Mahedi Hasan apart from questions asked by cutter master Mustafizur Rahaman. (PTI)

Nishant Dev books Paris Olympics ticket

BANGKOK, May 31: Nishant Dev (71kg) became the first Indian male pugilist to secure a Paris Games quota when he reached the semifinals of the Boxing Olympic qualifiers here on Friday.

The world championships bronze medalist, who had narrowly missed on an Olympic berth in the previous qualifiers, earned the quota after defeating Vasile Cebotari of Moldova 5-0 in the quarterfinal which was a battle of the southpaws.

It is India's fourth quota place with women boxers Nikhat Zareen (50kg), Preet Pawar (54kg) and Lovlina Borgohain (75kg) having already secured their passage to Paris.

The 71kg weight class had five quotas on offer.

Dev, who has been dominant all tournament, was off to a flyer, landing sharp, accurate punches. The Indian was more composed and used his punches judiciously.

In the second round, Cebotari landed a couple of blows and Dev looked a bit out of breath but the Indian continued to hit accurate shots. In the last three minutes, both boxers looked spent but Dev continued to land punches at will. Cebotari earned a point deduction for his punch to Dev when the Indian was down on the canvas.

Earlier, India's quest for booking a quota in the women's 60kg ended with Ankushita Boro 2-3 defeat against Agnes Alexiussou of Sweden in the quarterfinals.

The 23-year-old Boro fought hard but her Swedish opponent, a former European Games bronze medalist, dug into her reservoir of experience to pip the Indian.

Boro, a former youth world champion, was slow off the blocks, but managed to adapt toward the end of the first round, using straight jabs effectively. It was enough to convince one judge. Down 1-4, Boro made a blistering start, using the combination of left jab and right cross. (PTI)

T20 WORLD CUP

India eye redemption as big-ticket cricket touches base in America



NEW YORK, May 31: There will be the usual favourites, the mavericks, the chokers and also the unpredictable minnows - the script is familiar for a World Cup but the scale would be unprecedented when the T20 showpiece, featuring a record 20 teams, spearheads cricket's audacious charge into the American market starting here on Saturday.

While India would be eager to shed the baggage of near-misses, Australia would like to add another chapter to their tale of domination. For the likes of Pakistan and West Indies, the primary target would be to keep in check their tendency to implode at the most inopportune time.

Defending champions England and South Africa too will be a force to reckon with, especially the latter. Given the presence of match-winners like Heinrich Klaasen, David Miller, Quinton de Kock and Kagiso Rabada, the Proteas seem primed to get rid of the chokers' tag.

It will be a ground-breaking event not just because of the sheer size of the draw but also for the fact that it officially marks cricket's big-ticket entry into the USA, which will host 16 of the 55 matches to be played across 29 days.

The remaining 39 games will be held in the West Indies, including the Super 8 stage, the semifinals and the final on June 29. Besides the obvious favourites on paper, the likes of Afghanistan can also never be counted out to upset the apple cart at the most unexpected time.

There are plots within plots that will unfold in the course of next one month.

And perhaps one of the most intriguing would be the one involving India, a team that looks so destined for an ICC trophy but has somehow managed to fall short after the 2013 Champions Trophy triumph. Rohit Sharma's reputation as captain will definitely be on the line this time. Considering the unparalleled resources and depth that the sport's powerhouse has, most experts find it difficult to pinpoint India's trophy drought at the word stage over the past decade.

Rohit's predecessor Virat Kohli ended his tenure as the most successful Test captain but a global trophy eluded him.

Now Rohit is carrying that baggage of not winning a world title with India finishing runner-up in two ICC events over the past 12 months, including the juggernaut-ending loss to Australia in the ODI

World Cup final at home.

Their outdated approach in the previous two T20 World Cups cost them dearly but they are unlikely to repeat those mistakes in the Americas.

The recently-concluded IPL showed how the batters are pushing boundaries and India's high-profile line-up needs to follow that risky path.

