

6 WORLD Israeli officials say Netanyahu has dissolved the War Cabinet Chinese premier agrees with Australia to 'properly manage' differences 8 NATION Consensus prevailed on LS Speaker's choice since Independence NCERT working as RSS arm, assaulting Constitution: Jairam

Downstream areas flooded after Kandong Dam releases water HT Correspondent DONGKAMUKAM, June 17: Several areas in Karbi Anglong were flooded after NEEPCO opened the sluice gates of the Kandong Dam on the Kopili river on Monday. Incessant rains for the past week in the district had compelled the officials of NEEPCO to release the excess water, thereby causing immense plight to the people living in the downstream areas. The most affected MAC (Member of Autonomous Council) areas are Bithung Rengthama, Rongkhang and parts of Kopili MAC constituencies in West Karbi Anglong. Families residing in the downstream areas were directed to move towards safer places. Many of them have either taken shelter in makeshift tents on the embankment or have moved to the homes of their relatives and friends. On Monday the Dongkamukam Tumpreng Hojai road was flooded and commuters could travel on the road only after 10 am when the water level gradually began to recede. Flood waters reportedly also overflowed the road at Komorakatta in Hojai district.

9 dead, 41 hurt in Bengal train mishap; probe begins

Goods train rams into stationary Kanchanjunga Express Documents show goods train driver not at fault Ex-gratia announced

HT Bureau GUWAHATI, June 17: At least nine people -- seven passengers and two railway staff -- were killed and 41 injured after a goods train rams into the Sealdah-bound Kanchanjunga Express from behind in West Bengal's Darjeeling district on Monday. Among the deceased were the pilot of the goods train and the guard of the passenger train, an NF Railway press statement said. The injured have been shifted to North Bengal Medical College and Hospital for treatment. Some local reports attributed to senior West Bengal Police officials put the casualty count at 15. The toll could rise, as multiple agencies of the state and Centre were simultaneously working on war footing along with locals to rescue passengers who could still be trapped inside, sources said. As a result of the accident, four coaches from rear side of the Kanchanjunga Express and 5 wagons of the container carrying train got derailed blocking the train move-



ments of both Up and Down lines. However, debris on the Up Line was cleared at 17:40 hrs. Work for speedy restoration of the Down Line is also in progress, the press statement added. In a post on X, Prime Minister Narendra Modi said the "railway accident in West Bengal is saddening. Condolences to those who lost their loved ones". "I pray that the injured recover at the earliest. Spoke to officials and took stock of the situation. Rescue operations are underway to assist

Himanta condoles loss of lives in WB train accident

GUWAHATI, June 17: Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma condoled the death of those killed in the collision between a goods train and the Kanchanjunga Express in West Bengal on Monday and assured of all possible help. Sarma said that his heart went out to the families of those who lost their lives in the accident. "The tragic train collision between the Kanchanjunga Express and a goods train is extremely unfortunate," he posted on 'X'. "We are monitoring the situation closely and will provide all necessary assistance as and when required," he added. At least 15 people were killed and 60 others injured in the collision near Rangapani station in West Bengal's Darjeeling district. Later, speaking to reporters, (CONTD. ON PAGE-2)

Amit Shah reviews security situation in restive Manipur



NEW DELHI, June 17: Union home minister Amit Shah on Monday reviewed the security situation in ethnic violence-hit Manipur amidst reports of fresh incidents of trouble in the northeastern state. At the high-level meeting, Shah was given a detailed briefing on the prevailing situation in the state by top security officials, sources said. The home minister took stock of the situation in Manipur a day after the state's Governor Anusuiya Uikey had called on him there. It is believed that Uikey apprised him about the law and order situation there. There were reports of fresh violence in capital Imphal and Jiribam recently. The Centre is said to be worried over the violence spreading to new areas like Jiribam,

which has been by and large peaceful in the last one year, the sources said. During the meeting, Manipur government representatives said that adequate forces were deployed in the areas where fresh violence were reported, they said. Security advisor to the Manipur government Kuldip Singh, DGP Rajiv Singh and chief secretary Vineet Joshi attended the meeting on behalf of the state government. However, chief minister N Biren Singh was not present at the meeting. Union Home Secretary Ajay Bhalla, Director of Intelligence Bureau Tapan Deka, Army Chief Gen Manoj Pande, Army Chief-designate Lt Gen Upendra Dwivedi and other senior officials were (CONTD. ON PAGE-2)

Gaurav Gogoi asks EC to release data on EVMs found faulty in LS polls



NEW DELHI, June 17: Congress leader Gaurav Gogoi on Monday asked the Election Commission to put out data on how many EVMs were found faulty throughout the Lok Sabha polls. Gogoi, who won the just concluded Lok Sabha elections from the state's Jorhat seat by defeating his nearest BJP rival by a margin of over 1.44 lakh votes, said he can confidently say that these machines have shown inaccurate results.

Gogoi's statement came a day after a fresh political row erupted over EVM tampering claims with Congress leader Rahul Gandhi and other opposition leaders citing a media report that alleged that a relative of the Shiv Sena candidate in Mumbai North West Lok Sabha constituency was found using a mobile phone "connected" to an electronic voting machine during the counting of votes on June 4. In a post on 'X', Gogoi said before treating the Electronic Voting Machines (EVMs) as infallible, the Election Commission of India should put out data on how many EVMs were found faulty throughout the elections. He said the ECI should answer how many machines showed the wrong time, date, votes registered during the general elections and how many EVMs had their components replaced - counting unit, ballot unit and how many EVMs were found faulty during the mock poll. "Having contested the elections, I can confidently say that these machines have shown inaccurate results. I hope the Election Commission puts out the above data because the public have the right to know," he said. Returning officer of the Mumbai North West Lok Sabha constituency, Vandana Suryavanshi, has dismissed (CONTD. ON PAGE-2)

'Each MLA should pay own electricity bill', says BJP legislator Prashanta Phukan

HT Bureau GUWAHATI, June 17: BJP MLA Prashanta Phukan has welcomed the decision of the government to end VIP culture in the state and ministers, senior government officials will have to pay the bills of their electricity consumption at their residences. Phukan asserted on Monday that prepaid electric meters should be installed at the houses of each legislator and all MLAs in the state will take of their power expenses. The BJP MLA claimed that in 2007, he raised this issue in the assembly, however, no decision was taken at that time. Phukan also heaped praises for Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma for taking this decision and he mentioned that it will benefit the general public. Notably, Sarma on Sunday declared that the government has decided to stop paying senior government officials' power bills, including those of the ministers, ending the VIP culture in the state. He said that as on July 1, each state minister will pay their own electricity bills. Senior government of-

ficials, including those working at the state secretariat, would also have to pay the power bills on their own. The Chief Minister said, "We have already told the senior state government officials that they will no longer receive free electricity if they remain at the quarters." According to him, the state government will have to take less burden and the power department can stop hiking the electricity tariffs of the general public. Sarma said that he will start paying his house's electrical bills on July 1 and that the required instructions have already been sent. "No Chief Minister in Assam has paid power bills on their own in the last 75 years since India gained independence; instead, the state government was taking the burden of paying their power bills. I was also receiving these freebies for the last three years until recently I came to know about this," he said. Sarma claimed that he quickly gave the order to install power meters in the Chief Minister's residence after learning that the bills had been paid from a specific state government fund.

Sikkim: Around 50 tourists rescued from Lachung, moved to Mangan town

GANGTOK, June 17: Around 50 tourists were rescued from North Sikkim's Lachung on Monday and moved to Mangan town, the Border Roads Organisation (BRO) said. The rescue operation, however, had to be halted due to inclement weather, and the remaining tourists would be moved on Tuesday, it said. The rescue operation began after the BRO restored connectivity between Chungthang and Mangan via the recently built bridge at Toong over the Teesta river. "The BRO in close coordination with civil administration and team of NDRF is leading the mammoth evacuation operation," a statement said. Incessant rains since June 12 wreaked havoc in Mangan, causing multiple landslides, and severing connectivity to most parts of the district. Due to the blockage of various roads at several locations, around 1,200-1,500 tourists got stranded in Lachung town, officials said. The situation became grave after the collapse of the newly constructed suspension bridge at Sanklang as it was the main connection to North Sikkim and Dzongu, they said. "Responding to the natural disaster by overcoming severe weather conditions and heavy rainfall in the region, the BRO launched restoration efforts by mobilizing huge manpower and machinery to restore connectivity to North Sikkim at the earliest," the statement (CONTD. ON PAGE-2)

CM Sarma visits GMCH, reviews construction of Mother and Child Hospital



HT Bureau GUWAHATI, June 17: Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma on Monday and reviewed the progress being made regarding the construction of the Mother and Child Hospital wing of the Gauhati Medical College and Hospital (GMCH) in the city. The Mother and Child Hospital wing is being constructed at a cost of Rs. 375 crores and comprises of eight floors, excluding the basement and the ground floor and with a total building area of 56,840 square meters. The chief minister chaired a meeting attended by senior officials of the state health department and GMCH authorities during which matters related to filling up of vacant faculty positions, recruitment of staff, capacity expansion and various other issues of the medical college and hospital were discussed. Addressing the media, Sarma said that the purpose of his visit was to look into the progress being made regarding the construction front of the upcoming Mother and

Child Hospital wing and get a first-hand idea of its floor-plan. He said, "The need for a wing dedicated entirely to maternal and pediatric care had been long felt owing to the increasing number of patients visiting GMCH for treatment. Once the Mother and Child Hospital becomes functional, it will contribute greatly towards enhancing the capacity and efficiency of GMCH in dealing with such medical cases. Around 70 per cent of the construction works of the hospital have been completed and that the remaining 30 per cent is likely to be finished on or before April next year." The State Cancer Institute and Neuro-science Centre of GMCH have been contributing immensely in making modern healthcare services affordable and accessible to all, the chief minister said while emphasizing the importance of a robust public healthcare delivery system in the state. "As the medical college's various departments, including super-specialty departments, get their (CONTD. ON PAGE-2)

Blade-like object found in food of Air India flight

MUMBAI, June 17: A blade-like metal piece was found in the food of a passenger onboard an Air India Bengaluru-San Francisco flight last week for which the airline's catering partner has apologised. Confirming the presence of a "foreign object" in the food, the airline on Monday said that it came from the vegetable processing machine used at the facilities of its catering partner TajSATS. The passenger, in a post on X, claimed that he got a feel of the blade-like object only after chewing the grub for a few seconds but luckily no harm was done. "Air India food can cut like a knife. Hiding in its roasted sweet potato and fig chaat was a metal piece that looked like a blade. I got a feel of it only after chewing the grub for a few seconds. Thankfully, no harm was done," the passenger, Mathures Paul, who is a journalist by profession, said. Paul blamed Air India's catering service, adding, "but the incident doesn't help the image I have of Air India...what if the metal piece was in the food served to a child?" (CONTD. ON PAGE-2)

Teenager drowns in Siloni river in KA

HT Bureau DIPHU, June 17: A teenager from Diphu drowned in the Siloni River at the Longsokangthu picnic spot in the afternoon on Monday. The Longsokangthu picnic spot is located 24 kms north of Diphu. The teenager was identified as Roshan Basumatary (17), son of Kanak Basumatary. He was a resident of Panbari, Diphu. According to sources, the victim had gone to the Longsokangthu picnic spot by the bank of the Siloni river to take a bath along with his friends. While he was bathing in the river he was carried away by the swift current of the water at around 2:30 pm. The locals informed the police. Police from the Manja Police Station reached the spot and launched an operation to fish out the body of the victim from the river.

Delay in rollout of proposed India-Middle East-Europe Economic Corridor (IMEC) discussed during meeting

NSA Doval, his US counterpart Sullivan review implementation of iCET

NEW DELHI, June 17: NSA Ajit Doval on Monday held extensive talks with his American counterpart Jake Sullivan, focusing on implementation of the ambitious India-US Initiative on Critical and Emerging Technologies (iCET), bilateral defence ties and regional security situation. Sullivan is visiting Delhi from June 17 to 18, in the first trip to India by a senior Biden administration official after the Modi government came to power for the third term. The US National Security Adviser (NSA) is accompanied by a high-level delegation comprising senior US government officials and industry leaders. It is learnt that the two NSAs also deliberated on the proposed India-Middle East-Europe Economic Corridor (IMEC) against the backdrop of a delay in its rollout in view of the current situation



in West Asia. Sullivan's visit to India came three days after Prime Minister Narendra Modi and US President Joe Biden had a brief conversation on the sidelines of the G7 summit in Italy's Apulia region. The top Biden administration official also met External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar. He is also expected to call on Prime Minister Modi. "Delighted to welcome US NSA @JakeSullivan46 in New Delhi today morning. A comprehensive discussion on a broad range of bilateral, regional and global issues," Jaishankar said on 'X'. (CONTD. ON PAGE-2)

'Bharat', 'India' to be used interchangeably in textbooks: NCERT chief

NEW DELHI, June 17: "Bharat" and "India" will be used interchangeably in NCERT textbooks as is the case in the country's Constitution, National Council of Educational Research and Training Director Dinesh Prasad Saklani has said. The comments assume significance in the wake of a high-level panel working on the social science curriculum recommending that "India" should be replaced with "Bharat" in school textbooks for all classes. In an interaction with PTI editors at the agency's headquarters here, the NCERT chief said both the words will be used in the books and the council has no aversion to either "Bharat" or "India". "It is interchangeable...our position is what our Constitution says and we uphold that. We can use Bharat, we can use India, what is the problem? We are not in that debate. Wherever it suits we will use India, wherever it suits we will use Bharat. We have no aversion to either India or Bharat," he said. "You can see both being used in our textbooks already and that will continue in new textbooks. This is a useless debate," Saklani said. A high-level committee for social sciences, constituted by the NCERT to revise the school curriculum, had last year recommended that "India" should be replaced with "Bharat" in the textbooks for all classes. Committee chairperson C I Isaac, who was heading the panel, had said they have suggested replacing the name "India" with "Bharat" in the textbooks, introducing "classical history", instead of "ancient history" in the curriculum, and including the Indian Knowledge System (IKS) in the syllabus for all subjects. "The committee has unanimously recommended that the name Bharat should be (CONTD. ON PAGE-2)

Gold, silver import surges 210 pc in 2023-24 from UAE; need duty revision in FTA: GTRI

NEW DELHI, June 17: India's gold and silver imports from its free trade agreement (FTA) partner UAE have skyrocketed 210 per cent to USD 10.7 billion in 2023-24 and there is a need to potentially revise the concessional customs duty rates under the pact to mitigate the arbitrage driving this surge, a report said on Monday.

Economic think tank Global Trade Research Initiative (GTRI) said this sharp rise in gold and silver imports is primarily driven by import duty concessions granted by India to the UAE under the India-UAE Comprehensive Economic Partnership Agreement (CEPA).

India allows 7 per cent tariffs or customs duty concessions on import of unlimited quantities of silver and a 1 per cent concession on 160 metric tonnes of gold. CEPA was signed in February 2022 and implemented in May 2022.

Additionally, India facilitates gold and silver imports by allowing private firms to import from the UAE through the India International Bullion Exchange (IIBX) in Gift City. Previously, only authorised agencies could handle such imports, the report said.

"While India's total imports from the UAE fell 9.8 per cent from USD 53.2 billion in FY23 to USD 48 billion in FY24, imports of gold and silver skyrocketed 210 per cent, from USD 3.5 billion to USD 10.7 billion," it said.

"Import of all remaining products fell 25 per cent, from USD 49.7 billion in FY23 to USD 37.3 billion in FY24," it said.

GTRI Founder Ajay Srivastava said the current import of gold and silver from the UAE is unsustain-



able as the UAE does not mine gold or silver or add sufficient value to imports.

"High import duties in India on gold, silver, and jewellery at 15 per cent are at the root of the problem. Consider lowering tariffs to 5 per cent. This will cut large-scale smuggling and other misuse," Srivastava said.

Trade in gold, silver, and diamonds has been prone to misuse due to their low volume but high value and high import duties in India.

Low tariff imports of gold, silver only benefit few importers who keep all profits arising through tariff arbitrage and never pass it to consumers, he said.

Srivastava suggested the government implement certain measures to help India balance its trade policies, protect domestic revenue, and ensure fair competition in the import of precious metals and jewellery.

It suggested reassessing and potentially revising the concessional duty rates under CEPA to mitigate the arbitrage driving the surge in

imports of gold and silver.

"At least, implement yearly import quotas (tariff rate quotas) for silver, similar to those for gold, to control the volume of imports and prevent revenue loss," it said, adding that India should rigorously verify the claimed value addition by Dubai-based refiners in gold and silver imports to ensure compliance with CEPA rules of origin.

It also asked to tighten regulations around the India International Bullion Exchange (IIBX) at Gift City to control the volume and nature of precious metal imports and the exchange should not allow country-based exemptions.

As increased imports contribute to a higher current account deficit and since gold and silver act more like financial instruments than regular trade items, India should avoid including them in any FTA.

"India has granted tariff concessions for these items in many FTAs and under the DFTP (duty-free tariff preference) scheme, so a comprehensive review is needed.

India announced the scheme for LDCs (least developed countries)

in 2008. Under this, India provides duty free/preferential market access on about 98.2 per cent of India's tariff lines (or product categories).

Further, the report stated that silver imports from the UAE increased multifold to USD 1.74 billion in 2023-24 from a meagre USD 29.2 million in 2022-23 due to India charging an 8 per cent duty under the CEPA versus a 15 per cent duty from other countries.

"The large 7 per cent tariff arbitrage resulted in a loss of revenue for India of ₹ 1,010 crore in FY24. Revenue loss will increase as India has committed to make tariffs zero on unlimited quantities of silver from the UAE within next 8 years," it added.

It said this trade is unusual because the UAE just imports large silver and gold bars, melt and convert these into silver grains and unwrought gold for exports.

"A check with global refiners will show that value addition in such process is much less than 1 per cent as opposed to 3 per cent required under the FTA," it said.

On gold bars, the report said India agreed to import 200 metric tons of gold annually from the UAE with a 1 per cent tariff concession and due to this gold imports rose 147.6 per cent from USD 3 billion in FY23 to USD 7.6 billion in FY24, causing India to lose ₹ 635 crore in revenue in FY24.

Similarly, India's jewellery imports have increased 187.6 per cent from USD 1.1 billion in FY23 to USD 3.3 billion in FY24, whereas these imports from the UAE have increased 290 per cent from USD 347 million in FY23 to USD 1.35 billion in the last fiscal. (PTI)

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9 dead, 41 hurt in Bengal

minor injuries. Vaishnav posted on X. Vaishnav informed that the Commissioner of Railway Safety (CRS) has started a probe into the cause of the accident. Vaishnav added that measures will be taken to prevent a recurrence of the circumstances that led to the accident.

According to preliminary information received from railway officials, the passenger train was stationary on the tracks when the goods train rammed into it from behind. While two rear compartments of the Kanchanjunga Express were immediately thrown off the tracks under the severe impact, another bogie was seen precariously hanging mid-air with the engine of the goods train tucked underneath. Inclement weather in the region posed an additional challenge to the rescue operations, the officials said.

The accident triggered haunting memories of the Coromandel Express disaster near Bahanaga Bazar in Odisha a year ago, which killed nearly 300 people and injured over a 1,000 others. The 13174 Kanchanjunga Express was bound for Sealdah from Agartala when the accident occurred around 9 am, the railway official said.

No Fault of goods train: The goods train that rammed into the Kanchanjunga Express between Ranipatra Railway Station and Chatter Hat Junction in West Bengal on Monday was allowed to cross all red signals as the automatic signalling had "failed", internal documents show.

The document, a written authority called TA 912, was issued to the driver of the goods train by the station master of Ranipatra, authorising him to cross all red signals, a railway source said. "Automatic Signalling has failed and you are hereby authorized to pass all automatic signals between RNI (Ranipatra Railway Station) and CAT (Chatter Hat Junction)," says the authority letter. "The TA 912 is issued when there is no obstruction or any train on the line in the section, and it authorises the driver to cross red or caution signals. It is a matter of investigation why the station master did that. He might have been under the impression that the previous train crossed the station section and entered into another section," the railway source explained.

According to the source, the automatic signalling system between RNI and CAT was defective since 5.50 am Monday. Il-fated train restarts journey: Railway officials, meanwhile, confirmed that the ill-fated Kanchanjunga Express has begun its journey to Kolkata with passengers in the unaffected coaches. "The train has started from the accident site around 12.40 pm and is expected to reach Sealdah at 8 pm," Kaushik Mitra, CPRO, Eastern Railway, told reporters. Long-distance train services from north Bengal and the northeastern part of the country were affected due to the accident. Eastern Railway officials in Kolkata said route diversions of several long-distance trains were being made through the Siliguri-Bagdogra-Aluabari zone instead of their usual route, as the tracks remained blocked at the accident site.

Among the trains diverted were the Guwahati-Saraighat Express, Guwahati-Bengaluru Express, NJP-Howrah Vande Bharat, Kamrup Express and Uttarbanga Express, the officials said. West Bengal government officials said additional bus services were being introduced from the region on an emergency basis to transport the affected commuters. BJP MP from Darjeeling Raju Bista was among the leaders who rushed to the spot to oversee rescue operations. A passenger from Agartala, who was in coach number S6 of the Kanchanjunga Express, said he felt a sudden jerk and the compartment screamed to a halt. He also claimed that the relief and rescue operations were delayed. "My wife, child and I somehow managed to come out of the mangled coach. We are currently stranded... The rescue operations also started quite late," the passenger told a television channel. (With inputs from PTI)

Himanta condoles loss of lives

Sarma said he has already spoken to Railways Minister Ashwini Vaishnav and took stock of the situation. "We are checking if any deceased or injured is from Assam. So far, we have not received any names. Our chief secretary is personally monitoring the situation," he added. The CM said the Assam government would take all necessary steps to bring back the people to their homes if they are from the state. "If any injured person is from Assam, we will arrange advanced treatment for them," he said. (PTI)

Amit Shah reviews security

present at the hour-long meeting. Ethnic violence broke out in Manipur on May 3, 2023 after a tribal solidarity march in the hill districts of the state to protest against the majority Meitei community's demand for Scheduled Tribe status. Since then, over 220 people belonging to both Kuki and Meitei communities and security personnel have been killed in the continuing violence.

Meiteis account for about 53 per cent of Manipur's population and live mostly in the Imphal Valley, while tribals, which include Nagas and Kukis, constitute 40 per cent and reside mainly in the hill districts. Shah's review of the Manipur situation came a day after he took a similar meeting on the situation in Jammu and Kashmir. On June 10, RSS chief Mohan Bhagwat expressed concern over peace sliding Manipur even after one year and said the situation in the strife-torn state must be considered with priority.

Addressing a gathering of RSS trainees in Nagpur, he had said, "Manipur is waiting for peace for the last one year. There was peace in Manipur 10 years ago. It felt like gun culture had finished there. But the state has suddenly seen violence". Bhagwat said the situation in Manipur will have to be considered with priority and there is need to get over election rhetoric and focus on problems facing the nation. Jammu and Kashmir and Manipur are believed to be drawing attention of the Modi government's third term as both the states have been witnessing unrest for long. (PTI)

Gaurav Gogoi asks EC

the report in Mid-Day newspaper as "false news" and said that a defamation notice has been issued to the publication. She asserted the EVM is a standalone system, not programmable and has no wireless communication capabilities. Questioning the reliability of EVMs, Gandhi and other leaders had on Sunday also quoted a post by Elon Musk, chairman of social media platform X and CEO of Tesla, in which he talked about eliminating the EVMs and claimed the risk of hacking was "too high".

