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Lotus blooms in 'Land of the rising sun' again

HT Bureau
GUWAHATI, June 2: The Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) on Sunday retained in Arunachal Pradesh, while the ruling Sikkim Krantikari Morcha (SKM) secured a second term in Sikkim. Voting was held for 60 assembly seats in Arunachal Pradesh and 32 assembly seats in Sikkim on April 19.

The saffron party returned to power in Arunachal Pradesh for the third time in a row after winning 46 seats in the 60-member assembly, and bagging four more seats compared to its 2019 tally.

In sweeping the assembly elections, the counting of which was held during the day, the BJP decimated the opposition parties, especially the Congress which was relegated to the fifth position with only one seat after NPP (5), NCP



(3) and PPA (2). Three seats went to Independent candidates. Chief Minister Pema Khandu asserted that the momentum of what happened in the 'Land of the rising sun', a sobriquet for Arunachal Pradesh, will spread to other parts of the country on June 4 when votes for the Lok Sabha elections will be counted. "This is a historic occasion for the BJP and entire Arunachal Pradesh. The people of Arunachal Pradesh have declared that they

want BJP to stay in power for the next five years. This time, the mandate is more than what we got in 2019. In the 2019 Assembly polls, BJP won 41 seats, while we have won 46 seats this time," Khandu said. Prime Minister Narendra Modi congratulated the people of Arunachal Pradesh for the landslide win.

"Thank you Arunachal Pradesh! The people of this wonderful state have given an unequivocal mandate to politics of development. My gratitude to them for reposing their faith in @BJP4Arunachal again. Our Party will keep working with even greater vigour for the state's growth," Modi said in a post on X. In response, Khandu said, "Your guidance and vision have played a monumental role in our success. (CONTD. ON PAGE-2)

Delhi CM Kejriwal surrenders at Tihar jail

NEW DELHI, June 2: Delhi chief minister Arvind Kejriwal on Sunday surrendered at the Tihar jail here after his interim bail granted by the Supreme Court in the excise policy-linked money laundering case ended on June 1.

He was granted the relief for campaigning in the Lok Sabha elections. Before surrendering, Kejriwal paid homage to Mahatma Gandhi at the Raj Ghat, offered prayers at the Hanuman temple in Connaught Place and addressed AAP leaders and workers at the party office.

During his address, Kejriwal said, "I am going back to jail not because I was involved in corruption but because I raised voice against dictatorship," he said.

"I was given a 21-day (relief) by the Supreme Court. These 21 days were unforgettable. I did not waste even a minute. I campaigned for saving the country. The AAP is not

important, it is secondary. The country comes first," he said.

Kejriwal also asserted that all exit polls predicting a third term for the BJP-led NDA at the Centre were "fake". Exit polls on Saturday predicted that Prime Minister Narendra Modi will retain power for a third straight term, with the NDA expected to win a big majority in the polls. "They are not forming government on June 4. These exit polls are mind games to drive you into depression," Kejriwal told AAP workers and leaders.

Before Kejriwal arrived at the Tihar jail, traffic movement was restricted in the areas around the prison and security arrangements heightened with deployment of deployment of police personnel.

The chief minister paid homage at Mahatma Gandhi's memorial at the Raj Ghat, offered prayers at the Hanuman (CONTD. ON PAGE-2)

CID, forensic experts to probe Dhakuakhana murder: DGP



NORTH LAKHIMPUR, June 2: The Criminal Investigation Department (CID) has been entrusted to probe the suspected murder of a contractor and local BJP leader in Dhakuakhana in Assam's Lakhimpur district, whose half-burnt body with the head missing was recovered in a field, a top police officer said on Sunday.

Another officer said foul play is suspected in the case as per prima facie investigation.

The body of Sunil Gogoi, a government contractor and local BJP leader, was found with the head missing and in a half-burnt condition in an open field near his residence on Saturday evening.

Lakhimpur superintendent of police Aparna Natarajan said, "It appears to be a case of murder, prima facie. But we cannot say anything more at the moment. Investigating agencies are coming from Guwahati and only then the picture will be clearer."

Director General of Police GP Singh, in a post on X, said a team of CID and Forensic Science Laboratory has been sent to Dhakuakhana to take forward the investigation.

"Reference murder at Dhakuakhana, North Lakhimpur - A team of @AssamCid and FSL led by IGP CID has been sent to the spot from Guwahati to associate in the investigation with @lakhimpurpolice We shall leave no stone unturned to identify the perpetrators and bring them to face the justice," he said. State education minister Ranoo Pegu, (CONTD. ON PAGE-2)

HT BRIEFS
Dry Day
DIPHU: The district administration of Karbi Anglong has declared Dry Day on June 4, the day of counting for Lok Sabha election. It has prohibited the possession of any intoxicants by any person or group of persons and banned the sale of liquor, giving or distribution of alcohol, fermented or intoxicating liquors or other substances of a like nature at a hotel, eating houses, tavern, shop or any other place, public or private. All Bonded warehouses, IMFL Retails OFF/ ON shops including Club ON, Hotel ON, Star Hotels, country spirit shops, other establishment settings or serving liquor will remain closed during the dry day.

Heroin recovered
BOKAJAN: The police in Karbi Anglong recovered heroin and arrested one in this connection. The police intercepted a car, AS 23 AG 0299, carried out a thorough searched during which 24 identical plastic soap cases were recovered. The cases were filled with heroin which was concealed inside the front bonnet of the car. The contraband weighing 271.16 grams was seized in presence of the independent witnesses. The driver of the car identified as Pranab Baruah, son of Puful Boruah, resident of Kaupatoni, Mahadevpur police station, Namsai district in Arunachal Pradesh has been apprehended.

Seven held
GUWAHATI: Seven persons have been arrested and contraband drugs recovered from them in separate operations in Assam's Barak Valley, chief minister Himanta Biswa Sarma said on Sunday. The operations were carried out on Saturday, he said. Sharing details on X, Sarma said the operations were conducted based on the police's 'strong intelligence network'.

Cong, INDIA bloc trying to undermine electoral process: BJP

NEW DELHI, June 2: The Congress and other INDIA bloc constituents as well as certain civil society groups are trying to undermine the integrity of India's electoral process, the BJP alleged on Sunday and urged the Election Commission to prevent any attempts of "violence and unrest" during counting of Lok Sabha poll votes on June 4.

The poll panel was also urged by a BJP delegation comprising Union ministers Nirmala Sitharaman and Piyush Goyal to take cognisance of the "systematic attempts" being made to undermine the process and initiate stringent action against those responsible.

The delegation submitted a memorandum to the Election Commission (EC) in this regard.

Their efforts against India's "very robust" electoral process are a direct attack on the country's democratic institutions and pose a risk to public order and trust in the electoral system, Goyal told reporters after meeting the officials of the commission. "We had to call upon the Election Commission today in light of the repeated attempts by a section of political parties, like the Congress and their INDI alliance partners, and also by certain motivated civil society groups and NGOs who are trying their level best to undermine the integrity of India's electoral process," he said. (CONTD. ON PAGE-2)

Exit polls 'bogus, 'deliberate attempt' to justify rigging: Cong

NEW DELHI, June 2: Terming the exit polls "bogus", the Congress on Sunday said they were a "deliberate attempt" to justify rigging of the elections and part of "psychological games" being played by Prime Minister Narendra Modi to lower the morale of the INDIA bloc workers.

Congress general secretary Jairam Ramesh also hit out at Prime Minister Modi for holding several meetings, including a long brainstorming session to review the 100-day agenda of the "new government", saying these were "pressure tactics" to send out a signal to the bureaucracy and the administrative structure that he is coming back.

"These are mind games -- 'I am coming back, I am going to be the prime minister again'. He is sending



a signal to the bureaucracy, the administrative structure of the country and we hope that the civil servants who have been entrusted with the responsibility of ensuring a fair counting of votes will not be intimidated and not be frightened by these pressure tactics," Ramesh told PTI at the AICC headquarters here.

He also said that the exit polls that came out Saturday evening are "completely bogus" and have been "orchestrated and masterminded by the man whose exit is inevitable and

guaranteed on June 4".

"These are all part of the psychological games being played by the outgoing prime minister (Narendra Modi) and the outgoing home minister (Amit Shah). The outgoing home minister call up 150 District Magistrates and collectors yesterday. The results that the exit polls have come up with bear no relation to reality," the Congress leader said.

Exit polls on Saturday predicted that Prime Minister Modi will retain power for a third straight term, with the BJP-led NDA expected to win a big majority in the Lok Sabha polls.

While India Today-Axis My India has forecast 361-401 seats for the BJP-led alliance and 131-166 seats for the opposition INDIA bloc in the 543-member Lok Sabha, the ABP-C Voter predicted 353-383 seats for (CONTD. ON PAGE-2)

Pijush Hazarika visits flood-affected areas in Hojai

Over 6 lakh people affected in 10 districts



HT Correspondent
HOJAI, June 2: Minister for Water Resources, Pijush Hazarika, conducted a visit to the flood-affected areas of Hojai district on Sunday to assess the situation.

Ensure postal ballots counted first, guidelines followed: INDIA bloc to EC

NEW DELHI, June 2: Leaders from the INDIA opposition bloc urged the Election Commission (EC) on Sunday to ensure that on June 4, the postal ballots are counted and their results declared before the outcome of the EVMs is announced, and stressed that the poll panel should issue clear guidelines on the counting process and ensure that those are implemented.

A delegation of leaders from the Indian National Developmental Inclusive Alliance (INDIA) met the full bench of the EC on Sunday, ahead of Tuesday's counting of the votes polled in the Lok Sabha election.

Briefing the media after the meeting, Congress leader Abhishek Singhvi said this was the third time that a delegation of opposition leaders visited the poll panel during the

Sarba highlighted the role of PM's vision in galvanising collective efforts toward national progress

Union minister Sonowal stresses on youth's empowerment in Dibrugarh

HT Correspondent
DIBRUGARH, June 2: Union Minister of Ports, Shipping, and Waterways, as well as Ayush, Sarbananda Sonowal, emphasised the critical importance of enabling youth with wisdom, empowering them with opportunities, and energising them with vision.

Addressing a gathering organised by the Dibrugarh District Committee of All Assam Sonowal Kachari Students Union (AASKSU) at Kacharibari, on Sunday, Sonowal underscored the transformative potential of the nation's youth when equipped with the right tools and mindset.

The event also saw Sonowal felicitating students who excelled in the recently announced results of 10th and 12th standard exams from both state and central boards, acknowledging their hard work and achievements.

In his speech, Sonowal invoked India's rich heritage and emphasised



general election and, among other things, urged the officials to ensure that the postal ballots are counted and their results declared before the results of the electronic voting machines (EVMs) are announced.

"This is the third multi-party delegation visiting the EC during this process... We spent time with the EC on two-three major issues. Most important was counting the postal ballots and declaring the results first. This is a very clearly stated statutory rule, which specifically says that you should take up the postal ballots first," Singhvi said. "Our complaint is that this guideline has been (CONTD. ON PAGE-2)

IIM in Assam gets Centre's nod

HT Bureau
GUWAHATI, June 2: The proposal for the establishment of a new Indian Institute of Management (IIM) near Assam's capital Guwahati has been approved by the Union Education Ministry, said chief minister Himanta Biswa Sarma on Sunday.

Sarma said the state government had been pursuing the matter with the Centre for last 18 months, and the new institute will be a "game changer" for higher education in the state.

"Sharing a BIG NEWS! Following our request in 2023, Hon PM Shri @narendramodiji has given a special gift to the people of Assam by approving an Indian Institute of Management near Guwahati, making it among the few cities to house an IIT, AIIMS, Nat'l Law Univ & now IIM," Sarma wrote on micro-blogging site X.

The Assam chief minister said the state government had presented its case before education minister Dharmendra Pradhan and his ministry, besides writing to PM Modi. Sarma said the state government

Undercurrent in favour of Congress in Assam: Borah

HT Bureau
GUWAHATI, June 2: Assam Congress president Bhupen Borah has disagreed with the predictions of exit polls and asserted that there was an undercurrent in the state in favour of the opposition party.

"There is no doubt that there was an undercurrent in our favour. This is known to many; however, the media will not accept it publicly," he said on Sunday.

Borah claimed that the exit polls were published to impress the government. "Many of the agencies do exit polls to keep the government happy. Moreover, in exit polls, only a small sample size is considered which cannot give the whole picture. Every 3-4 kilometres, the mood of the people changes in the country," he added.

Borah questioned the efficacy of the exit polls. However, he also mentioned that the exit polls have given the Congress party a relatively good number in Assam. "Exit polls have predicted at least 3-4 seats for (CONTD. ON PAGE-2)

Union minister Sonowal stresses on youth's empowerment in Dibrugarh

the need to harness its power to pave the way for a brighter future.

He further highlighted the role of Prime Minister Narendra Modi's vision in galvanising collective efforts toward national progress.

"I want to take this opportunity to highlight the innate power that our rich heritage has. Our youth must be enabled with wisdom, empowered



with opportunities & energised with vision to effect changes that we desire to bring. India, for a long time, reeled under tumultuous misrule which affected our idea of the nation," Sonowal added.

Sonowal also urged the youth to draw inspiration from Swami Vivekananda's ideals of wisdom and service, emphasising the impor-

stance of building a strong nation through collective endeavor.

Recognising the pivotal role of young students in shaping the country's future, Sonowal expressed confidence in their ability to drive the nation-building process forward with wisdom, strength, and determination.

Speaking specifically about the Sonowal Kachari community, Sonowal lauded its contributions to Assamese nation-building, emphasising the importance of preserving its dynamic culture and spiritual traditions. He called upon the youth of the community to actively engage in education, culture, and sports to uphold this legacy.

"The Sonowal Kachari community has played a pivotal role in the broader Assamese nation-building process. The values of the dynamic culture and spiritual traditions have profoundly shaped the personalities of the Sonowal people, significantly impacting (CONTD. ON PAGE-2)

India receives highest FDI from Singapore in 2023-24, Mauritius follows

NEW DELHI, June 2: India received the highest foreign direct investment (FDI) from Singapore in 2023-24 even as overseas capital inflows into the country contracted by about 3.5 per cent due to global economic uncertainties, according to the latest government data.

Though FDI from Singapore has dipped by 31.55 per cent to \$ 11.77 billion in 2023-24, India has attracted the maximum inflows from that country, the data showed. During the last fiscal, FDI equity inflows decreased from major countries, including Mauritius, Singapore, the US, the UK, UAE, Cayman Islands, Germany, and Cyprus.

However, investments increased from the Netherlands and Japan. Since 2018-19, Singapore has been the largest source of such investments for India. In 2017-18, India attracted the maximum FDI from Mauritius.

According to experts, after the India-Mauritius tax treaty amendment, Singapore has emerged as the preferred jurisdiction for investment in India. Rumki Majumdar, Economist, Deloitte India, said that as one of the world's prominent financial hubs, Singapore attracts global investors who want to invest in Asia.

"Recently, India's initiatives such as amendments by the SEBI to the REIT Regulations 2014 have created new opportunities for Singapore-based investors, which is why India is likely seeing high FDI from Singapore," Majumdar said. She also hoped that FDI into India would pick up in the latter half of 2024-25. Sanjiv Malhotra, Senior Advisor, Shardul Amarchand Mangaldas & Co, said that Singapore and Mauritius are jurisdictions used by global investors to route their money into developing economies such as India.



"While there are many geo-economic and political factors why Singapore has gained more prominence in the recent past, the primary reason for it topping the FDI charts for India is tax," Malhotra said, adding Singapore has a very competitive domestic tax regime and efficient regulatory set-up.

Historically, the double tax avoidance agreement between India and Singapore provided for many beneficial provisions including capital gains exemption in India for investments made from Singapore and even though this provision has been amended, Singapore still is a credible place to create operations with substance to invest further in South-East Asia (including India), he added.

Malhotra added that in 2023-24, India witnessed a drop in FDI primarily due to the global uncertainty on account of the disturbances in the Middle-East and Europe. "Hopefully FDI inflows to India may improve in 2024-25 (from 2023-24) but they may still remain below 2022-23 levels. A stable government post elections surely will help the cause of more FDI into India but I see the global headwinds to be too strong

as of now," he said.

Anindya Ghosh, Partner, INDUSLAW, too said that prior to 2016, Mauritius was a preferred jurisdiction for foreign investment in India due to the significant tax advantage it offered as a low-tax jurisdiction for routing investments.

However, in 2016, India amended its tax treaty with Mauritius to introduce a source-based taxation regime for capital gains, eliminating the tax advantage and reducing the attractiveness of Mauritius as an investment hub for India. After the India-Mauritius tax treaty amendment, Singapore has emerged as the preferred jurisdiction for foreign investment in India due to various factors, Ghosh said.

She added that many multinational companies have their regional headquarters or holding companies based in Singapore, making it a convenient location for channelling investments into India. She added that global economic conditions, geopolitical tensions, and domestic policy developments may influence the overall FDI inflows in 2024-25.

FDI equity inflows in India declined 3.49 per cent to \$ 44.42 bil-

lion in 2023-24 as against \$ 46.03 billion in 2022-23.

The total FDI -- which includes equity inflows, reinvested earnings and other capital -- declined marginally by one per cent to \$ 70.95 billion during 2023-24 from \$ 71.35 billion in 2022-23.

In 2021-22, the country received the highest ever FDI inflows of \$ 84.83 billion. Sectorally, inflows contracted in services, computer software and hardware, trading, telecommunication, automobile, pharma and chemicals.

In contrast, construction (infrastructure) activities, development and power sectors registered a healthy growth in inflows during the period under review.

FDI from Mauritius dipped to \$ 7.97 billion in the last fiscal from \$ 6.13 billion in 2022-23.

The US is the third largest investor in India in 2023-24 with \$ 4.99 billion foreign investments, though it is down from \$ 6 billion in 2022-23. It was followed by the Netherlands (\$ 4.93 billion), Japan (\$ 3.17 billion), the UAE (\$ 2.9 billion), UK (\$ 1.2 billion), Cyprus (\$ 806 million), Germany (\$ 505 million), and Cayman Islands (\$ 342 million). As per the data, Mauritius accounts for 25 per cent of the total FDI which India has received during April 2000 to March 2024 (\$ 171.84 billion), while Singapore's share is 24 per cent (\$ 159.94 billion). The US accounted for 10 per cent of total overseas investments with \$ 65.19 billion during the period.

Foreign investments are crucial for India to overhaul its infrastructure such as ports, airports and highways to push growth. FDI also helps improve the country's balance of payments situation and strengthen the rupee value against other global currencies, especially the US dollar. (PTI)

Contd. from Page 1...

Lotus blooms in 'Land

We shall continue with greater vigour to work for Sabka Sath, Sabka Vikas." Khandu himself won unopposed from the Mukto assembly constituency. Nine other BJP candidates also tasted victory unopposed. "The people of the state has repaid to the contribution of Prime Minister (Narendra Modi)....The development witnessed under the BJP-led NDA regime in the state is the major factor for the party's win in the state," Khandu asserted.

The development witnessed in Arunachal Pradesh under the BJP-led central government is a major factor for the party's win in the state, the chief minister asserted. To a question regarding the formation of the new ministry, Khandu said that after the Lok Sabha polls counting on June 4, all the winning candidates of the party would convene a meeting where the chief ministerial candidate would be decided.

"BJP is a disciplined party. The party will select the leader with consensus from all elected candidates," Khandu said. While the BJP's vote share is 54.57 per cent, as many as 14 party candidates including Education Minister Taba Tedir, were defeated this time. The minister was defeated by NCP nominee Toko Tatung, a greenhorn, in the Yachuli constituency. A total of 20 first-timers tasted victory in the northeastern state. Eleven of them are from BJP, four from NPP, two each from PPA and NCP and one independent.

The opposition Congress which fielded 19 candidates in the 60-member assembly managed to bag only one seat, Bamang, where former state home minister Kumar Wai won by a slender margin of 635 votes defeating BJP's Doba Lamnio. State Congress president NabamTuki said the party was "disappointed but not demoralised" by the election results. "We will introspect about the causes of the defeat and work on the organisation in the coming days," he added.

The National People's Party (NPP) which won five seats, annexed 16.11 per cent while the Nationalist Congress Party (NCP) gained a vote share of 10.43 per cent and won three seats. The regional People's Party of Arunachal (PPA) which managed to win two seats had a vote share of 7.24 per cent. Kiren Rijiju, Union minister and Lok Sabha poll candidate from Arunachal Pradesh, said the credit for this assembly polls results goes to the people of the state, the BJP workers and the leadership of PM Modi.

"The development that took place in Arunachal Pradesh in the last 10 years, didn't happen when the Congress was in power there for 60 years... This victory will inspire us to work more in the future," Rijiju said. On the other hand the Sikkim Krantikari Morcha (SKM) returned to power by sweeping the assembly polls in the Himalayan state, winning 31 of the 32 seats.

The opposition Sikkim Democratic Front (SDF), which ruled the state for 25 years in a row till 2019, could manage only one seat, while its president and former CM Pawan Kumar Chamling, who is Chief Minister Prem Singh Tamang's mentor-turned-adversary, lost in the two seats he contested. The 73-year-old eight-term legislator will not be seen in the assembly for the first time since 1985. Tamang, however, won from two seats, and his party bagged 58.38 per cent of the votes polled. The SKM had won 17 seats in the 2019 assembly polls. The Prime Minister hailed Tamang and the SKM for the victory. (With inputs from PTI)

Delhi CM Kejriwal surrenders

temple in Connaught Place and addressed workers and leaders of the AAP before surrendering. Kejriwal's wife Sunita Kejriwal was seen accompanying him. AAP leaders, including Atishi, Kailash Gahlot and Saurabh Bharadwaj, Rajya Sabha MPs Sanjay Singh and Sandeep Pathak, and party leaders Durgesh Pathak, Rakhi Birla and Reena Gupta were also present. (PTI)

Cong, INDIA bloc trying

The BJP delegation urged the EC to ensure enhanced monitoring and security measures are put in place during counting of votes to prevent "any attempts at violence or unrest".

Earlier in the day, a delegation of opposition INDIA bloc leaders, including Congress's Abhishek Singhvi, met the commission and urged it to ensure that all the guidelines are followed on June 4, including declaring the postal-ballot results before the outcome of the EVMs is announced.

Union minister Goyal said, "I think the mandate given by the people of India both in 2014 and 2019, and the likely mandate of the 2024 general elections, expected on June 4, has unreservedly supported certain non-governmental organisations, so called civil society groups, who can not accept a popular leader of the masses who has delivered for the wellbeing of 1.4 billion Indians." Exit polls on Saturday predicted that Prime Minister Modi will retain power for a third straight term, with the BJP-led NDA expected to win a big majority in the Lok Sabha polls.

