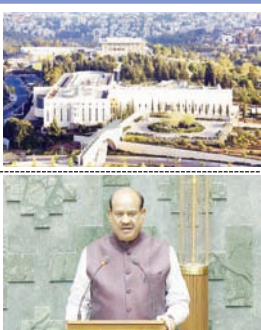


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25 YEARS OF DEDICATED JOURNALISM

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Government of Assam

Ambitious step of Education Department  
Government of Assam

Under the Pragyan Bharati Scheme

**Free admission**  
for students at college level



### Eligibility criteria for free admission



Students' parents should not be employed in government/bodies and corporations under government



Students are required to submit income certificate of father/mother



Students are required to enroll as regular students



In the absence of income proof, the family identity card or ration card will be considered as valid proof of income.

### Account of Pragyan Bharati Scheme Implementation in Previous Years

Year	Number of Enrolled Students	Amount Paid to Colleges (In crore)
2016-17	1,38,085	44.15
2017-18	2,34,280	74.50
2018-19	2,78,729	91.73
2019-20	1,89,434	77.23
2020-21	4,07,581	161.92
2021-22	3,57,903	89.87
2022-23	3,29,612	183.87
2023-24	2,94,633	103.09



Total amount

**₹826.36**  
crore



Total number of students

**22,30,257**

More than 57,500 students have received free admission at the college level till now in this year

Government of Assam will pay the entire fee amount against such admissions to the college authorities on 10 July 2024

Janasanyog /D/1915/ 24/26-Jun-24





# Sensex breaches 78,000 level for 1<sup>st</sup> time, Nifty at record high as private bank shares shine

**MUMBAI, June 25:** Benchmark Sensex breached the historic 78,000 level for the first time while Nifty settled at a new record high on Tuesday on buying in blue-chip bank stocks and Reliance Industries. The 30-share BSE Sensex jumped 712.44 points or 0.92 per cent to settle at a new closing peak of 78,053.52. During the day, the benchmark soared 823.63 points or 1 per cent to hit a fresh lifetime high of 78,164.71.

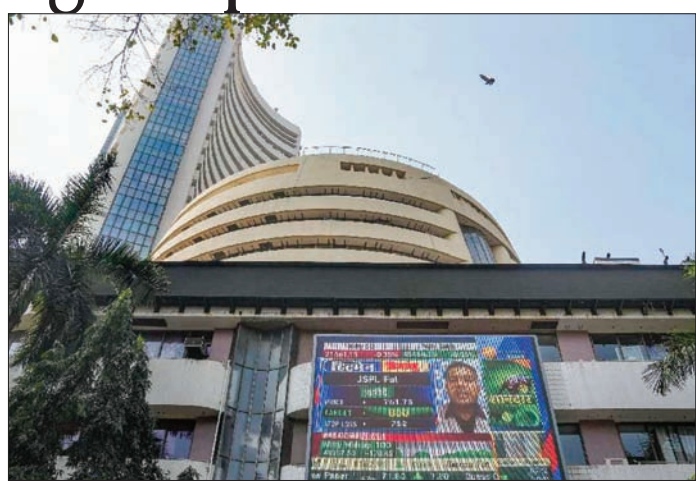
The Sensex breached the 77,000 mark for the first time on June 10.

The Nifty went up by 183.45 points or 0.78 per cent to settle at a fresh record high of 23,721.30. During the day, it climbed 216.3 points or 0.91 per cent to hit an intra-day lifetime high of 23,754.15.

Among the 30 Sensex companies, Axis Bank, ICICI Bank, HDFC Bank, Tech Mahindra, Larsen & Toubro, Bajaj Finserv, State Bank of India, Reliance Industries and Infosys were the biggest gainers.

Power Grid, Asian Paints, Tata Steel, Nestle, Maruti and JSW Steel were among the laggards.

"A rally in the banking stocks pushed Nifty to hit another record



34th time this year though a host of other sectors ended in the negative," said Deepak Jasani, Head of Retail Research, HDFC Securities. In the broader market, the BSE midcap gauge declined 0.26 per cent while the smallcap index dipped 0.03 per cent.