"We should eliminate electronic voting machines. The risk of being hacked by humans or AI, while small, is still too high," Musk said while responding to a post by US politician Robert F Kennedy Jr alleging Puerto Rico's primary elections experienced "hundreds of voting irregularities related to electronic voting machines". Gandhi wrote on 'X' that EVMs in India are a "black box" and nobody is allowed to scrutinise them. He said that serious concerns are being raised about transparency in our electoral process.

"Democracy ends up becoming a sham and prone to fraud when institutions lack accountability," Gandhi said in a post and tagged the media report which claimed that a relative of Shiv Sena's candidate Ravindra Waikar, who won the polls from Mumbai's North-West seat by 48 votes, had a phone that unlocks an EVM.

However, former Union minister Rajeev Chandrasekhar of the BJP countered Musk's criticism of the EVMs and said that the billionaire businessman's view may apply to the US and other places where they use regular compute platforms to build "Internet-connected voting machines".

"But Indian EVMs are custom designed, secure and isolated from any network or media - No connectivity, no Bluetooth, wifi, Internet, ie there is no way in. Factory-programmed controllers that cannot be reprogrammed," Chandrasekhar said in a post on X. "Electronic voting machines can be architected and built right as India has done. We would be happy to run a tutorial Elon," the BJP leader added. (PTI)

Sikkim: Around 50 tourists

said. "Swift and efficient response by a brave team of 758 BRTF under Project Swastik once again demonstrated their selfless commitment, resilience and determination in restoring vital connectivity and rescue of stranded tourists from North Sikkim," it added. (PTI)

CM Sarma visits GMCH,

own dedicated buildings, the current main building will eventually be housing only three departments. The resulting de-crowding of patients will lead to reduced spread of infections among patients and visitors," he further said. The chief minister also instructed health officials to expedite the process of filling up of vacant posts of faculty the state's medical colleges and hospitals. He also advised the GMCH authorities to make a transition from conventional electricity to solar-generated electricity for their daily energy needs.

Commissioner and secretary of Medical Education and Research Department, Siddharth Singh, GMCH principal Achyut Chandra Baishya along with other senior officials were present on the occasion.

NSA Doval, his US counterpart

"Confident that India-US strategic partnership will continue to advance strongly in our new term," he said.

The iCET was launched by PM Modi and President Biden on the sidelines of the Quad summit in Tokyo on May 24, 2022. Subsequently, Doval and Sullivan have made concerted efforts to implement the roadmap under the iCET framework with a focus on cooperation in new and emerging technologies, including semiconductors, artificial intelligence, quantum computing, defence innovation, space and advanced telecommunications. The two sides have included new areas under iCET that included biotechnology, critical minerals and rare earths processing technologies, digital connectivity, digital public infrastructure and advanced materials. The ongoing visit gives the NSAs an opportunity to review the progress and set new priorities and deliverables for iCET, people familiar with Doval-Sullivan talks said. The two NSAs also discussed bilateral issues and reviewed the India-US partnership on regional and global issues of mutual interest. (PTI)

'Bharat', 'India' to be

used in the textbooks for students across classes. Bharat is an age-old name. The name Bharat has been used in ancient texts, such as Vishnu Purana, which is 7,000 years old," Isaac had told PTI. The NCERT had then said that no decision has been taken on panel's recommendations. The name Bharat first appeared officially last year when the government sent out G20 invites in the name of "President of Bharat", instead of "President of India". Later, the nameplate of Prime Minister Narendra Modi during the summit in New Delhi also read "Bharat", instead of India. The NCERT is once again at the centre of a controversy with the revised Class 12 political science textbook not mentioning the Babri masjid but referring to it as a "three-domed structure". (PTI)

Blade-like object found

This is the second incident involving the food served on the airline's long-haul flights in the recent past. Significantly, both Air India and TajSATS are part of the steel-to-steel conglomerate, Tata Group. "Air India confirms that a foreign object was found in the meal of a guest aboard one of our flights. After investigation, it has been identified as coming from the vegetable processing machine used at the facilities of our catering partner," Air India Chief Customer Experience Officer Rajesh Dogra said in a statement.

The airline had initiated a probe after the passenger posted about the incident on X. The airline has worked with its catering partner to strengthen measures to prevent any recurrence, including more frequent checking of the processor, especially after chopping any hard vegetables, Dogra said. "Air India has engaged with the affected customer and deeply apologises for this experience," he added. A TajSATS spokesperson said, "We have strengthened our processes of comprehensive inspection and preventive maintenance of all our production equipment." Earlier, a business-class passenger of the airline's New Delhi-Newark flight had complained that he was served "uncooked" food by the airline and the seats were dirty, describing the journey as "no less than a nightmare". (PTI)

Extreme heat melts diesel demand, sales drop 4 pc in June

NEW DELHI, June 17: India's diesel demand slumped in June as extreme heat conditions in parts of the country curtailed travel, preliminary data of state-owned firms showed on Monday.

Fuel sales, which traditionally surge during elections, have defied the trend this year, falling month after month. And the decline has now extended even after the end of the general elections.

Petrol sales of three state-owned firms, which control 90 per cent of the fuel market, at 1.42 million tonnes in the first half of June was almost the same as 1.41 million tonnes of fuel consumed in the same period last year. Month-on-month consumption dropped 4.6 per cent. Diesel sales dropped 3.9 per cent to 3.95 million tonnes during June 1 to 15 when compared with the year-ago period. The demand for the nation's most consumed fuel had fallen 2.3 per cent in April and 2.7 per cent in March. In May it fell 1.1 per cent. Besides electioneering, the summer harvest season as also the scorching summer that increases the demand for air conditioning in cars, should have led to a rise in fuel consumption. However, this year has defied the trend. (PTI)

Amul seeks return of ice cream tub from Noida customer for investigation after centipede complaint

NEW DELHI, June 17: Amul on Monday requested a woman customer in Noida to return the ice cream tub, in which she claimed to have found centipede, for further investigation and asserted that it offers superior quality dairy products in both India and global markets.

A woman in Noida has claimed she has found a centipede inside an ice cream tub she ordered through an instant delivery app, said food safety officials, who have launched a probe into the matter.

In a post on X on June 15, the woman, who identified herself as Deepa Devi, shared a picture showing the insect inside the ice cream tub.

Gujarat Cooperative Milk Marketing Federation (GCMMF), which markets dairy products under Amul brand, regretted the inconvenience caused to the woman customer in Noida.

Noida's food safety department has launched a probe into this matter. In a statement, Amul said it immediately responded to the complaint on social media.

"We deeply regret the inconvenience caused to her because of this incident," the statement said.

Amul said its team was trying to contact the customer continuously and was allowed to meet after 9:30 pm on the same day (June 15).

"During our meeting with the customer, we had requested the customer to provide the said ice cream tub for investigation, unfortunately, the customer refused to hand over the same.

"Unless the complaint pack is retrieved from the customer it would be difficult for us to investigate the matter and hence comment specifically on the issue which involves pack and supply chain integrity as well," Amul said.

During the interaction, the customer was informed and assured about Amul's state-of-the-art ISO-certi-



fied plants which are automated and pass through numerous stringent quality checks before offering any product for sale to the esteemed customers.

Amul also invited the customer to visit its plant to assure her about the quality processes being followed. Amul assured customers about the superior quality of Amul Ice Cream.

Amul highlighted that it is among India's most trusted brands, owned by 36 lakh farmers. It markets 22 billion packs of Amul products annually across 50+ countries with the highest quality and food safety standards from 100+ dairies across India.

"We would like to assure you that we take the utmost care to ensure our products are safe, healthy and nutritious to serve our customers daily," Amul said.

The cooperative organisation requested the customer to return the ice cream tub for a thorough investigation.

"Once we receive the complaint pack from the customer, we shall investigate the matter from all angles and again get back to our customers with the findings," Amul said. (PTI)

Busting five myths about eco-friendly eating

SINGAPORE, June 17: Choosing food that is both healthy and good for the planet can be confusing. Here are five myths to avoid to help you make better choices. "Organic beef", "GMO-free" and "100 per cent natural" are just some of the countless claims designed to attract the eyes of eco-conscious consumers in the supermarket.

Yet while people are increasingly willing to spend more on these labels, there is often not enough consideration of how much these features actually contribute to a food's environmental sustainability. It's understandable why consumers are confused. Determining the environmental impact of different food products is highly complex — influenced by how much resources and energy they consume, greenhouse gases they emit, the way they impact the biodiversity of the area where they are produced, how and how far they are transported to market, and the amount and type of waste they create. Despite this, the basic characteristics of a diet that would benefit both human health and the planet are clear. At least half of our daily caloric intake should come from fruits, vegetables, wholegrains, legumes, nuts, and seeds while significantly limiting red meat and energy-dense, nutrient-poor foods such as sugar and refined grains.

Unfortunately, typical Western diets are far from this ideal and many economic, political, and societal factors contribute to this discrepancy, making it a difficult



issue to address.

However, tackling the psychological barriers that prevent the public from consuming more sustainably can help improve their behaviour. The first step towards doing this is addressing the significant lack of knowledge consumers have about what makes a food choice eco-friendly.

Here are five common food myths that need to be busted:
Myth 1: "Meat's eco-footprint is exaggerated"

Animal husbandry is one of the most environmentally-damaging activities in food production due to its high greenhouse gas emissions, extensive resource use, and the pollution it causes.

Consequently, the most impactful change a person can make to reduce their dietary ecological footprint is to limit animal-based foods, particularly beef. Many people underestimate the environmental impact of meat, eggs, and

dairy and doubt the environmental benefits of substituting them with plant-based alternatives.

Additionally, there is a widespread but mistaken belief that reducing car and plane travel, conserving electricity, recycling, and avoiding plastic are more significant to one's climate footprint than reducing animal-based food consumption.

Myth 2: "Organic and local always equals sustainable"

People often assume that organic and local production is the gold standard for sustainability as it can reduce chemical use and lower transportation emissions.

However, this perspective requires more nuance. For example, organic tomatoes grown in open fields can have higher environmental impacts due to increased fuel and machinery use.

Similarly, locally grown tomatoes, especially in heated greenhouses, can be less sustainable

than those produced in distant unheated greenhouses due to higher energy requirements.

Myth 3: "What is natural is good"
Humans have a "natural bias", believing that what is natural is inherently good. As a result, foods without preservatives, additives, artificial ingredients, or high levels of processing are often perceived as superior.

It's important to critically evaluate this belief. For instance, genetically modified (GM) crops are often viewed negatively due to the belief that anything altered by humans, especially at the genetic level, must be unsafe for society and the environment.

Myth 4: "Good for me, good for the planet"

Healthy foods are often assumed to be automatically eco-friendly. However, a food's nutritional quality and its environmental impact aren't necessarily related. Even though strawberries, for example, are highly nutritious, their environmental impact can vary depending on whether they were grown locally or in a faraway country, on a field or in a heated greenhouse.

Similarly, while eating more plant-based foods is better for the environment, they may not always offer the same nutritional benefits as their animal counterparts. For example, plant-based foods are more likely to be incomplete sources of protein because of their lower digestibility and because they're missing some of the nine essential amino acids humans need. (PTI)

New initiative aims to ensure quality and sustainability in state's historic tea industry Minister Bimal Borah inaugurates Mobile Residues Testing Lab in Dibrugarh



HT Correspondent
DIBRUGARH, June 17: State Commerce and Industry minister Bimal Borah inaugurated the Mobile Residues Testing Lab to support tea leaves testing in Dibrugarh on Monday.

Borah formally inaugurated this advanced laboratory at the Teamafco tea factory in Alimur, Dibrugarh.

While speaking at the programme, Bimal Borah appealed to all the stakeholders to follow the prescribed guidelines for the greater interest of the entire tea industry.

"The chief minister of Assam will discuss the matter related to the SOP on June 22, 2024, in the presence of all the stakeholders," Borah said.

"I would like to thank the Assam Bought Leaf Tea Manufacturers' Association for bringing the mobile testing lab to Dibrugarh to check the tea leaves collected from small tea growers. This step is much needed for the sustainability of the tea industry. The tea industry has been facing many challenges, but we have overcome every challenge we faced," Borah said.

Amid ongoing controversy over

the use of prohibited chemicals on raw tea leaves, a mobile testing laboratory named 'Eurofins Agro Laboratories' was inaugurated in Dibrugarh.

"This mobile lab will ensure the quality standards of chemicals used on tea leaves. This is the first laboratory in the 200-year history of Assam's tea industry. Tea leaves purchased by bought leaf factories from small tea growers and the made tea produced by the bought leaf factories will be tested in this laboratory," said Chand Gohain, president of ABLTMA.

He added, "There will be sample

collecting centres in various places, including Dibrugarh, Tinsukia, etc. The launch of this Mobile Residues Testing Lab comes at a crucial time."

"This mobile lab will empower our small and large tea growers alike, providing them with accessible, timely, and reliable testing services right at their doorstep," said Gohain.

Pankaj Jaiminy, managing director of Eurofins Analytical Services India, assured, "The launch of this Mobile Residues Testing Lab comes at a crucial time. The global market's demand for safe, residue-free tea is growing, and with increasing regulatory standards, it is imperative that our tea producers can meet and exceed these requirements. This mobile lab will empower our small and large tea growers alike, providing them with accessible, timely, and reliable testing services right at their doorstep."

"This state-of-the-art facility will enable us to test for pesticide residues in tea leaves swiftly and efficiently. In doing so, we take a giant leap towards safeguarding the health of consumers, ensuring the integrity of our tea, and maintaining our reputation on the world stage," he said.

Buradia river embankment collapse

HT Correspondent

NALBARI, June 17: The Buradia river embankment collapsed early on Monday morning, inundating several villages in its wake. Purni village bore the brunt of the flood, with more than eight neighbouring villages including Nadla, Barbara, Nawpara, Sahpur, Gamarimuri, Kulbil, and Pahlangpara also affected by the surging waters. The deluge has devastated paddy crops belonging to local farmers, leaving over 100 houses submerged and disrupting communication networks.

Meritorious students felicitated at Chengamari



HT Correspondent
BISWANATH CHARIALI, June 17: A total of 31 meritorious students who have recently passed the HSLC and HS examinations and brought laurels to the greater Chengamari area were felicitated in a public meeting organised by the Chengamari branch of Assam Sahitya Sabha on Monday. The public felicitation meeting took place at the conference hall of Diplonga ME School premises with Shailendra Saikia, president of the literary organisation, presiding over the event. The programme was inaugurated by Arun Bordoloi and graced by Dr Ranjan Gogoi as a distinguished guest.

The event was attended by Ghanashyam Kalita, Mahim Hatibaru, Premananda Das, Satyendra Kr Bora, Debajit Saikia, Bakul Sut, and other dignitaries. Meritorious students were honoured with citations, gamosas, and a packet of books. Addressing the session, Dr Gogoi advised the students to be sincere, systematic, and regular in their efforts. The meeting also featured speeches by Haren Pator, Rupam Saikia, Palabika Saikia, and Bharat Kalita. Biswajit Sut, secretary of the branch committee, conducted the proceedings of the programme.



Devotees taking out a water collection on the occasion of annual Bor Sabha Bornamghar at Tongana Village, Gohpur on Monday. UB Photos

Students gain insightful day with Indian Army commanders



HT Correspondent
MARGHERITA, June 17: Students from Titlagar Government High School in Charaideo district, Shree Shree Anirudha Deva Adarsha Jatiya Vidyalaya, Kordoiguri, and Udaipur High School, Jagun, under Margherita sub-division in

Tinsukia district, spent a day with company commanders of the Indian Army at Charaideo and Tinsukia on Monday.

The visit by 250 students and 20 teachers provided a unique experience and opportunity for the children, giving them a firsthand look at the life, responsibilities,

and values upheld by Indian Army personnel.

It not only served as an educational adventure but also instilled a sense of patriotism, discipline, and respect for the armed forces among young minds.

The day began with a warm welcome for the children by the company commander and his team.

The children were introduced to the key personnel, learning about their roles and the structure of the Indian Army.

An interactive session with the soldiers was the highlight of the day, where the children got a chance to ask questions and learn about the experiences and challenges faced by personnel.

The session was filled with stories of camaraderie and the dedication required to serve in the Indian Army, thus motivating young minds.

To make the experience more engaging, the children participated in a tug-of-war match followed by a volleyball competition.

Later, all the children, along with the teaching staff, shared a meal with the soldiers.

This unique opportunity fostered a sense of respect and admiration for the armed forces among children, especially from an area disturbed by insurgent activities for a long time.

Eid-Ul-Zuha celebrated with religious fervour

HT Correspondent
HOJAI, June 17: Along with the rest of the country, the holy festival of sacrifice, Eid-Ul-Zuha, also known as Eid-al-Adha, was celebrated with pomp and gaiety throughout the entire Hojai district on Monday.

Despite incessant rainfall over the past few days, the festivity was celebrated with high spirits. Thousands of Muslims joined the celebration of Eid-Ul-Zuha at mosques in Hojai, Nilbagan, Daboka, Udali, Jugijaa, Murajhar, Gopal Nagar, Kapasbari, Lanka, and Lunding. The namaaz began at 7:00 am.

During the namaaz, the Muslims prayed before the Almighty Allah to bless each and every human being with happiness, and for universal peace and harmony. Hojai markets were thronged with children from nearby areas enjoying the festivity by purchasing various food and sports items.

Talking to this correspondent,



Basit Alom Chowdhury, president of Nilbagan Youth Association, said, "Eid festival is the symbol of peace, tranquility, and brotherhood." He added, "We Muslims prayed to Almighty Allah for universal peace and happiness."

Our Demow correspondent

The holy festival of Islam, Eid-ul-Zuha, also known as Bakrid, was celebrated in Demow on Monday. Muslims gathered at the Masjid in Demow Dehajan in the morning to offer prayers. They exchanged greetings and gifts to mark the occasion of Eid-ul-Zuha.

TU launches new programme in semiconductor technology

HT Correspondent
TEZPUR, June 17: Tezpur University (TU) has started admissions for the Master of Technology (M Tech) program in semiconductor technology for the academic session 2024-25. This specialised program, designed to equip students with advanced knowledge and skills in the rapidly evolving field of semiconductor technology, will be offered by the department of electronics and communication engineering.

The M Tech in semiconductor technology at Tezpur University is a two-year, full-time program that combines rigorous academic coursework with practical, hands-on experience. The curriculum is meticulously crafted to cover key areas to produce graduates who will be well-prepared to meet industry expectations.

Giving the example of the recent semiconductor unit set up in Jagiroad, Prof Shambhu Nath Singh, vice chancellor of TU, said that India's 'Semiconductor Mission' represents a strategic initiative aimed at establishing the country as a global hub for semiconductor design, manufacturing, and innovation. "Semiconductors are essential to almost all sectors of the economy, including aerospace, automobiles, communications, clean energy, information technology, and medical devices. Given the importance of this area, TU is launching the multidisciplinary program this academic year," Prof Singh said.

Interested candidates can apply online through the Tezpur University admission portal. The last date for submission of applications is July 18, 2024.

Sur Sadhana Sangeet Mahavidyalaya organises Rabha Divas in Nagaon



HT Correspondent
NAGAON, June 17: Sur Sadhana Sangeet Mahavidyalaya, a pioneer institute of vocal music and instrumental, celebrated Bishnu Prasad Rabha Divas with day-long programs at the Haladhari Bhuyan Memorial Auditorium of Srimanta Sankar Mission premises on Sunday.

The program was inaugurated with the lighting of a lamp and garlanding of the portrait of Bishnu Prasad Rabha by Sidananda Dev Goswami, a noted litterateur and retired official of All India Radio, Nagaon centre. In his inaugural speech, Goswami illustrated the life and contributions of Bishnu Prasad Rabha, mentioning that he was a true artist who sought to unite all people, irrespective of caste, community, and religion, through his songs, music, and poems.

The program was chaired by Nava Kumar Mahanta, the president of Sur Sadhana Sangeet Mahavidyalaya, while Suwagmoni Mahanta, the principal of the institute, mentored the entire program. Suwagmoni Mahanta presented a special musical piece with 'Aye Mur Sesh Gaan' by Kala Guru Bishnu Prasad Rabha, following which the students from the institute performed songs by Kala Guru one after another.

Noted artist Ranjan Bezbaruah, who has achieved national recognition for singing old Assamese classic songs in Sanskrit, and noted singer Nayan Jyoti Hazarika also attended the program as special guests. They spoke about the works and creations of Bishnu Prasad Rabha. Both Ranjan Bezbaruah and Nayan Jyoti Hazarika also performed Bishnu Prasad Rabha's songs during their lectures, as stated in a press note.

Sarkari Sangeet Vidyalaya celebrates Jyoti Prasad Agarwala's birth anniversary

HT Correspondent
MORIGAON, June 17: The Sarkari Sangeet Vidyalaya (SSV), Morigaon, celebrated the birth anniversary of 'Rup Konwar' Jyoti Prasad Agarwala with fanfare at the cultural hall of the Srimanta Sankardev Sangha Zila Namghar, Morigaon, on Monday. The programme titled 'Jyoti Alok Sandhaner Rabhar Aabhare Haou Aami Jyotisman' was organised by Sankari Sangeet Vidyalaya (SSV), Morigaon.

At the beginning of the programme, the members of Sankari Sangeet Vidyalaya (SSV), Morigaon, felicitated the invited guests. The former state general secretary of Srimanta Sankardev Sangha (SSS), Babul Bora, spoke at length about Rup Konwar's life. Thereafter, Anghuman Dutta, the district cultural officer (DCO) of Morigaon, inaugurated the programme with a valuable speech. Speaking on the occasion, the DCO said, "Rup Konwar Jyoti Prasad Agarwala's dedication towards the upliftment of Assamese culture is remarkable."

The president of Sankari Sangeet Vidyalaya (SSV), Morigaon, Gyan Mohan Deka, welcomed the invited guests and students to the programme. The principal of Sankari Sangeet Vidyalaya (SSV), Morigaon, Prasanna



Kr Medhi, along with Guru Tapash Bordoloi, Utpala Hukai, and some aspirants of SSV, Morigaon—Mantu Kr Nath, Ranajit Bordoloi, Ajoy Deoraja, Binaram Deori, Bhabananda Mahanta, Basanta Raj Kumar Goswami, Jitu Deka, Sonamoni Deka, and Tapan Sarai—conducted the felicitation programme.

The programme started with a chorus performed by the guardians of the students of SSV, Morigaon, directed by Prasanna Kr Medhi. Thereafter, students of SSV performed songs and dances, paying tribute to 'Rup Konwar' Jyoti Prasad Agarwala and 'Kalaguru' Bishnu Prasad Rabha.

QUOTE OF THE DAY

He who knows that enough is enough will always have enough.
-Lao Tzu

Naidu returns revives Amaravati dream

The political landscape of Andhra Pradesh is once again in flux with the fate of Amaravati hanging in the balance. Chief Minister Chandrababu Naidu has embarked on a mission to develop Amaravati as the state's capital, a task he has five years to accomplish amidst the unpredictable nature of electoral politics. The previous tenure of Jagan Mohan Reddy had stalled Amaravati's development, favouring a three-capital proposal, which left the farmers of the region in prolonged protest. Now, with Naidu back in power, the Amaravati dream has been revived, but the clock is ticking. Amaravati's journey to becoming the capital city began with the acquisition of 33,000 acres of farmland from 29 villages under Naidu's earlier administration. The plan, designed with input from Singapore, envisioned a grand capital for Andhra Pradesh. However, Jagan Mohan Reddy's tenure saw a dramatic shift with his proposal to distribute the administrative, judicial, and legislative functions across Visakhapatnam, Kurnool, and Amaravati respectively. This move led to a 1,631-day protest by Amaravati's farmers, demanding the original plan be upheld.