Termining the exit polls "bogus", the Congress on Sunday said they were a "deliberate attempt to justify rigging" of the elections and part of "psychological games" being played by Prime Minister Narendra Modi to lower the morale of the INDIA bloc workers. Former Congress president Rahul Gandhi dubbed the exit polls as "Modi media poll". (PTI)

Exit polls 'bogus, 'deliberate

the ruling alliance and 152-182 seats for the INDIA bloc. Slamming the exit polls, Ramesh said that in some states the NDA has been given more seats than the number of seats available in that state. "It flies in the face of all political feedback. The INDIA 'janbandhan' parties met yesterday, we went through state-wise analysis and there is no way INDIA janbandhan is going to get less than 295 seats," Ramesh said.

"This is a deliberate attempt to justify rigging, this is a deliberate attempt to justify manipulation of EVMs and this is also psychological ops to lower the morale of the Congress workers and the INDIA janbandhan workers. We are not going to be frightened, we are not going to be intimidated and you will see that the actual results on June 4 will be completely different from what these exit polls show," the Congress general secretary said. These are political exit polls and not professional exit polls, he added.

Ramesh pointed out that Congress treasurer and senior leader Ajay Maken has raised the issue of candidates' counting agents at the Assistant Returning Officer (ARO) table not being allowed. "He (Maken) has raised this issue, there has been some response from the CEO of Delhi but the fact of the matter is that he raised this issue based on legitimate fears that had been expressed by the candidates. We have raised the issue of the counting of postal ballots and the effort of the Election Commission to change the methodology that has been part of the law," Ramesh said. He said the Congress has raised all such issues before the poll watchdog and had filed 117 complaints to it over the last 77 days, 14 of which are against the PM. (PTI)

CID, forensic experts to probe

who visited the victim's residence, also assured of stern action, claiming that there was evidence that Gogoi was killed. "Visited the residence of late Sunil Gogoi who has been brutally killed by unknown criminals last night. He was a popular and bold leader of BJP. Visited the crime site which bears proof of pre planned ghastly murder," he said. Pegu added that he has spoken to chief minister Himanta Biswa Sarma over the matter and requested him to ensure speedy investigation to nab the culprits. (PTI)

Pijush Hazarika visits flood-

this endeavor, emphasising that the dam will be vital for their protection and welfare. "I have instructed the engineers and officials of the Public Works Department and Water Resources Department to initiate the preliminary steps for the dam's construction, with the support of local MLAs and the District Administration," he added. Accompanying Hazarika were Ramkrishna Ghosh, Local MLA, Lachit Kumar Das, district commissioner, the superintendent of police, BJP district president, and several other officials.

Meanwhile, as per officials, the flood situation in Assam remained unchanged with more than six lakh people in 10 districts reeling under waters. Heavy rains in different parts of the state led to the swelling of river water level, forcing affected people in many areas to evacuate to safety.

Kopili, Barak and Kushiyara rivers were flowing over the danger level. Altogether 6,01,642 people in Hailakandi Hojai, Morigaon, Karimganj, Nagaon, Cachar, Dibrugarh, Golaghat, Karbi Anglong West and Dima Hasao districts remained affected due to the floods. The death toll in floods and storm since May 28 is at 15, the officials said. Nagaon remained the worst-hit district with over 2.79 affected population, followed by Hojai (1,26,813 affected population) and Cachar (1,12,265). More than 40,000 displaced people were taking shelter in relief camps across various districts. Rescue and relief operations were being carried out by multiple agencies, including NDRF, SDRF, local administration and people. Road and rail communication in several parts of the state remained disrupted, officials said. (With inputs from PTI)

Ensure postal ballots counted first,

given a go-by. They have repealed the practice," he added. In a letter to the EC, the leaders said the number of postal ballots has gone up significantly in this Lok Sabha election as senior citizens (aged 85 years and above) and differently-abled persons were allowed to cast their votes through this process.

They quoted various rules and guidelines of the EC, including provisions of the Conduct of Election Rules, 1961 and Handbook for Returning Officer and Counting Agents (August 2023), that said the counting of postal ballots shall be done first.

Another letter, signed by 13 opposition leaders, including Congress president Mallikarjun Kharge, Nationalist Congress Party (SP) president Sharad Pawar and CPI(M) general secretary Sitaram Yechury, said even as political parties have put in a lot of effort to train their counting agents, the counting officials often fail to fully understand all aspects of the counting process. Elaborating on the opposition's demands, Yechury said the leaders have requested the EC to ensure that its own guidelines are implemented. The guidelines include ensuring that the control units of the EVMs are moved through CCTV-monitored corridors and a verification of the date-and-time display of the control units is done.

"This verification is important because unless it is done, there is no authenticity that it is the same control unit that came from the polling booth, that it has not been changed," he said. The Communist Party of India (Marxist) leader also said the start and end time and the date of the polling process should be checked on the control unit.

"The slips and tags that are put when an EVM is sealed should be shown to all the counting agents for verification. After pressing the button for the results, reconfirming the date of polling is not done... that has to be ensured," he said. The opposition parties have asked their agents to monitor the vote-counting process closely on Tuesday and ensure that form 17C, which contains the number of votes recorded at each polling station, is shared with them. Polling for the seven-phase parliamentary election was concluded on Saturday. (PTI)

Undercurrent in favour of

us in Assam. Although I will not say the number I will assure you that both vote percentage and seat will increase for the Congress in the state," he added. Meanwhile, the senior Congress leader also said that the fight against the BJP will continue till the saffron party is ousted from power in the state.

Union minister Sonowal stresses

the social life of Assam," he added. The Union minister stressed the significance of mastering global knowledge through modern technology, underscoring the need for continuous learning and adaptation in today's competitive world. The event served as a platform to celebrate the achievements of meritorious students while reaffirming the commitment to nurturing the youth as the driving force behind India's progress.

GST collection rises 10% to ₹ 1.73 trn in May on higher revenues

NEW DELHI, June 2: The country's gross GST collections rose to ₹ 1.73 trillion in May, growing 10 per cent year on year driven by increased revenues from domestic transactions, the finance ministry said on Saturday. GST collections had touched a record high of ₹ 2.10 trillion last month.

"The gross Goods and Services Tax (GST) revenue for the month of May 2024 stood at ₹ 1.73 trillion," the ministry said in a statement.

The 10 per cent year-on-year growth in May collection is driven by a strong increase in revenues from domestic transactions (up 15.3 per cent) amid slowing of imports (down 4.3 per cent).

After accounting for refunds, the net GST revenue for May 2024 stood at ₹ 1.44 trillion, reflecting a growth of 6.9 per cent compared to the same period last year.

The gross GST collections in FY25 till May 2024 stood at ₹ 3.83 trillion, which is a 11.3 per cent year-on-year growth, driven by a strong increase in domestic transactions (up 14.2 per cent) and marginal increase in imports (up 1.4 per cent). After accounting for refunds, the net GST revenue in the FY 2024-25 till May 2024 stood at ₹ 3.36 trillion, reflecting a growth of 11.6 per cent compared to the same period last year. (PTI)

Monetary policy: RBI unlikely to cut interest rate on June 7, say experts

NEW DELHI, June 2: Reserve Bank of India (RBI) is unlikely to cut the benchmark interest rate at its upcoming monetary policy review meeting, taking place soon after the announcement of the Lok Sabha election results, amid inflation challenges, said experts.

The Monetary Policy Committee (MPC) may also refrain from rate cut as economic growth is picking up, notwithstanding the elevated interest rate of 6.5 per cent (repo) prevailing since February 2023. The meeting of the Reserve Bank Governor Shaktikanta Das headed MPC is scheduled for June 5 to 7. The decision will be announced on June 7 (Friday). Results of the Lok Sabha elections will be announced on June 4.

The central bank last hiked the repo rate to 6.5 per cent in February 2023 and since then it has held the rate at same level in its previous six bi-monthly policies.

If the interest rate remains untouched again on June 7, it would be the eighth time for the RBI to maintain the status quo on the benchmark repo rate.

On expectations from the June policy, Madan Sabnavis, Chief Economist, Bank of Baroda, said economic conditions have largely remained unchanged since the last policy. High-frequency indicators like PMI and GST collections do show that growth is on course.

He further said concerns on inflation remain even though the last couple of numbers have come at less than 5 per cent. The ongoing heat wave has affected prices of vegetables in particular and while the IMD has predicted a normal monsoon, it would be prudent to

wait and monitor how it progresses.

"Under these conditions, a status quo on policy rate and stance may be expected. It would be interesting to see, however, if RBI changes forecasts of GDP and inflation for FY25," Sabnavis opined.

Sanjay Nayar, President of industry body Assocham, too said the central bank is expected to keep the repo rate unchanged in the ensuing MPC meeting as retail inflation remains above the target of 4 per cent.

"Though inflation has started receding, the macros would become clearer only after the monsoon season plays out in September. To get a sustainable balance between cyclical consumption-driven growth and inflation, investment growth to propel the supply side...." he added. The government has mandated the Reserve Bank to ensure the consumer price index (CPI) based inflation remains at 4 per cent with a margin of 2 per cent on either side.

The retail inflation based on the Consumer Price Index (CPI) was 4.83 per cent in April this year.

Aditi Nayar, Chief Economist, ICRA, said the recent inflation data and the outlook for prices of food and commodities had suggested a status quo on the rates and stance in the upcoming June 2024 monetary policy review.

"This has been further cemented by the higher-than-forecast expansion in the Indian economy in Q4 FY2024, which led to the full year GDP growth printing above 8 per cent. As a result, the likelihood of a stance change in August 2024



followed by a rate cut in October 2024 has eased, unless an abundantly well distributed monsoon quells food prices in a sustainable fashion," she added.

The MPC is entrusted with the responsibility of deciding the policy repo rate to achieve the inflation target, keeping in mind the objective of growth.

Ranen Banerjee, Partner and Leader Economic Advisory, PwC India, opined that given the uncertainty and risks on the inflation front, commodity prices and oil prices trending higher, the MPC will be constrained to have a status quo on the policy rates.

"There is no urgency on rate action too as the growth is sustaining and the US economic data also suggests that the US Fed will not cut rates before October 2024. The yields have softened without any rate action given the expected lower borrowings by the government from the high dividends from RBI," he said.

There could however be some action by way of reduction in the CRR given the liquidity challenges, Banerjee added. Manish

Jaiswal, Group COO, Eldeco, also expects the RBI to keep the repo rate steady at the forthcoming monetary policy meeting.

"This policy aims to stabilize the real estate market, make homes more affordable, and sustain growth. Stable home loan rates improve consumer confidence and enable more informed investment decisions. This favourable environment enables us to launch new projects and encourages buyers to invest confidently, thereby driving real estate sector growth and contributing to India's economic progress," he said.

The MPC consists of three external members and three officials of the RBI. External members of the rate-setting panel are Shashanka Bhide, Ashima Goyal, and Jayanth R Varma. In an off-cycle meeting in May 2022, the MPC raised the policy rate by 40 basis points and it was followed by rate hikes of varying sizes, in each of the five subsequent meetings till February 2023. The repo rate was raised by 250 basis points cumulatively between May 2022 and February 2023. (PTI)

Nagaon flood claims life of man

HT Correspondent

NAGAON, June 2: The flood situation in Nagaon district persisted unchanged on Sunday. It is reported that more than 150 villages within the Kampur, Nagaon, and Raha revenue circles are submerged in floodwaters as of the time of reporting.

According to sources, the Nagaon district administration has established over 25 relief camps across various locations in these three revenue circles. The fresh flood has affected over 2.5 lakh people in the district by Sunday. While the water levels in Kapili and Borpani rivers have slightly decreased, the Nishari river remains at a high level.

Tragically, on Sunday, a man named Dilip Das (45) lost his life near Kekuribari under the Kampur revenue circle. He was swept away by the overflowing Nishari river while observing the flood situation in the area, as per reports. In response, the SDRF and fire service personnel initiated an immediate search operation and later recovered his body.

The untimely demise of Dilip Das has enveloped the greater Kampur areas in sadness on Sunday afternoon.

Event featuring career counseling session lauded by dignitaries like Hrishikesh Goswami and minister Sanjoy Kishan

ATTSA honours academic excellence among tea tribes students in Tinsukia

HT Correspondent

MARGHERITA, June 2: Assam Tea Tribes Student Association (ATTSA) Tinsukia District Executive Committee on Sunday organised a grand felicitation and career counseling program at Margherita College, where more than 250 students belonging to the Tea Tribes community of Tinsukia district were felicitated for securing first-division marks in the recently declared HSLC and HS Examinations.

The program began with the hoisting of the association flag, which was unfurled by Jagat Nayak, president of Assam Tea Tribes Student Association Tinsukia Executive Committee, followed by 'smriti tarpan' conducted by Anuj Tanti, general secretary, and Umesh Jaal, assistant secretary of ATTSA Tinsukia District Executive Committee.

Afterward, a career counseling program was held at Margherita College Auditorium, with more than 250 students in attendance. A lengthy discussion regarding their career paths took place in the presence of ATTSA Tinsukia District Executive Committee president



and general secretary, Jagat Nayak, and Anuj Tanti.

Hrishikesh Goswami, former chief minister Sarbananda Sonowal's media advisor, was present as the keynote speaker, along with chief guests Sanjoy Kishan, Assam Government Tea Tribes and Labour Welfare minister, Margherita College principal Dr Atonu Kakoty, Assam Tea Tribe Student Association Central Executive Committee general secretary Jagdish Baraik, Margherita

sub-divisional police officer Sambhavi Mishra (IPS), and many other resourceful and distinguished individuals from Margherita sub-division.

Hrishikesh Goswami, the keynote speaker, emphasised that without education, no community can develop. He noted that the Tea Tribes students of Assam are now passing their exams with flying colours, which is a positive sign of development.

"Only education can bring ref-

ormation," he added, "bank balances, luxurious vehicles, and high living standards are temporary, but if one is educated, not only that individual but the entire society and nation will prosper."

Sanjoy Kishan, minister for Labour and Tea Welfare in the state government, expressed his appreciation for Tea Tribes students' academic achievements, acknowledging the sacrifices made by their parents for these results.

"After 77 years of our country's independence, significant development work has taken place in the tea garden areas of Assam," he remarked, crediting the construction of model schools, high schools, and higher secondary schools to the leadership of chief minister Himanta Biswa Sarma.

The entire program was moderated by Anuj Tanti, general secretary of ATTSA Tinsukia District Executive Committee.

Lumding-Silchar hills train services resume after five day hiatus



HT Bureau

GUWAHATI, June 2: Train services on the Lumding-Silchar Hills section have resumed, returning to normal after a five-day suspension caused by torrential rain and landslides triggered by Cyclone 'Remal'. The suspension severed rail connections between the Barak Valley and the states of Tripura, Manipur, and Mizoram, isolating the Dima Hasao district from the rest of the state.

The restoration of services brought relief to passengers in the Barak Valley and neighbouring states. The first north-eastern link train departed from Lumding and passed through New Haflong sta-

tion at 6:00 pm, heading towards Badarpur. Subsequently, the Sealdah-Agartala Express left New Haflong station for Agartala at 6:30 pm. Additionally, the special Kanchenjunga Express train from Guwahati to Agartala departed at 1:00 pm.

Even though train services resumed on the hill section, the North Eastern Frontier Railway authorities canceled all passenger trains from Silchar on Saturday and Sunday due to flooding at Silchar railway station. Railway authorities had been working tirelessly to restore the services after the landslides disrupted train operations between Lumding and Badarpur.

Pre-yoga awareness session held



HT Correspondent

PALASBARI, June 2: Aiming to raise awareness worldwide of the many benefits of practicing yoga, a pre-yoga awareness program was organised at Lokpriya Gopinath Bordoloi International Airport in Guwahati on Sunday.

The program was held between 7:00 am to 8:30 am. The yoga session was led by Bhagan Murmu, a yoga expert and a senior employee of the Central Security Force. The event was attended by chief airport officer Utpal Baruah, commandant of the Central Security Force, Lal-mohan Thakur, and more than 100 people from GIAL & CISF.

Crowdfunding efforts facilitate medical care



HT Correspondent

BISWANATH CHARIALI, June 2: Ankur Nath, a ten-year-old resident of Killingmukh, Borbheti village under Sootea PS, suffered an electric shock at Killingmukh Anganwadi center on May 29 and was immediately rushed to Biswanath Chariali sub-divisional hospital. Due to the severity of his condition, he was referred to TMCH, Tezpur, for advanced medical care. Despite treatment, his recovery was slow, prompting medical staff at TMCH to advise his family to seek further treatment in Guwahati. However, being underprivileged, the family lacked the means to travel to Guwahati.

In this dire situation, Uttam Kumar Nath, secretary of Sootea Press Club and a local journalist, initiated a crowdfunding campaign through his news portal Sootea 24x7 to assist the family. His plea resonated with many, including the circle officer of Naduar revenue circle, local employees, and other community members, who generously contributed to the cause. With the funds collected, Ankur was successfully transported to Guwahati for treatment.

Ankur's condition is reported to be stable and showing signs of improvement. The timely intervention by journalist Nath has garnered praise from the community for his compassionate initiative.

PHE contractor Manab Hazarika earns accolades as best performer

HT Correspondent

BISWANATH CHARIALI, June 2: Manab Hazarika, a resident of Sootea and a first-class contractor of the Assam Public Health Engineering Department (Road) and PWD (Home), has been recognised as the best contractor by the department under the jurisdiction of the sub-divisional office of the PHE, Biswanath. Manab, who secured the contract for the construction work of water supply at Kachari part 2 of Selaikhati in the northwestern part of Biswanath with an amount of ₹ 20 lakhs, 35 thousand, and 23 rupees under the Jal Jeevan Mission, accomplished his contract work within 6 months and provided water to 180 families with home connections.

The sub-divisional office of the Assam Public Health Engineering Department, Biswanath, organised a felicitation program in the office premises on Sunday and honoured Manab Hazarika with a citation, gamosa, and recognition as the best contractor.

Biswanath MLA Pramod Borthakur and the officials of the department accorded him the felicitation. The event was attended by officials, contractors, and office bearers.

Nagaon pays tribute to Ranjit Kumar Nath

HT Correspondent

NAGAON, June 2: Nagaon Nagorik Somaj organised a special commemorative programme to pay homage to noted lawyer and academician Lt Ranjit Kumar Nath on Sunday at Nagaon Swahid Bhavan.

The programme was chaired by social activist Purnakanta Baruah, and noted Assamese storyteller Sibananda Kakoti delivered a brief note on the prospect of the programme and also highlighted the life and contributions of Lt Ranjit Kumar Nath towards the society of the small town here. Former district administrator Chandra Mohan Kakoti, litterateur and intellectual Prabbhat Bora, senior advocate of Nagaon Bar Association Niranjan Sarma, Aalok Goswami, senior physician Dr Mukut Goswami, Dr Harendra Baruah, sports organiser Pradeep Hazarika, Amio Hazarika, Divya Prasad Bora, Tribauct Weigelt, a noted lawyer as well as the only son-in-law of Lt Ranjit Kumar Nath, and Mukul Prasad Borthakur also spoke on the occasion and recollected his works and contributions to the fields of education, arts, and culture of the town. Over a hundred dignitaries of the town attended the programme and paid homage to Lt Ranjit Kumar Nath during the commemorative programme. The programme came to an end with a vote of thanks by advocate Mukul Prasad Borthakur.

Dima Hasao district admin gears up for vote counting

HT Bureau

GUWAHATI, June 2: The Dima Hasao district administration is making final preparations for the counting of votes scheduled for June 4. During a press conference on Friday, district commissioner and district election officer Seemanta Kumar Das assured that the administration is fully prepared for the process.

Votes from five assembly constituencies within the Diphu Lok Sabha constituency will be counted in Karbi Anglong and West Karbi Anglong. Specifically, the counting of votes for the Haflong Assembly constituency will commence at 8:00 am on June 4 at the District Commissioner's Office.

Commissioner Das detailed that the counting for the Haflong constituency will occur over 19 rounds on 14 tables. The administration has already appointed a supervisor and two micro-observers to oversee the process, ensuring accuracy and transparency.

Commissioner Das also emphasised the importance of co-operation from the press. Journalists who have received identity cards from the Election



Commission of India will have access to a media center located below the counting hall, equipped with all necessary facilities to disseminate information to the public efficiently.

This robust preparation underscores the district administration's commitment to a smooth and transparent vote-counting process, essential for maintaining public trust in the electoral system.

African Swine Fever outbreak prompts culling of pigs in Jorhat

HT Correspondent

JORHAT, June 2: The Animal Husbandry and Veterinary Department carried out culling of pigs on Sunday at the number 9 Line Naginjan Tea Estate under Selenghat Development Block, Mariani, in Jorhat district. The entire area was declared the epicenter of African Swine Fever (ASF) by the Jorhat district commissioner on May 31, following several cases of pig deaths due to the disease in recent times.

It may be mentioned here that six villages within a one km radius around the epicenter were designated as the 'Infected Zone', and 26 villages falling within a 10 km radius were designated as the 'Surveillance Zone' by the DC in the order passed on Friday, imposing several restrictions in both zones.

A Jorhat district animal husbandry and veterinary official stated on Sunday evening that a total of 18 pigs were culled within the 1 km radius of the epicenter with the assistance of a 3-member team from Guwahati.

The team utilised a painless technique (electric shock) to euthanise the pigs, which were then buried in a large pit dug by an excavator, with chemicals used to sanitise the area. A sign was placed indicating that no activities should be carried out at the burial site.

The official mentioned that initially, the team faced resistance from pig owners, compounded by bad weather, as they were unwilling to have their pigs culled. However, after much persuasion and assurances of compensation as per government norms, they agreed to the culling.

Sivasagar DIPRO office faces neglect, infrastructure in peril

HT Correspondent

SIVASAGAR, June 2: In an era where most government offices boast modern facilities and cutting-edge technology, the Sivasagar DIPRO office presents a stark contrast. Surprisingly, the administration appears completely indifferent to the sorry state of the infrastructure of this important department despite repeated media reports over the years.

The six-decade-old building on the southern bank of the historic Sivasagar tank may crumble down at any moment, as the whole structure is in ruins. The three employees of the department - one fourth-grade employee, one driver, and another technical assistant - may face serious consequences if it collapses during office hours. The building has not been repaired for many years; the ceilings, part of the walls, and window panes have caved in, and the worn-out furniture and interiors are all exposed to the elements. Whenever it rains, the rainwater seeps in, drenching files, computers, and furnishings, forcing employees to hastily relocate to drier areas.

Meanwhile, the DIPRO Jayanta Mout, now serving as liaison officer to Revenue minister Jogen Mohan, neglects his duties within the department. The assistant commissioner, Kankana Saikia, shoulders the additional responsibility of managing the DIPRO office. With only three staff members instead of the allocated nine, the department struggles to effectively communicate government programs to local media personnel, highlighting a significant gap in its operations.