India may not have the same batting firepower as compared to some of the rival teams but as pitches in the Caribbean are expected to be spin-friendly, they surely have all bases covered.

Rohit and Co. are scheduled to play three games at the makeshift facility here including the blockbuster clash against Pakistan on June 9. Drop-in pitches will be used at the brand new facility with all teams entering unfamiliar territory.

India, however, will have the advantage of playing a warm-up game against Bangladesh at the same venue on June 1 before they take on Ireland in their opening league game on June 5.

Not far from India's base in New York City, the first ever international cricket game was played between USA and Canada back in 1844. (PTI)

Focus on Indian shooters' performance in WC ahead of Paris Olympics

MUNICH, May 31: Away from the oppressive Indian summer, the country's shooters would be hoping to further fortify their preparations ahead of the Paris Olympics when the ISSF World Cup (Pistol/Rifle) commences here on Saturday.

Several shooters, who recently appeared in the gruelling nearly month-long trials in New Delhi and Bhopal, were keen to skip the World Cup because of "fatigue" and to focus on their Olympic preparations.

But with the National Rifle Association of India (NRAI) making participation in WC compulsory, and also reportedly thrashing out the contentious issue of personal coaches with the shooters, the Paris-bound pistol and rifle marksmen would like to use this last competitive outing to gauge their preparations for the Olympics.

The issue of personal coaches had become a major point of contention. The shooters felt that there was little "flexi-

bility" being given to them vis-a-vis personal coaches at the national camp. Though the issue seems to have been sorted for now, many personal coaches would not have accompanied their wards as the federation's decision came on the day the shooters were leaving for Munich.



With several shooters having displaced the original Paris quota winners in the national squad following a series of four Olympic Selection Trials (OST), the federation would also be keen to see how they perform in the World Cup. Someone like rookie Army man Sandeep

Singh coming out of nowhere to top the national trials and push former world champion and Paris quota winner Rudranksh Patil out of Olympic contention has put the federations in a fix.

While the 20-year-old Rudranksh is one of the best 10m air rifle shooters the country has produced after Olympic gold medalist Abhinav Bindra, the federation will have to strictly abide by its Olympic selection policy -- of picking the Paris-bound team based on the OSTs -- as a deviation could lead to more headaches in the form of litigations for the NRAI. Several Olympic quota winners, after losing out to country-mates during the trials, had written to the federation to be considered for Paris, leading to a never-before-seen scenario.

The NRAI can also name the Olympic contingent, a process which is already delayed, while the shooters are competing in the World Cup.

At a time when several countries have announced their Paris-bound squads, India is still struggling to name the shooting contingent. (PTI)

We are playing good hockey but also struggling at times: Harmanpreet

LONDON, May 31: India men's hockey captain Harmanpreet Singh feels his side is playing good hockey but only in patches and this will have to be ironed out in the upcoming FIH Pro League games here as the team prepares for the ultimate test at the Paris Olympics.

The side is currently third in the table with 21 points from 12 matches. Harmanpreet's side will take on Germany and Great Britain, sixth and ninth on the charts, in the decisive London leg of the Pro League, which commences here on Saturday. India will first take on the Germans.

India are coming into the London leg of the Pro League on the back of a mixed performance in Antwerp, Belgium where they won two hard-fought matches against Argentina and lost an equal number of games to the hosts.

"We played scintillating hockey in some moments while we struggled in a few others, but the team is con-

stantly improving," Harmanpreet said in a Hockey India release on Friday.

"We also used this opportunity to give some match experience to the younger players in the squad and improve our overall chemistry," he added.

The skipper added that playing some tough matches against Argentina and Belgium, which will help the side.

"We played some intense matches against Argentina and Belgium in Antwerp, both in the same pool as us in the Paris 2024 Olympics. The aim in these upcoming matches (in London) will be to get out of our blocks early, work on our combinations and positioning to make sure we play to the best of our abilities."

He added it was absolutely necessary to do well in London to be ready for the Olympics.