The change in government has once again altered the trajectory. Naidu's return has brought hope to the farmers, who have dismantled their protest camps and are optimistic about Amaravati becoming the sole capital. Naidu's commitment was evident during his swearing-in ceremony, where he reiterated that Amaravati would be the one and only capital, although Visakhapatnam and Kurnool will still see significant development. This decision has broader implications, notably for Prime Minister Narendra Modi and the BJP. The TDP, BJP, and Pawan Kalyan's Jana Sena are aligned in supporting Amaravati's capital status. This alliance, which had laid the foundation stone for Amaravati back in 2015, hinges on the successful realization of this vision. Modi's government has a vested interest in the success of Amaravati, as it symbolizes the promises made to the state and the fulfillment of developmental goals that could influence voter sentiment.

The BJP-led NDA coalition is not without its challenges. Modi's leadership has faced setbacks in other states like Maharashtra and Uttar Pradesh, highlighting the volatility of political fortunes. Ensuring the development of Amaravati could bolster Modi's image and provide a tangible success story for the coalition. However, the pressure is on both Modi and Naidu to deliver. Failure to do so could have significant political repercussions, potentially affecting their hold on power in upcoming elections. The stakes are high. For Naidu, transforming Amaravati into a thriving capital city within five years is not just a promise to the farmers but a political imperative. For Modi, supporting this project aligns with his broader developmental agenda and could strengthen his coalition's standing. The intertwining of their political fates with the fate of Amaravati underscores the critical nature of this venture. The development of Amaravati as the capital city of Andhra Pradesh is a litmus test for both Chief Minister Chandrababu Naidu and Prime Minister Narendra Modi. The next five years will be crucial in determining whether Amaravati's promise can be realised and if the political fortunes of Naidu and Modi will flourish or falter. The electorate has shown that continuity is never guaranteed, making the successful development of Amaravati a significant factor in the political stability and legacy of both leaders.

Post-fractured mandate, will judiciary rise to the challenges?

By far the biggest takeaway from the 2024 general elections for India is that the ruling coalition will no longer be able to amend the Constitution and convert the country from a secular State to a Hindu Rashtra. During the election campaign, the Prime Minister of India memorably said, "Ram is my idea of India." The people of India have denied him the opportunity to see his dream come true through an amendment to the Constitution.

Lallu Singh, the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) candidate from Faizabad (Ayodhya), who made a remark that his party would take 400 seats to amend the Constitution or introduce a new one, lost the election.

The present coalition government of the National Democratic Alliance (NDA), will also not be able to amend the Constitution by deleting Article 16, which gives reservations in public employment to socially and economically backward classes.

The core of the Constitution will remain protected. The people of India have not just exercised their franchise, what we saw was the closest thing to a referendum on the basic features of the Constitution.

The question looming large in people's minds was whether we will remain a secular nation or become a nation governed by Sanatan Dharma.

India has chosen to retain the core of the Constitution, which is secular, democratic and republican. Those who wanted to replace the system of governance with their version of "Ram Rajya" have been defeated.

Those who wanted to set up the norm of 'cultural nationalism', whatever that means, above the Constitution in the name of decolonisation of the country, have lost the unjust ideological war.

The Constitution is the end product of the aspirations of India's Independence movement and to deny the legitimacy of the Constitution in the name of decolonisation was an attempt to deny the sacrifices of the freedom fighters and those who led India to Independence.

Fortunately, voices that were calling into question India's Constitution have been met with a re-

sounding answer by India's electorate.

The Constitution is not a colonial document, far from it; it makes a break with obscurantism and entrenched hierarchies and inequalities constructed by Brahmanism.

Tradition and convention demands that law officers of the government of India resign even if they are to be continued by the incoming government. So far, we have not seen the Attorney General for India or the Solicitor General of India or the Additional Solicitors resign. This was required to be done by them.

In the recent past, we have seen the critical role of law officers of the government of India in courts eroded by their inability to take an independent stand from the government they represent.

They seem to have forgotten that they do not take instructions from the government but advise the government. In my wish list, I would like to see this happen.

We are entitled to ask who will be the Attorney General for India, who will be the Solicitor General of India and who will be the other law officers of the incoming government. At the very least, they must not be people who deny the legitimacy of the Constitution of India and its basic features.

It has been famously said that when there is a strong government, the judiciary is weak. In recent years, we have witnessed ebb in the confidence people vest in the judiciary. Petitioners in jail have chosen to withdraw their petitions for bail rather than have them heard by certain judges known for their proclivity to deny bail.

Another recent trend, and an unfortunate one that cannot be trivialised, is the surge in criticism against the judiciary, book-marked by the rising number of memes calling out the judiciary for its inability to uphold the fundamental rights of the people and toeing the government line in all major challenges to governmental action or legislation.

Only time will tell if the judiciary can regain its independent voice. For all our sakes, let us hope it does sooner than later.

At present, there are two vacancies in the Supreme Court.

The third vacancy will arise on September 1 this year, when Justice Hima Kohli demits office. Thus, there are a total of three vacancies in the Supreme Court to be filled up before the current Chief Justice of India (CJI) Dr D. Y. Chandrachud retires on November 10 this year.

We need to keep a watch on who will be appointed to these vacancies sooner or later. Can we hope to see those committed to the ideology of the Preamble to the Constitution be appointed, or will there be more Victoria Gowris alluding to two of India's minorities as "White Terror" and "Green Terror".

Who really decides who becomes a judge of the Supreme Court of India? In theory it is the collegium, we know, but why are candidates recommended by the collegium not being appointed. What complex political calculus results in the delay of appointments to create a desired seniority among judges? Even the judges sought to be transferred by the collegium are not being transferred by the government.

We now have a system in which the future Chief Justice of India is handpicked for appointment well in advance. While making an appointment to the Supreme Court, seniority does not appear to be the criteria anymore.

In a situation such as this, the government may be tempted to appoint those who it thinks will favour them. It is here that we expect the judiciary to demonstrate its independence.

Finally, let us look at the critical cases pending in the Supreme Court for decision:

• The validity of the Places of Worship (Special Provisions) Act, 1991 is pending before the Supreme Court. This case is of foremost importance since it is linked to the secularism of our country. The fate of litigation arising from the Gyanvapi mosque and the Krishna Janmabhoomi-Shahi Idgah case depends upon what the court will rule on the validity of Places of Worship Act.

• The challenge to the validity of the Citizenship (Amendment) Act (CAA), 2019 is yet another crucial case. This case will de-

side whether the Parliament can grant citizenship to immigrants based on their religion alone and the outcome of the case will also impact our understanding of secularism in this country.

• The Supreme Court is yet to hear a challenge to the Chief Election Commissioner and Other Election Commissioners (Appointment, Conditions of Service, and Term of Office) Act, 2023, which excludes the CJI from the committee to appoint the Chief Election Commissioner and Election Commissioners.

• The validity of the Prevention Money Laundering Act, 2002 (PMLA) and also the correctness of the judgment in Vijay Madanlal Choudhary versus Union of India, in which a three-judge Bench upheld contentious provisions of the PMLA, likely to be heard by the Supreme Court in the coming days.

We have seen how the PMLA has been misused by the ruling government for political gains by breaking the opposition parties and threatening legislators from the opposition.

• A larger Bench of the Supreme Court is yet to hear the validity of the passage of the Finance Act, 2017 as a money bill, which introduced problematic changes in the PMLA.

• The judgment on the validity of Section 6A of the Citizenship Act, 1955, which granted legislative sanction to the Assam Accord extending citizenship to those who entered the state of Assam up to and including on March 24, 1971, is awaited. The law has been challenged on the ground that no illegal immigrants who entered Indian Territory after 1947 should be granted citizenship.

• The judgment of a seven-judge Bench on the question whether the Aligarh Muslim University is a minority institution is also awaited. This case is directly linked to the interpretation of Article 30 of the Constitution, which confers the right on minorities to establish and administer educational institutions of their choice.

• The judgment on the power of state governments to sub-classify based on relative backwardness within the Scheduled Castes

(SC) and Scheduled Tribes (ST) is also awaited. It is likely to impact whether backward among the SCs/STs including de-notified tribes and Vimukta Jatis can be granted separate quotas within the SCs/STs quotas.

• The Supreme Court is yet to rule on the validity of Section 124A of the IPC, which provides for the offence of sedition.

All these laws entail violations of the right to life and liberty as guaranteed in the Constitution. In addition, the challenge to the CAA goes to the very root of granting citizenship based on religion alone.

We have seen very often that governments try to achieve through courts what they cannot achieve politically or on the floor of the legislature. At this point, it is not possible to see which way the court will lean or how it will read the message of the elections.

What kind of litigation is likely to reach the court after elections? We are likely to see petitions being filed by losing candidates challenging elections including on the ground that the winning candidate had campaigned on the basis of religion.

Finally, on a happy note, the pre-general elections period saw another election, the election of the president of the Supreme Court Bar Association (SCBA).

Senior counsel Kapil Sibal won by a majority of 1,070 votes. This appears to indicate that he has bridged the divide between the right and liberal constituencies at the Bar. This, by itself, is a healthy trend as it stopped the sharp polarisations we have seen at the Bar in the recent past.

Since 2014, the ruling party has adopted a strategy to get things done through surrogates by filing petitions in courts to achieve a political aim. Hopefully, this trend will become a thing of the past.

One also hopes to see the SCBA at the forefront for undoing the damage that has been inflicted on civil liberties in this country in the last decade.

The journey must begin with a demand that the three new criminal laws are not implemented until there is a judicial audit of the implications of these laws for the citizens of India and access to justice. (IPA Service)

Increasing incidents of question paper leaks cause stress and anxiety among students

By: Privanka Saurabh

When the question paper of a competitive exam is leaked, the dreams of the candidates as well as their families are shattered. Such incidents shatter our collective dream and morale of building an advanced, prosperous, well-educated and strong nation and society. This creates a permanent feeling of dissatisfaction and disappointment towards the system among the youth, the influence of the government is reduced and the common people are disillusioned with the system. For the youth, competitive exams not only become a question of a bright future but sometimes of existence as well. Along with this, the credibility of the government is in danger. Many times, the involvement of big coaching centres and operators is also found in the matter of leaking the question paper. Cheating is becoming a nationwide business today, which has many beneficiaries and shareholders. The suspicious role or collusion of politicians to officials, question paper makers to coordinators, exam conducting institutions and commissions to exam centres cannot be denied.

Frequent incidents of question paper leaks have become a significant concern in India's education system. For example, more than 70 cases of question paper leaks were reported in 2023 alone, affecting various competitive exams including BCS, medical entrance exams, and state recruitment exams. These leaks have caused extreme stress and anxiety among students, hampering their preparation and confidence levels. Manual handling and security lapses are the major reasons for question paper leaks. The traditional method of printing and distributing question papers involves multiple touchpoints where security can be compromised. For example: In 2020, a manual handling mistake led to a critical error during the Bihar Public Service Commission exams. Criminal gangs involved in organized crime take advantage of the vulnerabilities in the examination system to reap increasing economic benefits. For example: In Rajasthan, a gang that leaked question papers of several exams was busted, earning crores of illegal revenue.

Technical vulnerabilities indicate that poorly secured digital systems

can be hacked, leading to electronic leaks. For example: Medical entrance exam question papers were leaked through hacked email posts, leading to wide distribution. Examination officials or staff sometimes collaborate with an external party to leak papers for financial gain. For example, several officials were arrested for their involvement in leaking question papers for state recruitment exams in 2023. Today we need advanced security protocols to prevent question paper leaks. It is important to use tamper-proof tracking and secure transport facilities for physical users. For example: The Central Board of Secondary Education (CBSE) has started using database digital resources, which are accessible only to authorized personnel on exam results.

Using blockchain technology for secure question paper management and distribution can be beneficial. For example: EduBlock uses ProBlock to ensure that the question paper is securely encrypted and decrypted only at the exam centre, significantly reducing the risk of leaks. A strict legal framework can enforce harsh penalties for individuals and organs involved in the leak. For example: The Public Examination (Prevention of Unfair Deaths) Bill, 2024, proposes harsh penalties including imprisonment and heavy fines. Regular training and strict accountability for examination staff can also be a measure. For example: Conducting regular audits and implementing monitoring systems to detect and prevent threats. Question paper leaks have a psychological impact on students. It leads to increased stress and anxiety among students.

The inconvenience and irregularity caused by question paper leaks significantly increase stress and anxiety among students, affecting their mental well-being and exam performance. Students who have worked hard may feel that their achievements have been undermined, leading to a loss of confidence in the education system and their ability. Repeated incidents of paper leaks can depress students, leaving them disillusioned about their prospects and the value of merit-based success. After several leaks of state-level entrance exams in Bihar, many students began to feel disheartened and lost faith in the fairness of the education sys-

tem. Students' academic plans are disrupted by the need to appear for exams, causing additional stress and logical inefficiency. Question paper leaks also lead to a loss of confidence and trust in exams, leading to distrust among students and services.

Counselling and support services are the need of the hour to reduce this psychological impact on students. Providing psychological support and counselling to students affected by the leak is imperative. For example: Setting up helplines and counselling centres to help students deal with stress and anxiety during exam time. Maintain regular communication about the efforts made to prevent leaks in future. Informing students and consumers about improved security measures and free schemes to rebuild trust. Rescheduling exams quickly with strong security measures is very beneficial to reduce the spread of illness from alternative exam schedules. Arranging localised question papers and adequate exam dates to avoid prolonged stress for students. Frequent incidents of question paper leaks undermine the reality of competitive exams and cause a lot of stress for students.

Since the problem of question paper leak is becoming uncontrolled, it should be the first and foremost responsibility of the governments of various states including the Centre to not let the incidents of question paper leak recur and take strict action against the culprits. Along with this, they should make such arrangements on a priority basis, so that there is no scope for question paper leaks. It is difficult to understand why it is difficult to make such a system in this age of information technology. Unfortunately, there is no way to solve many problems in the education sector. One of these is the problem of question paper leaks. There is hardly any state where the matter of question paper leaks of some competitive or regular examination does not remain in the headlines.

Addressing this issue requires a nuanced approach, including improved security protocols, leveraging technology, stringent legal measures, and comprehensive support for affected students. By implementing these measures, we can restore confidence in the examination system and ensure a fair and just process for all students.

NEET's inequities: A disrupted playing field

By: Dipak Kurmi

The Supreme Court's vacation Bench has issued notices to the National Testing Agency (NTA) and the Central Government in response to pleas for a new NEET-UG 2024 examination, following allegations of a paper leak. The Bench emphasized the need for answers, stating, "The sanctity has been affected, and we need answers." Once again, this incident highlights that NEET may not be the most reliable method for evaluating students.

Allegations of a paper leak have surfaced, suggesting some candidates might have received an unfair advantage. This has raised significant concerns about the test's integrity. Additionally, numerous students experienced technical issues, including poor network connectivity, at several centers, causing disruptions during the examination.

An unexpectedly high number of candidates have achieved top scores, with 67 individuals scoring a perfect 720 and each attaining a 99.997129 percentile. Notably, six of these high scorers were from the same center, which has sparked suspicion. Additionally, the decision to award grace marks to approximately 1,560 candidates due to lost time has faced criticism, especially since the NTA did not reveal the formula used, despite the Supreme Court's 2018 ruling. The NTA stated that these candidates were compensated with grace marks.

NEET serves as a distinctive admission system for medical courses in India, requiring all aspiring students to pass this exam. The concept of a common entrance test was introduced by Murli Manohar Joshi during his tenure as the HRD Minister in the NDA government. This idea received some validation in the Supreme Court's judgment in the TMA Pai Foundation vs. State of Karnataka case in 2002.

NEET was introduced by the Medical Council of India (MCI) in 2010. However, in

2013, a three-judge majority in the Christian Medical College Vellore Association vs Union of India case invalidated NEET, a decision that faced widespread criticism for being anti-student and potentially lowering medical education standards. Consequently, the Indian Medical Council Act, 1956, was amended to include Section 10D, authorizing the MCI to conduct NEET. In 2016, a review petition against the 2013 judgment was accepted, and the Supreme Court mandated the implementation of NEET from that year onward.

Unexpectedly, the Bench did not heed the Indian Government's repeated pleas to allow state governments to conduct their own tests, at least in 2016. Notably, the dissenting judge from the 2013 ruling mandated NEET even before a full hearing by the Constitution Bench. Therefore, NEET was enforced

by the court rather than the Narendra Modi government. In 2020, the Justice A. R. Jaisankar Bench reaffirmed NEET's validity, extending it to minority institutions as well. Unfortunately, the Supreme Court focused solely on the legality of NEET, neglecting to consider its actual impact on the ground, particularly on underprivileged and minority institutions.

Why is NEET considered unfriendly to students? Firstly, if a student falls ill or performs poorly on this single exam, they must wait an entire year for another chance. Secondly, multiple tests would allow students to apply to specific institutions of their choice, offering more control over their admissions. However, with centralized NEET counseling, students may be placed in colleges they do not wish to attend.

The NEET paper leak has impacted over 2.3 million candidates, compounded by translation errors in the question paper. Additionally, NEET fails to assess essential qualities for future doctors, such as compassion, empathy, and a passion for serving humanity. Moreover, relying on a single test is not an adequate measure. Global best practices consider qualifying exam marks, extracurricular activities, and the statement of purpose, providing a more holistic evaluation.

NEET is often regarded as the best option by our judges and government because they believe it promotes merit. However, is there a true consensus on what merit actually means? British sociologist Michael Dunlop Young's book 'The Rise of the Meritocracy (1958) introduced the concept of 'meritocracy,' which requires competition and equal opportunity.

Yet, can the NTA and judges genuinely believe that the complex notion of merit can be adequately measured

by a single test? When NEET and similar admission exams fail to meet this fundamental criterion, the competition is neither fair nor just, and equal opportunity becomes an illusion. Many Western scholars argue that common admission tests cannot assess essential learning abilities such as imagination, curiosity, and motivation. NEET undeniably has a class element, as evidenced by the Justice AK Rajan Committee, which uncovered clear signs of elitism. The Justice Rajan report on NEET's impact in Tamil Nadu provided substantial support for arguments against a single test. Among the 86,342 people surveyed by the panel, the majority opposed NEET. The introduction of NEET has re-

duced diversity in Tamil medical institutions, with the percentage of students from rural areas decreasing from 61.45% to 50.81%.

Likewise, the proportion of candidates from government schools has decreased from 1.12% to 0.6%. Meanwhile, the dominance of English-medium students in medical education has intensified, rising from 85.12% to 98.01%. Economically disadvantaged students have also seen a decline, dropping from 47.42% to 41.05%. Additionally, there has been a decrease in first-generation learners. If similar committees are established in other states, comparable findings may emerge. In 2021, the Tamil Nadu Assembly passed a law opposing NEET, but it was returned by the Governor in 2022. Upon resubmission, the Governor has referred the bill to the President, who is unlikely to give approval.

Furthermore, the existence of a single national test like NEET has led to significant financial gains for commercial coaching institutes. These institutes, predominantly located in urban areas, pose a disadvantage to economically disadvantaged students from rural backgrounds or those educated in vernacular mediums. Another issue is the substantial disparity in syllabus content between CBSE and state boards. Testing unequal candidates through a single test like NEET undermines the principle of equality.

It is crucial to redefine our understanding of merit in a way that embraces inclusivity and diversity within society. Merit should not become a tool for exclusion. Chief Justice DY Chandrachud aptly emphasized that the Constitution's transformative vision should not be overshadowed by misconceptions surrounding merit. The assessment of merit should align with its contribution to societal welfare. The 'one nation, one test' policy demands thorough reconsideration and enhancement to better serve its intended purpose. (The writer can be reached at dipakkurmipltd@gmail.com)



What foods are high in protein? Is India becoming the largest digital community in the world?

By: Jenna Fletcher

Eating foods high in protein has many benefits, including muscle building and feeling fuller after eating. Although eating lots of protein may be beneficial, eating a balanced diet is essential to staying healthy. Protein is an essential nutrient that is important in many bodily functions. It provides the building blocks for cells and helps to maintain muscle mass.

Most healthy adults need to consume at least 0.8 grams (g) of protein per kilogram of body weight (or 0.36 g per pound of body weight). However, an individual's protein goals may vary depending on physical activity level and medical history.

Because protein promotes a sense of fullness, some people choose to adopt a high protein diet when seeking to lose weight.

The following are some of the best high protein foods that a person can consume.

High protein foods

1. Salmon

Salmon is a fatty fish, meaning it is full of omega-3 fatty acids. Salmon is also an excellent source of protein and can help a person feel more satisfied at meals.

One salmon fillet (178 g) contains 39.3 g of protein.

2. Chicken breast

Chicken breast is a lean source of protein. The majority of its calories come directly from protein when served without skin. A 100 g skinless chicken breast provides around 22.5 g of protein.

3. Beef

Beef offers high amounts of protein per serving. A 3-ounce serving (85 g) of ground beef contains about 21.3 g of protein.

There is a range of different types of beef to choose from. It is best to choose lean beef as much as possible to help limit intake of saturated fats to no more than 5–6% of daily calories for optimal heart health.

4. Tuna

Tuna is an excellent and widely available source of protein. It is also a great source of heart healthy unsaturated fatty acids. One can (107 g) of tuna contains around 20.3 g of protein.

Canned tuna is a helpful pantry staple to keep on hand. It is shelf-stable and relatively affordable compared to many other animal protein sources. A person can add tuna to salads, sandwiches, and snacks.

5. Bison

Bison meat is another excellent source of protein. Bison is lean meat, offering less fat per serving than beef. Bison is becoming more available, and some people use it as a substitute for beef. One 3 oz (85 g) of bison contains around 21.6 g of protein.

6. Pork

Lean pork is a good source of protein. Pork chops and tenderloin are good choices for meals.

People should avoid processed pork products such as bacon because they are higher in saturated fat and sodium. One 4 oz (113 g) serving of pork contains around 19.1 g of protein.

7. Turkey

Turkey packs a powerful punch of protein. Cooked turkey breast can provide about 25.6 g of protein per 3 oz (85 g) serving.

8. Halibut

Halibut is a type of white fish. It is an excellent source of lean protein, with around 29.3 g of protein in half a fillet (159 g).

Vegetarian high protein foods

Below are some examples of high protein foods that are suitable for people following a vegetarian diet.

9. Eggs

Eggs are an excellent source of protein, nutrients, and healthful fats, with 1 large egg containing about 6.3 g of protein.

They are also incredibly versatile. A person can prepare eggs in multiple ways such as boiled, scrambled, or poached. A person can incorporate eggs into various dishes such as types of stir fry, soup, and sandwiches for a boost of protein.

A hardboiled egg makes a convenient high protein snack. Not every vegetarian diet includes eggs. A lacto-ovo-vegetarian diet includes eggs and dairy.

10. Greek yogurt

Plain, low-fat Greek yogurt packs as much as 19.9 g of protein in a 7 oz (200 g) serving. Flavored Greek yogurts often contain a lot of added sugar, so be sure to read the nutrition label.

For a delicious Greek yogurt breakfast or snack with no added sugars, opt for plain Greek yogurt and top with your favorite fruits, nuts, and seeds.

11. Cottage cheese

Cottage cheese is a dairy product that has an abundance of protein. It also offers a healthful serving of calcium and other nutrients. A 4 oz (113 g) serving of cottage cheese contains around 12.5 g of protein.

12. Milk

Cow's milk is an excellent source of protein for people who can tolerate drinking milk. A 1 cup (244 g) serving of milk contains 8 g of protein.