NFR transforms wasteland into eco-friendly park in Guwahati

HT Bureau
GUWAHATI, June 2: As part of its commitment to sustainability, Northeast Frontier Railway has reclaimed a wasteland and constructed a park named Sirisha Rail Udyaan in its place at BG Colony, Maligaon. NF Railway always initiates efforts to protect the environment and preserve the planet for future generations.

The newly constructed Sirisha Rail Udyaan was previously a wasteland area. Due to waterlogging and garbage dumping, the place was almost abandoned and unhygienic for the nearby residents. The area was unsightly, and the foul odour made life difficult for people in the vicinity. NF Railway reclaimed the wasteland and constructed a park for the local community. The park covers an area of approximately fifty-five



hundred square meters and offers modern facilities such as walking and running tracks for people of all ages, seating arrangements, a lawn area, and an open gym. Additionally, the park features separate washrooms for men and women. The walls of the park are painted to impart knowledge about the nature and cultural history of Assam. In addition to a children's

play area, solar LED lamps have been installed, and the park includes a beautiful pond with two water fountains.

Residents of the locality have appreciated this initiative by NF Railway, as they no longer have to deal with garbage, flies, and mosquitoes. Since the transformation of the water body into a park, everything has changed in the

area; children play, and people come here for walks. NF Railway is consistently engaged in protecting the environment by planting trees at various locations. This strategic commitment aims to enhance green cover in and around the zone, contributing to the beauty of the area and supporting biodiversity and sustainable development.

Tribute to Rajiv Lochan Borthakur (Jijida)

On that warm summer night, you left us all stunned and still. When the wind carried the truth to far-away corners, we all rushed to you to see your eyes beaming with so much warmth and hope. But you've gone beyond the vales, hills, and seas to the yonder sun. Your loving eyes now shine bright in the corners of our hearts. We will never let them dim in life, Jijida.

We all loved you greatly for your passion for life, work, fun, wit, and music. You built up your life from scratch, established yourself, and never craved anyone's help. Never in a fuss over anything, your cool demeanor endeared everyone around. From Khagen Mahanta's melodies echoing through your voice to the uproarious laughter evoked by your antics on the Jorhat Dhapkata Yajna Mandir stage, you left an indelible mark on all who witnessed your artistry.

On this day of remembrance, as we perform your Addyashrad-dha, our prayers ascend to Lord Shiva, beseeching him to bless your soul with eternal happiness.
- Manoj Kumar Borthakur (BulBul)
AT Road, Sivasagar

Senior forest official passes away

HT Correspondent

KOKRAJHAR, June 2: Brahmananda Patiri, a senior forest official in the Forest Department, Government of Assam, passed away on Sunday.

He was admitted to Nemcare Hospital, Guwahati, on Saturday after feeling unwell during a meeting in Guwahati and breathed his last on Sunday morning. He was serving as the divisional forest officer (DFO) of Chirang division in Chirang district.

Notably, Patiri was a well-educated and well-read person, associated with cultural and literary activities. People from various communities have extended their deep condolences and are mourning the demise of Patiri.

Meritorious achievers applauded

HT Correspondent

DEMOW, June 2: Under the patronage of the All Adivasi Students Association of Assam (AASAA), Demow Regional Committee, in association with the Primary Committees, felicitated meritorious students who passed with flying colors in the HSLC and HS Final Examination 2024 on Sunday. The felicitation program was held in the auditorium of N-Santiya Bhawan (Demow Alun Nagar) on Sunday. Lalit Tanti, president of AASAA, Demow Regional Committee, presided over the meeting, while Kamal Bhumij, general secretary of AASAA, Demow Regional Committee, anchored the program. A total of 50 meritorious students were felicitated with phulam gamosa and citations. Gauranga Chaura, Tarun Kurmi, secretary of Chah Janajati Jatiya Sanmillani Sivasagar District Committee, Ajay Kumar Gogoi, professor at Moran Women College, David Bonia, former president of AASAA, Demow Regional Committee, along with other dignitaries, were present as chief guests.

Revolutionary methods for conquering the urge to smoke

By: Dipak Kurmi

Tobacco use poses significant health risks, a fact well-known to everyone. Despite this awareness, many tobacco users find themselves irresistibly drawn to it, unable to overcome the powerful cravings it induces.

In response to the rising global tobacco consumption, the WHO has designated May 31st as World No-Tobacco Day, an annual observance since 1987. Despite this initiative, many tobacco users find the urge to smoke nearly impossible to resist.

To combat these cravings, it's essential to remember that they

usually pass within 10 minutes, whether you give in or not. Let's delve into some innovative and effective strategies to help you resist the temptation to smoke or use tobacco when these cravings hit.

Consider Nicotine Replacement Therapy: This method includes several options such as nicotine nasal sprays or inhalers available by prescription, over-the-counter nicotine patches, gum, and lozenges, as well as prescription non-nicotine medications like bupropion (Wellbutrin SR, Wellbutrin XL) and varenicline. These fast-acting treatments can be safely combined with long-acting nicotine patches or non-nicotine cessa-



tion medications for enhanced effectiveness.

Avoid Triggers: Recognizing what prompts your urge to smoke is crucial. Tobacco crav-

ings are often strongest in situations where you typically smoke or chew tobacco, such as at parties, bars, during stressful moments, or when enjoying a cup

of coffee. Identify these triggers and create a strategy to steer clear of them.

Building Social Networks: Connecting with individuals who have successfully quit smoking and receiving their encouragement can provide significant psychological support for those currently trying to quit.

Harness the Power of Delay: When a tobacco craving hits, challenge yourself to delay indulging for 10 minutes. Use this time to distract yourself with other activities. Try moving to a smoke-free area nearby. These straightforward yet powerful strategies can help you overcome the urge.

Redirect Your Chewing

Urges: Give your mouth something else to do to combat tobacco cravings. Chew on sugar-free gum, enjoy a piece of hard candy, or munch on raw carrots, nuts, or sunflower seeds to keep yourself distracted.

Don't Fall for the "Just One" Trap: It's tempting to think that smoking just one cigarette will satisfy your craving. However, don't trick yourself into believing that stopping at one is enough. Usually, smoking one cigarette will only lead to wanting another.

Tap into the Benefits of Exercise: Engaging in physical activity can effectively distract you from tobacco cravings. Even short bursts of movement,

like going up and down stairs or taking a brisk walk or jog, can help diminish the urge to smoke.

Quitting smoking is a significant step towards better health, and there are various innovative methods available to suit individual preferences. Some may opt for nicotine replacement therapy, while others may choose to quit abruptly.

Support groups can also provide valuable assistance to those looking to quit. Regardless of the approach, patience and perseverance are key, as quitting smoking is challenging but undoubtedly worthwhile for your well-being. *(The writer can be reached at dipakkurmipltd@gmail.com)*

Understanding sudden cardiac death and preventative measures

By: Dr Bimal Chhajjar

Sudden cardiac death has garnered significant attention, and there is an urgent need to shed light on this pressing issue and raise awareness among the public. Far too often, individuals succumb to this silent threat without any warning, leaving families and communities devastated. While events such as natural disasters capture the news, sudden cardiac death demands equal if not greater attention.

Unlike accidents, which can happen within moments, sudden cardiac death is often a result of heart-related conditions. The leading cause of Sudden Cardiac Death is heart disease, particularly blockages in the heart's arteries.

Shockingly, about 95% of adults who suffer from sudden cardiac death have these blockages. When these blockages restrict blood flow to the heart, it can trigger

a heart attack, ultimately leading to sudden cardiac death.

Several other factors can also contribute to sudden cardiac death, including accidental incidents, intense physical exercise, excessive alcohol consumption, and drug overdoses. However, it is important to highlight that the majority of cases are closely associated with heart disease.

The heart's arteries play a critical role in supplying blood to different parts of this vital organ.

Among these arteries, the left artery is responsible for providing blood to around 70% of the heart. Blockages in this artery can lead to a severe heart attack, culminating in sudden cardiac death.

Preventive measures are of utmost importance, particularly for individuals with a history of heart disease or those with risk factors such as high cholesterol, high blood pressure, diabetes, smoking, obesity, or a family history of heart disease. Regu-

lar check-ups, including coronary angiography, can effectively identify blockages and potential risks, enabling timely interventions and treatments.

Sudden cardiac death is a serious concern that demands our attention. Understanding the risk factors and prioritizing regular check-ups can significantly reduce the likelihood of this unfortunate event.

Embracing a healthy lifestyle, engaging in regular exercise, and managing risk factors can collectively protect our hearts and decrease the risk of sudden cardiac death.

Our mission should be to educate and empower individuals to adopt healthier lifestyles, preventing cardiac incidents and urge the people to spread awareness about sudden cardiac death to help save lives.

Remember, knowledge is power, and together, we can combat this silent threat and ensure a healthier future for all. *(The author is the Director, SAAOL Heart Centre)*

What are the different types of stroke?

By: Zawn Villines

A stroke occurs when there is a sudden disruption to the blood and oxygen supply to a part of the brain. Most strokes are ischemic strokes. They occur when a blockage prevents adequate blood flow to the brain cells.

Around 10-20% of strokes are hemorrhagic strokes. About half of all hemorrhagic strokes are subarachnoid hemorrhages, when bleeding occurs around the brain. The other half are intracerebral brain hemorrhages, when bleeding occurs inside the brain. A person may also experience a transient ischemic attack (TIA), or ministroke. These usually last only a few minutes, but can be a warning sign of a major stroke to follow.

This article looks at the different types of stroke. It will also explore what causes each type of stroke, the potential symptoms of each, and some treatment options.

What is FAST, and what are the symptoms of a stroke?

Ischemic stroke
A person may have a stroke when there is a sudden disruption to the blood and oxygen supply to the brain.

An ischemic stroke is the most common type of stroke. It occurs when a clot in a blood vessel interferes with adequate blood flow to the brain. This can happen when a person has atherosclerosis, for example.

A blood clot that travels from the heart or the carotid arteries to a blood vessel in the brain may also cause an ischemic stroke.

Symptoms
Symptoms of an ischemic stroke include:

- sudden numbness in any area of the body
- weakness on one side of the body
- drooping on one side of the face due to hemifacial paralysis
- vision changes in one field of vision, for example, the left side of both eyes
- dizziness or a loss of coordination
- balance problems and difficulty walking
- confusion
- a sudden, very intense "thunderclap" headache with no known cause

Risk factors
Anyone can have an ischemic stroke, but certain groups have a higher risk. Some risk factors include:

- being female, as females live longer and are therefore more likely to live long enough to have a stroke
- high blood pressure
- high cholesterol
- untreated diabetes
- having atherosclerosis, when fatty plaques build up in the walls of arteries
- smoking
- a high alcohol intake
- limited exercise
- being over the age of 65
- having atrial fibrillation (A-fib), a heart condition that causes a rapid or irregular heart rate
- having vasculitis, a type of blood vessel inflammation

Treatment
There is currently no cure for ischemic stroke. Instead, urgent treatment focuses on removing the clot and preventing further brain damage.

The first line of treatment ideally includes a tissue plasminogen activator (TPA) or alteplase. Administering this treatment through a vein in the arm can help quickly dissolve the blood clot and improve blood flow to the affected area of the brain.

In some situations, it may be necessary to surgically dissolve or remove the clot using a pro-

cedure called a thrombectomy.

Thrombectomy works best within 6 hours of stroke symptoms appearing, but it may improve outcomes up to 24 hours after a stroke.

During the first few days after an ischemic stroke, doctors will provide care that aims to reduce the likelihood of permanent damage, such as:

- fluid management
- blood pressure management
- glucose management
- anti-inflammatory medication, in some cases

A person will receive this care whether or not they have TPA or a clot removal.

A doctor may also give blood thinners, such as heparin, if the time window for TPA or surgical intervention has passed or if it is not suitable for the individual.

What are the first-line medications for a stroke?

Recovery
To help a person regain functioning and cope with the stress of having a stroke, they may need a variety of supportive treatments. These may include:

- speech therapy
- occupational therapy
- physical therapy
- psychological therapy

A doctor may also recommend making certain lifestyle changes, such as reducing the fat in their diet or exercising more often, to reduce the risk of experiencing another stroke.

Hemorrhagic stroke
A hemorrhagic stroke occurs when a blood vessel either ruptures or leaks, causing bleeding into the brain. The blood that accumulates from the bleed compresses the surrounding brain tissue.

Like other strokes, a hemorrhagic stroke can cause rapid tissue death.

Symptoms
The symptoms of a hemorrhagic stroke are similar to those of an ischemic stroke and include:

- numbness
- loss of function, especially on one side of the body
- drooping on one side of the face
- trouble speaking
- loss of consciousness
- confusion
- severe headache
- seizure

Risk factors
Two possible causes of hemorrhagic stroke are aneurysms and arteriovenous malformations (AVMs). An aneurysm is an enlarged, ballooning blood vessel. This change in a blood vessel's size and shape increases the risk of it rupturing and bleeding. Many people with aneurysms do not have symptoms, and most aneurysms will appear after the age of 40.

An aneurysm can be congenital or hereditary, or it may result from risk factors such as:

- high blood pressure
 - smoking
 - a high alcohol intake
 - using drugs, such as cocaine
 - being female
 - head trauma or traumatic brain injury
- An AVM, on the other hand, is a misshapen blood vessel. An AVM is usually present from birth. The misshapen blood vessel may rupture or bleed, causing a hemorrhagic stroke.

Transient ischemic attack
A transient ischemic attack

(TIA), sometimes called a ministroke, is similar to an ischemic stroke because it temporarily blocks blood flow to the brain. Treatment aims to prevent a recurrence, as a person who experiences a TIA has a higher risk of a major stroke in the future.

Symptoms
TIAs may cause symptoms similar to those of an ischemic stroke, including:

- confusion
- trouble walking
- drooping on one side of the face

• tingling or numbness
However, the symptoms tend to be less severe and last just a few minutes. Unlike an ischemic stroke, a TIA resolves on its own, when the clot either moves or dissolves.

Risk factors
The risk factors for a TIA are the same as those for an ischemic stroke and include:

- being older
- smoking
- getting little exercise
- having cardiovascular disease
- having A-fib

TIAs occur before about 15% of strokes. This means that many people who experience a TIA will experience an ischemic stroke in the future.

Prevention
A person who has a TIA should talk with a doctor about lifestyle changes, medications, and other treatment options that can reduce the risk of experiencing another stroke.

Other types of stroke
When a health professional cannot determine the cause of disrupted blood flow to the brain, they call it a "cryptogenic" stroke. A doctor may make this diagnosis if extensive tests have not shown any stroke risk factors. The symptoms of a cryptogenic stroke are similar to those of other strokes. However, treatment can be challenging because there is no clear underlying risk or cause.

For this reason, a doctor may perform a wide variety of diagnostic tests. They may also recommend lifestyle changes to reduce the risk of experiencing another stroke.

Brain stem stroke
A brain stem stroke is not a specific type of stroke, but it is an ischemic or hemorrhagic stroke that occurs in the stem of the brain. It can cause complex symptoms and be difficult to diagnose.

Some symptoms of a brain stem stroke include:

- dizziness
- confusion
- numbness
- trouble walking

Most strokes cause symptoms on only one side of the body. Brain stem strokes, however, may cause symptoms on both sides of the body. In some cases, they may even lead to paralysis.

Treatment for a brain stem stroke will be the same as for other strokes. It aims to remove the clot or stop the bleeding, depending on the likely cause.

A brain stem stroke can also affect breathing, so emergency respiratory support may also be necessary.

Summary
Health professionals recommend using the acronym "FAST" to recognize and quickly intervene when someone is having a stroke. FAST stands for:

- F:** face drooping
 - A:** arm weakness
 - S:** speech difficulties
 - T:** time to seek emergency medical attention
- A stroke is a medical emergency. The person must begin treatment as soon as possible. *(Courtesy: Medical News Today)*

What are the effects on the body of running every day?

By: Jonathan Melville & Matthew Slater

Running is a great form of exercise that has numerous benefits for our health. For instance, people who consistently run at least an hour a week throughout their lives tend to live three years longer and have fewer chronic illnesses; compared with people who don't do any exercise.

But some people are taking their love of running up a notch – running every day for as many days in a row as possible. This trend is being referred to online as a "run streak". The rules of the run streak trend are simple: runners must complete a minimum of one mile (1.6km) every day, either on road, trail or the treadmill.

There are some remarkable streaks currently ongoing. Jim Taylor is said to have the longest streak among runners in Britain, having completed at least a mile a day for over 30 years. Globally, the longest streak is held by Jon Sutherland, a US runner who has reportedly run at least mile a day for over 50 years.

These are certainly incredible feats – but what are the effects on the body of running every day? Is it actually safe?

Whether you're an amateur or professional runner, in order to get fitter you need to follow a training regime that places just the right amount of stress on the body so it can adapt. This is usually done through low-intensity runs and interval training, followed by periods of rest.

When this cycle is consistently repeated over months, runners will notice many changes in their fitness. These include a 5%-10% improvement in maximal oxygen consumption (the maximum amount of oxygen the body can use and transport to its working muscles), reduced heart rate during low-intensity runs, and improved ability to use fat for energy.

All of these improvements help runners get faster or run further with less fa-

tigue.

But a key element to becoming a better runner is taking rest periods. This allows the joints and ligaments to recover from the stress that running places on them. Rest also permits the body to replenish carbohydrate stores in the muscles, ensuring the body has energy for subsequent training days. Rest days can also help improve a runner's recovery time between workouts.

But the nature of the run streak trend means there are no days off. This could have many potential pitfalls that runners should know about.

Continual training without adequate rest can cause many harms to the body. In extreme cases – such as ultra-endurance running – mild scarring of the heart can occur.

It can also weaken the immune system by reducing the function of immune cells. This can increase risk of respiratory infections and cause drastic changes in hormones, such as an up-to-40% reduction in adrenaline and testosterone. This may lead to poor recovery between runs and symptoms of overtraining – including changes in mood or muscle damage.

Runners must also be mindful of potential overuse injuries. These affect up to 70% of elite and recreational runners and could derail a run streak. One of the leading causes of overuse injuries is poor hip-muscle stabilisation in runners. This type of injury is more likely to happen as the training volume increases.

Safe way to run
To complete a run streak safely, pay attention to your training load – a combination of the volume, frequency and intensity of your workouts. It's pivotal to manage this – taking particular care with the intensity of your runs, since the frequency of training is daily and the duration of runs is at least one mile.

High-intensity runs – such as intense sprint intervals – place more stress on the body and take longer to recover from, compared with low-intensity runs.

per cent fewer deuterium atoms (a heavier and stable hydrogen variant) on average than the normal yeast cells, a startling change.

Cancerous cells exhibited a similar but not quite as strong shortage in deuterium," the researchers observed, according to a story on science news website Phys.org.

They tracked a chemical called nicotinamide adenine dinucleotide phosphate (NADPH), which is a reducing agent in anabolic reaction in cells. During synthesis of glucose, NADPH draws hydrogen and moves them to other molecules.

But the source of the hydrogen may be any of the element's isotopes. The metabolic origins of NADPH were found to differ to some extent in fast-growing cells and cancer cells, compared to healthy cells.

"Changes in NADPH demand associated with cellular biochemical composi-

tion are also recorded in lipid hydrogen isotope ratios," the researchers observed.

The researchers pulled the fatty acids from the cells under observation and used a mass spectrometer to identify the ratio of hydrogen atoms within, according to Phys.org.

"These results provide promising tools to characterise eukaryotic metabolism, thus helping to elucidate the role of NADPH in health and disease," the authors stated in their report.

Although the research is at a nascent stage, the findings are particularly important because it can help save many lives that are lost to cancer, merely because it was not diagnosed early enough. If the isotopic variation shows up in simple diagnostic processes like blood tests, it will ensure the disease has a better prognosis than what is observed in later stages, the researchers claimed. *(Courtesy: Down To Earth)*

Metabolic footprints of cancer cells may help in early diagnosis, shows study

By: Preetha Banerjee

A study of hydrogen atoms in cells may pave the path for early detection of cancer in people, a group of scientists has claimed.

Fast-growing cells such as cancer cells have a different balance of hydrogen atom variants than healthy cells, researchers from the University of Colorado Boulder and Princeton University found.

This "atomic marker" may serve as an indicator for detecting cancer in individuals before the disease advances, they claimed in the report published May 6, 2024 in the journal PNAS.

This tool, which is commonly used in geosciences, was derived from studying the metabolism of yeast cells and healthy and cancerous mouse liver cells.

"Fermenting yeast cells, the kind that resemble cancer, contained roughly 50

Chang'e-6 landed at the designated landing area at 6:23 am (Beijing Time) in the South Pole-Aitken (SPA) Basin for the first time in human history

China's Chang'e-6 successfully lands on rarely explored Moon's far side to collect samples

BELJING, June 2: A Chinese spacecraft successfully touched down on the far side of the Moon on Sunday, in the first endeavour of its kind to collect samples from this rarely explored terrain.

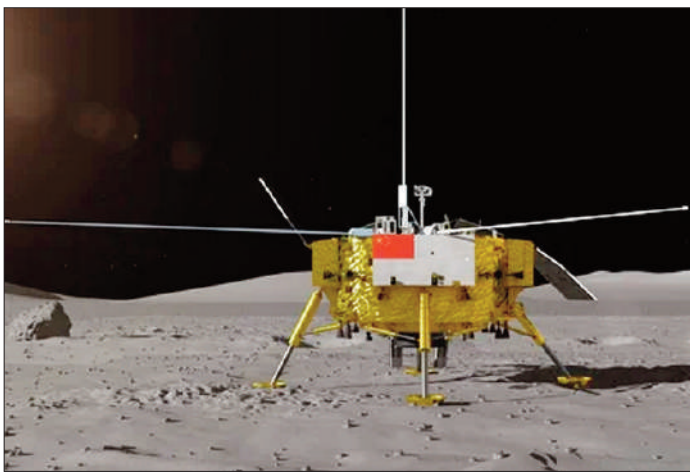
The Chang'e-6 landed at the designated landing area at 6:23 am (Beijing Time) in the South Pole-Aitken (SPA) Basin for the first time in human history, the China National Space Administration (CNSA) announced.

Chang'e-6 consists of an orbiter, a returner, a lander and an ascender. Since its launch on May 3 this year, it has gone through various stages such as Earth-Moon transfer, near-Moon braking, lunar orbiting and landing descent.

The lander-ascender combination separated from the orbiter-returner combination on May 30, the CNSA said. For the powered descent, regarded as the most complex manoeuvre, an autonomous visual obstacle avoidance system was used to automatically detect obstacles. A visible light camera selected a comparatively safe landing area based on the brightness and darkness of the lunar surface, state-run Xinhua news agency reported.