"A positive news from the market perspective is the current account turning surplus in Q4 FY24. This will take away the pressure on the rupee and pave the way for FII inflows when clarity emerges on the Fed rate cuts," said V K Vijayakumar, Chief Investment Strategist at Geojit Financial Services. India recorded a current account surplus of USD 5.7 billion or 0.6 per cent of GDP in the March quarter, the Reserve Bank of India said on Monday.

This is the first time in ten quarters that the crucial metric of the country's external strength has turned into surplus mode. Among indices, bankex jumped 1.87 per cent, financial services climbed 1.45 per cent, IT by 0.53 per cent, capital goods by 0.28 per

cent and tech by 0.43 per cent.

Realty declined 1.82 per cent. Power (1.05 per cent), utilities (0.95 per cent), metal (0.84 per cent) and telecommunication (0.28 per cent) also dropped.

"The markets edged higher signaling a resumption of the uptrend after a brief pause. Nifty traded within a range during the first half, but selective buying in heavy-weight stocks, particularly from the banking sector, spurred a sharp surge," Ajit Mishra - SVP, Research, Religare Broking Ltd, said.

"We believe the current buoyancy in banking, coupled with notable strength in IT, will dictate the trend, while other sectors may contribute on a rotational basis," Mishra added.

In Asian markets, Seoul, Tokyo and Hong Kong settled higher while Shanghai ended lower. European markets were trading in the negative territory. US markets ended on a mixed note on Monday.

Global oil benchmark Brent crude declined 0.44 per cent to USD 85.63 a barrel.

Foreign Institutional Investors (FIIs) offloaded equities worth ₹653.97 crore on Monday, according to exchange data. (PTI)

## Interest rates not impeding growth, monetary policy to focus on lowering inflation: Das

**MUMBAI, June 25:** Reserve Bank Governor Shaktikanta Das on Tuesday asserted that the high interest rates are not impeding growth, and made it clear that the monetary policy will "unambiguously" focus on getting down inflation going forward.

The country is at the threshold of a "major structural shift" in its growth trajectory and is moving towards a path where 8 per cent real GDP growth can be sustained on a yearly basis, Das said addressing an event by Bombay Chamber of Commerce and Industry here. "Normally if growth is well sustained, if you've good growth, then it is a clear sign that your monetary policy and your interest rates are not acting as an impediment to growth," Das said.

Addressing the debate on the sacrifices to growth because of the elevated interest rates, Das said all such concerns are misplaced and the growth momentum is continuing month on month. He said RBI's nowcasting team is projecting a GDP growth number at 7.4 per cent for the June quarter, which is higher than the central bank's own estimate of 7.3 per cent, and added that he is confident of the economy growing at the RBI estimated 7.2 per cent for FY25.

"A good growth outlook gives us the necessary

space to unambiguously focus on inflation," he added.

Das used the analogy of chess to underline the focus on the inflation moderation going ahead and made it clear that one wrong move can distract and get us off-track now. A single adverse weather event can take inflation back to over 5 per cent, he said, stressing on the focus that is required.

He said the inflation has come down by 3.1 percentage points to 4.7 per cent currently from a high of 7.8 per cent in 2022 "primarily" due to the monetary policy actions. Connecting lower inflation with growth aspirations, he said a lower level of price rise can ensure sustainable growth.

"High inflation makes the economy uncompetitive, makes the economy an unfavourable destination for both domestic as well as foreign investments, above all, a high inflation would mean lowering the purchasing power of the people especially the poor people," he said.

Das said after three years of growth getting a push from the government expenditure, there is "clear evidence" of private capital expenditure picking up and pointed to sectors associated with infrastructure like cement and steel witnessing the highest interest. (PTI)

Contd. from Page 1...

## Lok Sabha braces for Speaker's

Vajpayee moved a motion to choose TDP member G M C Balayogi as the Lok Sabha Speaker. The motion moved by Vajpayee was adopted.