13. Nut butters

Nut butters, including peanut butter and almond butter, are another quick and easy way to add protein to the diet.

Use 1–2 tablespoons of nut butter on whole grain toast, in a smoothie, or as a dip for apple slices and fresh veggie sticks for a protein boost.

The amount of protein per serving can depend on the type of nut butter.

14. Whey protein powder

Whey protein powder is a supplement that is popular among bodybuilders and athletes aiming to increase muscle mass and strength. This powder is made from proteins found in the liquid part of milk, which are left over during cheese production. It can add a substantial amount of protein to a person's diet.

It is essential for people to read the nutrition labels because whey proteins are often full of added sugar and sweeteners. The nutrition labels can also provide information about how much protein is in that particular whey protein powder.

Vegan high protein foods

Below are some examples of high protein foods that are suitable for people following a vegan diet.

15. Black beans

Black beans can be an inexpensive source of protein. A person can prepare black beans in a variety of ways, making them a very versatile ingredient when preparing meals. One cup (172 g) of black beans contains around 15.2 g of protein.

16. Lima beans

Lima beans can add variety to types of salad, stir fry, and rice bowls. A 1-cup (241 g) serving of canned lima beans provides about 11.9 g of protein.

17. Broccoli

Broccoli is higher in protein than many other vegetables. It is not a high protein food on its own, but a person might choose it over other vegetables if they are prioritizing protein intake.

One cup (91 g) of chopped raw broccoli has around 2.57 g of protein and contains a variety of nutrients such as folate and potassium. This vegetable is also low in calories, with around 30.9 calories per cup.

18. Cauliflower

Like broccoli, cauliflower offers a lot of protein compared to its low calorie count. One cup (107 g) of chopped cauliflower has 27 calories and 2.05 g of protein.

19. Chinese cabbage

Also known as napa cabbage, Chinese cabbage is a vegetable that is full of antioxidants. While it is not as high in protein as some other sources, 1 cup (109 g) of cooked napa cabbage adds 1.2 g of protein to your daily intake.

20. Oats

Oats offer about 10.7 g of protein per cup (81 g). They are also a source of complex carbohydrates. Raw oats are easy to prepare as oatmeal and people can flavor them with a variety of healthful foods, such as fruits and nuts.

People should read the label carefully for instant and prepared oatmeal, as they often contain high amounts of added sugars or sweeteners.

21. Tempeh

Tempeh comes from soybeans, like tofu. However, it has a higher protein count than tofu, offering about 20.3 g of protein per 100 g.

A person can usually find tempeh in the refrigerated produce section at the grocery store, often right next to the tofu.

22. Spirulina

Spirulina is a bacteria that grows in both fresh and salt waters. It offers a variety of nutrients and protein from a small amount of its powdered form. One cup (112 g) of spirulina contains around 64.4 g of protein.

A person can add powdered spirulina to smoothies, salads, soups, and baked goods. Spirulina is also available in tablet form as a dietary supplement.

23. Hemp seeds

People can use hemp seeds in salads as a substitute for croutons. Hemp seeds offer about 9.48 g of protein per 3 tablespoons (30 g). They are fairly easy to find in most grocery stores but can be expensive.

24. Sun-dried tomatoes

Sun-dried tomatoes are an excellent addition to many dishes and are widely available. They offer protein, as well as additional nutrients and fiber.

One cup (54 g) of sun-dried tomatoes contains about 7.61 g of protein, though a person is unlikely to eat this many sun-dried tomatoes in a single meal or snack.

25. Guava

Guava is a small tropical fruit with a sweet flavor. Guava is one of the most protein-rich fruits available, with about 4.21 g of protein per cup (165 g). It also offers additional nutrients, such as vitamin C.

26. Artichokes

Artichokes are high in fiber and offer a good amount of protein. A half-cup of cooked artichoke hearts (84 g) provides about 2.43 g of protein.

This vegetable is very versatile and is suitable for use in a variety of recipes. Fresh artichokes and canned artichoke hearts are available at most grocery stores.

27. Peas

Peas are high in protein, fiber, and other nutrients. Frozen peas are inexpensive, easy to find, and suitable in a lot of recipes. Cooked green peas offer about 4.12 g of protein per half cup (80 g).

28. Chickpeas

Chickpeas are high in protein and fiber, and full of nutrients that support heart and bone health. Some studies have suggested that chickpeas may have a protective effect against certain cancers, such as breast cancer and colon cancer.

29. Quinoa

Quinoa is one of the only complete sources of vegetarian protein. One cup (185 g) of quinoa contains around 8.14 g of protein.

It contains all nine essential amino acids, making it an excellent choice for vegetarians, vegans, and those who do not eat a lot of protein from animal sources.

30. Almonds

Nuts are an excellent source of healthy fats. They make a calorie-dense, protein-rich snack that can help you stay full for longer.

A 1-oz serving, which is around 23 whole kernels or 28.35 g, contains about 6 g of protein. To cut back on sodium intake, a person can choose unsalted or lightly salted almonds.

31. Lentils

Lentils pack a hefty dose of plant protein and fiber. They are very affordable and may promote heart health.

One cup (198 g) of cooked lentils contains around 17.9 g of protein.

32. Pumpkin seeds

Pumpkin seeds are full of protein and minerals, such as magnesium and selenium. One cup (46 g) of pumpkin seeds contains around 13.7 g of protein.

In addition to just snacking on pumpkin seeds, this versatile ingredient makes an excellent topping for yogurt and oatmeal. A person can also add pumpkin seeds to granola, smoothies, and soups.

33. Avocado

Avocados not only contain protein and unsaturated fat, but they also contain good levels of fiber and nutrients, such as potassium.

One cup (230 g) of pureed avocado offers 4.51 g of protein.

34. Pistachios

Pistachios contain a big serving of protein while also being lower in calories compared to many other nuts.

A 1-oz (28.35 g) serving of pistachios contains about 5.73 g of protein, and a wealth of other nutrients, including a high dose of B-6.

35. Chia seeds

This tiny seed packs around 4.68 g of protein per ounce, along with omega-3s, fiber, and calcium.

People following a vegan diet often use chia seeds as an egg substitute, and many people enjoy adding them to smoothies or salads for extra health benefits.

36. Asparagus

Asparagus gets over one-quarter of its calories from protein. It is also full of nutrients, including B vitamins, and is low in carbohydrates.

This vegetable provides about 1.44 g of protein per 60 g, which is approximately four boiled asparagus spears.

37. Brussels sprouts

Brussels sprouts are full of protein, fiber, and vitamins. One cup (88 g) contains around 2.97 g of protein.

38. Spelt

Spelt is a type of hulled wheat with a very high protein content. It has risen in popularity and is often available with specialty flours.

Spelt flour contains 14.5 g of protein per 100 g.

39. Teff

Teff is a grass that is often ground down to make flour. This gluten-free food has a fairly high protein content, with about 13.3 g of protein per 100 g serving.

Summary

There are many potential sources of protein people can choose from. Many protein sources offer additional nutrients that benefit overall health as well.

Aiming for a balanced diet with a variety of protein sources can help a person maximize healthy fats, vitamins, minerals, and fiber. (Courtesy: Medical News Today)

By: Armaan Choudhary

A recent joint report by industry body IAMAI and market data analytics firm Kantar revealed a significant milestone: for the first time, over half of Indians are active internet users, totalling 759 million. Projections indicate that by 2025, this number could reach a staggering 900 million. Furthermore, the report 'The e-Economy of a Billion Connected Indians,' released by Google, Bain & Company, and Temasek, predicts that India's internet economy will reach a value of \$1 trillion by 2030. These figures paint a picture of a nation on the cusp of a digital revolution, poised to become the largest digital community in the world.

But what does it mean for the citizens of the country? Would it only affect the socio-economic sphere of the society? Would it mean something for the relationship between the citizens and the state? What would citizenship mean in the digital world?

Vox Populi, Vox Dei

The concept of citizenship can be traced back to ancient Greece. It signified the participation of the citizens in the affairs of the state. For those with privileged statuses, the idea of "civic virtue" or being a "good citizen" was essential since participation was not considered a right but a duty. Over time, with the democratic transition, this idea gave birth to the notion of political rights of the citizens that entitled them to participate in the de-

cision-making process, being a member of the nation-state. It was not a mere exercise of the right to vote or contest but the freedom to discuss public issues. It was about free formulation and expression of the public opinion that ultimately governs a democratic state.

In India, modern citizenship evolved during the struggle for independence. The framers of the Indian constitution envisioned a country where citizens were equal and free to express their opinions. This idea is reflected in Article 19 of the constitution, which entitles citizens to freedom of expression as a fundamental right. Over the years, despite continuous friction with the state over the years, this right has enabled citizens to shape the decision-making process significantly.

How technology advancement has transformed the public discourse?

With technological advancements in the last few decades, the medium of such participation is undergoing a notable change. Now, popular slogans are preceded by a hashtag, platforms like X (previously Twitter) have become the new 'nukkad' for citizens' issues, and social movements are accompanied by social media campaigns. For instance, the #MeToo movement in India gained significant traction and led to the exposure of several high-profile cases of sexual harassment, all through the power of social media.

The Internet has been both a boon and a bane for public

discourse. No doubt, it has made the space of dialogue more inclusive and accessible, but at the same time, the rapid spread of information has led to a deeper polarization of views. It has helped in a rapid exchange of information but also exposed discourse to mis and disinformation. As the nature of public discourse changes, so does how it is regulated.

Earlier, section 144 was used to contain the public order. It is now functionally impossible without an internet shutdown. Censorship once seemed enough to suppress speech, public communication, or the spread of information among citizens. However, new laws are being formed to regulate content on social media and OTT platforms. These questions indicate that a new saga of deliberative democracy and regulation has begun.

As technology permeates not only socio-economic but also political life, it becomes increasingly vital to grasp the concept of citizenship in the digital world. While the socio-economic dimension of digital citizenship is often discussed through issues like the digital divide, digital literacy, competition laws, and online welfare schemes, the political sphere remains the least explored. Understanding digital citizenship is not just about being aware of our rights and responsibilities online, but also about actively participating in shaping the digital landscape.

Like Mike Ribble (Nine Elements of Digital Citizenship), writers have defined

digital citizenship as "norms of appropriate, responsible behaviour regarding technological use".

While it is important to recognize the duties of a citizen in an online world, it is also equally important to recognize their rights, especially in terms of political participation. However, the digital sphere also poses unique challenges, such as the spread of fake news and the potential for online harassment, which need to be addressed in any discussion of digital citizenship.

What future beholds?

The question is how democratic participation can be ensured in digital politics, especially in a country like India.

The future of digital citizenship in India hinges on the technology policy framework that is being developed. The impact of these legislations will lay the foundation of the country's digital sphere and determine how citizens can participate in the online world. The right to participate in the daily affairs of the state, deliberate upon the pressing issues, and voice one's concerns and opinions form the basic structure of citizenship in a democratic state.

It would also be interesting to see how the new tech policy landscape with the current Digital Personal Data Protection Act, the upcoming Digital India Act, and the National Data Governance Framework Policy would unfold, as they will shape the future of digital citizenship in India. (Courtesy: Youth Ki Awaaz)

Pets bring infinite joy and companionship to our lives – but there are also downsides

By: Emily Hemendinger

Owning a pet can be a roller coaster. There are the highs, like when your dog greets you with a full-body wiggle when you return home, or when your cat purrs loudly as you cuddle next to one another. Then there are the lows, like stressful trips to urgent care, waking up to that unpleasant vomiting noise, or making the difficult choice to say goodbye because of medical problems or even intractable behavioral issues.

For those pet-owners who are struggling, it's beneficial to their mental health to acknowledge that pets can create stress and that some animals are more work than others. Research has shown that both cats and dogs can have equally positive impacts on mental health.

Pets may be helpful at reducing stress, anxiety and feelings of being overwhelmed, including in children. Pet ownership has also been shown to improve well-being by instilling people with a sense of purpose and responsibility. As a licensed clinical social worker, animal lover and proud dog mom, I have both professionally and personally seen the mental health impacts of having animal companions.

Media stories commonly cover the positives of pet ownership. But the hardships and downsides of owning a pet are not discussed as often. For instance, while there are many positive aspects to pet ownership, some research is showing that pets may lead to exacerbated mental health concerns or even sleep issues.

Whether you're adopting or shopping, pets can bring a full range of emotions into our lives. Research has even shown that pets may benefit non-pet owners around them as well.

Pets enrich lives

A pet owner may easily be able to tick off an infinite number of positive effects their fuzzy companion has had on their life. Research backs them up.

Pets can provide constant companionship for individuals and families. This is particularly true for older adults.

There was an uptick in adoptions of pets during the early days of the Covid-19 pandemic. Many people benefited from pets during periods of stay-at-home mandates and quarantines.

Research shows that dogs can reduce loneliness in their owners. In fact, being accompanied by a dog may even make you seem more approachable.

Pets, especially dogs, may help improve one's ability to socialise and feel connected with others, as well as increasing the prospects for social interactions. People may bond over the experience of having pets, socialize at the dog park, or even meet up at the local cat café.

Animals and pets have also been used to assist in detecting the onset symptoms of medical episodes, including seizures. Animal-assisted therapy and pet therapy have shown promise in im-



proving symptom management and overall quality of life in a number of conditions, including trauma and stress-related disorders, anxiety disorders, eating disorders, autism, traumatic brain injuries, neurological disorders and more.

Inherent stressors

Despite the many positive impacts of pet ownership, it also can have negative impacts. For example, one survey found that 47% of Americans felt separation anxiety when leaving their dogs at home.

The survey also found that 41% of pet owners declined social invitations because they did not want to leave their dog at home, and that 70% of pet owners would prefer to work remotely so they could stay at home with their pet. Pet owners have also identified feeling anxious about their pet getting sick or running away, or the risk that they might harm the animal unintentionally.

Stress from pet ownership is common. There's the stress of house-training and making sure the pet is getting enough enrichment – both physically and mentally. Then there are the challenges associated with vet appointments and navigating illness, as well as financial stressors and finding pet sitters.

Another element of pet ownership that people often don't talk about is the stress, and often shame, that owners with reactive dogs experience from walking their dog, having people over to the house or having their dog around children.

Finally, there's the reality that our pet companions live shorter lives than we do, leading to end-of-life planning, expensive treatments for older-age ailments, and, of course, the grief that will be felt from the loss of a pet. For some people, the loss of a pet may feel worse than human loss.

People may judge or criticize pet owners for an "overblown" grief reaction. The common experience of invalidation and lack of acknowledgment related to grief around pet loss – similar to the grief felt from divorce and miscarriage – is categorised as disenfranchised grief. This term refers to grief that is not acknowledged, validated or accepted socially.

Strings attached

Pet owners, especially post-pandemic, have reported high levels of guilt related to leaving their pets at home while at work or social events.

Some of this guilt may be related to concerns about providing insufficient attention to the pet or about the pet's health. This guilt has even been shown to be similar to the feeling human parents have concerning their human children.

As someone who adores their dog, I can relate to the guilt of leaving him alone. To complicate things, my dog has joint issues, anxiety and discoid lupus, a type of lupus that affects the skin on his nose. He can also be reactive. All of these aspects require me to provide extra care. When friends invalidate my worries and guilt, it can feel isolating and shaming.

And I'm not alone in these feelings. Overall, when there is a lack of consideration for the complex feelings pet owners experience, the invalidation and disenfranchised feelings can lead to depression, anxiety, feelings of being isolated and worsened quality of life.

Finding support

The human-animal bond is unique, with humans receiving unconditional love and full acceptance from their animal companion. When society can honour and respect this bond through validation, patience and compassion, it not only helps pet owners but also the clinicians who treat the animals.

Employers can be supportive by continuing to provide remote and hybrid work options, flexibility in scheduling and opportunities for employees to feel validated and receive support. If a loved one is experiencing guilt around leaving their dog at home or a friend is having anxiety about their cat's health, instead of minimizing their experience, try talking to them and asking how best to support them through their distress.

Another support tool is encouraging pet owners to practice self-compassion and mindfulness, being present and focusing on the time they do have with their pet.

Pets can bring infinite joy and companionship to our lives, whether that's through pet ownership, fostering, volunteering or engaging in animal-assisted therapy.

It remains important, however, to acknowledge the stressors and difficulties pet owners face. After all, the ups and downs of pet ownership, just like the ups and downs of the human experience, are what make life and relationships that much more meaningful. (Courtesy: Scroll.in)

Critics say Netanyahu's wartime decision-making has been influenced by the ultranationalists in his government

Israeli officials say Netanyahu has dissolved the War Cabinet after key partner bolted govt

TEL AVIV, June 17: Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu dissolved the influential War Cabinet tasked with steering the war in Gaza, Israeli officials said Monday, a move that comes days after a key member of the body bolted the government over frustrations surrounding the Israeli leader's handling of the war.

The move was widely expected following the departure of Benny Gantz, a centrist former military chief, earlier this month. Gantz's absence from the government makes Netanyahu more dependent on his ultranationalist allies to govern and the dissolution of the War Cabinet underlines that shift as the eight-month-long war in Gaza drags on.

The officials, who spoke on condition of anonymity because they were not authorized to discuss the change with the media, said that going forward Netanyahu would hold smaller forums with some of his

government members for sensitive issues surrounding the war. That includes his security Cabinet, where far-right governing partners who oppose cease-fire deals and have voiced support for reoccupying Gaza, are members.

The War Cabinet was formed in the early days of the war, when Gantz, then an opposition party leader and Netanyahu rival, joined the coalition in a show of unity following the Oct. 7 Hamas attack on southern Israel. He had demanded that a small decision-making body steer the war, in a bid to sideline far-right members of Netanyahu's government.

It was made up of three mem-

bers - Gantz, Netanyahu and Defense Minister Yoav Gallant — and together they made important decisions throughout the course of the war.

The move to scrap the War Cabinet comes as Israel faces more pivotal decisions.

Israel and Hamas are weighing the latest proposal for a cease-fire in exchange for the release of hostages taken by Hamas during its attack. Israeli troops are still bogged down in the Gaza Strip, fighting in the southern city of Rafah and against pockets of Hamas resurgence elsewhere. And violence continues unabated between Israel and the Lebanese Hezbollah militant group — with a Biden

administration envoy in the region in a bid to avert a wider war on a second front.

Netanyahu has played a balancing act throughout the war between pressures from Israel's top ally, the U.S., and the growing global opposition to the war and from his government partners, chief among them Finance Minister Bezalel Smotrich and National Security Minister Itamar Ben-Gvir.

Both have threatened to topple the government should Israel move ahead on a cease-fire deal. The latest proposal being considered is part of the Biden administration's most concentrated push to help wind down the war. For now, progress on a deal appears to remain elusive.

Critics say Netanyahu's wartime decision-making has been influenced by the ultranationalists in his government and by his desire to remain in power. Netanyahu denies the accusations and says he has the country's best interests in mind. (AP)



Chinese premier agrees with Australia to 'properly manage' differences

MELBOURNE, June 17: Chinese Premier Li Qiang said he agreed with Australian Prime Minister Anthony Albanese on Monday to properly manage their nations' differences as they emerge from a hostile era in which minister-to-minister contacts were banned and trade barriers cost Australian exporters up to 20 billion Australian dollars (USD 13 billion) a year.

Li, Albanese and senior ministers of both administrations met at Parliament House to discuss thorny issues, including lingering trade barriers, conflict between their militaries in international waters and China's desire to invest in critical minerals.

Li, China's most senior leader after President Xi Jinping, arrived in the South Australian state capital of Adelaide on Saturday and the national capital of Canberra late Sunday in the first visit to the country by a Chinese premier in seven years. Li told reporters after Monday's meeting that the bilateral relationship was "on the right track of steady improvement and development."

"We ... had a candid exchange of views on some differences and disagreements and agreed to properly manage them in a manner befitting our comprehensive strategic partnership," Li said through an interpreter.

Albanese, who in November last year became the first Australian prime minister to visit China since 2016, described



the discussions as "constructive."

"Australia advocates that we should all work together to promote a regional balance where no country dominates and no country is dominated," Albanese said.

"I've made it clear as nations with different histories, political systems and values, we will cooperate with China where we can, disagree where we must and engage in the national interest," the Australian leader added.

Their relations have improved markedly since Albanese's center-left Labor Party was elected in 2022 following nine years of conservative government in Australia.

Most of the official and unofficial trade barriers Beijing introduced in 2020 on coal, cotton, wine, barley and wood have been lifted since Albanese was elected. Beijing had banned minister-to-minister contacts as it froze out the previous Australian government diplomatically.

Agriculture Minister Murray Watt said before the meeting that he would raise the issue of China's ban on Australian rock lobsters and exports from two beef processing plants.

"The mere fact that we have the first visit by a Chinese premier, the second-most powerful person in China, ... since 2017 is an enormous opportunity to continue that dialogue, to continue stabilizing our relationship and address some of the outstanding issues," Watt said.

Li was served lobster at a business lunch with winemakers on Sunday and wagu beef at a state lunch Monday, news media reported. Li planned to underscore China's interest in buying a bigger stake in Australia's critical minerals sector, which is essential to the global transition to renewable energy sources, by visiting a Chinese-controlled lithium processing plant in Western Australia state Tuesday.

Li visited New Zealand before Australia and is scheduled to stop in Malaysia late Tuesday before returning to China.

Australia shares US concerns over China's global dominance in critical minerals and control over supply chains in the renewable energy sector.

Citing Australia's national interests, Treasurer Jim Chalmers recently ordered five Chinese-linked companies to divest their shares in the rare earth mining company Northern Minerals. (AP)

EU leaders are gathering to discuss nominees for the bloc's top jobs after an election shakeup

BRUSSELS, June 17: The 27 leaders of the European Union gather in Brussels on Monday evening to take stock of recent European election results and begin the fraught process of dividing up the bloc's top jobs, but they will be playing their usual political game with a deck of reshuffled cards.

The June 6-9 elections saw the European Parliament shift to the right and dealt major blows to pro-European governing parties in Paris and Berlin. The Franco-German motor that usually propels EU politics along was weakened, and new dynamics could be on show at the informal dinner.

Under the EU's complicated division of powers, the presidents and prime ministers get to nominate the

next head of the bloc's powerful executive branch, the European Commission, which is responsible for drawing up EU policy on everything from climate to the colossal shared budget.

Under the EU's treaties, their choice should take into account the results of the election.

German conservative Ursula von der Leyen looks likely to stay on as president for another five years after a strong showing for her centre-right European People's Party parliamentary group.

In an interview with Germany's Welt TV on Saturday, Chancellor Olaf Scholz said, "It is clear after the results of the elections that everything indicates that there can be a second term in office for Ursula

von der Leyen." He said he believes the top job nominations could be agreed "quickly".

Von der Leyen, at the helm of the EU since 2019, led a huge drive during the pandemic to secure billions of COVID-19 vaccine doses, set up a historic post-pandemic economic recovery fund and, from 2022, drummed up support for Ukraine in its war with Russia and extended a hand to Kyiv to join the bloc.

But nothing is guaranteed. Von der Leyen's presidential style has at times riled her commission colleagues, and she is deeply unpopular in some corners of the EU Parliament, where she will need the support of 361 of the 720 lawmakers to hold on to her job.

The other big posts up for grabs

are that of European Council president, held by Belgian centrist Charles Michel, and EU foreign policy chief, occupied by Josep Borrell of Spain from the centre-left. The council president's job is to broker deals between the 27 member states, while the top diplomat represents the EU on the world stage.