The Chang'e-6 mission is tasked with collecting and returning samples from the Moon's far side, the first endeavour of its kind.

India became the first country to land near the little-explored lunar



south pole region last year when its Chandrayaan-3's lander, carrying the Pragyaan rover successfully landed there. The Chang'e-6 landing site is at an impact crater known as the Apollo Basin, located within the SPA Basin.

The choice was made for the Apollo Basin's potential value of scientific exploration, as well as the conditions of the landing area, including communication and telemetry conditions and the flatness of the terrain, Huang Hao, a space expert from the China Aerospace Science and Technology Corporation (CASC) said.

The terrain on the far side of the Moon is more rugged than the near side, with fewer continuous flat

areas Huang told Xinhua.

However, the Apollo Basin is relatively flatter than other areas on the far side, which is conducive to landing. The lander is equipped with multiple sensors, including microwave, laser and optical imaging sensors which can measure distance and speed, and identify obstacles on the lunar surface, Huang said.

To prevent interference to optical sensors by lunar dust during landing, the lander is also equipped with gamma-ray sensors to accurately measure the height through particle rays, ensuring that the engine can be shut down on time and the lander can touch down smoothly on the lunar surface, he

added.

After the landing, the probe is scheduled to complete sampling within two days. It has adopted two methods of Moon sampling, which include using a drill to collect subsurface samples and grabbing samples on the surface with a robotic arm.

Due to the Moon's obstruction, the Earth-Moon communication window period on the far side of the Moon, even with the help of the Quejiao-2 relay satellite service, is still shorter than that on the near side. Therefore, the sampling time of Chang'e-6 will be reduced to about 14 hours, compared with the 22 hours used by its predecessor Chang'e-5, the report said.

The CNSA said earlier that the mission is poised to make breakthroughs in key technologies, such as automatic sample collection, take-off and ascent from the far side of the Moon. Meanwhile, the probe will carry out scientific exploration of the landing zone.

The CNSA announced that scientific instruments from France, Italy and the European Space Agency/Sweden will be on board the lander of the Chang'e-6 mission and a Pakistani payload on the orbiter.

This is the first time China has included an orbiter from its all-weather ally Pakistan in its Moon mission.

According to reports from Pakistan quoting the Institute of Space Technology (IST), the satellite ICUBE-Q has been designed and developed by IST in collaboration with Shanghai Jiao Tong University and Pakistan's national space agency Suparco.

The Chang'e lunar exploration probe is named after the Chinese mythical Moon goddess.

The Chang'e 5 brought samples from the Moon's near side. Chinese said during the analysis of the samples it was found they contained water in tiny beads embedded in lunar dirt.

China also plans to have a lunar station on the Moon in future.

A major space power, China in the past successfully launched unmanned missions to the Moon which included landing a rover. China has also sent a rover to Mars and built a space station which is currently in operation.

Earlier, China announced plans for a manned lunar landing by 2030. The country's plans include landing astronauts on the Moon by 2030 and building a research base at its south pole – a region believed to contain water ice.

Sunday's landing comes as a growing number of countries, including the United States, eye the strategic and scientific benefits of expanded lunar exploration in an increasingly competitive field. (PTI)

Zelensky accuses China of pressuring other countries not to attend upcoming Ukraine peace talks



SINGAPORE, June 2: Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky accused China on Sunday of helping Russia to disrupt an upcoming Swiss-organised peace conference on the war in Ukraine. Speaking at Asia's premier security conference, Zelensky said that China is pressuring other countries and their leaders not to attend the upcoming talks. He did not say which ones.

"Russia, using Chinese influence in the region, using Chinese diplomats also, does everything to disrupt the peace summit," he said at a news conference at the Shangri-La defence forum.

"Regrettably this is unfortunate that such a big independent powerful country as China is an instrument in the hands of (Russian leader Vladimir) Putin." China has staked out what it says is a neutral position on the war, putting it at odds with Ukraine, the United States and most of Europe. Its trade with Russia has grown, easing the economic impact of Western sanctions. And American, Ukrainian and other intelligence agencies say there is evidence that Chinese parts are winding up in Russian weaponry, even if China is not directly arming its neighbour.

The Swiss had been hoping China would attend the peace conference in mid-June, but Chinese Foreign Ministry spokesperson Mao Ning signalled on Friday that that was unlikely. China has been calling for a peace conference with equal participation of all sides, including Russia, which has not been invited. "There is still a clear gap between the arrangements for the meeting and the demands of the Chinese side, as well as the general expectations of the international community," Mao said. "This makes it difficult for China to participate in the meeting."

The foreign ministry did not respond immediately to a request for comment on Zelensky's accusation. The Ukrainian leader said of China's pressure on others, "That is not only support to Russia, that is basically support of war."

In a speech to the security conference earlier in the day, Zelensky urged top defense officials to attend the upcoming talks in Switzerland, saying he was disappointed at the failure of some countries to commit to joining. Chinese Defense Minister Dong Jun spoke before Zelensky at the Shangri-La conference but he did not appear to be in the room when Zelensky made his appeal.

Zelensky said that Ukraine had proposals to make at the summit as

a basis for peace, addressing nuclear security, food security, the release of prisoners of war and the return of Ukrainian children abducted by Russia.

"Time is running out, and the children are growing up in the Putin-land where they are taught to hate their homeland," he said.

At the same time, Zelensky said Ukraine is "ready to hear various proposals and thoughts that lead us ... to an end of the war and a sustainable and just peace." The greater the participation, the more likely it will be that Russia will have to listen, he said. "The global majority can ensure with their involvement that what is agreed upon is truly implemented," he said.

Zelensky said he planned to meet one-on-one with Singapore's prime minister and would urge him to participate in person in the Switzerland talks.

"The same goes for the countries in the region," Zelensky said through an interpreter. "We truly count on you supporting this summit, and that you will be present in Switzerland."

Singapore Defense Minister Ng Eng Hen, who shared the stage with Zelensky, did not say whether his country's leaders would attend, but did note Singapore had condemned the invasion and provided Ukraine with military ambulances. "We stand with you, and I think your appearance at this Shangri-La Dialogue is the epitome of what we are all hoping for, a rules-based order that guarantees the security and survival of large nations and small," he said.

Dong did not specifically mention the Switzerland meetings in his address to the forum, but did say "on the Ukraine crisis, China has been promoting peace talks with a responsible attitude." He added that China had not provided weapons to either side of the conflict. "We have never done anything to fan the flames," he said. "We stand firmly on the side of peace and dialogue."

US Defense Secretary Lloyd Austin sat in the front row as Zelensky talked. In an address Saturday, Austin told the security conference that "Putin's war of aggression has provided us all with a preview of a world that none of us would want." "We've all been inspired by the courage of Ukraine's troops and the resilience of Ukraine's people," Austin said. "People around the world have rushed to help Ukraine defend itself, including countries across the Indo-Pacific." (AP)

34 taken into custody after pro-Palestinian protest

NEW YORK, June 2: New York City police said on Saturday that they took 34 people into custody following a pro-Palestinian protest at the Brooklyn Museum, which reported damage to some artwork and harassment to security staff by demonstrators.

Hundreds of protesters marched to the museum on Friday afternoon, set up tents in the lobby and unfurled a "Free Palestine" banner from the building's roof before police moved in to make arrests.

New York City police officers tackled and punched some protesters during scuffles that broke out in the crowd outside the museum while some demonstrators hurled plastic bottles at officers and shouted insults. Other protesters held banners, waved Palestinian flags and chanted boisterously on the steps of the grand Beaux Arts museum, which is the city's second largest.

City police said of the 34 people detained, six were arrested and charged with crimes ranging from trespassing to assault. Another 23 were released after receiving tickets or summonses for misdemeanours, including trespassing, making graffiti, damaging property and resisting arrest. Police did not say what happened to the remaining five people.

Museum spokesperson Taylor Maatman said in a statement that the museum closed an hour early because

of concerns about people's safety and the art collections.

"Unfortunately, there was damage to existing and newly installed artwork on our plaza, and our public safety staff were physically and verbally harassed," Maatman said.

The rally started across the street from the Barclays Center, home of the NBA's Brooklyn Nets. Marchers banging drums and chanting then made their way to the museum about a mile away.

Organisers, including the group Within Our Lifetime, called on supporters to "flood" and "de-occupy" the museum, saying they wanted to take over the building until officials "disclose and divest" from any investments linked to Israel's actions in Gaza. Videos posted on social media showed guards at the museum trying to secure its doors against the surging crowd and demonstrators finding other ways inside.

Within Our Lifetime posted on social media that its chair, Nerdeen Kiswani, was "targeted and violently arrested" by police.

New York City has seen hundreds of street demonstrations since the conflict between Israel and Hamas began in October.

The Brooklyn Museum sits at the edge of Crown Heights, which is home to one of the city's largest communities of Orthodox Jews. (AP)

Hezbollah fighters shoot down Israeli drone in Lebanon



BEIRUT, June 2: The militant Hezbollah group said it shot down an Israeli drone over southern Lebanon and fired rockets at an Israeli military base on Saturday, hours after Israeli drone strikes killed at least one person and wounded several others.

Hezbollah said in a statement that its fighters struck the Hermes 900 Kochav drone, saying such aircraft have been targeting militants and civilian homes. The exchange of fire along the Lebanon-Israel border has been intensifying over the past weeks with Israel's military push on Gaza's southern city of Rafah.

The Israeli military said a surface-to-air missile was fired toward a drone operating in Lebanese airspace, adding that it was hit and fell in Lebanese territory. "The incident is under review," the military said.

The Hermes 900 Kochav is a medium altitude and long endurance drone that can carry four anti-tank guided missiles.

Hezbollah said on Saturday that its fighters also attacked an Israeli army base in the border town of Kiryat Shmona with Burkan rockets "scoring direct

hits, igniting a fire and destroying part of it".

Burkan rockets can carry a warhead that weighs between 300 kilogrammes and 500 kilogrammes. The Israeli army confirmed a rocket hit a military base in Kiryat Shmona, without giving details.

Israeli media reported the rocket attack on Kiryat Shmona, and released images showing significant damage to infrastructure. No casualties were reported.

Earlier on Saturday, an Israeli drone strike on a motorcycle near the southern Lebanese village of Khibet Selm wounded two people, state-run National News Agency said. The agency reported another drone strike on Saturday afternoon in a village near the southern city of Nabatiyeh.

An Israeli airstrike on a house in the coastal village of Adloun killed one woman and wounded several others on Friday evening, the agency reported.

Late on Saturday night, Israel's warplanes attacked areas west of the northeastern city of Baalbek, slightly wounding two people and causing material damage, the agency said.

Such strikes deep inside Lebanon and far away from the Israeli border have been rare since the latest round of fighting began nearly eight months ago. The Saturday night strike was about 100 kilometres from the Israeli border.

Hezbollah began attacking Israeli military posts along the Lebanon-Israel border a day after the Israel-Hamas war broke out on October 7. Since then, tens of thousands of people have been displaced on both sides of the border.

Over the past seven months, more than 400 people have been killed in Lebanon, most of them fighters but they also include more than 70 civilians and non-combatants. In Israel, 15 soldiers and 10 civilians have been killed since October. (AP)

SKorea vows 'unbearable' retaliation against NKorea

SEOUL, June 2: South Korea said Sunday it'll soon take "unbearable" retaliatory steps against North Korea over its launch of trash-carrying balloons across the border and other provocations.

In the past week, North Korea floated hundreds of huge balloons to dump rubbish on South Korea, simulated nuclear strikes against its neighbor and allegedly jammed GPS navigation signals in the South in an escalation of animosities between the rivals. South Korea's national security director Chang Ho-jin said Sunday that top officials at an emergency meeting decided to take "unbearable" measures against North Korea in response to its recent series of provocative acts.

Chang called the North's balloon campaign and its alleged GPS signal jamming "absurd, irrational acts of provocation that a normal country can't imagine." He accused North Korea of aiming to cause "public anxieties and chaos" in South Korea. South Korean officials didn't say what retaliatory steps they would take. But many observers say South Korea will likely resume front-line loudspeaker broadcasts into North Korea that include criticism of its abysmal human rights situation, world news and K-pop songs. North Korea is ex-



tremely sensitive to such broadcasts because most of its 26 million people have no official access to foreign TV and radio programs.

Earlier Sunday, South Korea's military said that more than 700 balloons flown from North Korea were additionally discovered in various parts of South Korea. Tied to the balloons were cigarette butts, scraps of cloth, waste paper and vinyl, but no dangerous substances, according to the Joint Chiefs of Staff. It was North Korea's second balloon activity in less than a week. Between Tuesday and Wednesday, South Korean officials said they had found about 260 North Korean balloons carrying trash and manure.

There have been no reports of major damage in South Korea.

North Korea said its balloon floating was in reaction to South Korean activists flying anti-Pyongyang propa-

ganda leaflets via their own balloons across the border. North Korea often responds with fury to balloons from South Korea. In 2020, North Korea exploded an empty, South Korean-built liaison office in the North in anger over the South Korean balloon activities.

Experts say North Korea's balloon campaign, reportedly the first of its kind in seven years, is meant to stoke an internal divide in South Korea over its conservative government's tough policy on the North. They say North Korea is also expected to further ramp up tensions ahead of the U.S. presidential election in November.

Since 2022, North Korea has sharply increased a pace of weapons tests to build a bigger nuclear arsenal. Last week, it fired a barrage of nuclear-capable weapons into the sea in a drill simulating a preemptive attack on South Korea. (AP)

15 killed as heavy rains lash Sri Lanka

COLOMBO, June 2: At least 15 people were killed and more than 19,000 others from over 5,000 families were marooned over the weekend as severe monsoonal downpours inflicted widespread devastation in Sri Lanka, authorities said on Sunday.

The fatalities were reported from seven districts, including the capital Colombo, where torrential rains exceeding 300 mm have triggered flash floods, uprooted trees, unleashed strong winds, and lightning, and caused landslides, the Disaster Management Centre (DMC) said.

Twenty of the 25 administrative districts have been severely affected due to the rains.

More than 4,000 homes have suffered partial damage, with 28 houses completely obliterated.

The Sri Lankan Army has mobilised seven teams equipped with boats for rescue operations. The Air Force has put three helicopters on standby for immediate emergency response in the affected areas.

Anticipating further rainfall and flooding, the Ministry of Education has announced the closure of all schools across the island for Monday. (PTI)

Drive for healthcare access to people with intellectual disabilities launched

WASHINGTON, June 2: A US-based non-profit on Saturday announced an initiative to enhance healthcare access for individuals with intellectual disabilities, with an aim to benefit 10,000 people in India in the first year.

Under Project Hitarth, US-based Voice of Specially Abled People (VOSAP) has entered into a collaboration with Parivaar NCPO (National Confederation of Parents Organizations) to provide financial support to social workers to assist individuals with intellectual disabilities in accessing much-needed therapies, dental work, outpatient department services and get reimbursement up to ₹ 1 lakh per year from the government of India's Niramaya scheme, a press statement said.



"We are very excited for the opportunities with this new model to expand VOSAP impact that leverages the government of India's existing programmes and strengths of our trusted, reputed partners like Parivaar," said VOSAP's California-based founder Pranav Desai.

VOSAP is a leading disability sector NGO, having enabled more than 25,000 persons with disabilities since 2017 by providing assistive devices, surgical interventions and scholarships.

The Niramaya scheme offers up to ₹ 1 lakh insurance reimbursement for covered medical

expenses for individuals with intellectual disabilities.

A joint research conducted by VOSAP and Parivaar NCPO revealed significant underutilisation of the scheme due to challenges in online enrollment, understanding benefits and navigating the complicated claim process, the statement said.

In 2022-23, according to a government of India report, only 28,323 claims -- out of 1,87,290 (1.87 lakh) enrolled beneficiaries -- with an average of ₹ 6,405 per claim were settled.

This indicates a very poor enrollment as the number of individuals with intellectual disabilities in India are more than one crore and significantly low reimbursements amounts is very little impact of the Niramaya programme, the statement said.

"The pilot programme aims to benefit 10,000 individuals with intellectual disabilities within its first year, with the goal of scaling to 1,00,000 beneficiaries. By improving access to health care and reducing the financial burden of medical expenses, (Project) Hitarth strives to enhance the quality of life for individuals with intellectual disabilities through essential therapies such as physiotherapy and speech therapy, etc.," it said.

Parivaar NCPO's Pankaj Maru said, "Parivaar is happy to collaborate with Voice of SAP to make the Niramaya health insurance (scheme) more accessible for millions of PwIDs through our more than 300 parents and voluntarily member organisations having presence in 31 states." (PTI)

SDF managed only one seat SKM storms back to power in Sikkim

GANGTOK, June 2: The Sikkim Krantikari Morcha (SKM) on Sunday returned to power in the Himalayan state for the second consecutive term by a landslide victory, winning 31 seats in the 32-member assembly.

The opposition Sikkim Democratic Front (SDF), which ruled the state for 25 years in a row till 2019, could manage only one seat, though its president Pawan Kumar Chamling lost in the two constituencies he contested.

SKM president and Chief Minister Prem Singh Tamang, however, won from two seats, and the party bagged 58.38 per cent of the votes polled. The SKM had won 17 seats in the 2019 assembly polls.

Elections to the assembly were held simultaneously with the first phase of the Lok Sabha polls on April 19.

Prime Minister Narendra Modi hailed Tamang and the SKM for the victory.

"Congratulations to SKM and CM @PSTamangGolay for their victory in the Sikkim Assembly Elections 2024. I look forward to working with the State Government to further the progress of Sikkim in the coming times," Modi said in a post on X.

Responding to the Prime Minister's post, Tamang thanked him.

"We are committed to continuing our efforts towards the devel-



opment and prosperity of Sikkim. We look forward to collaborating with you to achieve our shared goals for the betterment of our state.

"Your unwavering support has been a driving force for us, and we look forward to your continued guidance and blessings," Tamang said in an X.

Modi also thanked all who voted for the BJP in the Sikkim assembly elections. The saffron party contested in 31 seats but failed to win any of them. The party bagged 5.18 per cent of the total votes polled.

Sikkim BJP president Dilli Ram Thapa, a sitting MLA, also lost to

constituencies that he contested.

"Your unwavering support has led us to this landmark victory, a triumph of truth and the people's will. Our Sikkimese community has transcended past negativities and divisive ideologies," Tamang said.

The SKM supremo especially thanked new voters, who had come all the way from different parts of the country to cast their vote in favour of the ruling party.

The Sikkim CM said the Sikkim Krantikari Morcha stood as a beacon of hope, lighting the way for a new dawn leading to golden and prosperous future.

"This win is not just ours; it belongs to the youth, students, and every Sikkimese who dreams of a bright future for our children and a prosperous, inclusive society," he said.

Laying down the priorities for the future, Tamang said that over the next five years, the state government's focus will be on the progress and prosperity of all people.

"Our past achievements, like the 'Aama Yojana' for the welfare of poor mothers, reflect our commit-

ment. This victory is a testament to the blessings and support that we received from our dear people, especially the most vulnerable," he added.

"We will continue our efforts to support the poor, the sick, and the needy. From the unborn child to our senior citizens, we will stand by every Sikkimese in their times of need. Despite challenges, our unity and determination will help us overcome obstacles. The people have given us a great gift by entrusting us with their future, and we will honor this trust with unwavering dedication," the SKM supremo said.

In 2019, the SKM had won 17 seats and unseated the Sikkim Democratic Front party (SDF) which ruled the state for 25 years in a row.

SDF president and former CM Pawan Chamling lost from both the seats he contested elections.

"I also want to thank the opposition as it is because of them that our party became stronger and more organised," he said.

Tamang asked the party workers to maintain calm in the aftermath of the landslide victory. (PTI)

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Assembly poll win 'historic': Khandu

'People repaid to PM Modi's contribution to Arunachal'

ITANAGAR, June 2: Arunachal Pradesh chief minister Pema Khandu on Sunday described the landslide victory of the BJP in the assembly elections as "historic" and asserted that the momentum will spread to other parts of the country on June 4 when the Lok Sabha elections results will be declared.

The BJP on Sunday returned to power in Arunachal Pradesh for the third time in a row, winning 46 seats in the 60-member assembly, decimating the opposition Congress which bagged just one seat.

"This is a historic occasion for the BJP and entire Arunachal Pradesh. People of Arunachal Pradesh have declared that they want the BJP to stay in power for the next five years.

"This time, the mandate is more than what we got in 2019. In the 2019 assembly polls, BJP won 41 seats, while we have won 46 seats this time," Khandu told PTI Video.

Votes of the assembly elections in the state were counted on Sunday.

Khandu, however, won uncontested from the Mukto assembly constituency. Nine other BJP can-



didates also tasted victory unopposed.

"The people of the state have repaid to the contribution of Prime Minister (Narendra Modi)... The development witnessed under the BJP-led NDA regime in the state is the major factor for the party's win in the state," Khandu asserted.

The development witnessed in Arunachal Pradesh under the BJP-led central government is a major factor for the party's win in the state, the chief minister asserted.

"The BJP has started its winning streak from the 'Land of Rising Sun' (Arunachal) and this trend will spread throughout the country

which the people will witness on June 4. The party will sweep the Lok Sabha polls with a huge margin and Narendra Modi become the Prime Minister for the third term," he told reporters.

To a question regarding the formation of the new ministry, Khandu said that after the Lok Sabha polls counting on June 4, all the winning candidates of the party would convene a meeting where the chief ministerial candidate would be decided.

"BJP is a disciplined party. The party will select the leader with consensus from all elected candidates," Khandu said. (PTI)

All four women candidates of BJP win in Arunachal polls



ITANAGAR, June 2: All four women candidates fielded by the BJP in the Arunachal Pradesh assembly elections have registered victories. In all, eight women candidates were in the fray in the assembly polls. Of them, four were fielded by the BJP, three by the Congress and one was an Independent nominee.

Former chief minister Kalikho Pul's widow Dasanglu Pul won the Hayuliang seat in Anjaw district unopposed. This was the third time in a row that she won from the constituency.

Pul had first won the by-election

from the constituency in 2016 after her husband died by suicide on August 9 that year. She had also won the seat in 2019.

Tsering Lhamu, the widow of former lawmaker Jambe Tashi, won Lumla seat by a margin of 1,531 votes. Earlier, she had won the by-election to the constituency in February last year, after her husband's death on November 2, 2022 due to cardiac arrest.

Another BJP nominee, Chakab Aboh, won Khonsa West seat by a margin of 804 votes. Aboh had first won the seat in a by-election in 2019 after her husband Tirong Aboh of the NPP was assassinated by NSCN militants on May 21 that year, a day before the declaration of results.

Nyabi Jini Dirchi, a greenhorn, has this time defeated sitting MLA Gokar Basar in Basar constituency by a margin of 1,791 votes.