"We are aware that the London stage of Pro League will be crucial in our preparations for the upcoming

Paris 2024 Olympics, hence we are looking forward to taking on Germany and Great Britain," Harmanpreet added.

Following Saturday's game, India will again take on Germany again on June 8. They will play Great Britain on June 2 and 9.

The Indian women's hockey captain Salima Tete said her side is in a "rebuilding phase" after failing to qualify for the Olympics and the Pro League matches here will give the team much-needed boost.

"We are currently in a rebuilding phase, and we are looking to take it one game at a time. We are confident that the upcoming games will help us better understand our chemistry within the team and improve going forward," she said.

The women are placed seventh on the Pro League table with eight points in 12 matches and will also take on Germany and Great Britain on the same dates as their male counterparts. (PTI)

ANTI MALARIA MONTH

1st - 30th June, 2024

SYMPTOMS	PREVENTION METHODS
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Fever with chills and rigor • Nausea and vomiting • Headache • Excessive sweating • Weakness, lethargy and uneasiness 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Remove stagnant water from your surroundings to prevent mosquito breeding • Use mosquito bed nets and age appropriate repellents like electric mats, coils etc. • Protect yourself from mosquito bites by wearing long sleeved clothes & trousers • If symptoms are indicative of malaria, immediately get tested and avail treatment

CONTACT DETAILS OF MALARIA OFFICERS

<p>Baksa & Tamulpur Shri Pradip Kr. Haloi 9859134661</p> <p>Barpeta & Bajali Mrs. Jyotirupa Das 9957420463</p> <p>Biswanath Dr. Eliza Deka 9435383153</p> <p>Bongaigaon Dr. Imdadul Islam Khan 7002822066</p> <p>Cachar Dr. M. I. Barbhuiya 9435461298</p> <p>Charaideo Dr. Kumud Chandra Das 9435138231</p> <p>Chirang Shri Robin Chandra Baro 9435540428</p> <p>Darrang Shri Shyam Prasad Baruah 9365234334</p> <p>Dhemaji Dr. K. K. Kaman 9957821651</p> <p>Dhubri Dr. Arup Kr. Choudhury 9435129614</p> <p>Dibrugarh Dr. Dondesarwar Deori 9435487749</p>	<p>Dima Hasao Dr. P. K. Gonju 9435151721</p> <p>Goalpara Shri Niranjan Nath 86381102355</p> <p>Golaghat Dr. Bharat Phukan 8011470777</p> <p>Hailakandi Shri Ashish Kumar Paul 9957214482</p> <p>Hojai Shri Nanda Ram Choudhury 9707029766</p> <p>Jorhat Md. Abdur Rohim 9401092350</p> <p>Kamrup Shri R. Rajkumar 9435146623</p> <p>Kamrup Metro Shri Mridul Talukdar 7086641463</p> <p>Karbi Anglong Dr. Semsing Singnar 7002805248</p> <p>Karimganj Dr. M. Sutradhar 6001587034</p> <p>Kokrajhar Shri Jugal Gam 8638809309</p>	<p>Lakhimpur Dr. Dhiren Saikia 9678950371</p> <p>Majuli Dr. Diganta Dutta 9435084804</p> <p>Morigaon Shri. Supriya Das 8011329900</p> <p>Nagaon Mrs. Santana Sarma 9101291916</p> <p>Nalbari Dr. Nabanita Das 9954293021</p> <p>Sivasagar Mrs. Swagata Dutta 9854034697</p> <p>Sonitpur Ms. Kakali Dutta 9954663064</p> <p>South Salmara Dr. S. L. Nag 8876802282</p> <p>Tinsukia Ms. Ujjwala Baruah 9954594576</p> <p>Udaiguri Ms. Nazia Hassan 8486375988</p> <p>West Karbi Anglong Dr. Montu Shyam 8011211937</p>
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Treatment for Malaria is free of cost at all the Government Health Facilities.
For any help, contact ASHA/ANM

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for any health related queries

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for Ambulance Services