In Brussels, names for the big posts have circulated for months. Former Portuguese Socialist Prime Minister António Costa is frequently mentioned to become council president. Estonian Prime Minister Kaja Kallas, well known for her tough line on Russia, has been floated as the bloc's potential top diplomat.

French President Emmanuel Macron said the aim Monday is "to

try to have a quick consensus. But perhaps we need to wait until June 27-28," when the leaders meet again in Brussels for a formal EU summit.

"I don't want to preempt things," Macron said on Saturday. "These discussions are happening with 27 of us, so we have advanced, several of us have called each other, and I think it's possible. I think it's possible in the days to come, or in the week to come."

Von der Leyen's own path to power in 2019 shows that the tussle over EU top jobs can be unpredictable. Then a German defense minister somewhat tainted by scandal in her ministry, von der Leyen was a relative unknown in Brussels when her name was raised by leaders in closed-door discussions. (AP)

China blames Philippines for a ship collision in the South China Sea, which Manila says is deceptive



TAIPEI, June 17: A Chinese vessel and a Philippine supply ship collided near the disputed Spratly Islands in the South China Sea on Monday, China's coast guard said, in the latest flare-up of escalating territorial disputes that have sparked alarm.

The coast guard said a Philippine supply ship entered waters near the Second Thomas Shoal, a submerged reef in the Spratly Islands that's part of territory claimed by several nations. The Philippine military called the Chinese coast guard's report "deceptive and misleading."

The Chinese coast guard said in a statement on the social media platform WeChat the Philippine supply ship "ignored China's repeated solemn warnings ... and dangerously approached a Chinese vessel in normal navigation in an unprofessional manner, resulting in a collision."

"The Philippines is entirely responsible for this," it added. In Manila, the Philippine military said it would "not discuss operational details on the legal humanitarian rotation and resupply mission at Ayungin Shoal, which is well within our exclusive economic zone."

It used the Philippine name for the shoal, where Filipino navy personnel have transported food, medicine and other supplies to a long-grounded warship that has served as Manila's territorial outpost.

"We will not dignify the deceptive and misleading claims of the China coast guard," military spokesperson Col. Xerxes Trinidad said. "The main issue remains to be the illegal presence and actions of Chinese vessels within the Philippines' exclusive economic zone, which infringes on our sovereignty and sovereign rights."

"The continued aggressive ac-

tions of the CCG are escalating tensions in the region," Trinidad said. The Philippines says the shoal, which lies less than 200 nautical miles (370 kilometers) from its coast, falls within its internationally recognized exclusive economic zone and often cites a 2016 international arbitration ruling that invalidated China's expansive claims in the South China Sea based on historical grounds.

Several incidents have happened in recent months near the shoal, where the Philippines maintains an outpost aboard the BRP Sierra Madre, which had been encrusted with rust since it was deliberately grounded in 1999 but remains an actively commissioned military vessel, meaning an attack on it could be considered by the Philippines as an act of war.

China has increasingly become assertive in pressing its claim to virtually the entire South China Sea, which has led to a rising number of direct conflicts with other countries in the region, most notably the Philippines and Vietnam. A new law by China, which took effect Saturday, authorises its coast guard to seize foreign ships "that illegally enter China's territorial waters" and to detain foreign crews for up to 60 days.

The law renewed a reference to 2021 legislation that says China's coast guard can fire upon foreign ships if necessary. At least three coastal governments with claims to the waters - the Philippines, Vietnam and Taiwan - have said they would not recognise the law.

The territorial disputes have strained relations and sparked fears the conflict could bring China and the United States, a longtime treaty ally of the Philippines, into a military confrontation. (AP)

Pak govt vows clampdown on 'anti-state' social media campaigns as it warns Imran Khan's party to stop 'propaganda'

ISLAMABAD, June 17: Urging jailed former Pakistan prime minister Imran Khan's party to quit its "anti-state activities and propaganda", the government has warned that it would clamp down on those involved in running anti-state smear campaigns on social media in a bid to damage the country's ties with friendly nations.

Addressing a press conference on Sunday, legal affairs spokesperson Aqeel Malik said there was no precedent to Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf's (PTI) "enmity as it was perpetrating anti-Pakistan legislation in foreign countries", the Geo News reported.

"Pakistan is an independent country and does not take dictation from any nation. We want friendly relations with all nations. However, a concentrated smear campaign against Pakistan in foreign countries that started after the 2022 vote of no confidence which mounted the anti-Pakistan propaganda," he said. Malik alleged that PTI has hired lobbyists and PR firms to promote anti-Pakistan campaigns abroad and warned that the government would clamp down on those involved in running anti-state campaigns on social media in a bid to damage Pakistan's ties with friendly countries.

The spokesperson urged PTI to quit its "anti-state activities and propaganda" and hold dialogue with the government on political issues to mull over solutions instead of damaging the nation's interest at global forums, the report said. Malik claimed, "All anti-Pakistan legislation is done on the behest of PTI and overseas Pakistani diaspora who have strong affiliation with this party are being misused for this clandestine motive of PTI."

Khan-led PTI has questioned the outcome of the February 8 general elections in Pakistan, alleging that its mandate from the people was "stolen" by the Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz party, Pakistan Peoples Party and its allies, who formed a coalition government to keep the former prime minister out of power.

Citing examples, he said in May 2023, 65 American congressmen wrote a letter to the US Secretary of Defence to prioritise the promotion of the protection of human rights and democracy in Pakistan. Again in November 2023, 11 congressmen wrote a letter to the US Secretary of State "to suspend US assistance to Pakistan. (PTI)

Trial of a US reporter charged with espionage in Russia is to begin June 26

MOSCOW, June 17: The espionage trial in Russia of Wall Street Journal reporter Evan Gershkovich will begin on June 26 and will be held behind closed doors, a statement from the court that will hear the case said on Monday.

Gershkovich, a US citizen, has been behind bars since his March 2023 arrest and faces 20 years in prison if convicted.

The trial is to be held in the Sverdlovsky Regional Court in Yekaterinburg, Russia's fourth-largest city, where he was arrested. Gershkovich has since been held in Moscow's Lefortovo prison, about 1,400 kilometers (870 miles) to the west.

The court said trial will be closed to the public, as is usual in espionage cases.

Gershkovich, 32, is accused of "gathering secret information" on orders from the CIA about Uralvagonzavod, a facility that produces and repairs military equipment, the Prosecutor General's office said last week in the first details of the accusations against him.

The reporter, his employer and the US government have denied the allegations, and Washington designated him as wrongfully detained.

Russia's Federal Security Service alleged that Gershkovich was acting on US orders to collect state secrets but provided no evidence to back up the accusations.

"Evan has done nothing



wrong. He should never have been arrested in the first place. Journalism is not a crime," US State Department spokesman Matthew Miller said last week.

"The charges against him are false. And the Russian government knows that they're false. He should be released immediately." The Biden administration has sought to negotiate Gershkovich's release, but Russia's Foreign Ministry said Moscow would consider a prisoner swap only after a trial verdict.

Uralvagonzavod, a state tank and railroad car factory in the city of Nizhny Tagil, about 100 kilometers (60 miles) north of Yekaterinburg, became known in 2011-12 as a bedrock of support for President Vladimir Putin.

Plant foreman Igor Kholmanskih appeared on Putin's annual phone-in program in December 2011 and denounced mass protests occurring in Moscow at the time as a threat to "stability," proposing that he and his colleagues travel to the Russian capital to help suppress the un-

rest. A week later, Putin appointed Kholmanskih to be his envoy in the region.

Putin has said he believes a deal could be reached to free Gershkovich, hinting he would be open to swapping him for a Russian national imprisoned in Germany. That appeared to be Vadim Krasikov, who is serving a life sentence for the 2019 killing in Berlin of a Georgian citizen of Chechen descent.

Asked by The Associated Press about Gershkovich, Putin said the US is "taking energetic steps" to secure his release. He told international news agencies at an economic forum in St. Petersburg in early June that any such releases "aren't decided via mass media" but through a "discreet, calm and professional approach."

"And they certainly should be decided only on the basis of reciprocity," he added, in an allusion to a potential prisoner swap.

Gershkovich was the first US journalist taken into custody on espionage charges since Nicholas Daniloff in 1986 at the

height of the Cold War. Gershkovich's arrest shocked foreign journalists in Russia, even though the country had enacted increasingly repressive laws on freedom of speech after sending troops into Ukraine.

Alsu Kurmasheva, a reporter for US-funded Radio Liberty/Radio Free Europe with dual US-Russian citizenship, has been jailed since October awaiting trial on charges of failing to register as a foreign agent while collecting information about the Russian military.

The son of Soviet emigres who settled in New Jersey, Gershkovich is fluent in Russian and moved to the country in 2017 to work for The Moscow Times newspaper before being hired by the Journal in 2022.

US Ambassador Lynne Tracy, who regularly visited Gershkovich in prison and attended his court hearings, has called the charges against him "fiction" and said that Russia is "using American citizens as pawns to achieve political ends."

Separately, US soldier Gordon Black is on trial in Vladivostok on charges of theft and threatening murder in a dispute with a Russian woman. Black, who was stationed in South Korea but visiting the Pacific Coast city, on Monday told a court that he denied the allegation of threatening murder but "partially" admitted to theft, according to the state news agency RIA-Novosti. (AP)

Muslims in Asia celebrate Eid al-Adha with sacrifice festival and traditional feast

JAKARTA, June 17: Muslims in Asia on Monday celebrated Eid al-Adha, or the Feast of Sacrifice, with food and prayers for people in Gaza suffering from the Israel-Hamas war.

One of the biggest Islamic holidays, the occasion commemorates Prophet Ibrahim's test of faith through slaughtering livestock and animals and distributing the meat to the poor. It's a joyous occasion for which food is a hallmark where devout Muslims buy and slaughter animals and share two-thirds of the meat with the poor and it's a revered observance that coincides with the final rites of the Hajj pilgrimage in Saudi Arabia.

Much of Asia, including Indonesia, Malaysia, India and Bangladesh, observed Eid al-Adha on Monday, while Muslims in other parts of the globe, including Saudi Arabia, Libya, Egypt, and Yemen celebrated

the holiday on Sunday.

On Monday, worshippers shoulder-to-shoulder joined in communal prayers in Indonesia's capital, Jakarta. Preachers in their sermons called on people to pray for Muslims in Gaza and Rafah.

"Our prayers and thoughts are with our brother and sisters who are now suffering in Palestine," worshipper Adi Prasetya said after praying at a field in southern Jakarta. "There are many opportunities for us now to channel our help through charities."

"May Allah give strength to those ravaged by war... may those who are divided can live in peace again," said another devotee, Berlina Yustiza.

Although Indonesia has more Muslims than any other country in the world, its traditions to mark Eid al-Adha have been influenced by other religions.

Residents in Yogyakarta, an ancient center of Javanese culture and the seat of royal dynasties going back centuries, believe that if they manage to catch the crops arranged in the form of a cone-shaped pile called "gunungan" that is paraded from the royal palace to the Kauman Grand Mosque, it can bring them good luck. They scrambled to grab various food offerings, made of fruit, vegetables and traditional snacks.

A day before the sacrifice festival, people in East Java's Pasuruan city expressed their gratitude and respect for the sacrificial animals by dressing them as beautiful as a bride. The sacrificial cow is wrapped in a seven-fold garland, a shroud, turban and prayer mat and paraded in a tradition called "manten sapi," or bride cow, before being handed to the sacrificial committee.

Villagers in Demak, a town in



Central Java province, celebrated the holiday with a procession of livestock called "apitan" as a form of gratitude for the food and harvest. They bring food in bamboo containers to the town's square where they eat together after praying. Locals believe the procession will provide prosperity and that disaster would come if it was abandoned.

Eid al-Adha commemorates the Quranic tale of Ibrahim's willingness to sacrifice Ismail as an act of

obedience to God. Before he could carry out the sacrifice, God provided a ram as an offering. In the Christian and Jewish telling, Abraham is ordered to kill another son, Isaac.

In Malaysia, Prime Minister Anwar Ibrahim joined thousands of congregants, including foreign tourists, and offered morning prayers at a mosque near his office in Putrajaya, south of the capital Kuala Lumpur.

Meanwhile at a wholesale market

in Selayang, just outside the capital, Muslim workers there knelt on mats placed on a large piece of white cloth laid outside the market to perform their prayers.

In his message, Anwar said the opportunity to go on the hajj pilgrimage to Mecca is one of God's great gifts and should make one more ascetic and simpler.

"I invite Muslims to live the message of simplicity that is preached in Hajj, to always be humble and not be mesmerized by the attraction of temporary worldly riches," Anwar said, "Let's not deviate from this goal. The world should be a bridge to the eternal land."

Muslims in India, where they comprise 14% of the population, celebrated Eid al-Adha on Monday across the country. In New Delhi, thousands offered prayers at the historic Jama Masjid, a 17th century

mosque. Families assembled early in the morning and many people shared hugs and wishes after the prayers. Numerous merchants with goats gathered on the streets leading to the mosque where people bargained with the goats for the best price.

Devotees across Bangladesh, a Muslim-majority nation of over 170 million people, on Monday marked the festival in open fields and mosques where many prayed for a better world free from war.

More than 400,000 devotees, the country's largest congregation, offered their prayers at a field in Kishoreganj district in the morning.

In the capital, Dhaka, a prominent imam led a gathering on the Supreme Court grounds where 35,000 men and women participated. Millions of cattle were slaughtered across the country to celebrate the day. (AP)

Tenzin Nima Glow, a first-timer, emerged victorious from Thrizino-Buragaon assembly seat

Three independents extend support to Khandu govt

ITANAGAR, June 17: Three independents in Arunachal Pradesh have extended their unconditional support to the BJP government led by chief minister Pema Khandu.



The MLAs - Laisam Simai, Wanglam Sawin, and Tenzin Nima Glow - conveyed their decision through a letter of support to Khandu, BJP sources confirmed.

Tenzin Nima Glow, a first-timer, emerged victorious from Thrizino-Buragaon assembly seat in West Kameng district, defeating two-time BJP MLA Kumsi Sidsow.

NEET seminar at Prism Academia concludes

GUWAHATI, June 17: Prism Academia in Ghari Makha Leikai, Imphal West, Manipur, recently hosted a highly informative and engaging two-day seminar on NEET Counselling.



Successful careers in the medical field. AMERF Education Counsellor, Joychand Moirangthem, provided an in-depth analysis of the NEET examination.

Underground power cable in Tripura: Minister

AGARTALA, June 17: The Tripura government will go for underground electricity cable networks in a few urban areas including Agartala Municipal Corporation (AMC) areas, said state Power minister Ratan Lal Nath.

DIPR Nagaland sends individuals to MIFF



KOHIMA, June 17: The Department of Information and Public Relations, Government of Nagaland, has selected five individuals from film and related fields from Nagaland to attend the 18th Mumbai International Film Festival, 2024.

Trucks carrying essential supplies stopped in Tamenglong

Violence in Jiribam district has claimed at least two lives

IMPHAL, June 17: More than 100 trucks carrying essential items to Imphal were stopped on NH 53 near Tatbung in Manipur's Tamenglong district on Monday by people who have called for an indefinite blockade of the Imphal-Silchar highway to protest violence in Jiribam district, police said.



On June 6, the body of 59-year-old Soibam Saratkumar Singh was discovered in Jiribam district triggering violence in the district which was not affected by ethnic violence till then.

No. TE(Ex) Admn- 5/2024/330

CORRIGENDUM

In continuation of the office notification published vide Janasanyog/D/1568/24, dated 15th June, 2024, it is brought to notice to all concerned that the registration process for admission into Engineering and Architectural courses of the Institutions outside Assam against the seats reserved for the candidates of Assam through CSAB-NEUT-2024 is going to start from 19th June, 2024 17.00 hours instead of 17th June, 2024.

Sd/- Director of Technical Education, Assam, Kahilipara, Guwahati-19.

Janasanyog /D/1679/ 24/18-Jun-24

KARBI ANGLONG AUTONOMOUS COUNCIL OFFICE OF THE ADDITIONAL DIRECTOR OF SERICULTURE, DIPHU, KARBI ANGLONG

No. Addl. DSDG.192/Pt/2021-2022/31,

Dated Diphu the 13th June, 2024

SHORT TENDER NOTICE

Sealed Tender in plain paper affixing non-refundable KAAC money receipt of Rs. 10.00 (Rupees Ten) only are hereby invited from PWD/KAAC registered Contractors and will be received on 15/06/2024 to 29/06/2024 upto 3:00 P.M. and subsequently open on the same day in presence of Tenderers or their authorized agencies if any.

In case the opening day of Tender happened to be any Holiday/Bandh, the Tender will be received and opened on the next day.

The undersigned reserve the right to accept or reject one or all Tenders without assigning any reason thereof and will not bound himself/herself to accept the lowest one.

GROUP-A. UNDER THE ASSISTANT DIRECTOR OF SERICULTURE, DIPHU :

Sl. No	Name of works	Tender Value (in lakh)	Earnest Money SC/ST-1% Others-2%	Time of completion
1	Renovation of office cum Rearing House at ECC Rongkhelan	10.00	SC/ST=10,000.00 Others=20,000.00	30 days
2	Construction of Chain Link Fencing at ECC Rongkhelan	10.00	SC/ST=10,000.00 Others=20,000.00	60 days
3	Renovation of office cum staff quarter at ECC Disobai	10.00	SC/ST=2,000.00 Others=4,000.00	30 days
4	Renovation and extension of Godown at Sericulture Complex, Diphu	10.00	SC/ST=10,000.00 Others=20,000.00	30 days
5	Extension of one room each for 2 nos. staff qtr. at Seri. Complex @4.00 L/each	8.00	SC/ST=8,000.00 Others=16,000.00	30 days
6	Repairing of Grade-IV qtr. At Sericulture Complex, Diphu	8.00	SC/ST=8,000.00 Others=16,000.00	30 days
7	Construction of Chain Link Fencing at ECC Langsoliet	8.00	SC/ST=8,000.00 Others=16,000.00	60 days
8	Construction of Rearing House at ESG Dengaon	15.00	SC/ST=15,000.00 Others=30,000.00	60 days

Group-B. UNDER SUPERINTENDENT OF SERICULTURE, DIPHU :

Sl. No	Name of works	Tender Value (in lakh)	Earnest Money SC/ST-1% Others-2%	Time of completion
1	Extension and renovation of new IB at ECC Bagori	15.00	SC/ST=15,000.00 Others=30,000.00	30 days
2	Extension and renovation of office building at ECC Bagori	15.00	SC/ST=15,000.00 Others=30,000.00	30 days
3	Electrification of both IB and office building at ECC Bagori	16.00	SC/ST=16,000.00 Others=32,000.00	30 days
4	Entrance Gate at ECC Bagori	10.00	SC/ST=10,000.00 Others=20,000.00	30 days
5	Internal Chain Link Fencing at ECC Bagori	10.00	SC/ST=10,000.00 Others=20,000.00	30 days
6	Construction of Labour Shed at CMG Sarumanthi	15.00	SC/ST=15,000.00 Others=30,000.00	60 days
7	Entrance Gate at CMG Sarumanthi	2.50	SC/ST=2,500.00 Others=5,000.00	30 days

Group-C. UNDER SUPERINTENDENT OF SERICULTURE, DIPHU:

Sl. No	Name of works	Tender Value (in lakh)	Earnest Money SC/ST-1% Others-2%	Time of completion
1	Const. of building at Supdt. of Sericulture, Hamren at office campus including electrification & water facility	30.00	SC/ST=30,000.00 Others=60,000.00	60 days
2	Const. of Labour shed at ECC Birsinki	10.00	SC/ST=10,000.00 Others=20,000.00	60 days
3	Construction of Chowkidar quarter at ECC Kolonga	15.00	SC/ST=15,000.00 Others=30,000.00	60 days
4	Extension and repairing of IB Umkhermi (TMC)	10.00	SC/ST=10,000.00 Others=20,000.00	30 days

TERMS AND CONDITIONS:

- The rate should be quoted as % (Percent) scheduled of rate works for all division under CPWD for the year 2021.
- Earnest Money should be deposited in favour of the undersigned in the form of call deposit and should be attached along with Tender, without which no Tender will be allowed.
- The following documents (Xerox) should be attached along with the Tender:
 - KAAC Professional Clearance Certificate.
 - Sale Tax Clearance Certificate/GST Registration No. along with PAN Card.
 - Caste Certificate for ST/SC.
 - Personal Bank Passbook with A/C no.
- Payment will be made subject to availability of fund.

Sd/- R. Rongphar,
I/c Additional Director of Sericulture,
Karbi Anglong, Diphu.

Memo No. Addl.DSDG.192/Pt/2012-2013/31-A,

Dated Diphu the 13th June, 2024

Consensus prevailed on LS Speaker's choice since Independence

NEW DELHI, June 17: If the opposition forces an election to the post of Speaker of the Lok Sabha next week, it would be the first such instance in the history of Independent India as the presiding officer has always been chosen by a consensus.

Elections to the post of the Speaker of the Central Legislative Assembly, as Parliament was called in the pre-independence days, were held for the first time on August 24, 1925 when Swarajist Party nominee Vithalbhai J Patel won the coveted post against T Rangachariar.

Patel, the first non-official member to be elected as the Speaker, won the maiden election with a narrow margin of two votes. Patel had polled 58 votes against 56 garnered by Rangachariar.

By its increased strength in the Lok Sabha, the opposition INDIA bloc is now aggressively demanding the post of the Deputy Speaker, which by convention is held by a member of an opposition party.

"We will force a contest for the post of Lok Sabha Speaker if the government does not agree to have an opposition leader as Deputy Speaker," a senior Congress leader said.

The first session of the 18th Lok Sabha will begin on June 24 during which new members of the Lower House will take oath and the



Speaker elected.

The INDIA bloc won 233 seats in the Lok Sabha elections, while the BJP-led NDA won 293 seats to retain power for the third consecutive term. The Telugu Desam Party (TDP) with 16 seats and Janata Dal (U) with 12 seats are the biggest allies of the BJP which won 240 seats.

The opposition bloc is also egging on BJP ally TDP to insist on the post of the Lok Sabha Speaker or face gradual disintegration of the party.

"We have the experience that the BJP betrays the people who support it," Shiv Sena (UBT) leader Sanjay Raut said in Mumbai on Sunday.

The JD(U) has declared support for a BJP candidate as the Lok Sabha

Speaker, while the TDP is understood to have favoured a consensus candidate for the coveted post.

The post of the Speaker of the Central Legislative Assembly has witnessed a contest on six occasions between 1925 and 1946.

Vithalbhai Patel was re-elected to the post unanimously on January 20, 1927 after the completion of his first term. Patel quit the post on April 28, 1930 following a call for Civil Disobedience by Mahatma Gandhi. Sir Muhammad Yakub (78 votes) won the Speaker's election against Nand Lal (22 votes) on July 9, 1930.

Yakub stayed in the post for one session, the last of the third Assembly. In the fourth Assembly, Sir

Ibrahim Rahimtoola (76 votes) won the Speaker's election against Hari Singh Gour who got 36 votes. Rahimtoola resigned on health grounds on March 7, 1933 and was succeeded by Shammukham Chetty on March 14, 1933 as the unanimous choice.

Sir Abdur Rahim was elected as the Speaker of the Fifth Assembly on January 24, 1935. Rahim had polled 70 votes against T A K Sherwani, who could muster the support of 62 members.

Rahim held the high office for more than 10 years as the tenure of the fifth Legislative Assembly was extended from time to time on account of the contemplated constitutional changes and later due to the World War II.

The last contest for the post of the Central Legislative Assembly Speaker was held on January 24, 1946 when Congress leader G V Mavalankar won the election against Cowsajee Jehangir by a margin of three votes. Mavalankar polled 66 votes against 63 by Jehangir.