In 2019, three women had won in the assembly polls, including Dasanglu Pul, Gum Tayeng from Dambuk and Jummum Ete Deori from Leka seat. (PTI)

BJP will keep working with greater vigour for Arunachal's growth: PM

NEW DELHI, June 2: Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Sunday thanked the people of Arunachal Pradesh for reposing their faith in the BJP yet again and said the party will keep working with even greater vigour for the state's growth.

The BJP on Sunday returned to power in Arunachal Pradesh for the third time in a row, as the party won 46 seats in the 60-member assembly and secured a majority, the Election Commission officials said.

"Thank you Arunachal Pradesh! The people of this wonderful state have given an unequivocal mandate to politics of development. My gratitude to them for reposing their faith in @BJP4Arunachal yet again," Modi said in a post on X.

"Our Party will keep working with even greater vigour for the state's growth," he said.

Modi also appreciated the hardwork of the "exceptional" BJP workers in Arunachal Pradesh through the election campaign.

"It is commendable how they went across the state and connected with the people," he said. (PTI)

People's trust, hard work of SKM cadres behind victory: Sikkim CM

GANGTOK, June 2: Sikkim chief minister and SKM supremo Prem Singh Tamang on Sunday gave credit for the party's landslide victory in the assembly election in the state to the hard work of the SKM cadre and the trust of the people in his government.

The SKM returned to power in the Himalayan state for the second time in a row by winning 31 seats in the 32-member assembly.

After the landslide win, Tamang congratulated the party supporters and the voters of Sikkim.

"It is because of the love and trust of the people which we have managed to secure in the past five years in government. Besides, party cadres worked very hard. Now we have the next five years to give our 100 per cent for the people of Sikkim," he said at a gathering in Paljor Stadium in Gangtok.

"Dear and Respected People of Sikkim, I would like to express my sincere gratitude to the esteemed people of Sikkim for giving a historic victory to the SKM," he said in a Facebook post.

Tamang won from both Rhenock and Soreng-Chakung

constituencies that he contested. "Your unwavering support has led us to this landmark victory, a triumph of truth and the people's will. Our Sikkimese community has transcended past negativities and divisive ideologies," Tamang said.

The SKM supremo especially thanked new voters, who had come all the way from different parts of the country to cast their vote in favour of the ruling party.

The Sikkim CM said the Sikkim Krantikari Morcha stood as a beacon of hope, lighting the way for a new dawn leading to golden and prosperous future.

"This win is not just ours; it belongs to the youth, students, and every Sikkimese who dreams of a bright future for our children and a prosperous, inclusive society," he said.

Laying down the priorities for the future, Tamang said that over the next five years, the state government's focus will be on the progress and prosperity of all people.

"Our past achievements, like the 'Aama Yojana' for the welfare of poor mothers, reflect our commitment. This victory is a testament to the blessings and support that we received from our dear people, especially the most vulnerable," he added.

"We will continue our efforts to support the poor, the sick, and the needy. From the unborn child to our senior citizens, we will stand by every Sikkimese in their times of need. Despite challenges, our unity and determination will help us overcome obstacles. The people have given us a great gift by entrusting us with their future, and we will honor this trust with unwavering dedication," the SKM supremo said.

In 2019, the SKM had won 17 seats and unseated the Sikkim Democratic Front party (SDF) which ruled the state for 25 years in a row.

SDF president and former CM Pawan Chamling lost from both the seats he contested elections.

"I also want to thank the opposition as it is because of them that our party became stronger and more organised," he said.

Tamang asked the party workers to maintain calm in the aftermath of the landslide victory. (PTI)

Arunachal Governor dissolves assembly

ITANAGAR, June 2: Arunachal Pradesh Governor KT Parnaik dissolved the seventh assembly on Sunday, paving the way for the constitution of the eighth assembly following the declaration of results, a statement said.

Under Article 174 (2) (b) of the Constitution, the governor has accepted the cabinet's advise and signed the order to dissolve the seventh state assembly with immediate effect, the statement issued by the Raj Bhavan said.

Parnaik has also accepted the resignation of Chief Minister Pema Khandu and his council of ministers. He requested Khandu and his ministers to continue until the new government is sworn in.

The chief minister called on the governor at Raj Bhavan and tendered his resignation.

The governor expressed his appreciation for the chief minister for successfully managing the state administration during his tenure, the statement said.

The BJP returned to power in Arunachal Pradesh for the third time in a row, winning 46 seats in the 60-member assembly, decimating the opposition Congress that bagged just one seat. (PTI)

Modi congratulates SKM chief

NEW DELHI, June 2: Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Sunday congratulated Sikkim Krantikari Morcha chief Prem Singh Tamang for his party's victory in the assembly polls and said he looks forward to working with the state government to further Sikkim's progress. The Sikkim Krantikari Morcha (SKM) on Sunday returned to power by sweeping the assembly polls in the Himalayan state, winning 31 of the 32 seats, according to the Election Commission. The opposition Sikkim Democratic Front won only one seat. "I thank all those who voted for @BJP4Sikkim in the Assembly Elections. I also appreciate the efforts put in by our Karyakartas," Modi said in a post on X. (PTI)

SKM won 10 seats in the 2014 assembly elections

Prem Singh Tamang: Able administrator, organiser, mass leader

GANGTOK, June 2: Much waters have flown down Teesta and Rangeet rivers since Prem Singh Tamang rebelled against the then Sikkim chief minister Pawan Kumar Chamling and subsequently formed his own party, the Sikkim Krantikari Morcha, in 2013.

Fifteen years after quitting the Sikkim Democratic Front in 2009, he decimated Chamling's party, scripting history by winning 31 of 32 assembly seats in the Himalayan state in 2024. Only twice before, in 1989 and 2009, had political parties, the Sikkim Sangram Parishad and the SDF, respectively, registered such landslide victories.

Fifty-six-year-old Tamang, regarded as an able organiser, administrator and fiery politician, rode on a slew of development and welfare measures, besides his own personal charisma, to massively increase his party's seats and vote share.

After having walked out of prison, where he was lodged for one year after being convicted in a corruption case, in 2017, Tamang had revamped his fledgling party, which went on to unseat Chamling from power only two years later, winning 17 seats in 2019.

Although SDF had won 15 seats, two party MLAs had won two seats each and had to quit one seat each, effectively putting the party's strength at 13 in the assembly.



Chamling suffered mass desertions of his MLAs, as 10 legislators joined the BJP, while the remaining two switched sides to the SKM, leaving him as the lone representative of his party in the assembly.

Tamang, on the other hand, went on to further consolidate his power and expand his party base and support, focusing on welfare schemes targeted at women and weaker sections and implementing development work with generous funding from the Centre as he stitched an alliance with the BJP. The coalition, however, collapsed ahead of the 2024

assembly polls over the seat-sharing issue. Born to Kalu Singh Tamang and Dhan Maya Tamang on February 5, 1968, he had graduated from a college in Darjeeling in neighbouring West Bengal and became a teacher in a government school in 1990.

However, he quit his job only three years later and in 1994, co-founded the SDF, with which he remained associated for nearly 20 years, of which he was a minister for 15 years, before floating his party in 2013. The SKM won 10 seats in the 2014 assembly elections.

After having fallen out with Chamling, Tamang had ploughed a lonely furrow in Sikkim politics, inviting the wrath of his former mentor as he was booked in a corruption case in which he was convicted to one year imprisonment following which he was disqualified from the state assembly as an MLA from Upper Burtuk seat.

After winning the 2019 polls, the bar on him to occupy a public post was removed by the central government, following which he took oath as the chief minister on May 27 that year and won a by-election five months later from Poklok-Kamrang constituency, ironically a seat vacated by Chamling.

Five years down the line, the fortunes of the two leaders have changed drastically, with Tamang winning from Rhenock and Soreng-Chakung constituencies with thumping margins, while Chamling met his political Waterloo by losing both seats, Namcheybung and Poklok-Kamrang.

The drubbings may mark the end of Chamling's four-decade-long public life during which he had served as a five-term chief minister to leave Tamang as the new satrap of Sikkim. The SKM boss, however, has also expressed his wish before the electorate to not remain in public life after serving two terms as the chief minister and to hand over the reins of the party to the next line of leadership. (PTI)

Congress will accept actual results: Hooda on exit polls



CHANDIGARH, June 2: With the exit polls predicting that Prime Minister Modi will retain power for a third straight term, former Haryana Chief Minister Bhupinder Singh Hooda on Sunday said the Congress party will accept actual results when they are out on June 4.

Hooda, the leader of opposition in the Haryana Assembly, emphasized the Congress will only recognize the actual results as he pointed to "frequent inaccuracies" of the exit polls.

Hooda, according to a statement, said the true verdict will emerge from the EVMs on June 4.

He highlighted the "overwhelming public support" for the Congress during the elections.

He claimed that people stood in support of the Congress during the election campaigns focusing on critical issues such as unemployment, crime, drug menace, inflation and agriculture.

Hooda, as per the statement, criticized the BJP for allegedly lacking substantial issues or a credible track record, suggesting that this has led to a significant loss of public confidence in the current government.

With the assembly elections barely a few months away in Haryana, Hooda also claimed that the electorate has already decided to back the Congress and vote for a change in the state.

He criticized the BJP government, alleging that it had failed to meet the expectations of the people.

Hooda said there are two lakh posts lying vacant in the state government which had not been filled up.

He also alleged that there was rising crime, drug menace and inflation, and pledged to redress these issues if the Congress comes to power in Haryana.

Meanwhile, senior Haryana BJP leader Subhash Barala said in Rohatki that on the basis of the feedback from party workers across the country and also going by the exit polls, the public has blessed Narendra Modi to become the prime minister for the third time.

Barala, who is a Rajya Sabha MP, claimed the NDA will win with an overwhelming majority.

Barala, who was also the convener of the Lok Sabha election management committee for Haryana, said that going by the exit polls, the Congress and INDIA alliance is not visible anywhere on the ground.

Exit polls on Saturday predicted that Prime Minister Modi will retain power for a third straight term, with the BJP-led NDA expected to win a big majority in the Lok Sabha polls.

The results of the Lok Sabha elections will be declared on June 4. (PTI)

Telangana suffered 'destruction of 100 years' in 10 years: CM Reddy

HYDERABAD, June 2: Claiming that Telangana suffered "destruction of 100 years" during the 10-year BRS rule, Chief Minister A Revanth Reddy on Sunday said his government is working for the state's cultural and economic revival and expressed his desire to make it a destination for the world.

Addressing the 10th Telangana formation day celebrations organised by the state government here, he thanked Congress leader Sonia Gandhi and former Prime Minister Manmohan Singh for fulfilling the decades-long demand of statehood for Telangana during the previous UPA regime at the Centre. He also defended his government's decision to invite Sonia Gandhi to the event though she did not attend.

A video message of Sonia Gandhi was played at the event.

He recalled the crucial role played by Sonia Gandhi, former Lok Sabha Speaker Meira Kumar and also late BJP leader Sushma Swaraj in the passage of the bill for formation of Telangana state in Parliament in 2014.

"We invited Sonia Gandhi, who fulfilled the Telangana people's aspirations, as a guest to the state formation day celebrations. Someone asked in what capacity she was invited. Does it require permission to invite the mother to the child's home?" he asked.

As long as the history of Telangana exists, Sonia Gandhi will be



recognized and respected as "mother" by the Telangana society, he said.

Taking strong exception to the Congress government's decision to invite Sonia Gandhi to the Telangana formation day celebrations, the BJP had said the government should inform people in what capacity Sonia Gandhi is being invited.

Recalling the the role of Sonia Gandhi, Meira Kumar and also Sushma Swaraj in passage of Telangana bill in Lok Sabha in 2014, Revanth Reddy thanked them on behalf of the state's people.

Sushma Swaraj, who was Leader of Opposition in Lok Sabha

then, had extended cooperation for the passage of the bill, he said.

He targeted the previous BRS government, without naming the party, for the alleged destruction in the state.

"During the 10 years of rule, Telangana has suffered 100 years of destruction. It was not just physical destruction but also fundamental freedom has been assaulted. Social justice was denied. The wealth of the state, which should belong to all the people, has gone into the hands of a few," he said.

He accused BRS of destroying Telangana's culture and traditions. Soon after taking over, his government had restored "freedom" and made the government accessi-

ble to people, he added.

According to Reddy, the previous Chief Minister's camp office-cum-official residence has been named after social reformer Jyotiba Phule and a mechanism to receive representations from people on their grievances has been set up there. Noting that his government is working towards the state's cultural and economic revival, he said the state does not have an official song even 10 years after its formation.

As per the wishes of the people, the government is proudly announcing the song "Jaya Jaya Telangana...", penned by noted Telangana poet Ande Sri, as the state's official song from today.

During the official event, Revanth Reddy unveiled the song for which music was composed by Oscar-winning music director M M Keeravani.

Pointing out that an emblem reflect a nation's history, Revanth Reddy said the government is working on a new emblem taking into consideration the suggestions and advice from various sections.

Quoting the Sanskrit phrase "Janani janmabhoomischa swargadapi gariyasi", he said an average Telangana rural woman will be the replica of 'Telangana Talli' (mother) who is hard working and generous.

Taking this into consideration, the 'Telangana Talli' statue will be

designed.

He alleged that the state's economy was completely ruined when his government came to power in December last year. The state's debt burden mounted to ₹ seven lakh crore.

The government is laying a strong foundation for the state's progress by conceiving long term plans for future generations.

"We are preparing the "Green Telangana - 2050 Master Plan" for the entire Telangana."

He highlighted his government's welfare and development initiatives, including Musi Riverfront Development project in Hyderabad, stringent measures to check the menace of drugs, recruitment of 30,000 youth in 70 days, depositing Rs 7,500 crore in the accounts of 69 lakh farmers and uninterrupted power supply.

From today onwards, Hyderabad will no longer be the joint capital of Telangana and Andhra Pradesh and his government would resolve the issues related to division of assets between the two states at the earliest, he said.

"The city of Hyderabad should develop as the world's number one brand. My strong desire is to make Telangana a destination for the world," he said.

The chief minister, who unfurled the national flag at the function, inspected the parade in an open jeep. (PTI)

SFI alleges saffron forces involved in religious campaign at Visva Bharati

KOLKATA, June 2: Left wing Students Federation of India (SFI) has alleged "saffron forces" are holding "certain religious activities" on Visva Bharati campus with over 12 rooms allotted to one such organisation in the university guest house.

Responding to the charges, Visva Bharati authorities, however, said, "no religious meet has been allowed within the university campus" but any room of the varsity-run guest house can be booked by any "bona-fide organisation as per applicable rates".

The SFI levelled the 'saffronisation' charges a day ago citing reports that the Shankaracharya of Puri Swami Nischalananda Saraswati will be attending a three-day religious event at a Bolpur auditorium and stay at a guest house at Ratanakuthi in Santiniketan.

The SFI further claimed in a mail to the vice-chancellor of the central university that a couple of days ago a "mass posting" of the said religious event was spotted around the campus premises, which also includes the 'Ashram Prangan'. "The Visva-Bharati campus is a serene place built upon the values and ideals of Rabindranath Tagore, which are directly impeded by such activities in recent times. Visva-Bharati in order to maintain its autonomy from mainstream religion has always refrained from celebrating religious



practices such as the Saraswati Puja or the Durga Puja," the left students' body said.

Denying any religious meet "has been organised or permitted at Visva-Bharati," registrar Ashok Mahato told PTI on Saturday, "I read in newspapers that Shankaracharya's programme is to be held at Gitanjali complex, which, as you know, is outside our campus and is not owned or managed by Visva-Bharati."

About the report that the Puri seer will be staying at the university-run guest house, he said, "while I don't have the guest details with me now, it can be said the guest house can be booked against

applicable rent."

The spokesperson of Visva Bharati said, "the Visva-Bharati guest houses can be booked by any citizen of India or bona fide institution of this country through proper channel."

"The same has happened in this case. Further, the religious programme, if any, is not being held in Visva-Bharati but outside the campus," the spokesperson said.

Visva Bharati University Faculty Association (VBUFA) office-bearer Kausik Bhattacharya said, "to our knowledge, the organisation which had invited the Shankaracharya of Puri is a religious body having no link with the BJP."

"But the university property should never be used for any religious activity nor should there be a campaign for any such programme on the campus which is not in sync with the ideals propagated by Tagore and his father Maharshi Debendranath Tagore, who professed the Brahmo ideology," he said.

An SFI member of Visva Bharati unit termed the development as attempt to "influence general students of an educational institution by outside saffron forces."

"It is also well known that the university has allotted about 12/14 rooms to the said group in the university's Ratan Kuthi guest house," he added. (PTI)

Will win at least 12 Lok Sabha seats, 110 assembly constituencies in Odisha: BJD

BHUBANESWAR, June 2: The ruling BJD on Sunday asserted that the party would form the government in Odisha with a two-thirds majority by winning at least 110 of the 147 assembly constituencies in the state.

The party said it would bag at least 12 of the 21 Lok Sabha seats in the eastern state.

Rejecting exit polls that predicted that the BJP would win 15 Lok Sabha seats in Odisha, the BJD said that exit polls for the state have proved to be wrong in 2014 and 2019 elections and the trend would continue this time as well.

"We are well poised to retain power in the state with a two-thirds majority in the assembly. Like in

2014 and 2019, this time as well the exit polls will be proved wrong," BJD spokesperson Sasmit Patra said.

"Based on our surveys, analysis and feedback from the ground level, we expect to win at least 12 Lok Sabha seats and 110 seats in the assembly... we will form a strong and stable government in the state," he said.

Exit polls have awarded 15 seats to BJP and five to BJD in Odisha.

BJD MLA Padmanabh Behera said, "Exit polls are not exact results. We will perform very well and form the government in the state. Naveen Patnaik will take oath as the chief minister on June 9."

BJD MP Manas Mangaraj said in an X post, "No matter what exit polls



are, I am confident that the public has approved our honesty, hard work and dedication."

Senior Congress leader and MLA Taraprasad Bahinipati said that the party will improve its performance and is likely to win four to five Lok Sabha seats in the state.

Congress had won nine assembly seats and one Lok Sabha constituency in 2019.

Senior BJP leader and Union minister Dharmendra Pradhan claimed that the exit polls have reflected the reality and that the BJP will win 15 Lok Sabha seats in the state.

BJP state president Manmohan Samal said, "People of Odisha want a change and there will be a change in the government."

In 2019, exit polls had predicted 12-15 Lok Sabha seats for the BJP and 6-8 for BJD, whereas the saffron party had won eight seats and the ruling party in the state had bagged 12.

In 2014, while exit polls had predicted 13 seats for BJD and five for BJP, the saffron party had bagged only one while the ruling party in the state had won 30 seats. (PTI)

In a first in Indian subcontinent, dog undergoes non-invasive heart surgery at Delhi vet hospital

NEW DELHI, June 2: A dog with a complex heart condition successfully underwent a minimally invasive heart surgery at a hospital here with veterinarians claiming it to be the first such procedure to be carried out by private practitioners in the Indian subcontinent.

Seven-year-old beagle, Juliet, was suffering from Mitral valve disease for the last two years, Dr Bhanu Dev Sharma, an interventional cardiologist for small animals at Max PetZ Hospital in East of Kailash said on Sunday.

The condition is caused by degenerative changes in mitral valve leaflets which result in back flow of blood within the left upper chamber of the heart and subsequent congestive heart failure (fluid build-up in lungs) as the disease progresses.

The surgeons performed a Transcatheter Edge-to-Edge Repair (TEER) procedure using a valve clamp on May 30.

"It's called hybrid surgery as it's a combination of a micro surgery and interventional procedure. The best part about this procedure is



that its minimally invasive as it's a beating heart procedure and not like an open heart surgery which needs a heart lung bypass machine," Sharma explained.

As per the pet parents, they were giving heart medications to Juliet for the last one year, Sharma said. They learnt about the procedure from their visit to the US where this surgery was introduced at Colorado state university two years ago, he said.

The pet dog was discharged in a stable medical condition just two days after surgery.

Mitral valve disease is the most

common heart condition in dogs in India as well as in rest of the world and accounts for 80 per cent of all heart diseases in dogs in India and worldwide. This disease is amongst one of the major causes of deaths in dogs, Sharma said.

"The only treatment majorly available so far includes medicinal treatment which delays the onset of clinical signs and gives symptomatic relief for sometime. It is not curative," he said.

Open heart mitral valve repair surgery is not a very viable option owing to the highly invasive nature of the procedure and because

it is done at very few centres in the world.

"TEER is entirely an image guided procedure and is done under trans oesophageal 4D echocardiography and fluoroscopy guidance in a beating heart. A small incision is made on the chest wall to get access to apex of the heart after which through a catheter the two leaflets of the diseased mitral valve are clamped together to reduce the leakage across the valve under guidance of high-tech equipment," Sharma said.

According to the veterinary hospital, Sharma's team is the first from Asia and second worldwide among private practitioners to have done the procedure successfully.

Sharma and his team of four doctors travelled to Shanghai last year to learn about the procedure.

"The procedure is similar in concept to Mitra clip procedure in humans which has benefitted and saved many human lives so far. With the launch of this surgery it gives a new ray of hope for dogs suffering from this very common heart disease," Sharma said. (PTI)

SC to hear Maha gov't's plea against premature release of gangster Arun Gawli today

NEW DELHI, June 2: The Supreme Court is scheduled to hear on Monday a plea of the Maharashtra government challenging a Bombay High Court order which paved the way for premature release of gangster-turned-politician Arun Gawli, who is serving life imprisonment in a murder case.

A vacation bench of Justices Arvind Kumar and Sandeep Mehta will hear the plea of the state government in which they had opposed the premature release of Gawli, who was also convicted under the provisions of the Maharashtra Control of Organised Crime Act (MCOCA).

On April 5, the Nagpur bench of the Bombay High Court had allowed the plea of Gawli in which he had sought direction to the state government for his premature release on account of the remission policy dated January 10, 2006, which was prevailing on the date of his conviction on August 31, 2012.

Gawli, who is undergoing life imprisonment for the 2007 murder case of Mumbai Shiv Sena corporator Kamlakar Jamsandekar, has claimed to have complied with all the conditions of the 2006 policy.

He said the rejection of his application for premature release by the state authorities is unjust, arbitrary and is liable to be set aside.

Gawli has contended that he has completed 65 years of age and has been certified as weak by the Medical Board making him eligible for availing the benefit of the policy.

The state government, however, has opposed his plea before the high court for premature release, saying revised guidelines dated March 18, 2010, for premature release contemplates that there shall be no premature release of a convict of organized crime unless he undergoes 40 years of actual imprisonment.

The high court rejected the submission of the state government, terming it as "totally misconceived" and said the revised guidelines of 2010 were general in nature.

It had said the 2006 policy was specifically framed for the benefit of prisoners who were of advanced

age and physically weak, and the 2010 guidelines would not apply at all.