Since Independence, only M A Ayyangar, G S Dhillon, Balram Jakhar and G M C Balayogi have retained the coveted posts in the subsequent Lok Sabhas. Jakhar was the Speaker of the seventh and the eighth Lok Sabhas and holds the distinction of being the only presiding officer to complete two full terms. Balayogi was chosen as the Speaker of the 12th Lok Sabha, which had a tenure of 19 months. He was also chosen as the Speaker of the 13th Lok Sabha on October 22, 1999, till his death in a chopper crash on March 3, 2002. On Tuesday, as the Congress nominated eight-term member Kodikunnil Suresh for the Lok Sabha Speaker's post, Parliamentary Affairs Minister Kiren Rijiju appealed to the opposition to reconsider its decision. (PTI)

## Assam Police fully prepared to

that the state will achieve this well ahead of the stipulated time. The new laws include stringent provisions for dealing with crimes against women and children, the filing of 'zero FIR' and e-FIR, and the conduct of all trial proceedings through electronic means, among other new aspects.

New crimes have been added to the lists in the new laws, with terrorism now defined under them, the ADGP said, adding that special legislation dealing with various crimes and terrorism will also remain in effect.

The Bharatiya Nyay Sanhita (BNS), the Bharatiya Nagrik Suraksha Sanhita (NSS), and the Bharatiya Sakshya Adhiniyam (BSA) will come into force from July 1, replacing the Indian Penal Code, the Criminal Procedure Code, and the Indian Evidence Act, respectively. (PTI)

## No right to profess love for Constitution;

families were destroyed due to their excesses." Uttar Pradesh chief minister Yogi Adityanath said the country will not pardon the Congress and demanded that the opposition party apologize to the people.

The BJP held programmes coinciding with the anniversary of the Emergency to "expose" what it called the Congress "authoritarianism" and its disregard for the Constitution. In posts on X, Modi said that just to cling on to power, the then Congress government disregarded every democratic principle and turned the nation into a jail. "Socially regressive policies were unleashed to target the weakest sections."

"These are the same people who have imposed Article 356 on innumerable occasions, got a Bill to destroy press freedom, destroyed federalism and violated every aspect of the Constitution."

"The mindset which led to the imposition of the Emergency is very much alive among the same party which imposed it. They hide their disdain for the Constitution through their tokenism but the people of India have seen through their antics and that is why they have rejected them time and again," Modi said.

The Prime Minister said the anniversary on Tuesday is a day to pay homage to all those great men and women who resisted the Emergency. "Those who imposed the Emergency have no right to profess their love for our Constitution," he said. Kharage said the Prime Minister is raking up the past only to hide his "failures".

"Narendra Modi ji, the country is looking forward to the future but you keep scratching the past to hide your failures. In the last 10 years, you made 140 crore Indians realise what 'undeclared emergency' is, which caused a deep trauma to democracy and the Constitution," Kharage said in a post in Hindi on X.

"Breaking parties, toppling elected governments through the backdoor, misuse of agencies like ED, CBI, IT against 95 per cent of opposition leaders, putting chief ministers in jail, and using the official machinery before elections and disturbing the level playing field, is this not undeclared emergency?"

Union defence minister Rajnath Singh said the Emergency was a black chapter in Indian democracy which cannot be forgotten. Dictatorship and misuse of power were on brazen display during the period, Singh said on 'X', adding that it raises a big question mark on the commitment to democracy of several political parties.

BJP president JP Nadda reminded the Congress of the "dark days of Emergency" and said those who insulted and ignored the Constitution several times have declared themselves as protectors of the Constitution."

Senior BJP leader Vikram Verma, a former union minister, said Rahul Gandhi should publicly express regret for the Emergency imposed by his grandmother. Congress leader P Chidambaram said the people of the country have voted for the 18th Lok Sabha in such a manner that no "divine ruler" can change the basic structure of the Constitution. In a post on 'X', he said the people have voted to curtail the ambitions of the BJP. "Hon'ble Prime Minister said that 'Emergency reminds us to protect the Constitution'. Very true," Chidambaram said.