Mavalankar was subsequently appointed as the Speaker of the Constituent Assembly and the Provisional Parliament that came into being after the Constitution came into force on January 26, 1950.

Mavalankar continued to be the Speaker of the Provisional Parliament till April 17, 1952 when the

Lok Sabha and the Rajya Sabha were constituted after the first general elections.

Since Independence, Lok Sabha Speakers have been chosen by consensus, and only M A Ayyangar, G S Dhillon, Balram Jakhar and G M C Balayogi have been re-elected to the coveted posts in the subsequent Lok Sabhas.

Ayyangar, the first Deputy Speaker of the Lok Sabha, was chosen as the Speaker following the death of Mavalankar in 1956. He won the 1957 general elections and was chosen as the Speaker of the second Lok Sabha.

Dhillon was chosen as the Speaker of the fourth Lok Sabha after the resignation of incumbent N Sanjeeva Reddy in 1969. Dhillon was also chosen as the Speaker of the fifth Lok Sabha in 1971 and continued in office till December 1, 1975, when he quit during the Emergency.

Jakhar was Speaker of the seventh and the eighth Lok Sabhas and holds the distinction of being the only presiding officer to complete two full terms.

Balayogi was chosen as the Speaker of the 12th Lok Sabha, which had a tenure of 19 months. He was also chosen as the Speaker of the 13th Lok Sabha on October 22, 1999, till his death in a chopper crash on March 3, 2002. (PTI)

NCERT working as RSS arm, assaulting Constitution: Jairam Ramesh

NEW DELHI, June 17: Amid the row over revision of NCERT textbooks, Congress leader Jairam Ramesh on Monday alleged that the institution has been functioning as an RSS affiliate since 2014 and is mounting an assault on the Constitution.

In a post on X, Ramesh said the National Testing Agency has blamed the NCERT for the 'grace marks' fiasco in NEET 2024.

That is only drawing attention away from the NTA's own abject failures, he alleged.

"However it is true that the NCERT is no longer a professional institution. It has been functioning as an RSS affiliate since 2014. It has just been revealed that its revised Class XI political science textbook criticises the idea of secularism as well as what it considers policies of political parties in this regard.

"NCERT's objective is to produce textbooks, not political pamphlets and propaganda," the Congress leader said.

"NCERT is mounting an assault on our country's Constitution in whose Preamble secularism features explicitly as a foundational pillar of the Indian republic. Various Supreme Court judgments have clearly held secularism to be an essential part of the basic structure of the Constitution," he said.

Ramesh said the NCERT needs to remind itself that it is the National Council for Educational Research and Training, "not the Nagpur or Narendra Council for Educational Research and Training." (PTI)

"All of its textbooks are now of dubious quality vastly different from those that shaped me in school," the Congress general secretary alleged. TMC leader Saket Gokhale also hit out at the NCERT, saying, "Shameless NDA 1.0 Government" is hiding "inconvenient facts" from students.

"By this logic, why teach kids about other 'violent depressing things' like the World War?" he said. "Are BJP and Modi ashamed of their history as criminals and rioters? Why hide the truth from students?" Gokhale asked.

Rejecting accusations of saffronisation of school curriculum, the NCERT director has said that references to Gujarat riots and Babri masjid demolition were modified in school textbooks because teaching about riots "can create violent and depressed citizens."

In an interaction with PTI editors, National Council of Educational Research and Training (NCERT) director Dinesh Prasad Saklani said the tweaks in textbooks are part of annual revision and should not be a subject of hue and cry.

Saklani said, "Why should we teach about riots in school textbooks? We want to create positive citizens not violent and depressed individuals."

He added, "Should we teach our students in a manner that they become offensive, create hatred in society or become victim of hatred? Is that education's purpose? Should we teach about riots to such young children. (PTI)

Yediyurappa appears before CID for inquiry in POCSSO case

BENGALURU, June 17: Former Karnataka Chief Minister B S Yediyurappa on Monday appeared before the Criminal Investigation Department (CID) for an inquiry in connection with a POCSSO case registered against him.

The Karnataka High Court on Friday restrained the CID from arresting the veteran BJP leader in connection with the March 14 case.

According to police, Yediyurappa has been booked under the Protection of Children from Sexual Offences (POCSO) Act, 2012, and Section 354 A (Sexual harassment) of the Indian Penal Code (IPC) based on a complaint by the mother of a 17-year-old girl who alleged that he molested her daughter during a meeting on February two this year, at his residence in Dollars Colony here.

Yediyurappa has denied the charge, and said "people would teach a lesson to those indulging in conspiracies against him."

The victim's brother had filed a petition in the court last week alleging that though the case was registered nearly three months ago, no progress has been made in the investigation. The petitioner prayed that Yediyurappa should be arrested and interrogated.

After the Sadashivanagar police registered the case in March, the Karnataka Director General of Police Alok Mohan had issued an order transferring it to the CID for further investigation.

The 54-year-old woman, who had leveled the charge against Yediyurappa, died at a private hospital here last month, due to lung cancer.

In April, the CID collected the voice sample of Yediyurappa after summoning him to the office. (PTI)

PM Modi to visit Uttar Pradesh, Bihar Ensure complete transparency of EVMs or abolish them: Rahul Gandhi to EC

NEW DELHI, June 17: Prime Minister Narendra Modi will travel to Varanasi on Tuesday, his first visit after assuming office for the third consecutive term.

During his visit, the prime minister will participate in the PM Kisan Samman Sammelan and release ₹ 20,000 crore as part of the income support scheme for over 9.26 crore farmers.

At around 7 PM, Modi will witness Ganga Aarti at Dashashwamedh Ghat. He will also perform 'puja' and 'darshan' at the Kashi Vishwanath Temple at around 8 PM, an official statement said.

Varanasi district media in-charge of BJP, Arvind Mishra said the prime minister is coming to Kashi to express his gratitude to the voters of his constituency.

In the recently concluded Lok Sabha elections, Modi won from his parliamentary constituency of Varanasi for the third consecutive time.

The prime minister will be in Bihar on Wednesday where he will inaugurate the campus of the Nalanda University in Rajgir. He will also address the gathering on the occasion.

After being sworn in as prime minister for the third time, Modi signed his first file authorising release of 17th instalment of PM Kisan Nidhi reflecting the commitment of the government towards farmer welfare.

In continuation of this commitment, Modi will release the instalment amounting to more than ₹ 20,000 crore to around 9.26 crore beneficiary farmers under the Pradhan Mantri Kisan Samman Nidhi (PM-KISAN) through Direct Benefit Transfer.

So far, more than 11 crore eligible farmer families have received benefits of more than ₹ 3.04 lakh crore under PM-KISAN.

During the event in Varanasi, the prime minister

will also grant certificates to more than 30,000 women from Self Help Groups (SHGs) as Krishi Sakhis.

Krishi Sakhi Convergence Program (KSCP) aims to transform rural India through the empowerment of rural women as Krishi Sakhi, by imparting training and certification of Krishi Sakhis as Para-extension Workers. This certification course also aligns with the objectives of the "Lakshmi Didi" Program.

In Bihar, the prime minister will inaugurate the new campus of Nalanda University which is conceived as a joint collaboration between India and East Asia Summit (EAS) countries.

The inauguration ceremony will be attended by several eminent people, including the Head of Missions of 17 Countries.

The campus has two academic blocks with 40 classrooms having a total seating capacity of around 1900. It has two auditoria having a capacity of 300 seats each. It has a student hostel with a capacity of around 550 students.

It also has various other facilities including International Centre, amphitheatre that can accommodate up to 2000 individuals, faculty club and sports complex among others.

The campus is a 'Net Zero' green campus. It is self-sustainable with solar plant, domestic and drinking water treatment plant, water recycling plant for reusing waste water, 100 acres of water bodies, and many other environment friendly facilities.

The University has a deep connection with history. The original Nalanda University, established around 1,600 years ago, is considered to be amongst the first residential universities of the world. In 2016, the ruins of Nalanda were declared as a UN Heritage Site. (PTI)

NEW DELHI, June 17: Raising questions on the reliability of EVMs, Congress leader Rahul Gandhi on Monday asked the Election Commission to ensure complete transparency of the machines and processes or abolish them. The demand came a day after the Congress leader had alleged that the electronic voting machine is a "black box" and nobody is allowed to scrutinise them while further alleging that serious concerns are being raised about transparency in our electoral process.

"When democratic institutions are captured, the only safeguard lies in electoral processes that are transparent to the public," Gandhi said in a post on X. "EVM is currently a black box. EC must either ensure complete transparency of the machines and processes or abolish them," the former Congress president also said.

"How many machines showed the wrong time, date, votes registered? How many EVMs had their components replaced - counting unit? ballot unit? How many EVMs were found faulty during the mock poll," he asked. "Having contested the elections, I can confidently say that these machines have shown inaccurate results. I hope the Election Commission puts out the above data because the public have the right to know." Gogoi also said in a post on X.

A fresh political slugfest has erupted over EVM tampering claims with Gandhi and other opposition leaders citing a media report that alleged that a relative of the Shiv Sena candidate in Mumbai North West Lok Sabha constituency

was found using a mobile phone "connected" to an electronic voting machine during the counting of votes on June 4.

However, Vandana Suryavanshi, the returning officer of the constituency, dismissed the report in 'Mid-Day' newspaper as "false news" and said a defamation notice has been issued to the publication. She asserted the EVM is a standalone system, not programmable and has no wireless communication capabilities.

The BJP hit out at the opposition leaders over the issue and demanded that the Election Commission should prosecute all those who "amplified the lie" by sharing the news report. Questioning the reliability of EVMs, Gandhi and others had on Sunday also quoted a post by Elon Musk, chairman of social media platform X and CEO of Tesla, in which he talked about eliminating EVMs and claimed the risk of hacking was "too high".

"We should eliminate electronic voting machines. The risk of being hacked by humans or AI, while small, is still too high," Musk said while responding to a post by US politician Robert F Kennedy Jr alleging Puerto Rico's primary elections experienced "hundreds of voting irregularities related to electronic voting machines".

Congress' ally and Samajwadi Party chief Akhilesh Yadav also questioned the credibility of EVMs and demanded that all future elections should be conducted through ballot papers. (PTI)

Congress in Kerala apologises to Christians over controversial social media post

THIRUVANANTHAPURAM, June 17: The Congress in Kerala on Monday tendered an apology to the Christian community a day after one of its social media posts taking a dig at Prime Minister Narendra Modi over his recent meeting with Pope Francis triggered a political row in the state.

The party also withdrew the post from its official X handle. In a fresh post on its X handle, the state unit of the grand old party said it tendered an unconditional apology to the Christian faithful if its earlier post had caused any "emotional or psychological distress" to them.

In the explanatory post, the party further said the people in the state clearly know that it is not the tradition of the Indian National Congress to insult and disparage any religion, religious priests or idols. The party said no Congress worker would even entertain the remotest thought of insulting the Pope, whom Christians around the world con-

sider as God-like.

However, the party is not hesitant to mock PM Narendra Modi, who insults the faithful of the country by calling himself God, the post said.

In that way, people would understand the communal minds of BJP state chief K Surendran and others to portray the Congress' attempt to mock Modi's "shameless political games" as an insult to the Pope, it said.

Hitting out at Surendran and other BJP leaders who triggered a row over the issue, the Congress further said their attempt was to "downgrade" the Christians as a group of people who have no self-respect and are the ones who spread communal venom as soon as they inject it.

"If there is any genuine love for the Christian community, then Modi and his cohorts, who remained silent when their churches were burned down in Manipur, should first tender an uncondi-

tional apology to the Christians," the party added.

The BJP in Kerala on Sunday hit out at the Congress party in the state over its social media post on Modi's meeting with Pope Francis during the G7 Summit and alleged that it's X handle was seemingly run by "radical Islamists or Urban Naxals." The grand old party had earlier posted a picture of PM Modi with the Pope on its X handle along with a sarcastic comment that "Finally, the Pope got a chance to meet God!"

Irked by the post, BJP state chief Surendran had accused the Congress' state unit of posting derogatory and humiliating content against nationalistic leaders on its social media handle.

He alleged that AICC general secretary K C Venugopal was certainly aware of the post and sought to know whether party chief Mallikarjun Kharge and senior leader Rahul Gandhi endorsed it. (PTI)

Proposed infra project in Great Nicobar poses grave threat to tribals, should be reviewed: Cong

NEW DELHI, June 17: The Congress on Monday demanded a thorough review of a proposed "mega infrastructure project" in Great Nicobar initiated at the "instance" of the Niti Aayog, claiming that it poses a grave threat to the island's tribal communities.

Raising red flags over the proposed project, Congress general secretary and former Union environment minister Jairam Ramesh said all clearances given to the ₹ 72,000-crore project should be suspended immediately and an impartial review of it conducted, including by the parliamentary committees concerned.

"The Union government's proposed ₹ 72,000-crore 'Mega Infra Project' in Great Nicobar Island is a grave threat to Great Nicobar Island's tribal communities and natural ecosystem. The project, initiated in March 2021 at the instance of the NITI Aayog, shows numerous red flags," Ramesh said in a statement, which he also posted on X.

"The Congress demands an immediate suspension of all clearances and conduct of a thorough impartial review of the proposed project, includ-

ing by the parliamentary committees concerned," he said. He claimed that the environment, forests and climate change ministry has given an "in-principle" clearance for diverting 13,075 hectares of forest land. "This area is about 15 per cent of the island's land mass and constitutes one of the country's largest forest diversions in a nationally and globally unique rainforest ecosystem," the Congress leader said.

Compensatory afforestation for the loss of this unique rainforest ecosystem has been planned in the state of Haryana, thousands of kilometres away and in a vastly different ecological zone, Ramesh claimed.

"The coastline where the port and the project is proposed to come up is an earthquake prone zone, and saw a permanent subsidence of about 15 feet during the tsunami of December 2004. Locating such a massive project here puts investment, infrastructure, people, and the ecology in harm's way," he said in the statement.

"The project poses a direct threat to the wellbeing and survival of the Shompen, an indigenous community classified as a particularly vulnerable

Monitoring shows snow levels are almost a fifth below normal across the region this year

Water shortages feared as snow persistence in Hindu Kush Himalaya hits record low



NEW DELHI, June 17: The Hindu Kush Himalaya is experiencing significantly lower snow persistence this year, raising serious concern over water security for downstream communities, according to a new report.

Leading experts from the International Centre for Integrated Mountain Development (ICIMOD), a Nepal-based intergovernmental organisation, have urged water management officials to initiate drought management strategies and preemptive emergency water supply measures.

The Hindu Kush Himalaya (HKH) region heavily depends on the cryosphere -- frozen water on the Earth's surface, including snow, permafrost, and ice from glaciers, lakes and rivers. This frozen water is a critical source of freshwater for around 240 million (24 crore) people living in the HKH region and has far-reaching benefits for around 1.65 billion (165 crore) people downstream.

Snowmelt accounts for around 23 per cent of the total water flow of 12 major river basins originating in the

HKH. However, its contribution varies from river to river, representing 74 per cent of the Amu Darya's flow, 77 per cent of the Helmand's flow, and 40 per cent of the Indus' flow.

Monitoring shows snow levels are almost a fifth below normal across the region this year, with the most dramatic declines in the west, where its contribution to water supply is the highest.

Snow persistence dropped 17 per cent below normal in the Ganga basin and 14.6 per cent below normal in the Brahmaputra basin, said the Snow Update Report - 2024, released on Monday.

The Helmand river basin shows the most significant drop in snow persistence at 31.8 per cent below normal. Its previous lowest level was in 2018, with a 42 per cent reduction.

The Indus basin has fallen to 23.3 per cent below normal, the lowest level in 22 years. The previous lowest year for this basin was 2018, with a 9.4 per cent shortfall. The Mekong basin had the smallest variation from normal, with snow persistence around 1 per cent below normal.

"We have seen a pattern of decreasing amounts and persistence of snow across the Hindu Kush Himalaya, with 13 of the past 22 years registering lower-than-normal seasonal snow persistence," said ICI-MOD cryosphere specialist Sher Muhammad, who is also author of the report.

"This is a wake-up call for researchers, policymakers and downstream communities. Lower snow accumulation and fluctuating snow levels pose a serious increased risk of water shortages, particularly this year," he said.

Miriam Jackson, ICIMOD's senior cryosphere specialist, said agencies must take proactive steps to address possible drought situations, especially in early summer. "Plans must be updated to accommodate water stress, and communities need to be notified of the risks."

"Beyond that, it's clear that governments and people in this region need urgent support to adapt to changes in snow patterns that carbon emissions have already locked in. G20 countries need to cut emissions faster than ever before to prevent even more changes that could prove disastrous to major population centres and industries reliant on snowmelt in the mountains," she said.

The experts said promoting rain-water harvesting and establishing local water committees may help mitigate the immediate impacts of below-normal snowfall on the water supply in the HKH region.

However, to ensure long-term resilience to climate change, countries sharing trans-boundary rivers must collaborate to update their water management laws. Such actions are crucial to addressing water shortages in south Asia, which relies on snowmelt, they said. (PTI)

9 nuclear-armed nations continued to modernise N-arsenals in 2023: SIPRI

NEW DELHI, June 17: Nine nuclear-armed nations including the US, Russia, France, China, India and Pakistan, continued to modernise their nuclear arsenals and several of them deployed new nuclear-capable weapon systems in 2023, a Swedish think-tank said on Monday.

In its analysis, the Stockholm International Peace Research Institute (SIPRI) said China's nuclear arsenal increased from 410 warheads in January 2023 to 500 in January 2024, and it is expected to keep growing.

The report said some 2,100 of the deployed warheads were kept in a state of high operational alert on ballistic missiles, and nearly all of them belonged to Russia or the US.

However, for the first time China is believed to have some warheads on high operational alert, it said.

The SIPRI said nine nuclear-armed states -- the US, Russia, the UK, France, China, India, Pakistan, North Korea and Israel -- continued to modernise their nuclear arsenals and several deployed new nuclear-armed or nuclear-capable weapon systems in 2023.

Of the total global inventory of an estimated 12,121 warheads in January 2024, about 9,585 were in military stockpiles for potential use, it said.

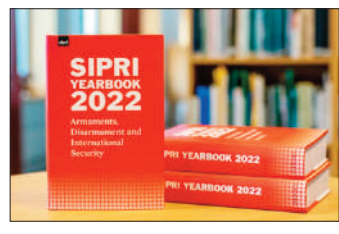
An estimated 3,904 of those warheads were deployed with missiles and aircraft -- 60 more than in January 2023 -- and the rest were in central storage, it said.

"Around 2,100 of the deployed warheads were kept in a state of high operational alert on ballistic missiles. Nearly all of these warheads belonged to Russia or the US, but for the first time China is believed to have some warheads on high operational alert," the report said.

According to the think-tank, India, Pakistan and North Korea are all pursuing the capability to deploy multiple warheads on ballistic missiles, something Russia, France, the UK, the US and more recently China already have.

This would enable a rapid potential increase in deployed warheads, as well as the possibility for nuclear-armed countries to threaten the destruction of significantly more targets, it said.

The SIPRI said Russia and the



US together possess almost 90 per cent of all nuclear weapons.

The sizes of their respective military stockpiles seem to have remained relatively stable in 2023, although Russia is estimated to have deployed around 36 more warheads with operational forces than in January 2023, it said.

Transparency regarding nuclear forces has declined in both countries in the wake of Russia's full-scale invasion of Ukraine in February 2022, and debates around nuclear-sharing arrangements have increased in saliency, it added.

The report put India's 'stored' nuclear warheads at 172 in January this year while the number for Pakistan was 170.

India slightly expanded its nuclear arsenal in 2023, it said, adding that both India and Pakistan continued to develop new types of nuclear delivery systems in 2023.

"While Pakistan remains the main focus of India's nuclear deterrent, India appears to be placing growing emphasis on longer-range weapons, including those capable of reaching targets throughout China," the report said.

It said depending on how it decides to structure its forces, China could potentially have at least as many intercontinental ballistic missiles (ICBMs) as either Russia or the US by the turn of the decade.

At the same time, the report said China's stockpile of nuclear warheads is still expected to remain much smaller than the stockpiles of either of Russia and the US.

"China is expanding its nuclear arsenal faster than any other country," said Hans M Kristensen, Associate Senior Fellow with SIPRI's Weapons of Mass Destruction Programme and Director of the Nuclear Information Project at the Federation of American Scientists (FAS).

"But in nearly all of the nuclear-armed states there are either plans or a significant push to increase nuclear forces," Kristensen said. (PTI)

India celebrates Eid-ul-Azha with gaiety; PM, Prez share greetings

NEW DELHI, June 17: Eid-ul-Azha was celebrated across India with great fervour on Monday with people turning up in large numbers dressed in traditional finery to offer prayers at mosques.

Top country leaders, including President Droupadi Murmu and Prime Minister Narendra Modi, extended greetings on Eid-ul-Azha, which is popularly known as Bakrid and marks the celebration of Prophet Ibrahim's sacrifice of his son for the Lord.

In the national capital New Delhi, thousands offered prayers at the historic Jama Masjid. Muslim families assembled at the 17th century mosque on the occasion and shared hugs and wishes after the prayers. Large number of people also offered special prayers at different mosques across the city.

Eid-ul-Azha namaz was also offered on the mosque premises of the iconic Taj Mahal in Agra in Uttar Pradesh.

A local resident Shakeel Rafiq who offered namaz there, said, "We prayed for the peace and prosperity of the country. May the coming years bring prosperity for the people of India."

Speaking to PTI, Prince Vajpayee, Chief Conservation Assistant at Taj Mahal said, "On the occasion of the



Eid-ul-Adha, the entry for the devotees and others in the Taj Mahal premises was free till 7 am to 10 am."

Sharing greetings on the occasion, Modi said in a post on X, "Greetings on Eid-ul-Adha! May this special occasion further cement the bonds of harmony and togetherness in our society. May everyone be happy and healthy."

He also greeted the royal family and the prime minister of Kuwait, and highlighted the festival is an "integral part of India's multicultural heritage".

"Hon'ble Prime Minister @narendramodiji extended festive greetings to

H.H the Amir, H.H the Crown Prince and H.H the Prime Minister of Kuwait on the auspicious occasion of Eid al-Adha," the Indian Embassy in Kuwait posted on X.

In his message, Modi emphasised the values of sacrifice, compassion and brotherhood, embodied by this festival, which are "essential in building a peaceful and inclusive world", the statement said.

The President, too, wished people in an X post in Urdu saying, "On this occasion, let us all pledge to work together in the interest of all the citizens, especially the people of the deprived

sections." Murmu added in her post in Urdu.

Chief Ministers Mamata Banerjee, Pinarayi Vijayan, A Revanth Reddy, Champai Soren, and M K Stalin, and Jammu and Kashmir Lieutenant Governor Manoj Sinha are among other state leaders who greeted the Muslim community on the occasion.

In Srinagar, three former chief ministers -- Farooq Abdullah, Omar Abdullah and Mehbooba Mufti -- offered prayers at the Hazratbal Shrine where more than 50,000 people gathered for prayers on the occasion, officials said. Smaller gatherings were seen at all Muslim places of worship across the valley, except for the historic Jamia Masjid in the old city where authorities refused to allow Eid prayers for the sixth year in a row.

"After Fajr prayers today, police personnel closed the gates of Jama Masjid in Srinagar and informed the Aqaf that Eid prayers scheduled for 9:00 am would not be permitted at the mosque," the Anjuman Aqaf Jama Masjid said in a statement.