"In view of the above discussion, we hold that the petitioner is entitled to the benefits flowing from the remission policy dated January 10, 2006, which was prevailing on the date of his conviction. We also hold that by applying the rule of ejusdem generis, convicts of MCOCA Act cannot be excluded from availing the benefits of the said policy. Writ Petition is accordingly allowed," the high court had ordered.

It has given state government authorities four weeks to pass a consequential order in that regard from the date of uploading of the order.

However, on May 9, the state government again moved the high court seeking four months time for implementation of the April 5 order, saying they have challenged the verdict in the apex court.

"It is informed that a Special Leave Petition has been filed before the Supreme Court. The summer vacation of the Supreme Court would commence from May 20, 2024. By virtue of our order the petitioner is required to be set free and if his release is postponed by a few months, it would curtail his liberty. However, as the Special Leave Petition is filed/registered yesterday only, we deem it appropriate to grant some breathing time to the State to obtain necessary orders from the Supreme Court," the high court said in its May 9 order.

It gave the state government four more weeks for implementation of the April 5 order setting Gawli free and made it clear that no more extensions would be granted.

Gawli is the founder of the Akhil Bharatiya Sena and was an MLA from 2004-2009 from Chinchpokli seat of Mumbai and has shot into prominence from Dagdi Chawl, a neighbourhood of Byculla.

He was arrested and underwent a trial in 2006 for the murder of Jamsandekar and in August 2012, a sessions court in Mumbai had sentenced him to life imprisonment in the murder case. The court had also imposed a fine of ₹ 17 lakh on him. (PTI)

Pune car crash: 'Minor's parents manipulated his blood sample by visiting Sassoon Hospital'

PUNE, June 2: The parents of a 17-year-old boy allegedly involved in a Porsche car accident tampered with his blood sample by visiting the state-run Sassoon General Hospital in Pune, a court was told on Sunday. The police made this claim while seeking the remand of the couple in connection with the destruction of evidence related to the May 19 accident, which claimed the lives of two IT professionals.

The couple has been remanded to police custody until June 5. The minor's mother, Shivani Agarwal, was arrested on June 1, after it emerged that the boy's blood samples were replaced with hers.

Vishal Agarwal, the boy's father and a realtor, was previously taken into custody for allegedly destroying evidence related to the case.

Both parents were produced before a holiday court, where police

sought a seven-day remand for further investigation. The police told the court that the parents allegedly conspired and destroyed the evidence related to the car crash.

The Agarwal couple went to the Sassoon Hospital to manipulate the blood samples of their minor son, the police said, adding that the blood sample of the teenager was swapped with that of his mother.

The court was told that police have secured the CCTV footage available at the hospital but also need to verify whether the footage has also been tampered with.

Police said they needed to search the house of the Agarwals and to check whether the footage of the CCTV installed at their property was also manipulated.

The couple's lawyer, Prashant Patil, argued that the police had already searched their house and re-

CR commissions electronic interlocking at CSMT

MUMBAI, June 2: Central Railway on Sunday said it has successfully completed commissioning of Electronic Interlocking at Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj Terminus in Mumbai and widening of platforms at Thane station ahead of schedule.

The first train from CSMT after the block departed for Tilwala at 1.10 pm on Sunday, a CR release said.

CR said that it has successfully completed the mammoth task of commissioning of Electronic Interlocking at CSMT for extension of platforms 10 and 11 and widening of platforms 5 and 6 at Thane station well before the targeted time to ensure smooth travelling to all commuters.

After extension of platform 10 and 11 at CSMT by 385 metres, the length has been increased to 690 metres and can now accommodate passenger trains of 24 coaches.

A block of 36 hours was taken on the CSMT-Byculla main line and CSMT-Vadala Road harbour line section for carrying out the work, the release said.

The work involved assembling, laying and dismantling of turnouts, erection of Over Head Equipment portals including erection of 2 special portals of 53 metres covering all 10 lines, a first for the Indian Railways, it said.

In addition to lengthening of platforms, wiring of points, signals, DC track circuits and other technical works were also carried out. The work was accomplished with the help of 250 highly skilled and technically competent staff and a team of senior officers and supervisors, the release said.

The challenging task of widening of platform 5 and 6 at Thane station was undertaken and a 63-hour mega block was operated at Thane to complete the work.

Platform 5 and 6 at Thane station is one of the busiest platforms handling more than 300 suburban as well as mail/ express trains daily, the release said. The widening by 2-3 metres for the entire length of 587 metres was done by placement of 785 precast hollow blocks. (PTI)

covered CCTV footage, asserting that the couple has cooperated with the investigation and should be sent to judicial custody. The court, however, granted police custody.

The couple was booked under IPC section 201 (causing disappearance of evidence) which is a bailable offence, he said, adding that two doctors and a hospital staffer are already in police custody in connection with the blood sample swap.

Patil argued that the police had recovered the DVR of CCTV installed at the house of the accused.

"It is to be noted that one of the accused is a woman. Both of them (Vishal and Shivani) are cooperative. If required, both persons will be present for the inquiry whenever they are asked to. Thus, instead of police custody, we request them to grant judicial custody," he said. (PTI)

Exit polls: Cong's state leaders confident of much better returns

NEW DELHI, June 2: Congress leaders from some politically crucial states on Sunday exuded confidence that the party will do much better than what was projected in the exit polls and asserted the INDIA bloc is going to form the next government.

Leaders from states such as Karnataka, Maharashtra, Haryana, Uttar Pradesh, Punjab, Jharkhand, Assam, Himachal Pradesh, Bihar, Rajasthan and Gujarat stressed that the Congress' performance would be very good, belying all the predictions in the exit polls.

The assertion was made at an online interaction Congress general secretary Jairam Ramesh had before the media with key state leaders, Pradesh Congress Committee presidents and legislature party leaders of various states.

Leader of the Opposition in the Punjab Assembly Partap Singh Bajwa said all the surveys have given seven to nine seats to the Congress.

"We are ahead on nine seats, one seat will go to the AAP and three seats will be won by the candidates who will not in any way help the NDA or the PM. The INDIA bloc will get a minimum of 10 seats...In Punjab, the NDA is not going to get even a single seat," he said. There are 13 parliamentary constituencies in the state.

Himachal Pradesh Chief Minister Sukhvinder Singh Sukhu said the Congress has an edge on two



parliamentary seats and is in a tight contest on the two other seats in the hill state. He exuded confidence that the Congress was also winning the six assembly seats where the bypolls have taken place.

Karnataka deputy chief minister D K Shivakumar said the Congress would win at least two-third of the 28 seats on the back of the popularity of the guarantees the party fulfilled after coming to power in the state. Bihar Congress chief Akhilesh Prasad Singh said his party would definitely win six to seven seats out of the nine seats it contested in the state.

He said the INDIA bloc together would win around 20 out of the 40 seats in Bihar.

Jharkhand Congress chief Ra-

jesh Thakur claimed the INDIA bloc will get eight to ten seats out of the 14 in the state.

Maharashtra Congress president Nana Patole said the party will win 16 seats and the Maha Vikas Aghadi alliance will get 38-40 seats out of the 48 in the state. People are fighting the elections against the BJP in these polls, Patole said.

Rajasthan Congress chief Govind Singh Dotasra said the party would win at least 12-13 seats in the state.

He said there was tough fight in the remaining seats in Rajasthan - that has a total of 25 parliamentary constituencies.

During the online interaction, Gujarat Congress president Shaktisinh Gohil said the party has

fought strongly in the state.

The Congress will win four to five seats in Gujarat and there was tough competition on about 12 seats he said. Gujarat has a total of 26 Lok Sabha seats.

These exit polls are an attempt to mislead the people and create pressure on counting agents, he claimed.

Haryana Congress president Uday Bhan said the Congress would win at least eight of the 10 seats in Haryana.

Uttar Pradesh Congress chief Ajai Rai also spoke during the interaction and exuded confidence of a much better performance in his state than the projections made in the exit polls. Uttar Pradesh has 80 seats and the Congress, which fought the polls in alliance with the Samajwadi Party, contested on 17 seats.

The unusual interaction before the media came a day after the exit polls on Saturday predicted that Prime Minister Narendra Modi will retain power for a third straight term, with the BJP-led NDA expected to win a big majority in the Lok Sabha elections.

While India Today-Axis My India has forecast 361-401 seats for the BJP-led alliance and 131-166 seats for the opposition INDIA bloc in the 543-member Lok Sabha, the ABP-C Voter predicted 353-383 seats for the ruling alliance and 152-182 seats for the INDIA bloc. (PTI)

Agnikul eyes launching satellites by 2025: CEO Ravichandran



NEW DELHI, June 2: After the successful test flight of its Agnibaan rocket, Chennai-based space start-up Agnikul Cosmos is hoping to start launching satellites early next year.

In an interview with PTI, Agnikul co-founder and Chief Executive Officer Srinath Ravichandran said the 3D-printed semi-cryogenic engines and the rocket will offer quick turnaround for customers who will be able to have customised launch vehicles for their satellites.

"Nine to twelve months I would say. Probably by the end of this financial year or the early part of the next financial year is what we are targeting," Ravichandran said when asked about the commercial orbital launch of the Agnibaan rocket.

The first test flight of Agnibaan SoRTeD (suborbital technology demonstrator) on May 30, which lasted for 66 seconds, came after four unsuccessful attempts.

"It was a big sense of relief. I think we got a lot of learning in differentiating between building a vehicle and launching a vehicle," said Ravichandran, whose idea to use 3D printing technology to build engines and rockets led to Agnikul Cosmos, a space sector start-up incubated at the IIT Madras Research Park in 2017.

The other co-founders were Moin SPM, an operations specialist, and Satyanarayanan Chakravarty, a professor at IIT Madras and Head of the National Centre for Combustion Research and Development.

Women engineers Saraniya Periaswamy, the Vehicle

Director for Agnibaan SoRTeD, and Umamaheswari. K, the Project Director of the first Mission, played a key role in the test flight.

The Agnibaan also logged several firsts to its credit -- the world's first flight with a single piece 3D printed engine, the first-ever semi-cryo engine launch of India and the first-ever launch from a private launchpad in India. The rocket was controlled by computers powered by Linux operating system, and driven by an ethernet-based architecture for connecting flight computers within the vehicle.

Agnibaan SoRTeD was also the first flight to use aviation-grade jet fuel and industrial-grade Liquid oxygen as propellants.

Agnibaan SoRTeD was a vertical ascent flight, unlike sounding rockets that are launched using guiding rails placed at a particular angle.

"Seven seconds after lift-off we checked the health of the vehicle and that is when the auto-pilot kicked in. A little bit into the flight, it started moving over the ocean and performed the pitch-over manoeuvre and then continued on its planned trajectory," Ravichandran said, sharing details of Agnibaan SoRTeD's maiden flight.

"Once it reached about 60 seconds or so, we entered the wind biasing manoeuvre, where we solve the wind speed and actually fly into the wind so there is not much wind load on the vehicle," he said.

After the wind-biasing manoeuvre, the rocket continued to fly till burnout and dropped back into the ocean. "There was continuous radar tracking of the vehicle. All the devices and instruments enabling that also worked really well," Ravichandran said.

The next steps for Agnikul are to master the technology of firing multiple engines together and carry out tests for stage separation.

"We will have to figure out two things. Our orbital rocket has multiple engines fired together. So, that will have to be tested out on the ground.

"And the stage separation. SoRTeD was a single-stage vehicle. The orbital vehicle will have two stages. So stage separation has to be tested," Ravichandran said.

"We are already in the middle of building rigs at our facility. We will take six-seven months to get that and from there we will be able to target the orbital mission in the next three months," he said.

According to Ravichandran, the demand for small satellites was high with as many as 30-35 tonnes of payloads put in low earth orbits every year. (PTI)

Kejriwal hugs children, touches parents' feet before leaving for Tihar jail

NEW DELHI, June 2: Delhi chief minister Arvind Kejriwal and his family bid adieu to each other on Sunday before he left the CM's residence to surrender at Tihar jail after his interim bail in the excise policy case ended on June 1.

Kejriwal hugged his children and touched his parents' feet before leaving in a car for a scheduled visit to the Rajghat and the Hanuman temple at Connaught Place.

He waved a final goodbye to his parents before his car sped alongside a long trail of vehicles carrying AAP leaders who accompanied the chief minister for his surrender. Kejriwal's wife Sunita, son Pulkit and daughter Harshita also accompanied him for his surrender.

Sharing visuals of the family's last moments together, the AAP wrote in a post on X, "Bharat Mata's brave son Arvind Kejriwal ji took blessings from his parents and hugged his children before going to jail to save democracy. Kejriwal will not bow down to dictatorship."

In another post, the party wrote, "It is this feeling that scares the dictator. With a smile

on his face, Delhi CM Kejriwal headed towards Rajghat to pay homage to father of the nation, Mahatma Gandhi. Today, Kejriwal ji will go to jail in this fight to save democracy."

In a display of unity and support, Kejriwal's family and AAP leaders accompanied the chief minister as he paid homage at Mahatma Gandhi's memorial at the Rajghat and offered prayers at the Hanuman temple in Connaught Place.

Kejriwal later addressed a large gathering of workers and leaders of the AAP before leaving for Tihar jail.

AAP leaders, including Atishi, Kailash Gahlot and Saurabh Bharadwaj, Rajya Sabha MPs Sanjay Singh and Sandeep Pathak, and party leaders Durgesh Pathak, Rakhi Birla and Reena Gupta were also present.

Patriotic songs and slogans of "Kejriwal Zindabaad" filled the air at the party headquarters.

Addressing the gathering, Kejriwal said, "I am going back to jail not because I was involved in corruption but because I raised voice against dictatorship... I campaigned for the Lok Sabha polls to save the country."

Kejriwal said the BJP will not form the next government at the Centre, saying the exit polls were "fake" and "mind games" by the BJP.

Several exit polls, which were aired on Saturday evening, predicted a comfortable majority for the BJP-led NDA. Counting of votes for the Lok Sabha polls will be held on Tuesday.

The address at the party headquarters was summed up with the national anthem and Kejriwal left for Tihar amid a sea of Indian flags.

Minutes before the chief minister's surrender, security arrangements were beefed up at Tihar jail with heavy police deployment. Traffic was also restricted in the area.

The chief minister surrendered to the Tihar authorities after 21 days of bail granted by the Supreme Court for the election campaign.

He was released from prison on May 10 on an interim bail granted by the apex court in the excise policy-linked money laundering case.

The bail expired on June 1, the day the seventh and last phase of the general elections was held. (PTI)

LS polls: EC asks Cong's Ramesh to share details of claim

NEW DELHI, June 2: The Election Commission (EC) sought factual information from Congress leader Jairam Ramesh on Sunday on his claim that Home Minister Amit Shah has called up 150 district magistrates and collectors ahead of the June 4 counting of votes for the Lok Sabha polls. In a letter to Ramesh, the poll panel has asked him to share details regarding his claim by 7 pm on Sunday. The EC has referred to his post on X on June 1, in which the Congress general secretary had alleged that "the outgoing Home Minister has been calling up DMs/Collectors. So far, he has spoken to 150 of them. This is blatant and brazen intimidation, showing how desperate the BJP is..."

The process of counting votes is a sacred duty cast upon every returning officer and such public statements "tend to put an element of doubt and thus, deserves to be addressed in larger public interest", the EC has told Ramesh.

It has also told the Congress leader that when the Model Code of Conduct is in force, all officers are under the deemed deputation of the commission and they report directly to the poll watchdog for any directions.

"However, no DM has reported any such undue influence as alleged by you..." the EC's letter to Ramesh has stated.

"It is requested that details of 150 DMs to whom such calls have been allegedly made by the Home Minister along with the factual matrix/basis of your information are shared by 7 pm today -- June 2, 2024, so that appropriate action can be taken," it has told the Congress leader. (PTI)

PM Modi chairs host of meetings



NEW DELHI, June 2: Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Sunday stressed the need to ensure regular fire and electrical safety audits in hospitals and other public places as he reviewed the heatwave situation in the country amid fire incidents which have claimed many lives.

He chaired a host of meetings, including one on the post-Cyclone Remal situation, especially in the northeast region, and another to review the 100-day agenda of the new government to be sworn in after the Lok Sabha results are announced on June 4.

Exit polls broadcast on Saturday predicted a massive win for the BJP-led National Democratic Alliance

(NDA), with Modi set to retain power for a third straight term.

In the meeting to review the heatwave conditions in parts of the country, Modi instructed officials that proper drills for preventing and handling incidents of fire must be undertaken on a regular basis, according to an official statement.

He also said that regular drills for the maintenance of fire lines in forests and productive utilisation of biomass must be planned.

Modi was briefed that as per forecasts, the heatwave is likely to continue in parts of Rajasthan, Gujarat and Madhya Pradesh. Monsoon this year is likely to be normal and above normal in most parts of the country

LDF, Congress in Kerala reject exit poll predictions; terms it baseless

THIRUVANANTHAPURAM, June 2: The ruling Left in Kerala and the Congress on Sunday rejected as "baseless" the exit poll predictions which said that the BJP-led NDA will come to power at the Centre and also open its account in the state where it has not had an MP in the past. The LDF also termed the predictions as "suspicious" and "politically motivated", while the Congress said that there is no need to believe the exit polls as they have been proved wrong in the past.

The LDF and the Congress, both of whom are confident of a good show in the Lok Sabha polls in the state, were in agreement that the BJP will not open its account in Kerala. LDF convener and veteran CPI(M) leader E P Jayarajan said the exit poll predictions were not arrived at through some scientific findings or experiments, "it was not based on public sentiments" and was not an observation following a proper analysis of the elections.

"I suspect it is politically motivated. All the exit polls have taken a stand that repeats and strengthens what the BJP has been saying till now (about the poll results). That is what makes it even more suspicious," he told a TV channel.

A similar view was expressed by senior Congress leader Ramesh Chennithala, who said that he will not accept exit polls which based on a sample size of 1,000 people make predictions about how lakhs of people voted.

"We have no faith in the exit polls. There is no need to believe in them. There is a strong public sentiment against Prime Minister Narendra Modi in the country. We firmly believe that the INDIA bloc will win and that it will reach the figure of 295 predicted by Congress president Mallikarjun Kharge," he said. "We are moving forward with the belief that the INDIA bloc will form a government at the Centre. Also the UDF will have a huge win in Kerala. We will win all 20 seats," he added. Kerala Pradesh Congress Committee (KPCC) chief K Sud-

hakaran and his party colleague K Muraleedharan were also confident that the UDF will win all 20 seats in Kerala and that BJP will not get even one. They, too, said that exit polls have been wrong in the past.

Jayarajan too questioned how the exit polls were predicting that the BJP will open its account in the southern state.

"I believe it is a political creation. The BJP has hardly any chance of opening its account in Kerala. The actual fact is that the BJP will not get even one seat in Kerala," he said. The LDF convener further said that Kerala was a secular state with a new generation that was highly educated and secular in its outlook.

"Kerala society does not wish for a communal party to come here," he added. On being asked whether Kharge's prediction of the INDIA bloc winning 295 seats was accurate, Jayarajan said "the fact is that it is possible".

"In two days the picture will be clear," he added. While rejecting the predictions, he said that there should be extreme vigil during the counting process on June 4.

His party colleague and CPI(M) Central Committee member A K Balan, was also of the view that the BJP would not open its account in Kerala and that it would not get a majority at the national level.

"We cannot believe that the BJP will come back to power based on the exit polls. The predictions are a lie and have no connection with reality," he said.

He further said that all the seats from Kerala will go to the INDIA bloc, but the exact share of the LDF and UDF will be clear only after results come on June 4. However, Balan was confident that LDF would have a good show in Kerala.

On whether BJP will win in Thrissur, the CPI(M) leader said it was not possible, but if it happens, then the Congress would have to be blamed for it. The BJP has fielded actor Suresh Gopi in Thrissur Lok Sabha constituency. (PTI)

and below normal in parts of peninsular India, the statement said.

In the meeting to review the post-Cyclone Remal situation, another official statement said, Modi was briefed about its impact in the affected states, including the loss of lives and damage to houses and other properties due to landslides and floods in Mizoram, Assam, Manipur, Meghalaya and Tripura.

National Disaster Response Force (NDRF) teams have carried out evacuation, airlifting and road clearance operations, it said, adding the Union home ministry is in regular touch with state governments.

PM Modi said the Union government will continue to extend full support to the states affected by the cyclone, according to the statement.

Top bureaucrats were part of the meetings the prime minister chaired.

He is also chairing a meeting to review the preparations to celebrate the World Environment Day, which falls on June 5.

Much before the Lok Sabha polling exercise began, Modi had set in motion the exercise for different government ministries to prepare the 100-day agenda for the new government.

He had asked his Council of Ministers to prioritise programmes and initiatives for the first 100 days. (PTI)

SIT searching for Bhavani Revanna

BENGALURU, June 2: The Special Investigation Team carried out searches at various locations in the last 24 hours looking for Bhavani Revanna, mother of suspended JD(S) MP Prajwal Revanna, in connection with a woman kidnap case as she was not present at her residence at Holenarasipura in Hassan district, sources said on Sunday.

Meanwhile, Karnataka home minister G Parameshwara said a search is on to "arrest" Bhavani, who is found "absconding". She is hiding somewhere and will be arrested soon, he added.

"They (Special Investigation Team) are searching for her (Bhavani) to arrest her. It's not known where she is. She will be arrested once she is found. It is a due process of law and nothing else," Parameshwara told reporters here.

The SIT had issued a notice to Bhavani asking her to be present at her home on June 1 as there was a need to question her in the kidnap case linked to allegations of sexual abuse against her son. When a team of SIT sleuths reached Bhavani's house, 'Chennambika Nilaya', she was not present.

Two women lawyers reached 'Chennambika Nilaya' on Saturday evening and met the SIT officials. They did not disclose the purpose behind the meeting.

It is learnt that Bhavani had communicated through her lawyers that she was unwell and would appear before them (SIT) shortly.

Bhavani's husband and Holenarasipura JD(S) MLA H D Revanna is on bail in the same case. The SIT carried out searches at various locations including Mysuru, Hassan, Bengaluru, Mandya and Ramnagara. The searches were also done at Bhavani's relatives' houses to track her, but she was not found, sources said.

Sources said the SIT has constituted various teams to look for Bhavani.

Prajwal was arrested over allegations of sexually abusing several women. (PTI)

77th World Health Assembly adopts amendments to International Health Regulations, 2005

'A further step towards equity and the creation of an umbrella of solidarity that will help protect the world from future pandemic threats'

NEW DELHI, June 2: In a landmark achievement in the global health security agenda, the 77th World Health Assembly agreed to the package of amendments to the International Health Regulations (IHR 2005) based on 300 proposals made by member countries after the Covid-19 pandemic.

The targeted amendments to the International Health Regulations (IHR) aim at improving countries' ability to prepare for and respond to Public Health Emergencies of International Concern (PHEIC) and Pandemic Emergencies (PE), an official statement said.

They include provisions for facilitating equitable access to relevant health products during PHEIC and PE, as well as mobilizing financial resources to support developing countries in building, strengthening and maintaining the core capac-



ities required under the IHR (2005), it said. Health Ministry Secretary Apurva Chandra said that an "incredible milestone" has been reached "with the revision of the international health regulations".

"This is a further step towards equity and the creation of an umbrella of solidarity that will help protect the world from future

sumed sessions on the issue, the statement said.

The processes witnessed a number of close calls with seeming deadlocks over positions taken by the various stakeholders, it added.

In order to finalize the package of amendments to the IHR, a proposal was put forward in the form of a White Paper by Apurva Chandra as Chair of Committee A of the World Health Assembly on May 28, 2024.

It proposed to establish a single drafting group, to be co-chaired by one bureau member from the Intergovernmental Negotiating Body (INB) and the Working Group on Amendments to the International Health Regulations (2005) (WGHR) respectively, to consider the matters related to some of the most critical agenda items - the proposed amendments to the IHR (2005), followed by consideration of procedural mat-

ters on way forward related to INB negotiations on the pandemic treaty.

The single drafting group thus established, along with WHO secretariat and member State representatives, through sheer hard work and determination completed the work of bringing consensus in the ongoing IHR amendments during the 77th assembly session period.

India played a constructive role in the crafting of the Instrument, which seeks to operationalize equity, necessary for an equitable response by developing countries to Public Health Emergencies.

As a result, on June 1, 2024 the resolution to amendment of the IHR (2005) was adopted by consensus in the 77th World Health Assembly, the statement said.

The said proposal was approved by all member states by consensus, it said. (PTI)

'Lagaan' inspired to capture essence of storytelling via cricket: Sharan Sharma on 'Mr & Mrs Mahi'

MUMBAI, June 2: Filmmaker Sharan Sharma says he sought inspiration from Aamir Khan-starrer "Lagaan" while crafting the story of his new film "Mr. & Mrs. Mahi", a human drama set against the backdrop of cricket.

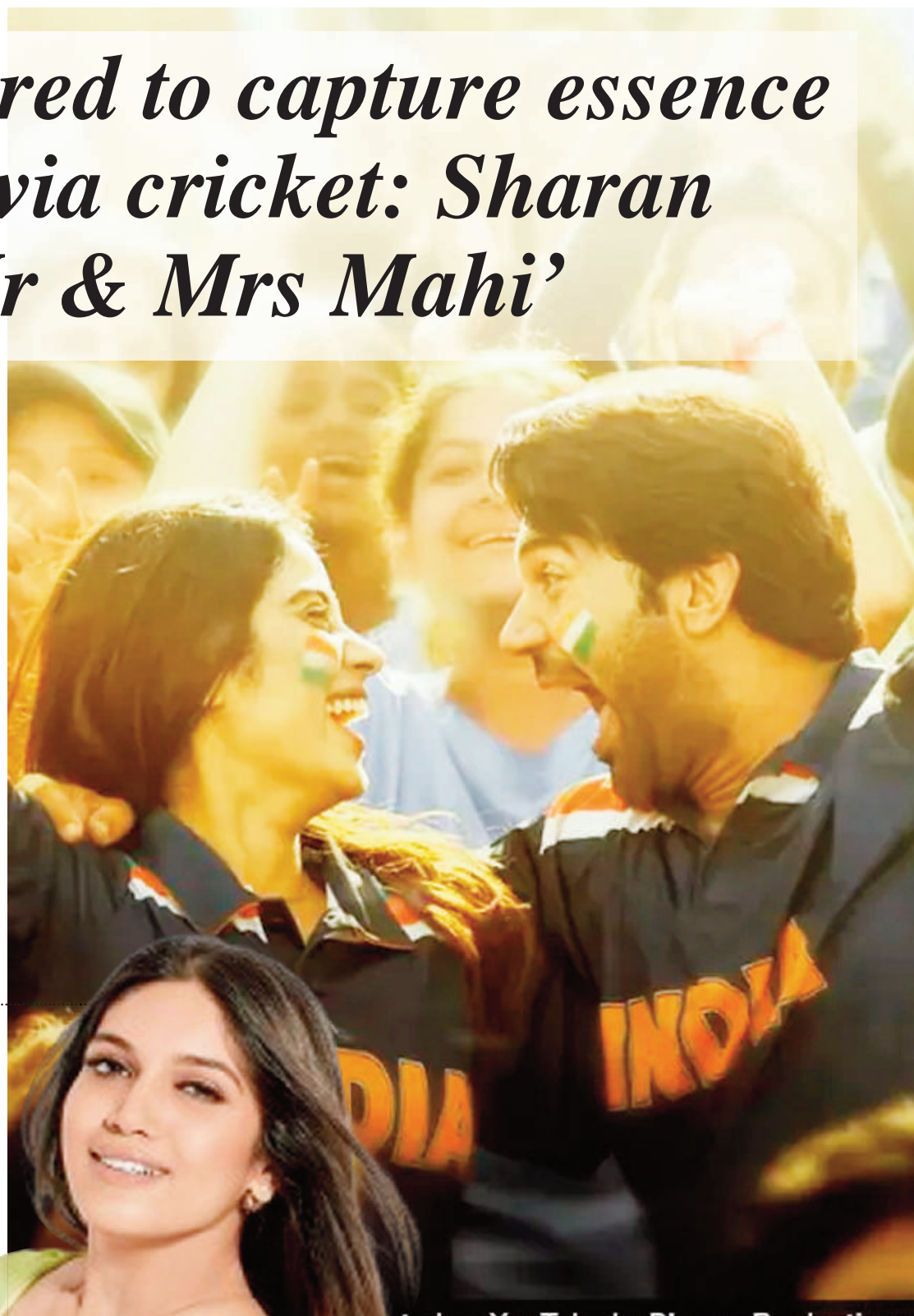
Sharma's movie features Janhvi Kapoor and Rajkumar Rao as the titular couple -- Mahendra, a former cricketer, and Mahima, who is a doctor. After Mahendra spots the cricketing talent in his wife, he encourages her to chase her dream and becomes her coach.

"There's so much cricket to watch in general, so I'm not going to a theatre to watch cricket. I go there to watch a story. We didn't want to show the sport like how we see it on TV... We shot it like a scene, the idea was to show the drama of the scene. This was done brilliantly in 'Lagaan'.

"In 'Lagaan', you were following the story, you were not sitting and watching the match. Our inspiration from 'Lagaan' in terms of coverage, and the focus was on storytelling, that's what we were trying to take," the director told PTI in an interview.

"Lagaan", a period sports drama from director Ashutosh Gowariker, was about a cricket match between a group of untrained villagers and their colonial masters. It won an Academy Award nomination for best foreign language film and went on to become a blockbuster hit and a classic in the history of Indian cinema.

Sharma, who made his filmmaking debut with 2020's "Gunjan Saxena: The Kargil Girl", starring Kapoor, said he was very particular about each and every detail related to the sport in the movie. (PTI)



BHUMI PEDNEKAR BEGINS SHOOTING FOR HER DEBUT OTT SHOW 'DALDAL'

MUMBAI, June 2: Bhumi Pednekar on Saturday announced that she has started filming for "Daldal", the upcoming Prime Video thriller that will mark the actor's series debut.

The actor, who was most recently seen in "Bhaktshak", shared the news on Instagram, where she also posted a still from the show, in which she will star as a cop hot on the heels of a serial killer in Mumbai. "The past never stays buried for long. Rita's journey with #Daldal commences from today.. #Day1 #DaldalOnPrime," Pednekar, 34, wrote in the caption. Amrit Raj Gupta of "Gullak" fame will direct the series, based on Vish Dhamija's book "Bhendi Bazaar". It is produced by Abundantia Entertainment. In "Daldal", which was announced by Prime Video in March this year, Pednekar plays Rita Ferreira, Mumbai's newly appointed DCP who is haunted by the guilt of her part and dealing with demons of her present.

"She must embark on an investigation of a series of murders that puts her on a collision course with a cold-blooded serial killer, even as she has to save her life from falling apart," read the official synopsis.

Vikram Malhotra and Suresh Triveni serve as executive producers on the series, penned by Sreekanth Agneewaran, Rohan D'Souza, and Priya Saggi. (PTI)



Manav Vij's crime drama show 'Gaanth' to stream from June 11 on JioCinema

MUMBAI, June 2: Crime series "Gaanth", starring actors Manav Vij, Monika Panwar and Saloni Batra, will premiere on JioCinema on June 11.

Directed by Kanishk Verma, "Gaanth" will present audiences an unsolvable and bone-chilling case that blurs the lines between reality and perspective, the streamer said in a press release.

Set around the eerie streets of East Delhi, the show follows a strange case of mass suicide that captures both media and police attention. As the 40-year-old disgraced Police Inspector Gadar Singh (Vij) gets the charge of the gritty case, he is determined to get to the root of the crime and find the truth.

"The mystery deepens with the introduction of a psychiatric intern Sakshi Murmu (Panwar), who possesses a unique gift for perceiving patterns invisible to the human eye. Singh and Murmu form an unlikely partnership to unravel the mystery of the peculiar crime scene- seven bodies hanging from seven ropes in a cramped, hazy corner of a house," the official plotline read.

Vij, best known for starring in films such as "Uda Punjab", "Phillaari", "Naam Shabana" and "Andhadhun", said he has always been a fan of psychological thrillers.

"They make you think deeply, transforming you into an investigator as you unravel the mystery in your mind. When I was offered 'Gaanth', I realised it wasn't just about playing a cop in a crime thriller; the character had intricate nuances.

"Gadar Singh is profoundly layered, struggling with inner demons while pursuing the ultimate truth behind the eerie crime. After filming, it took some time for me to detach from the character. Despite the challenges, playing such complex roles is immensely rewarding," the 47-year-old actor said. (PTI)



Share a special bond with Manoj Bajpayee, fun to reunite with him: Sharib Hashmi on 'Family Man' 3

MUMBAI, June 2: Actor Sharib Hashmi says he shares a great bond with "The Family Man" co-star Manoj Bajpayee and was eagerly looking forward to reprise his role of JK Talpade in the show's upcoming season three.

Created and directed by Raj Nidimoru and Krishna DK, the action thriller series features Bajpayee as Srikant Tiwari, a middle-class guy trying to maintain a balance between his personal and professional life as a covert intelligence officer.

Hashmi plays Talpade, a close friend and colleague of Tiwari, in the show, which started with its critically-acclaimed first season in 2019 and followed by the sophomore chapter in 2021.

The filming for the upcoming third season of the Prime Video show began last month. "I was very excited to begin work on the third sea-

son of 'The Family Man', and I'm very happy with the scenes that we've shot. I'm waiting for the next schedule to begin, I look forward to getting back to playing JK," the 48-year-old actor told PTI in an interview.

Hashmi said reuniting with Bajpayee on "The Family Man" series is always "fun and special".

"We both share a special bond. I've a great comfort level with him. When we become JK and Tiwari, we get into that groove and have that same banter, we pull each other's legs. It didn't seem that we didn't shoot for this long," he said.

The actor said that he never anticipated that their onscreen camaraderie will attract a huge fan-following.

"We did hope that people would like us but we didn't know that our onscreen friendship would get so much love. Some people have writ-

ten poems about that. It feels great that our hard work has paid off," he added.

Hashmi, who has garnered critical acclaim for his work in "Filmistaan", "Tarla", "Fighter", among others, said he believes in working with utmost honesty, whether he has one scene in a film or a full-fledged role.

"I never take my work for granted, I've confidence in myself. I've talent too but I'm not over confident that I can do everything on my own as an actor. I need support and guidance from the director, and that is important for me. I think a lot before saying yes to a film, whether I do one scene in 'Fighter' or a full-length role in 'Tarla,'" the actor said.

Hashmi's upcoming movie is "Malhar", set in rural Kutch and described as a heartwarming exploration of three intertwined tales of love, struggle, and resilience.

The anthology movie also features Anjali Patil of "Newton" fame, Rishi Saxena, Shrinivas Pokale, Vinayak Potdar, Mohammad Samad and Akshata Acharya, among others.

"There are three stories in this, there's a story of two children who are friends, another is a teenage love story, and one is a story where I, Anjali and Rishi feature. I liked how the director weaved these three stories; besides I liked the character, the script and team," Hashmi said. "I'm not headlining the film. Rather I've a cameo but it doesn't look like a small role. I'm hoping the audience will like the film, which touches upon some relevant topics," he said.

"Malhar" is set to release in theatres on June 7. The film is directed by Vishal Kumbhar and produced by Praful Pasad under the banner of V Motion Pictures. (PTI)



LOCALS WILL HAVE TO PLAY THE GAME AND EXPLORE IT: YUVRAJ ON CRICKET'S FUTURE IN AMERICA

DALLAS, June 2: Former India star Yuvraj Singh is amazed at the Americans' penchant for packaging their sports and for cricket to make strides in the USA, he says the "locals" will have to "play the game and explore it".

The USA and the West Indies are jointly hosting the ongoing edition of the T20 World Cup with matches being scheduled in New York, Dallas and Fort Lauderdale in Florida.

"To all the (Indian American) fans who come here for cricket, who I know want India to win, but I think you should encourage your American friends and all the people

around the world to come and watch every game and encourage the sport of cricket in America," Yuvraj said.

An ICC Ambassador for the T20 World Cup, Yuvraj was present at the opening of Fan Park at the Oculus Trade Centre in New York.

"I'm sure this is a place where all the best sports in the world are played. America is a place where all sports are popular."

"In our country, I know cricket is very popular amongst other sports, but I think it will be amazing to watch cricket grow in America because I feel the way the Americans package sports, I

don't see as much happening around the world," he added.

A member of the International Cricket Council (ICC), USA is hosting a cricket tournament of this magnitude for the first time, and it has generated some interest in this part of the world that is obsessed with baseball, the NBA and American football (NFL).

"Definitely, the interest is growing in America. The major league (cricket) has come and done really well, cricket is really growing. I think the way Americans package sports is amazing, and if they can package cricket like that, like their sports, it will be great to watch.

"But, along the way, the locals will have to play the game and explore it. It's going to take time. But, as I said, Americans, the way they package sports, is amazing, and if they can do it with cricket, it will be good to watch," Yuvraj said.

The marquee India-Pakistan match is scheduled for June 9 in New York and Yuvraj, a veteran of many epic battles between the neighbours, is looking forward to the game as it will be the

first time he will be watching it from the venue.

"Well, it's a game of emotion. If we win, we'll go crazy. If we lose, we'll go crazy. But the thing is, if we win, they will go crazy with us. If we lose, they will go crazy with us. That's the difference."

"But I think, whether it's India, Pakistan, or any other game, I'm sure the guys are going 100%. It's just that I always feel that the team who control their emotion on that day better and

focus on the match situation, they will win the game.

"In the last couple of years, we've had a better record than Pakistan. And hopefully, we can continue that."

The stylish left-handed batter added, "I think I would not be that nervous going into India-Pakistan game watching it. I've watched on TV, but never been to the ground watching an India-Pakistan match. This will be first time."

Yuvraj is delighted to see Americans hosting a top global cricket tournament and also playing in it for the first time. The USA started their campaign with a convincing seven-wicket victory over ri-

vals Canada in Dallas.

"All the best to you and the American team, but India is far ahead in cricket right now. Part of you, which is also Indian, so I know inside you want India to win as well."

"But to say a few words about this iconic place, we all know the history over here and we all know what happened and people's lives do matter. "And to the World Cup teams, I wish them all the best and may the best team win, and I hope you guys really enjoy the tournament and cheer all teams. I know you want to back India, but if India is not playing, cheer other teams as well," Yuvraj said. (PTI)



Norway Chess: Praggnanandhaa stuns Caruana, enters top 10 world ranking

STAVANGER (NORWAY), June 2: Indian Grandmaster R Praggnanandhaa scored a massive, hard-earned victory over world number two Fabiano Caruana of the United States and made his way to the top 10 of world rankings after the end of fifth round of Norway Chess tournament here.

Hikaru Nakamura of the United States got the better of off-colour world champion Ding Liren of China to stretch his lead to a full point over Magnus Carlsen of Norway.

With 10 points in his bag, Nakamura has a full point lead over Carlsen at the half way stage of this USD 161000 prize money tournament.

Carlsen outwitted Firouzja Alireza of France from a drawn rook and pawns endgame. With five rounds still to come, the world number one is followed by Praggnanandhaa on 8.5 points while a distant fourth now is Alireza who remained on 6.5 following his loss.

Caruana on five is in fifth spot while Ding Liren is clearly not enjoying the event with just 2.5 points to his credit.

In the women's event being held simultaneously, R Vaishali continued her dream run and defeated Tingjie Lei of China in the



Armageddon game to keep her lead on 10 points.

Anna Muzychuk is the closest to the Indian and is a full point behind after defeating Pia Cramling of Sweden in the Classical game. Women's world champion Wenjun Ju is third on 7.5 after scoring her fifth straight victory in the Armageddon over Koneru

Humpy. Lei stands fourth on six points, two points clear of Humpy who seems to be struggling at the half-way mark. Cramling with three points is at the bottom of the tables. Praggnanandhaa played out a Carlsenque endgame to grind down Caruana. The Catalan opening by the Indian saw ex-

change of pieces at regular intervals and the players reached a rook and knight endgame before the 40th move itself. The same side pawns even with an extra pawn is known to be a theoretical draw but Praggnanandhaa kept playing till Caruana collapsed on his 66th move and blundered his last pawn. It took 11 more moves

for Praggnanandhaa to convert into a full point.

Carlsen had a similar outing and his was even easier draw that Alireza missed in the rook and pawns endgame. Carlsen had to wait for as many as 77 moves for Alireza to make a serious mistake and five moves later, the world number one had cruised to another victory from an equal endgame.

In the women's section, Vaishali played out a draw under the Classical time control with Tingjie Lei and in another drawn endgame of the day, outplayed the Chinese in the ensuing knight and pawns endgame.

This was Vaishali's second win under Armageddon in the tournament along with two wins in Classical. Her lone loss came against Wenjun Ju in the first round. It was a day that will be attributed to blunders from almost level endgames. Koneru Humpy was the other player on the receiving end as she could not find the best defensive path in a rook and pawns endgame against Ju in the Armageddon.

Though just a pawn less, Humpy missed a slightly tricky defense towards the final stages but instead ended up losing a rook with the clock ticking away. (PTI)

Careers of boys can change with June 6 game: Stimac



KOLKATA, June 2: Indian football team coach Igor Stimac on Sunday said the upcoming FIFA World Cup Qualifier against Kuwait could "change the careers" of his players and described it as a "huge game".

India will take on Kuwait at the Salt Lake Stadium in their penultimate second-round game, which will be followed by the away match against Qatar on June 11.

Despite their shocking loss to lower-ranked Afghanistan in the home leg match in Guwahati in March, India can still make a maiden entry into the third round of qualifiers for the 2026 World Cup.

"It's a huge game. The careers of the boys can change with this game. I want them to enjoy and do their best in the game," Stimac told the All India Football Federation (AIFF).

India, who slipped to 121 in the FIFA rankings after gaining just a solitary point in their two meetings with Afghanistan in March, will look to put up a much better display against Kuwait in what will also be talisman Sunil Chhetri's farewell from international football.

"For such an important game, we need to do a few things; in regards to strength conditioning, in regards to understanding what it needs, in regards to how important this game is, and in regards to mental strength and self-confidence.

"So, we work on all aspects needed for our boys to be on top of their form in this game."

The head coach added: "There are two key points for the preparations for this game. First, winning the game is crucial. And to reach that target, we need to be very clever. We need to understand that in the game, we require patience.

"If we don't open the scoring in the first half an hour, we need to be intelligent and play quality football together with pace. All these aspects are very important and we have to prepare for them."

The Blue Tigers are winless in six matches and have scored just a goal in these games.

In the last one year, India met Kuwait three times. It includes the victory in a tiebreaker in the SAFF Championship final in Bangalore.

"Each of those matches was very tough and I can clearly state that we controlled all those games in superb ways," Stimac said.

"We dominated for the bigger parts in each one of these games. We were above them physically. But on other occasions, before the Kuwait games, we had many games that helped us reach that level.

"But it is a different game now because they are coming here when we didn't have the opportunity to play games. No league is being played now, no club is available. But we did play two games between us to reach the intensity we required.

"And I need to tell you that the boys were superb in those two games. I am very happy with them; happy with everything that was done in the last three weeks," the coach added.

Asked if he was missing anything that could have added value to the side, Stimac said, "I don't have the right to think about it. We have to focus on what we have. What we can do and what can be improved.

"In the final week, we are concentrating on set pieces, offensive tactics, and a few details regarding the shape, team composition, and speed of passing. That's all." (PTI)

Champions League final: Real Madrid seals 15th European Cup after 2-0 win over Borussia Dortmund

LONDON, June 2: In an explosion of gold and silver confetti, Real Madrid held aloft the Champions League trophy for a record-extending 15th time on Saturday.

The most familiar sight in European club soccer's greatest competition felt as fresh as ever after a 2-0 win against Borussia Dortmund in the final at Wembley Stadium.

"Getting used to it? Never," said Carlo Ancelotti, who extended his own record of wins as a coach to five. "The dream continues."

A white wall of Madrid fans at one end of the stadium serenaded their conquering heroes after goals from Dani Carvajal and Vinicius Junior sealed the victory.

A predictable result came in less than predictable circumstances after Dortmund dominated the chances in the first half.

"It was a very difficult game, much more difficult than we had expected," Ancelotti said. "We changed things because in the first half we were a bit lazy."

Carvajal headed Madrid in front in the 74th minute and Vinicius doubled the Spanish giant's lead nine minutes later.

Ancelotti's fifth Champions League title was his third in two spells with Madrid and two more than his closest rivals Zinedine Zidane, Pep Guardiola and Bob Paisley.

Carvajal, Luka Modric, Toni

Kroos and Nacho won the trophy a sixth time to equal the benchmark set by Madrid icon Paco Gento.

Madrid's win comes just a year after Manchester City lifted the trophy for the first time, a victory many believed would herald a new era of dominance for Guardiola's team in Europe. Instead, it was Ancelotti who underlined his case to be considered the finest coach of his generation for his continued supremacy in the Champions League.

As well as three titles with Madrid, he was a two-time win-

ner with AC Milan. He also lifted the Spanish title this season - his sixth league championship won in five different countries.

Madrid's dominance of the competition defies belief, having won more than double than anyone else. Milan is the second most successful club with seven. Madrid has won nine titles in the Champions League era and this was its second in three seasons. "This is the love story between Real Madrid and the European Cup. Players come, players go, but we can say that this is our competition," Madrid president Florentino Perez said.