The management body of the 14th century mosque claimed that Mirwaiz Umar Farooq, who was scheduled to deliver the Eid sermon, was placed under house arrest. (PTI)

4 Maoists killed in encounter

CHAIBASA, June 17: At least four Maoists, including a woman, were killed in an encounter with security forces in Jharkhand's West Singhbhum district on Monday, officials said. The encounter broke out around 5 am near Lipunga area under Gua police station limit, around 200-km from Jharkhand's capital Ranchi, they said.

"Four Maoists were killed in the gunfight, while two have been arrested," Jharkhand Police spokesperson IG (Operations), Amol V Homkar, told PTI.

Homkar said that one INSAS rifle, two SLRs, three rifles (.303) and one (9mm) pistol were recovered during the search operation.

Later briefing media persons, he said that the killed Maoists were identified from the primary sources as zonal commander Kande Honhaga, a resident of Thalkobad in Chaibasa and he was carrying a bounty on his head, sub-zonal commander Singrai alias Manoj, a resident of Jaipur police station area in Chhatisgarh, area commander Surya alias Munda Devagam and a woman cadre Junga Purty alias Marla. According to police sources, Singrai was carrying a bounty of ₹ 10 lakh, Kande ₹ 5 lakh and Surya ₹ 2 lakh. (PTI)

'1st Cambodia-India Tourism Year' launched in Delhi

NEW DELHI, June 17: The '1st Cambodia-India Tourism Year' was on Monday launched in New Delhi during a ceremony that was attended by many top officials of the tourism ministries of both the countries.

The event also celebrated the starting of the maiden flight service between Phnom Penh and New Delhi a day earlier.

Long Phirum, Secretary of State, Ministry of Tourism of Cambodia and Manisha Saxena, Director General (Tourism), Ministry of Tourism of India jointly launched the '1st Cambodia-India Tourism Year 2024' with a beating of traditional drums on the dais.

Both Saxena and Phirum addressed the gathering that consisted of government officials, tour operators from both the countries, and many businessmen from India who interacted with Cambodian officials and others.

Phirum, who spoke in Cambodian

language, in her address, described the designation of 2024 as 'Cambodia-India Tourism Year' as a "significant milestone".

She also said that the "historic direct air link" between Phnom Penh and New Delhi was also celebrated yesterday in Phnom Penh.

Cambodia's national flag carrier Cambodia Angkor Air began the first-ever direct flight services between the two countries from June 16, four times a week -- Monday, Wednesday, Friday and Sunday.

A senior official from Cambodia said many Cambodian delegates arrived in India by catching the inaugural June 16 flight from Phnom Penh.

Cambodian Ambassador in New Delhi Koy Kuong, and Seila Hul, Under Secretary of State, Ministry of Tourism of Cambodia also attended the event.

A few colourful performances by a troop of artistes from Cambodia

were also held on the occasion during the 'Cambodia-India Tourism Year 2024' event held at a plush hotel in Delhi.

"Trade and cultural ties between India and Cambodia are very, very historical, and centuries-old. There was a very thriving trade from the southern state (in India) to Cambodia (in ancient times) and vice versa," Saxena told PTI on the sidelines of the event.

There are a lot of similarities between the two cultures, "the tangible and intangible heritage we have," she said.

"And, the launch of this flight (yesterday) and the Cambodia-India Tourism Year will really help citizens on both the sides, to rediscover this commonality. It will be a great mover, bring economic opportunity for tourism businesses, as the traffic increases. It will bring prosperity and better understanding between the two countries," she said. (PTI)

Man kills daughter for wanting to marry outside of caste in Delhi

NEW DELHI, June 17: A man allegedly slit his daughter's throat and dumped her body here on a farm in Rohini's Kanjhawala area for wanting to marry a man from another case against the wishes of the family, police said on Monday.

The woman was found lying in a pool of blood with multiple stab wounds in a farmland in Chandpur village in Kanjhawala on Sunday, they said. Deputy Commissioner of Police (Rohini) Guriqbal Singh Sidhu said the 46-year-old accused has been arrested. He said police received a call about the incident at 8.53 pm on Sunday.

Sidhu said a police team immediately reached the spot and found a woman with deep injuries in her neck and abdomen. She was shifted to a hospital where doctors declared her brought dead.

In view of the sensitivity case, multiple police teams were formed

for the case. CCTV footage of the area was analysed, he said.

Police traced the registration number of the cab that was used by the father-daughter duo. On the basis of technical evidence, police identified the woman and found that the man was her father, another police officer said.

The father was picked up by a police team on Monday morning and he confessed to the crime. He told police that he had picked up his daughter from his son's home in Narela on Sunday evening, the officer said. According to police, the man hired a cab to go to their house in Prem Nagar but he had a fight with her daughter over an issue on the way. They asked the driver to drop them in Kanjhawala, which is when he allegedly took her to the farm, slit her throat and stabbed her multiple times, leaving her dead on the spot, the officer said. (PTI)

AI app scores 170 out of 200 in UPSC prelims-2024

NEW DELHI, June 17: An Artificial Intelligence based app, PadhaiAI, scored over 170 marks out of 200 in the UPSC preliminary exams 2024 solving the entire paper within seven minutes and qualifying above the general score which usually remains under 100.

The score places PadhaiAI's score in the top 10 nationally, if not rank 1, an official release said.

The app developed by a team of IITians took the exam in a public setting on Sunday, right after the UPSC preliminary exam in presence of guests from the education sector, UPSC community, and media professionals at Delhi's The Lalit hotel.

It took under seven minutes to solve the entire paper, the release said.

The event was live-streamed at livestream.padhai.ai and YouTube, where the questions and answers are publicly available, it added.

The AI's answers were also compared with broad AI models commercially available from big tech companies such as OpenAI, Microsoft, and Google by using answer keys released by top coaching institutes. (PTI)

Cleaning up Delhi's air requires uncomfortable decisions involving rich people: Sunita Narain

NEW DELHI, June 17: Cleaning up Delhi's air requires "uncomfortable and inconvenient" decisions, and it cannot be achieved by being nice to everyone, particularly the affluent residents who significantly contribute to the problem, leading environmentalist Sunita Narain has said.

In an interaction with PTI editors, Narain said although central and state governments have taken several steps to control air pollution in Delhi, including banning coal and introducing BSVI fuel, erratic weather patterns due to climate change and the inadequate speed of addressing the crisis continue to exacerbate the problem.

Narain, the Director General of the Centre for Science and Environment, said the episodic burning of crop residue by farmers in winter is not the primary concern. Instead, the persistent and major sources of pollution within the city, including transport and industries, are more worrisome.

"My only request for the new government is to take some uncomfortable, inconvenient decisions to move ahead on air pollution. We will never clean up the air of Delhi by being nice to everybody, particularly the rich of Delhi," she said.

Narain, who was part of the Supreme Court-appointed Environment Pollution (Prevention and Control) Authority, also urged the new government at the Centre to

Gujarat gov orders restoration of Jain idols at Pavagadh after protest by community

HALOL (GUJARAT), June 17: The Gujarat government on Monday instructed authorities in Panchmahal district to reinstall centuries-old Jain idols at their original place near the stairs leading to Kalika Mata temple on Pavagadh hill after community members staged protests over their alleged removal from the site. While community members alleged these idols of Jain Tirthankars (supreme spiritual teachers) were removed by the temple trust as part of a renovation project, the trust clarified they might have been displaced while removing an old shed on the stairs and maintained it was not done out of any ill will.

These Jain idols were placed on both sides of the steps of an old pathway, which goes to the hill temple, but is not in use at present. On Monday morning, some community members noticed that the idols were removed from the side walls and put together at one place, said Jain leader Dinesh Shah.

On learning about the removal of these 6 to 7 idols, members as well as religious leaders of the Jain community staged protests at Vadodara, Halol and Surat and gave memorandum to district collectors.

Gujarat Minister of State for Home Harsh Sanghavi swung into action and ordered restoration of these idols at their original site after discussing the issue with Chief Minister

Bhupendra Patel.

"These idols were placed there centuries ago and were being worshipped by people. Permission was never given to any trust or individual to remove these idols. This act has hurt the religious sentiments of many people. After discussing the issue with the CM, the (Panchmahal) district collector has been asked to reinstall these idols at the same place near the steps," said Sanghavi.

In a memorandum submitted to the Halol police, community leader Kiran Duggad accused the trustees of 'Shree Kalika Mataji Mandir Trust Pavagadh' of removing the idols from both sides of the old stairs.

Duggad, on behalf of the Halol Jain Sangh, demanded immediate restoration of these idols and registration of an FIR against those involved in this act of "hurting religious sentiments of Jains". Vinod Variya, one of the temple trustees, held a meeting with Jain leaders in the presence of district authorities on Monday afternoon at Halol and announced the idols will be placed at the same place.

"I want to clarify that there was no desecration of any religious structure. As you all know renovation has been going on at Pavagadh to provide better facilities to devotees coming there. This mega renovation is being done by the trust as well as the government," said Variya after the meeting. (PTI)

bring natural gas under the GST regime, arguing that the current triple taxation on gas makes it unaffordable compared to dirty coal. This change would make clean gas a more viable option, she said.

"My biggest request for the next government... The easiest thing we can do to reduce pollution in Delhi is to bring it under GST," Narain said.

She stressed the need for reducing vehicular pollution by enhancing public transport.

Source apportionment studies conducted in the past show that transport accounts for 17.9 per cent to 39.2 per cent of Delhi's PM2.5 pollution, while industries' contribution ranges from 2.3 per cent to 28.9 per cent.

"Delhi has taken several steps to control air pollution. It is the only city in the country to ban coal use, which is a major achievement. Delhi shut down its last coal-based power plant and transitioned to gas for power generation. The government introduced BSVI fuel and imposed a congestion charge on trucks entering Delhi. The construction of a peripheral expressway now allows trucks to bypass the city," Narain said.

Efforts have also been made to incentivise the use of natural gas. In Delhi, there is zero VAT on gas, and natural gas is now

readily available in industrial areas across the city. These initiatives have collectively led to a year-over-year reduction in pollution levels, she said.

However, Narain said, there are two major factors that continue to exacerbate the problem -- worsening weather conditions, which are beyond human control, and the inadequate speed of tackling the crisis.

This winter, for instance, northwest India, including Delhi, did not experience rain. The lack of rainfall is due to changes in the Arctic jet stream affecting western disturbances, which are becoming more erratic and shifting northwards, she explained.

This has led to less snow in the hills and less rain in Delhi, resulting in higher pollution levels, Narain said.

"Secondly, after all the actions taken up to 2021, we are not taking actions at the speed required by the crisis that is happening," she said.

The environmentalist said the last major bus fleet expansion occurred during Sheila Dikshit's tenure as Delhi chief minister, around the time of the Commonwealth Games.

Since then, many buses have not been replaced, leading to a decline in bus ridership, she said and added that the bus system needs to be integrated with metro systems and parking facilities to be effective. (PTI)

GOVERNMENT OF ASSAM
OFFICE OF THE DISTRICT A. H. & VETY, OFFICER
KARBI ANGLONG AUTONOMOUS COUNCIL
D I P H U.
SHORT TENDER NOTICE

It is hereby informed to all the Govt. Registered Contractors and various Govt. Departments to collect the Tender Papers/Details of work, terms & conditions etc. vide Notification NO. KAAC/FIN-A-371/Misc/2023/54 Dtd. 05/06/2024 from the various establishments of A.H. & Vety, Department, Karbi Anglong as mention below. The Tender Paper will be received by the respective DDO's up to 2:00 PM on 01st July, 2024 and will be opened on the same date place and hour in presence of the tenderer or their authorized agent if any. In case the last date for receipt and opening of tender happen to be a holiday the tender so invited will be received and open on the next working Day in same time at respective venue to determine the eligibility of the tenders for the works.

The detailed tender paper may be obtained from the office of the following establishment on all working days with effect from 18th June, 2024 and will be received by the respective DDO's upto 2 :00 pm on 1st July, 2024.

Name of the Establishments

1. Sub-Divisional A. H. & Vety. Office, Diphu.
2. Sub-Divisional A. H. & Vety. Office, Hamren.
3. Deputy Director, Buffalo Breeding Project, Manja.
4. Officer in-Charge, Intensive Cattle Development Project [I.C.D.P.] Manja.
5. Manager, Govt. Pig cum Poultry Farm, Diphu.
6. Manager, Cattle Demonstration Farm, Manja.
7. Manager, Fodder Demonstration Farm, Manja.
8. Manager, Govt. Poultry Farm, Hamren.
9. Manager, Pork Production Centre cum Pig Breeding Farm, Donkamokam.
10. Manager, Feed Mixing Plant, Diphu.
11. Manager, Goat & Sheep Breeding Farm, Silonijan.
12. Manager, Duck Breeding cum Demonstration Unit, Phuloni.

Sd/-
District A. H. & Vety. Officer,
Karbi Anglong Autonomous Council,
D I P H U.
Memo No. KDVD/AA/21/2024-25/154- A
Dated Diphu the 17/06/2024.

'The Great Indian Kapil Show' renewed by Netflix for season two

MUMBAI, June 17: The Great Indian Kapil Show, hosted by comic-actor Kapil Sharma, will return for a second season, Netflix announced on Monday.

The first season of the popular celebrity chat series will conclude on June 22, with actor Kartik Aaryan as the celebrity guest.

In its ongoing chapter, The Great Indian Kapil Show featured several celebrities including Aamir Khan, Ranbir Kapoor, Vicky Kaushal and international singer Ed Sheeran across episodes. Besides Sharma, the show, which premiered in March on the streamer, also features Sunil Grover, Krushna Abhishek, Archana Puran Singh, Kiku Sharda and Rajiv Thakur.

In addition to Sharma, the series, which began in March, also stars Sunil Grover, Krushna Abhishek, Archana Puran Singh, Kiku Sharda, and Rajiv Thakur. Sharma described the first season as 'wonderful' and promised fans



that they won't have to wait long for the next installment. "Enjoy the finale episode with Kartik Aaryan this weekend and stay tuned as we gear up for season 2," Sharma declared.

Tanya Bami, Series Head of Netflix India, added, "After a

phenomenal first season, we're overjoyed to welcome Kapil and the gang back to Netflix for Season 2. Kapil's unparalleled ability to connect with audiences through his humor has made him a household name in Indian entertainment." According to Net-

flix, 'The Great Indian Kapil Show' has consistently ranked among the top two shows in India since its debut and is the first Indian series to remain on the Global Top 10 Non-English TV list for five consecutive weeks. (PTI)

Blake Lively on film adaptation of 'It Ends With Us': Did our best to honour the book and fans



LOS ANGELES, June 17: Actor Blake Lively, who is set to star in the big-screen adaptation of Colleen Hoover's book "It Ends With Us", says fans of the source material won't be disappointed with the upcoming film.

In "It Ends With Us", Lively stars opposite Justin Baldoni, who has also directed the film.

"Some people will always like a book better than a movie and some people like a movie better than the book, but I think that we just did our best to honour the book and honour the fans, and, I think, really make something that works even by itself," Lively told Entertainment Tonight in an interview.

The film follows Lily Bloom, who thinks she's found the love of her life in Ryle Kincaid.

"However, after a troubling incident of abuse reminds her of her dark past, she must decide if love alone can carry her marriage through. Further complicating things is the return of her first love into her life: a man who she took in many years prior when he was homeless," according to the official synopsis.

Even if someone hasn't read the book, the "Gossip Girl" star assured them they would like the film and vice versa.

"If you don't know the book, the movie works. I don't think there's any way that if you read the book and you saw the movie that you wouldn't be thrilled. We really worked hard on that.

"I also believe if you saw the movie and then read the book, you wouldn't go, 'Hold on, this isn't like...' You can do either. I think they're both really beautiful," she added.

"It Ends With Us" is slated to be released on August 9 with Brandon Sklenar, Alex Neustaedter, Isabela Ferrer and Jenny Slate also rounding out the cast. (PTI)



'Chandu Champion' earns ₹ 24.11 crore in opening weekend

NEW DELHI, June 17: Kartik Aaryan-starrer "Chandu Champion" has collected ₹ 24.11 crore in its first weekend, the makers said on Monday.

Directed by Kabir Khan, the sports drama opened at the box office with ₹ 5.40 crore on Friday and earned ₹ 7.70 crore on Saturday. It added ₹ 11.01 crore on Sunday to its collection. "Chandu Champion" is inspired by the life of India's first Paralympic gold medalist Murlikant Petkar. The Hindi film is produced by Sajid Nadiadwala's banner Nadiadwala Grandson Entertainment and Kabir Khan Films.

"Chandu Champion" opened with ₹ 5.40 crore on Friday, Day 1. The film then witnessed close to 45 per cent growth on Saturday, Day 2, collecting ₹ 7.70 crore.

"Garnering tremendous positive word of mouth, it registered 100 per cent growth on Sunday, Day 3, with a collection of ₹ 11.01 crore. This makes 'Chandu Champion' the film with the best growth post-pandemic, with a total collection of ₹ 24.11 crore in 3 days," the makers said in a press note.

Vijay Raaz, Bhuvan Arora and Rajpal Yadav also round out the cast of the film. (PTI)

'MUNJYA' CROSSES ₹ 50 CRORE-MARK IN 10 DAYS OF RELEASE

NEW DELHI, June 17: Horror comedy Munjya has earned ₹ 55.75 crore in 10 days of its release, the makers announced on Monday.

Munjya, the latest offering in Maddock Films' horror comedy universe, follows the story of the eponymous mythical creature which has its roots in Marathi folklore.

Directed by Aditya Sarpotdar and produced by Maddock Films, the film hit the screens on June 7. It stars Abhay Verma, Sharvari, and Mona Singh.

According to a post shared by the production banner on X, by the ninth day of its release, Munjya had collected ₹ 47 crore nett as its domestic box office collections. It added ₹ 8.75 crore nett for the 10th day, totalling to ₹ 55.75 crore.

"Munjya hits a half-century at the box office, and it's only 'cuz of your love! Catch the #Street2 teaser exclusively with #Munjya, running successfully in cinemas!" Maddock Films captioned the post.

Sathyaraj and Suhas Joshi also round out the cast of the film. (PTI)



FUNDAMENTALISM DOESN'T BELONG TO ANY ONE RELIGION: KONKONA SEN SHARMA



MUMBAI, June 17: Actor-filmmaker Konkona Sen Sharma on Sunday said fundamentalism is "its own beast" and doesn't belong to any religion in particular.

She was speaking at the launch of cinematographer Nusrat F Jafri's book This Land We Call Home, published by Penguin Random House. The event was also attended by writer-filmmaker Varun Grover and Svetlana Naudiyal, programming director, APAC, MUBI.

Asked what national incidents from their formative years influenced their thoughts on country and society, Sen Sharma said for her it was the demolition of the Babri Masjid in Ayodhya, Uttar Pradesh when she was a teenager.

The actor, daughter of veteran filmmaker Aparna Sen, said her mother made her write a report in Bengali and English on the 1992 incident. "For me, it is Babri Masjid (demolition), December 6, 1992... One of the chief things that came across from that (report) was that our fundamentalism doesn't belong to any one religion. It's its own beast. Because of that, it was easy to trace other

events from there.

"That was the first time I was actually so conscious about a political event. Before that, I think (it was) '84 and all (anti-Sikh riots). We were young, so we don't remember some stories that one has heard. And, these are not taught in schools. These are conversations which are highly charged even within families and family friends," Sen Sharma said during the Q&A session moderated by Naudiyal here.

Jafri, known for lensing Hansal Mehta's Shahid and the Zakir Khan-starrer series Chacha Vidhayak Hain Humare, also echoed Sharma's sentiments on the Babri Masjid demolition.

The cinematographer said she was 12 at the time and grew up in Lucknow, which has a fair representation of Muslims.

"Muslims and Christians were always a minority even in Lucknow where there's a good representation of Muslims and Christians. But even then, we had a good coexistence. It was Babri Masjid which started these, like Konkona (said), very charged, heated, passionate discussions even among stu-

dents.

"These were discussions where children were listening to their parents with each family's ideology coming in... We just went in for one or two months of curfew. We were off from school but the conversations had started. As a preteen, I was aware was an important event," Jafri added. For Grover, it was in the late 1990s when he heard about an incident of a Ganesha idol "drinking milk" in Delhi. Even as a student, the writer said he found it hard to believe that so many people could fall for "a simple sixth standard trick".

"For me, that was the day which told me that we are a nation of negative scientific temperament... That gave me a reality check about how to navigate the world and society.

"For a nation obsessed with engineering, sciences and being the knowledge centre of the world... And then saying, okay, it is something divine... But it shaped me in a very particular way (about) how to shape the world," said the writer, who studied civil engineering at the Indian Institute of Technology (IIT) Varanasi. (PTI)

Asalanka, smoked the Netherlands bowlers with minimal footwork and maximum power

Sri Lanka beat Netherlands by 83 runs

GROS ISLET (SAINT LUCIA), June 17: Sri Lanka finally found their mojo as they clinically disposed off the Netherlands by a whopping 83 runs in an inconsequential final group D league game of the T20 World Cup here.

With Bangladesh beating Nepal by 21 runs in the other group league game, the faint outside chance that the Netherlands had despite a way inferior net run-rate was up in smoke as they were bowled out for 118 in pursuit of an improbable target of 202 set by Wanindu Hasaranga's men.

The Sri Lankans left it too late while bringing their A game to the fore as all three units fired in unison but the horse has already bolted as they were out of reckoning for the Super Eights.

The Sri Lankan middle order were brilliant with veteran Angelo Mathews (30 off 15 balls) and skipper Hasaranga (20 off 10 balls) shored up the scoring rate but it was left-hander Charith Asalanka's 21-ball-46 that was the real difference in their innings. Asalanka smashed five sixes as Sri Lanka crossed the 200-run mark.

Asalanka, smoked the Netherlands bowlers with minimal footwork and maximum power, keeping a stable base that allowed him to go for the jugular.

"These are far better conditions than the USA, and we enjoyed those conditions. It can be tough to come in at No. 5. We just played the conditions," said Asalanka, who was adjudged 'Player of the



Match'. "I know I have to be a little more consistent. In general we are a little disappointed about the results in the first two games. But in the end we had a good game here," the southpaw said.

During the chase, the Netherlands openers Michael Levitt (31) and Max O'Dowd (11) added 45

in just 4.2 overs but once Maheesh Theekshana got the former stumped, there was virtually no resistance from the other batters.

Slinger Nuwan Thushara (3/24) was the pick of the Lankan bowlers while Chennai Super Kings star Matheesha Pathirana (2/12) also remained accurate during his overs hitting the blockhole

consistently. From being 45 for no loss in the first five overs, the Netherlands lost half of the side by the time they reached the halfway stage. Any remote chances of an impressive win ended then and there.

It was one of the best tracks across both USA and the Caribbean islands and there was

very little room for error on a track where ball came onto the bat nicely. Kusal Mendis, a seasoned campaigner, started the onslaught with 46 off 29 balls with a flurry of boundaries in the Powerplay to set the tone.

That allowed Asalanka, Mathews and Hasaranga to go hammer and tongs towards the back-end.

"After the bad first two games this win is very healthy for us. The wicket was really good we just wanted to put a 160-170 score on this wicket. With our attack anything over 160 we can defend. In the first two games we lost two or three wickets in the first six overs. Today we didn't. I think that was the difference," Hasaranga said at post-match presentation ceremony.

For Netherlands, the performance was a bit underwhelming in this format after impressing one and all during their 50-over global campaign in India last year. Even their Australia-born skipper Scott Edwards, who scored 31 on the day, admitted that his team was found wanting against better quality sides.