Its dominance will take some breaking with Kylian Mbappe widely expected to join as a free agent from Paris Saint-Germain during the offseason and Brazil's rising star Endrick on his way. (AP)

With our batting, anything under 200 was chaseable: Aaron Jones

DALLAS, June 2: Aaron Jones was at a loss for words after starring in the USA's seven-wicket demolition of Canada in the T20 World Cup opener in which the New Yorker introduced himself to cricket's elites with a 40-ball 94.

Set a target of 195, USA stuttered initially, losing opener Steven Taylor for zero in the second ball of the innings, and were 42/2 after 6.3 overs.

But Jones had other ideas as he came up with a counter-attacking knock to script a memorable win with 14 balls to spare.

"I don't think it is easy to put it into words. We know Canada come hard against us since it is a big rivalry. Happy to take the team over the line," said Jones, who smashed 10 sixes, the second most in a T20 World Cup innings behind West Indian Chris Gayle's 11

against England in 2016.

On his big shots, he said: "I go through my processes and I like my power hitting. I know if I get it in the middle, it will go for sure. I like to come in when the team is under pressure, it brings out the best in me."

Despite losing two early wickets, Jones said he was confident of chasing down the total with their long batting lineup. He got a helping hand from Andries Gous, who made 65 off 46 balls in a 131-run partnership with Jones.

"With our batting line-up, knew anything under 200 is chaseable. Outfield and pitch were good and we knew that," said Jones after USA's highest run chase in T20Is.

All praise for Jones, USA skipper Manank Patel said: "We've always known, he has the game. He played fearless cricket and back-

ing his shots. It was clean hitting.

"We want to continue the way we are playing. Don't want to change our fearless cricket whether we play Pakistan or India."

Calling it a team effort, Patel said: "The way we've been playing against Canada in previous series, I thought it was a whole team effort."

USA recently defeated Canada 4-0 in the build-up to the T20 World Cup.

"Gous and Jones handled the pressure situation, took the game out of Canada."

He, however, said they gave away 10-15 runs extra with the ball. "As soon as we bowled, the ball was coming well. We bowled well in patches but we gave 10-15 runs extra. Ball was two-paced too." (PTI)

Novak Djokovic keeps his French Open title defense going by getting past Lorenzo Musetti in 5 sets

PARIS, June 2: Novak Djokovic's French Open title defense — and his hold on the No. 1 ranking — are still alive thanks to a 7-5, 6-7 (6), 2-6, 6-3, 6-0 comeback victory over 22-year-old Italian Lorenzo Musetti in a third-round match that lasted 4 1/2 hours and did not conclude until Sunday after 3 a.m., the latest finish in tournament history.

It is Djokovic's 369th win at a Grand Slam tournament, tying Roger Federer for the most in tennis history. Djokovic can break the mark on Monday, when he'll face No. 23 seed Francisco Cerundolo of Argentina.

Djokovic briefly looked as if he might be unable to recover against Musetti but instead ran away with the final two sets and now will continue his bid for a record 25th Grand Slam title and

fourth at Roland Garros.

"I was in real trouble and credit to Lorenzo for making me uncomfortable on the court and playing some really amazing tennis. Very high level. At one point, I didn't know, really, what to do," the 37-year-old Djokovic said. "It didn't feel great playing him that third set and the beginning of the fourth."

Gasping for break while leaning over with hands on knees, or taking so much time between points that he earned a warning, Djokovic appeared to be exhausted at times against his much younger, backward-hat-wearing opponent. Musetti was propelled to the lead by a one-handed backhand, a deft touch at the net and a 5-for-5 success rate on break chances — playing, in sum, "the tennis of his life," as Djokovic

put it. Djokovic said he found the damp and cold conditions, and heavy clay, hard to deal with, especially "when you're playing 20-plus-shot rallies at 2 a.m.; who plays at 2 a.m., you know?"

But Djokovic is nothing if not a determined problem-solver. And once Djokovic got headed in the right direction in the fourth set, thanks to playing more aggressively on service returns and closer to the baseline during groundstrokes exchanges, the 30th-ranked Musetti could not withstand the charge.

One telling stat: Djokovic improved to 39-11 in fifth sets over his career; Musetti fell to 2-6.

Djokovic has spent more weeks atop the ATP rankings than anyone, but if he fails to return to the final at the French Open, he will cede that spot to

Musetti's countryman, current No. 2 Jannik Sinner. That's because a loss in this match would have been the latest in a series of disappointing results in 2024 for the oft-dominant Djokovic, who won 12 of the last 20 Grand Slam events he entered and hasn't been beaten this early at a major since the Australian Open in January 2017.

Not only hasn't he earned a trophy at any tournament this season, but he hasn't even reached a final.

That's why, a week ago, Djokovic assessed his mindset when arriving in Paris with a 14-6 record this year: "Low expectations and high hopes."

Those words also might have described Djokovic's thoughts entering the fourth set against Musetti, who never has been past

the fourth round at any Slam.

The bundled-up spectators frequently chanted Djokovic's first name, or his two-syllable nickname, "No-le." Musetti heard plenty of support in Court Philippe Chatrier, too. The sound reverberated off the underside of the retractable roof, which was closed because of showers that arrived earlier Saturday, the fifth day in a row with showers.

That weather was partially responsible for Djokovic and Musetti not setting foot on court until 10:30 p.m., more than two hours later than originally planned: Tournament organizers moved an additional contest into the safe-from-rain main stadium ahead of Djokovic-Musetti to try and make sure the third round would get completed on time. (AP)

We have not really nailed down our batting unit: Rohit Sharma

NEW YORK, June 2: The Indian team is yet to "nail" its batting lineup for the T20 World Cup and much shouldn't be read into the think tank's decision to send Rishabh Pant at number three in the warm-match against Bangladesh, said skipper Rohit Sharma.

India emerged winners by 60 runs at the Nassau County International Cricket Stadium, restricting Bangladesh to 122 for nine after posting 182 for five in the allotted 20 overs on Saturday.

On Pant batting at No.3, Rohit said, "Just to give him an opportunity. We have not really nailed down what the batting unit will look like. Even the bowlers did pretty well. All in all happy with how things went."

Pant struck a fluent 53 off 32 balls, while Hardik Pandya smashed 40 in 23 deliveries after Suryakumar Yadav helped himself to an 18-ball 31.

"Quite happy with how things went. Pretty much got what we wanted from the game. Like I said at the toss, it was important to get used to the conditions."

"New venue, new ground, drop-in pitch - important to get used to it and we managed pretty well,"



Rohit said after the match.

Left-arm seamer Arshdeep Singh shone with the ball, picking 2/12 in three overs while all-rounder Shivam Dube grabbed 2/13 in three overs.

Asked about Arshdeep, Rohit said, "He has shown us, in whatever games he has played, he has the skills up-front. He has got a very good skill-set (at the death too)."

Obviously, it looks like a good facility in terms of as quickly as they have put up. The ground is a bit soft and the guys could feel that on the hamstring and the calves.

"So, that's the area we need to ensure that we are working around and ensuring that the guys are looking after does feel a little bit heavy underneath," Dravid said in a video posted by the BCCI.

India ticked multiple boxes during their comfortable win over Bangladesh in the warm-up match, but none bolder than the fifty by Pant which has all but sealed his place as the first-choice wicket-keeper batter in the ICC showpiece.

Dravid added, "A little bit spongy (pitch) at times but I thought we coped really well. The batters had put an above-par score on that wicket and the bowlers came out and bowled really well."

"All in all, we got run-around and to get a game here is really nice. Hopefully, we can prepare well for the next couple of days and be ready."

Arshdeep, who made good use of the pitch said the team was nicely adapting to the conditions despite some challenges.

"Feels good, really important

how you start. We got wickets early on and did not give away runs. The wicket was helping us as well, so we tried to keep it simple and got the result as well."

"The ground is sand-based, so you need to get the rhythm right. It will be a challenge to adapt to the conditions here."

"We are adapting really well because the practice sessions were also there in the morning and everyone turned up and did their 100% there, that we can see on the field as well, the way we played as a team, and it was a nice result," Arshdeep said.

Dube, who has made a name for himself with his ability to hit big sixes besides bowling his medium pacers, added, "It was fun playing here, and it was good to have a win in our first warm-up game. Obviously, it's well-built. But there is a challenge for the players. It's not easy."

"The warm-up match is important for us to be ready for the T20 World Cup. So it was important to get used to it in batting, bowling and fielding and hence, we got a good idea after playing today and it was a different experience," Dube said. (PTI)

Amit Panghal clinches Paris Olympics spot



BANGKOK, June 2: Amit Panghal's comeback to the Indian team culminated in an Olympic quota as the world championships silver medalist boxer qualified for the Paris Games with a quarterfinal win in the 2nd World Qualification Tournament here on Sunday.

Panghal, India's lone male world championship silver medalist, notched a hard-fought 5-0 win over China's Chuang Liu for a ticket to his second Olympic Games.

He thus joins the quartet of Nishant Dev (71kg), Nikhat Zareen (50kg), Preeti Pawar (54kg) and Lovlina Borgohain (75kg). All of them have booked Olympic berths.

Panghal had only one shot at making the Paris Olympics and the 2018 Asian Games champion made the most of his opportunity.

The going has been tough for Panghal as he lost his place in the national team on the basis of BFI's evaluation system to world championship bronze medalist Deepak Bhoria, who competed at the earlier two qualifying events.

Since the Tokyo Olympics, the only big-ticket event that the Haryana boxer has competed in was the Commonwealth Games in

2022, where he won the gold medal.

He also emerged victorious at the prestigious Strandja Memorial tournament earlier this year.

The quarterfinal bout began on a rather sedate note with both boxers trying to assess each other. One minute into the bout, Liu went after Panghal. At an height disadvantage, the Indian struggled to find his range, and he did manage to land a couple of scoring shots but didn't engage much.

Trailing 1-4, Panghal, a three-time Asian Championship medalist, changed his strategy. He went on the offensive, beginning the second round on a positive note.

The Chinese boxer retaliated by launching some countering blows but Panghal continued with his punches and ended the round on a high, forcing all five judges to rule in his favour.

In the last three minutes, Liu changed his game and moved closer to Panghal. It was an energy sapping affair as both fighters traded punches, going hammer and tongs at each other. In the end, the former world number one prevailed. Later in the day, Jaismine Lamboria (57kg) and Sachin Siwach (57kg) will also look to secure Olympic quotas. (PTI)

T20 WC: SL look to muffle big guns in SA batting; Namibia face Oman



NEW YORK, June 2: Sri Lanka will rely on their exceptionally varied bowling attack to tame the unrestrained batting power of South Africa in their Group D T20 World Cup opener here on Monday.

They will be eager to get onto the points table at the earliest too as some tricky teams like Netherlands, Bangladesh and Nepal are clubbed with them in the group.

South Africa have spread all their cards on the table as the team selection indicated the most likely route they would take in this ICC showpiece.

A batting line-up consisting of captain Aiden Markram, wicket-keeper batter Heinrich Klaasen, Quinton de Kock, David Miller and Tristan Stubbs could be a nightmare for any bowling attack.

Klaasen and Stubbs have been in roaring form of late. In this World Cup cycle, the right-hander has averaged 41 and struck runs at 182.

In the IPL 2024 too, Klaasen made 471 runs from 16 matches at a strike rate of 171 for the Sunrisers Hyderabad.

Stubbs has been equally impressive for the Delhi Capitals, amassing 378 runs from 14 matches and he made them at a strike-rate of 190. Both these gifted power-strikers come in the middle-order where the spinners will be in operation, and to add to Lanka's worries, they are phenomenal against the tweakers, especially Klaasen.

In the run-up to the World Cup, the 32-year-old from Transvaal has averaged 59 against spin and made runs at an eye-watering strike-rate of 191. It will certainly worry a set of Lankan spinners such as captain Wanindu Hasaranga (economy 7.42) and Maheesh Theekshana (6.71), both of whom had to battle injuries in the recent past. So, Sri Lanka, who have not reached the knockouts of a T20 WC after their triumph in 2014, will be eager to try a couple of overs from pacers Matheesha Pathirana and Dilshan Madushanka in that phase when Klaasen and Stubbs are looking for acceleration.

However, Lanka might take heart from the fact that the Proteas went down 0-3 to the West Indies in a recent T20I series at Kingstons.

Lanka will also hope that the New York pitch will continue to offer some help to the bowlers as it had happened in Saturday's warm-up match between India and Bangladesh, where a few deliveries did not rise above the ankle and knee level. Beyond that, the Lankans are also one of the teams that have played a good number of T20Is this year. In 2024, they have series wins over Zimbabwe and Afghanistan at home and Bangladesh away.

In fact, they have won six of the last nine T20Is. But those external factors will not have much bearing on a fresh day and Lanka know that

their batters too will have to come good against the African rival. They have the experienced Angelo Mathews, the explosive Kusal Mendis and the rock-solid Dhananjaya de Silva to bank on while the former captain Dasun Shanaka can make a few quick runs down the order.

The SA attack does not have that much variety in their bowling unit as it largely revolves around Kagiso pacer Rabada and left-arm wrist-spinner Tabraiz Shamsi.

Anrich Nortje is still finding his range after coming back from an injury and had an underwhelming IPL where he conceded more than 11 runs an over. The SA management will hope that the pacer will regain his rhythm in the biggest stage and that will have a major say in avoiding another below-par outing in a World Cup.

Squad: South Africa: Aiden Markram (c), Ottniel Baartman, Gerald Coetzee, Quinton de Kock, Bjorn Fortuin, Reeza Hendricks, Marco Jansen, Heinrich Klaasen, Keshav Maharaj, David Miller, Anrich Nortje, Kagiso Rabada, Ryan Rickelton, Tabraiz Shamsi, Tristan Stubbs.

Sri Lanka: Wanindu Hasaranga (c), Charith Asalanka, Kusal Mendis, Pathum Nissanka, Kamindu Mendis, Sadeera Samarawickrama, Angelo Mathews, Dasun Shanaka, Dhananjaya De Silva, Maheesh Theekshana, Dunith Wellalage, Dushmantha Chameera, Nuwan Thushara, Matheesha Pathirana, Dilshan Madushanka. Travelling Reserves: Asitha Fernando, Vijayakanth Vijayakanth, Bhanuka Rajapaksa, Janith Liyanage.

Match starts at 8 PM IST.

In a Group B clash at Bridgetown, Namibia, a dominant force in the African Qualifiers, will be hoping for a winning start against Oman. However, it would not be that easy for Namibia as Oman had run them close in April, before conceding the five-match series 2-1. Hence, Oman, who are making their third appearance in a T20 WC, will be hoping for a better outcome this time.

Squad: Oman: Aqib Ilyas (c), Zeeshan Maqsood, Kashyap Pranjapati, Pratik Athavale, Ayaan Khan, Shoaib Khan, Mohammad Nadeem, Naseem Khushi, Mehran Khan, Bilal Khan, Rafiullah, Kaleemullah, Fayyaz Butt, Shakeel Ahmad, Khalid Kail. Reserves: Jatinder Singh, Samay Shrivastava, Sufyan Mehmood, Jay Odedra.

Namibia: Gerhard Erasmus (c), Zane Green, Michael Van Lingen, Dylan Leicher, Ruben Trimpelmann, Jack Brassell, Ben Shikongo, Tangeni Lungameni, Niko Davin, JJ Smit, Jan Frylinck, JP Kotze, David Wiese, Bernard Scholtz, Malan Kruger, PD Blienaar. Match starts at 6 AM IST (Monday). (PTI)

Bangladesh anxious on Shoriful availability as pacer requires six stitches for split webbing

NEW YORK, June 2: Bangladesh suffered an injury setback as left-arm pacer Shoriful Islam needed six stitches on a split-webbing in his bowling hand after their T20 World Cup warm-up match against India here.

The incident happened in the penultimate ball of India's innings on Saturday, when Shoriful tried to stop a drive from Hardik Pandya and hurt his bowling hand. Tanzim Hasan Sakib bowled the last ball of the innings as Shoriful walked off the field in pain.

"Shoriful suffered a split injury between the index and middle finger of his left hand while trying to stop a ball in his last over," Bangladesh Cricket Board chief

physician Dr Debashis Chowdhury was quoted on ESPNcricinfo.

Bangladesh begin their World Cup campaign against Sri Lanka in Texas on June 7 and it remains to be seen if the premier pacer is fit for that match. Bangladesh pacer Taskin Ahmed is also down with a side strain.

"After initial medical attention, he was taken to Nassau University Medical Centre. The hand surgeon administered six stitches. We will visit him again after two days. We will know then how much time it will take for Shoriful to return," said Chowdhury.

Shoriful claimed 1/26 from 3.5 overs in the warm-up match that India won by 60 runs. (PTI)

Hopefully my innings will open eyes of those who don't know me or USA cricket: Aaron Jones

DALLAS, June 2: New Yorker Aaron Jones on Sunday hoped his scintillating knock in the landmark T20 World Cup opener against Canada would "open the eyes of those who don't know me or USA cricket."

Jones' 40-ball 94 was an eye-opener as his team notched a convincing seven-wicket victory over rivals Canada here, beginning the home team's campaign on a rousing note in a tournament they are hosting for the first time, along with the West Indies.

Jones, whose place in the T20I side was under scrutiny and was released by Major League Cricket (MLC) franchise Seattle Orcas after its inaugural edition, said he showed he was "good enough" to play at the highest level. He was not picked in the last MLC draft.

"When I wasn't selected in the Major League, I just took it as a stepping stone in the journey," he said.

"I would have loved to get drafted, so it goes sometimes. Hopefully tonight's innings will probably open the eyes of those who don't know me or USA cricket."

"We have great players here and that we have a lot of talent here and are willing to play at the highest level for sure."

Set a target of 195, USA stuttered initially, losing opener Steven Taylor for zero in the second ball of the innings, and were 42/2 after 6.3 overs.

But Jones had other ideas as he came up with a counter-attacking innings to script a memorable win with as many as 14 balls to spare.

"I don't think it is easy to put it into words. We know Canada come hard against us since it is a big rivalry. Happy to take the team over the



line," said Jones.

Jones smashed 10 sixes on the day, the second most in a T20 World Cup innings behind West Indian Chris Gayle's 11 against England in 2016.

"Sometimes as a cricketer, you could go a bit under the radar if you have a few low scores," Jones said. "I always back myself and know that I am capable of performing at every level. (I am) happy that I came out on top and won the game for USA."

"Hope it opens the eyes of some people around the world that I am good enough to play T20 cricket."

"I believe in myself, I work hard and I just use (criticism) as motivation. I know that I'm good enough to play at the highest level, and whenever given the opportunity, I'll do my best for sure."

"When I went out to bat tonight, I just saw it as another game to fight for me and bring my team as close as possible to the line, and if we

get as close as possible to the line and over the line, it's great for the team."

Despite losing two early wickets, Jones said he was confident of chasing down the total with their long batting lineup. He got a helping hand from Andries Gous, who made 65 off 46 balls in a 131-run partnership with Jones.

"With our batting line-up, knew anything under 200 is chaseable. Outfield and pitch were good and we knew that," said Jones after USA's highest run chase in T20Is."

USA will next take on Pakistan at the same venue on Thursday and play India in ten days' time, while Canada face Ireland in New York on Friday.

Jones said they will continue to play fearless cricket.

"We just want to keep winning as much as possible, of course we can't win every single game for the rest of our lives."

"I don't think our plan (for the rest of the tournament) is going to change much. We want to play fearless cricket, we want to play hard cricket, we want to play smart cricket."

"We are going into the Pakistan game with the same mindset. We want to play fearless cricket, regardless of who we play against."

All praise for Jones, USA skipper Monank Patel said: "We've always known, he has the game. He played fearless cricket and backing his shots. It was clean hitting."

"We want to continue the way we are playing. Don't want to change our fearless cricket whether we play Pakistan or India." Calling it a team effort, Patel said: "The way we've been playing against Canada in previous series, I thought it was a whole team effort." (PTI)

Stay clam, keep nerves at bay: Babar tells teammates ahead of India clash

NEW YORK, June 2: The hype, the expectations and the pressure around India-Pakistan games certainly makes players nervous, says Babar Azam who advised his side to stay calm and stick to basics during the much-awaited T20 World Cup clash, here Sunday.

India have lost only once to Pakistan in the T20 World Cup in seven meetings with their only defeat coming in 2021 when the Virat Kohli-led side lost by 10 wickets at the Super 12 stage.

"We know the Pakistan-India fixture generates more discussion than any other match. There is a different vibe altogether for this fixture, and there's a lot of excitement too not just among players but also among the fans," Babar said in a PCB podcast.

"Wherever you go in the world, you'll have people talking about the India-Pakistan match with everyone supporting their country. Every fan eagerly waits for this fixture and focuses on this one particular match.

"Obviously, the expectations and the hype around this match causes some nervousness. It all comes down to how you handle it and the more you focus on the basics, the easier it will be for you as a player."

"It's a game of immense pressure, and if you keep your head cool, stay calm and trust your hard work and skills, things will be easier," Babar added. The Pakistan skipper rued the missed chances in the 2022 edition.

"For me, in 2022, we could and should have won the India game, but they took it away. The most hurtful was the defeat against Zimbabwe. It hurts more because we had played good cricket against India and people were praising our performance and fightback," he recalled about their one-run defeat in a last ball thriller.

He further emphasised the importance of playing top cricket against every team, focusing on effort and positive mindset while



acknowledging that results are uncertain. "I am happy and excited because when you go to play in a major event, you have different excitement. It's the aim of any cricketer to play in a World Cup, so that kind of feeling is coming over me. The hope is always to lift the trophy, but for that to happen, we have to play top cricket against every side."

"Effort is in our hands, but results, we do not know. How we

present ourselves on the ground, our body language and how we communicate with each other will matter. We must be positive, so results will come."

The 2009 champions, Pakistan have been the most consistent sides of the T20 global showpiece, having made six semi-finals in eight editions.

They finished runners-up in 2007 and in 2022, going down to England in the final of the previ-

ous edition.

"In the final, Shaheen's injury was impactful because at that time, the pressure was on them (England). We were forced to give an over to a spinner and that made a difference."

"Our performances in the last two ICC Men's T20 World Cups have been good. Unfortunately, we could not finish on a high. We were also runners-up in the ACC T20 Asia Cup 2022. So, at the back of our minds, we are thinking about how we have played two finals and a semi-final and how we can overcome the mistakes that derailed our campaigns," Babar said. Babar said winning an ICC trophy is an ultimate dream.

"As a batter, I have achieved decently and, as a captain, I have won a few series. But lifting the ICC trophy is a different motivation. You go to a different level and get a lot of praise. So, the motivation, aspiration and dream remains to lift an ICC trophy and present it to Pakistan," he said. (PTI)