"We had good patches throughout the tournament where we gave our chances to win at least three of those games. But something was slightly off and against good quality sides you can't afford that.

"In the batting, we needed someone to have a big innings, and we weren't able to do that. Backing our boys to come back firing." (PTI)

England secures 1-0 win against Serbia

Jude Bellingham's goal at Euro 2024



GELSENKIRCHEN (GERMANY), June 17: Jude Bellingham scored to give England a winning start at the European Championship by beating Serbia 1-0 on Sunday.

The Real Madrid star put Gareth Southgate's team in front with a stooping header in the 13th minute at the Veltins Arena from Bukayo Saka's cross.

The buildup to the game had been overshadowed by concerns about violence between rival supporters. And some of those fears were realized when police rushed to separate brawling fans in Gelsenkirchen earlier in the day.

Social media footage showed men throwing chairs at each other outside a restaurant festooned with Serbian flags in the city.

England fans were soon cele-

brating once the game got underway after Bellingham's early goal. Harry Kane so nearly extended the lead in the second half when Serbia goalkeeper Predrag Rajkovic pushed his far post header onto the underside of the bar.

Kane set a record for his country by making his 23rd appearance at a major tournament.

Victory sent England to the top of Group C after Denmark drew 1-1 with Slovenia in an earlier game, with Christian Eriksen scoring three years after suffering a cardiac arrest on the field at the last Euros. England plays Denmark on Thursday.

England was a beaten finalist at the last Euros, losing on penalties to Italy in the final three years ago. It is one of the favorites this time around. Serbia is playing in the Euros for the first time since 2000. (AP)

Sumit Nagal attains career-high ATP ranking of 71

NEW DELHI, June 17: India's Sumit Nagal continued his ascent in the ATP singles chart, climbing to a career-high ranking of 71 on Monday.

His previous best was 77 last week.

The Olympic-bound Nagal jumped six places following his runner-up finish at the Perugia ATP Challenger tournament on Sunday.

The 26-year-old, who will be the sole Indian in the men's singles event at the Paris Olympics, has so far logged 777 ATP points.

A string of impressive results in recent times has not only helped Nagal improve his ranking but also make the cut for singles event at the Paris Games.

The year began with a historic second round outing at the Australian Open. While he bowed out of the French Open in the first round, Nagal is set to compete at in the main draw of Wimbledon followed by the Paris Olympics at Roland Garros.

He had won the men's singles crown at the Heilbronn Neckarcup 2024 Challenger event in Germany earlier this month and the Chennai Open in February.

Nagal, who is currently the best-ranked Indian singles player, has won four ATP Challenger titles since 2023 and Heilbronn was his fourth title on clay. (PTI)

Tanzim, Mustafizur star in Bangladesh's Super Eight entry

KINGSTOWN (SAINT VINCENT), June 17: Pacer Tanzim Hasan Sakib's career-best figures of 4 for 7 with an astounding 21 dot balls headlined Bangladesh's dominant bowling performance as they entered the Super Eights of the T20 World Cup with a comfortable 21-run win against Nepal in their final group league game.

Having nearly shocked South Africa in their previous game, Nepal bowlers were again on target, bowling out Bangladesh for 106 but Tanzim along with seasoned Shakib al Hasan (2/9) and Mustafizur Rahman (3/7) bowled out Nepal for 85 in 19.2 overs.

Nepal were on course at 78 for 5 at one stage before losing their last five wickets for seven runs as a determined Bangladesh team used all its reservoir of experience after a disappointing batting show.

Bangladesh should have won the match when Nepal were reduced to 26 for 5 after seven overs courtesy the right arm outswing specialist Tanzim but Kushal Malla (27) and world record holder Dipendra Singh Airee (25) added 52 runs to raise visions of a first big win for the country against a major Test playing nation.

But as it happens with ICC's Associate Member nations, the batters with little exposure of facing quality bowling didn't know what to do with an experienced player like Mustafizur.



Needing 22 off 12 balls, 'The Fizz' was an artist at work as he bowled his customary slow off-cutters, which would pitch on middle stump and cut across the right hander.

Airee, who holds the world record of fastest T20I fifty off 9 balls and only third cricketer after Yuvraj Singh and Kieron Pollard to hit six sixes in an over, understood the difference of facing a world class operator to plundering runs against Mongolia and Qatar.

Mustafizur didn't even let Airee lay bat on ball during the five deliv-

eries that also had a slow bouncer. He got Airee off the last delivery.

In fact, four among the last five Nepalese batters failed to open their accounts with the fifth remaining not out without troubling the scorers. "Very happy the way we played this round. I hope we can continue with our bowling performance and hope that our batting performance will be fine in the next round," Bangladesh skipper Najmul Hossain Shanto said at post-match presentation ceremony.

The skipper wasn't happy that

none of the Bangladeshi batters could even cross 20 but has confidence that his bowling unit can defend any totals.

"We have everything. All the fast bowlers have worked really hard in the last two or three years. In this format, the bowling unit is very important and I hope they continue their form. We have to plan for the next round and execute our plans," he said. As far as Nepal skipper Rohit Paudel is concerned, he conceded that inexperience became their undoing. (PTI)

Rohit Sharma's coach shaped my career: USA cricketer



NEW DELHI, June 17: Left-arm spinner Harmeet Singh, who is a part of the USA team that is enjoying a fairytale run in the ongoing T20 World Cup in the Americas, has revealed that Indian captain Rohit Sharma's coach Dinesh Lad has been instrumental in shaping his career.

The 31-year-old represented India in two Under-19 World Cups and played for Mumbai at the age-group level before moving to the USA. He is now a member of the American team that has made the Super Eight stage in its very first appearance at the showpiece.

"I would like to thank everybody who supported me in this journey and especially to Dinesh Lad Sir. My talent was first recognised by Lad Sir, who was the coach and mentor during my school days (Rohit Sharma studied in the same school)," Harmeet recalled in a video shared with PTI.

"In fact, he only advised me to join his school. There he provided me with everything he possibly could," he said.

Harmeet said his progress would not have been possible without Lad. "I switched to Swami Vivekanand school. We broke many records, there was no cricket in the suburbs then but now looking back at it, it all looks like a dream. What all we achieved at the school, couldn't have been possible without Lad Sir's support," he said.

"The passion with which he worked on us, and the dedication he showed by sending us to the Shivaji Park Gymkhana to train better under Padmakar Shivalkar Sir and Pravin Amre Sir," he added.

The USA will open their Super Eight campaign against South Africa on June 19. (PTI)

Fans want Windies to legitimise T20 supremacy with third title

BRIDGETOWN (BARBADOS), June 17: The last resting place of Malcolm Marshall, one of the greatest fast bowlers of all time, looks like a forgotten piece of land when one passes through the burial site located a few blocks away from the Grantley Adams International Airport here.

Marshall's achievements are duly recognised by the cricketing world but 25 years after his untimely death, his homeland doesn't seem to remember him the way a player of his stature should be.

The pacer, who died at the age of 41 due to cancer, rests in peace alongside many departed souls in the churchyard of St Bartholomew's Church.

The site is of Marshall's mausoleum is unattended and littered with plastic bottles, raising questions on its upkeep.

The current generation doesn't seem to be aware of his contribution to the game either. There were blank faces at the international airport when one asked about the location of his last resting place which is literally a stone's throw from that facility.

"There is no doubt about Marshall's greatness but as they say 'out of sight can be out of mind'. The current generation was not even born when he was winning games for the West Indies in the

MARSHALL FORGOTTEN IN HOMELAND



'80s. "The money and the eyeballs were not as much as they are now. I am sure the modern day cricketers won't be forgotten that easily," said Kevin, a local who is a self-proclaimed fan of the game.

Besides Marshall, Barbados has produced many greats of the game including Sir Garfield Sobers and Joel Garner.

Marshall played his last Test in 1991 to end up with as many as 376 wickets at an exceptional av-

erage of 20.94. The right-arm pacer's legend grew during his county stint for Hampshire who named the road leading to the stadium after the West Indian. He was diagnosed with cancer in 1999 and succumbed to it within months.

The West Indies is hosting a men's World Cup after 14 years and the excitement in the entire region is palpable.

The remote location of the makeshift stadium in New York

did not help in promoting the game in an alien land but the organisers in the Caribbean have been able to engage the fans.

Posters and banners reading the 'Home of Final' are installed all around Bridgetown including the airport with the title clash scheduled at the Kensington Oval on June 29.

Darren Sammy captained the regional outfit to two T20 World Cup titles and now fans are backing him for a third one as a coach.

"I want the West Indies to be masters of the T20 game and Sammy can guide them to a third title. He has the ability of bringing everyone together. The world title would mean the world to the fans.

"One day I also hope we can regain the glory days in Test cricket," said Jerry Newton, who is from the neighbouring island country of Dominica but keenly followed the West Indies' performance even when he was travelling for work in UK last week.

The expectations are higher from fans as two-time winners West Indies could not qualify for the ODI World Cup in India last year.

Cricket also does a remarkable job of uniting the Caribbean where it remains the number one sport.

The Rovman Powell-led side has already entered the Super 8 stage of the tournament and if they do go on to garner more glory in the shortest format, the party in the Caribbean will last for months.

"If West Indies do end up winning a record third trophy in the T20, the party in the Caribbean will be going for many, many months afterwards, as everyone celebrates what would be a fantastic achievement by our men's team. I can assure you that," summed up Cricket West Indies CEO Johnny Grave. (PTI)

2009 champions and also the finalists of 2007 and 2022 editions Haven't thought out quitting captaincy: Babar Azam

FORT LAUDERHILL (FLORIDA), June 17: Under-fire Pakistan skipper Babar Azam hasn't yet thought about quitting captaincy despite his team's group-stage exit from the T20 World Cup, insisting that any decision on the matter will be taken only after discussions with his Cricket Board.

The 2009 champions and also the finalists of 2007 and 2022 editions, lost to USA and India in their first two games to exit the tournament even before the Super Eights.

Having faced massive criticism, the Pakistan skipper hit back when asked if he has any plans to tender his resignation.

"When I go back, we will discuss all the things that happened here. And if I have to leave the captaincy, this decision, I will tell you openly. I will not announce anything behind the scenes. Whatever happens, will happen in front of you," Babar said after Pakistan ended their group league campaign with a hard-fought three-wicket win over Ireland.

Babar said it was the Pakistan Cricket Board which reinstated him and whether he continues or not, will be their call.

"I have not thought about it. The decision is of the PCB," he said, asserting that he never asked for a leadership role.

"About the captaincy - when I had left it (after ODI World Cup), I thought that I shouldn't be doing it now, that's why I left it and I announced it myself. Then when they gave it back to me, it was the decision of the PCB."

Babar was visibly miffed at being repeatedly probed about his future as a leader and told the assembled media that one person cannot be blamed for team losses.

"...everyone is sad. As a team, we did not play. I told you that we did not lose this because of one person," he told a probing scribe.

"We are losing as a team. I am not saying



this because of one person. You are pointing out that because of the captain, I cannot play in every player's place. There are 11 players and each of them has a role.

"I think we as a team have not been able to apply, follow and finish things. We have to settle down and accept that we didn't play well as a team."

Imad Wasim, in a media interaction, had spoken how Pakistan is not changing its archaic style at a time when the world order in the shortest format had undergone a sea change.

Babar partially agreed with Imad's assertion.

"I think eight-nine players are the same who have been playing for four years. They should not fear. All of them are the same players. They are being backed. They are being given opportunities," he said.

Batting is an area of concern he admitted. "You need to assess the conditions, what's the demand here. If you follow that then - tell me how many matches have been played here and there's been outstanding batting?"

"There's been a struggle, but you need to be proactive about what's required here. I think it's about game awareness and common sense, which is what is required here."

Critical of US wickets

Babar joined the chorus of criticism against the standard of pitches in the tournament's USA leg, which concluded on Saturday. While drop-in pitches in New York copped a lot of flak, inadequate covers for the full ground in Florida also didn't go down well with teams.

"I was expecting someone to ask this question (on US tracks). As far as pitches are concerned...In New York, you saw that the game was played on toss. I think the timing was a little too early."

"Because when you win a toss, every second team opted to bowl. And bowlers got help...you didn't have the idea of bounce because there was no consistent bounce. Sometimes the ball went too high, sometimes it stayed down." (PTI)

Neeraj Chopra set to return at Paavo Nurmi Games



TURKU (FINLAND), June 17: Forced into a short break to mend a niggly, Olympic and world champion javelin thrower Neeraj Chopra will return to competitive action at the Paavo Nurmi Games here on Tuesday against a stellar field, hoping to continue his build-up to Paris Games with renewed vigour.

The 26-year-old superstar, the lone Indian in the field here, will be up against German teenaged sensation Max Dehning, who is the youngest member of the coveted 90m club, which Chopra is aspiring to enter.

The 19-year-old is being seen as a major competition for Chopra when he defends his Tokyo Games gold medal in Paris.

Local favourite Oliver Helander, who had beaten the Indian in the 2022 edition of the one-day competition, will also be there.

The Indian won a silver medal in 2022 with a throw of 89.30m, which was a personal best at that time. Chopra improved that mark to 89.94m at the Stockholm leg of the Diamond League in the same year.

Two-time world champion Anderson Peters of Grenada and 2012 Olympic champion Keshorn Walcott of Trinidad and Tobago are in fray as well here.

Chopra had withdrawn from last month's Ostrava Golden Spike as a precautionary measure after he "felt something in my adductor (group of muscles located on inner thighs)"

He began his season at the Doha Diamond League in May, where he finished second with his final throw of 88.36m, the ninth best mark of his career.

Jakub Vadlejch, who beat Chopra in the Doha Daimond League will not be competing here.

Chopra also participated at the National Federation Cup Senior Athletics Championships in Bhubaneswar, where he secured the gold medal with an underwhelming effort of 82.27m.

After the Paavo Nurmi Games, Chopra will next be seen in action at the Paris Diamond League on July 7.

He has opted out of the National Inter-State Athletics in Panchkula to be held from June 27 to avoid a hectic schedule ahead of the Olympics.

"Further competition schedule will be decided later according to situation and my body. Otherwise, I will go to Paris from there (after competing in Turkey)," Chopra had stated after the Federation Cup. (PTI)

We have discussed our mistakes enough: Wanindu Hasaranga

GROS ISLET (SAINT VINCENT), June 17: Sri Lanka captain Wanindu Hasaranga believes they've extensively discussed their repeated mistakes in big tournaments and now it's time to shift their focus towards rectifying those faults, following the ignominy of another group league exit.

Hasaranga termed his team's 83-run win against the Netherlands as something that came "too late" after losing their games against South Africa and Bangladesh in the group stage of the T20 World Cup.

"After every tournament, we gather around and discuss that we committed several mistakes. As a team, we should decide if we have to rectify those mistakes. I think we have not rectified our mistakes yet."

"As a captain, I feel very sorry about this," Hasaranga didn't beat around the bush after another inglorious first round exit having finished ninth in the ODI World Cup last year.

"We have discussed our mistakes in this World Cup and from previous ODI World Cup as well. So as we have not rectified those we had to get out of this tournament this soon."

The leg-spinner felt that it was the batting that led the team down.

"When we think of the bowling battalion, we are on the top in this tournament as well. Unfortunately, I know our batting wasn't good enough as we expected and that's why we had to get out of this tournament this early," the skipper put the blame squarely on batters.

Hasaranga, however, didn't want to read too much into social media comments where there has been an



outpouring of emotions by the Sri Lankans cricket fans.

"As a player, we should not look at social media posts. What's on social media is (posted) done by a small group of people to make (instigate) other fans angry. (Genuine) Sri Lanka fans are with us even if we lose the matches. We must be very lucky to have such kind of fans in Sri Lanka."

While Sri Lanka arrived in the United States at least 10 days prior to the start of the tournament, Hasaranga felt that there was no similarity between training pitches and match decks.

"We should thank the Sri Lanka Cricket (SLC) board for bringing us 10 days prior and organising a training camp like that. But I think from the locations that we have practised, the conditions (for matches) are not the same."

"So, we adjusted ourselves as

every possible way. Unfortunately, we had our first match in New York and it was not successful. And then we went to Dallas to the next match and we could not adjusted to the pitch there as well. I think as a team and as a captain, we take the full responsibility."

But Hasaranga doesn't want to hide behind the below-par USA tracks and paper over the dismal performance of his own team.

"Yes you can (put the) blame on pitches and make up stories when you lose a match. But as professional cricketers, we can't do that. All the other countries are also playing in the same pitches so we have to adjust ourselves to that. We have to admit that. That's why we come to these tournaments representing a country."

"We should have improved our cricket and not blame others," he concluded. (PTI)

Football coaching centre at Bokajan

HT Correspondent

BOKAJAN, June 17: The office of the Karbi Anglong District Sports Officer and Hanjlangso Sports Association inaugurated Small Khelo India Centre for football coaching at Hanjlangso on Monday.

District Sports Officer, Relip Ronghang said the Centre is located in Bokajan LAC area. Men, women and children irrespective of age can take the coaching. All those found to be talented will be able to play at various events. The Centre is for giving the opportunity to even those staying in remote areas. The inauguration of the Small Khelo India Centre was attended by the president of Hanjlangso Sports Association, Jivan Chandra Pathak; vice president, William Singnar; Coach Sania Marak and others.

'Don't waste your time in Pakistan'

NEW DELHI, June 17: Former India cricketer Harbhajan Singh on Monday suggested Gary Kirsten not to waste his time in Pakistan after the South African claimed that the Babar Azam-led side was plagued by disunity. Kirsten castigated the Pakistan players for not supporting each other during their disastrous T20 World Cup campaign, saying he has never experienced such toxic atmosphere in a team. Kirsten took up the assignment as Pakistan's head coach just before the tournament in the USA and West Indies but was left disappointed as the side made a first round exit after losing to newcomers USA and India. (PTI)

West Indies Afghanistan to engage in battle for supremacy



GROS ISLET (SAINT LUCIA), June 17: Hosts West Indies and much-improved Afghanistan will indulge in a battle of one upmanship and strive to gain momentum for the Super Eight stage when they take on each other in their final group stage game of the T20 World Cup here.

After starting off with a scrappy win over Papua New Guinea, West Indies are slowly but steadily finding their rhythm. They brushed aside Uganda and New Zealand.

Afghanistan, on the other hand, have had a flawless campaign so far. Rashid Khan and Co. are enjoying the conditions that the Caribbean pitches are offering.

Gaining momentum is the only thing at stake in the final Group C clash with both teams having qualified for the Super Eights.

"Momentum is a very important word for us it's important for us to keep playing good cricket and consistent cricket," West Indies skipper Rovman Powell said on the eve of the game.

"After this game the Super 8 is very, very important so you want players going into the Super 8 with good performances, you want to go in the Super 8 as a team winning."

That opener Rahmanullah Gurbaz (167 runs) and pacer Fazalhaq Farooqi (12 wickets) are currently leading the chart of run-makers and wicket-takers respectively is a just reflection of their fine run in this ICC show-piece.

Besides Gurbaz, the experienced Ibrahim Zadran has also made significant contributions collecting 114 runs with a highest score of 70. But the Afghans who have a lot of right hand batters will have their task cut out against left-arm spinners Akeal Hosen and Gudakesh Motie.

The Afghans themselves will be without off spinner Mujeeb Ur Rahman, who has been ruled out of the tournament due to a finger injury. However, they have no dearth of spinners with the likes of skipper Rashid and young Noor Ahmad, who bowled economically against

Papua New Guinea and New Zealand, in their ranks.

"It's been three good games but realising there's a lot more than three games to go obviously tomorrow and then three more in the group stage and hopefully beyond," Afghanistan head coach Jonathan Trott said.

"That's the focus but we're not worried about looking too far ahead the focus obviously the main goal is to go as far as we can and achieve things that no other Afghanistan team has done before."

"And we've taken a step in the right direction so far, but that's all it is. There's a lot more cricket ahead and a lot of good teams to play against," he added.

The Darren Sammy National Stadium has one of the best pitches across both USA and the Caribbean.

With the ball coming on to the bat nicely, both matches played here so far have been high-scoring affairs with Sri Lanka piling up a 200-plus score on Sunday.

The flamboyant West Indies batters in search of some big scores would welcome the conditions. The home batters have not yet found their groove, something which the skipper acknowledged.

"All of us as batters, have had a very subtle start to the World Cup, but tomorrow presents an opportunity here at the Daren Sammy Stadium for us as batters to get it right - it's also a better opportunity on a better wicket," Powell said.

Teams:
West Indies Squad: Rovman Powell (c), Brandon King, Johnson Charles, Nicholas Pooran (wk), Sherfane Rutherford, Andre Russell, Romario Shepherd, Roston Chase, Akeal Hosen, Alzarri Joseph, Gudakesh Motie, Shad McCoy, Shamar Joseph, Shimron Hetmyer and Shai Hope.

Afghanistan: Rashid Khan (c), Rahmanullah Gurbaz, Ibrahim Zadran, Azmatullah Omarzai, Najibullah Zadran, Mohammad Ishaq, Mohammad Nabi, Gulbadin Naib, Karim Janat, Nangyal Kharoti, Hazratullah Zazai, Noor Ahmad, Naveen-ul-Haq, Fazalhaq Farooqi, Fared Ahmad Malik.
Match starts 6am IST. (PTI)

Emphasised the importance of getting a good start from his batters Worried about our batting form: Bangladesh skipper Shanto

KINGSTOWN (ST VINCENT), June 17: Delighted that his team is through to the Super Eights but disappointed by its batting performance so far, Bangladesh skipper Najmul Hossain Shanto said he is yet to figure out why his batters have not been up to the mark in the ongoing T20 World Cup.

Bangladesh managed to trump Nepal by 21 runs to seal their place in the Super Eights. However, getting shot out for 106 put them in a spot of bother before their bowlers managed to get the job done.

"First of all, very happy that we are going to play Super Eights, and yeah, our batting is not up to the mark. But, the way our bowler bowled in the last three-four matches, really happy," Shanto said during the post-match media interaction here on Sunday night.

"I hope they will continue their form, and as a batting group, we need to do our proper planning so that we can come back in the next round."

Shanto admitted that the side's batting failures have been hard to decipher but he rejected suggestions that slow pitches were a reason. Bangladesh have gone past the 150-run mark just once in this tournament, against the Netherlands.

"I hope they (the bowlers) make us win every day; that's what I hope for, but the



batsmen also have a responsibility. And why it is not happening, everyone is trying to find out. But it is not happening anyway,

and it is not acceptable," he said. "The wicket is not the issue. This was a wicket where you can score 140-150 runs,

maybe which we could not do. So, it is definitely a reason for us to worry," he said. Despite managing scores close to

130, the team has emerged triumphant in three games and its only defeat so far has come against South Africa.

Shanto emphasised the importance of getting a good start from his batters.

"Of course, it is a reason for me to worry. I don't think it is a good thing for the team to bat like this because the start is very important. We are not getting the start, and the lower-order batsmen are not finishing it well," he pointed out.

"But we have to come out of this and think about how to come out of this. And we do plan and think about this all the time. Still, this mistake is happening again and again."

Bangladesh have been clubbed in Group 1 alongside India, Australia and Afghanistan for the Super Eights.

Shanto feels it will be a tough challenge for his team to overcome the in-form rivals.

"All 20 teams are here to win. So now, we are going to play Super Eights. All matches will be competitive," he stated.

"There are no big teams or big names, I hope we'll have a good Super Eights." Bangladesh will play their Super Eight opener against Australia on Thursday in Antigua, followed by India two days later at the same venue before finishing off against Afghanistan on June 24 here. (PTI)