"I may add, the Constitution reminded the people to prevent another Emergency, and they voted to curtail the ambitions of the BJP. The people voted for the 18th Lok Sabha in such a manner that no human or divine ruler can change the basic structure of the Constitution," he added. The Sharad Pawar-led NCP faction claimed there are many "Emergency situations" in the country at present and the BJP needs to answer them before dwelling into the past. (PTI)

## CEM Ronghang visits Bithung

have eroded roads of the village and damaged naamghars along with their boundary walls in Taradubi area. We also promise to build a church in the next two years. Arunodai Scheme and ration cards will also be given to all BPL families," said Ronghang. MAC Headings Rongphar, former insurgent leader of People's Democratic Council of Karbi Longri, Songbijit Kathar, president of BJP mandal committee of Bithung Rengthama, Tarjan Langthasa and others attended the programme.

## 'Simply not for me': After consecutive

in 2018, he contested the 2019 Sikkim assembly elections from two seats but lost in both. He again unsuccessfully contested the by-election to the Gangtok assembly seat, which was held later that year.

He lost the recently held elections to the SKM by 4,346 votes. Bhutia, the former Indian football captain, said he felt he had great ideas for the development of sports and tourism in Sikkim. "...given a chance, I would have loved to implement and contribute to the growth of the state in a very honest and sincere way," he said. "Unfortunately it was not to be. I am certain there will be more people with better ideas to do so," he said.

Bhutia said that his intention in politics was to do good for the people of the state and the country. (PTI)

## CBI files case against four in bank

loss of ₹ 8,28,42,900 to the bank, while benefiting themselves financially," the statement read.

In response to these findings, the CBI conducted searches at seven locations across the state, including the residences and workplaces of the accused in Jorhat, Tinsukia, and Dibrugarh districts, as well as one location in West Bengal, leading to recovery of incriminating documents, it added. (PTI)

## Heavy rain lashes three Arunachal

the Aalo-Pangin-Pasighat road. Several commercial and private vehicles are stranded on both sides of the highway, as a huge pile of debris blocked the road, officials said. (PTI)

## MoD, SpacePixxel to work

new defence innovators for pushing the boundaries of technology and safeguarding the nation. Emphasising the importance of combining indigenisation with innovation, he said domestic capabilities provide a foundation for fostering innovation by offering a platform for experimentation and development. Innovation fuels indigenisation by driving the creation of new technologies and solutions that can be produced domestically, the defence secretary said, assuring all possible support to the innovators at every step.

The ministry said iDEX, the recipient of the Prime Minister Award for Public Policy in Innovation Category in 2021, has emerged as a "game-changer in the defence ecosystem". Established by the DIO under Department of Defence Production, iDEX has launched 11 editions of the Defence India Start-up Challenge (DISC), and recently unveiled the Acing Development of Innovative Technologies with iDEX (ADITIT) scheme to promote innovations in critical and strategic defence technologies.

"In a brief period, iDEX has successfully gained momentum, fostering a burgeoning community of start-ups within the defence sector. It is currently engaged with over 400 start-ups and MSMEs. "Till now, procurement of 35 items, worth over ₹ 2,000 crore, has been cleared. iDEX has facilitated the creation of numerous job opportunities and played a pivotal role in the development of the defence ecosystem," it added. (PTI)

## Rupee settles 3 paise higher at 83.44 against US dollar

**MUMBAI, June 25:** The rupee appreciated 3 paise against the US dollar on Tuesday, tracking a firm trend in domestic equities amid stable global crude oil prices.

However, a strengthening American currency in the overseas market weighed on the local unit and restricted the up move, forex traders said. At the interbank foreign exchange market, the local unit opened at 83.46 and hit the intraday high of 83.41 and a low of 83.48 against the greenback during the session. It finally settled at 83.44 (provisional) against the dollar, registering a gain of 3 paise from its previous close. On Monday, the rupee appreciated 10 paise to settle at 83.47 against the US dollar.

"We expect the rupee to trade with a slight positive bias as positive domestic markets and a soft US dollar may support the rupee. However, a rise in crude oil prices and geopolitical tensions may cap a sharp upside. "Investors may remain cautious ahead of core PCE data from the US this week. USD/INR spot price is expected to trade in a range of ₹ 83.20 to ₹ 83.65," said Anuj Choudhary - Research Analyst at Sharekhan by BNP Paribas. (PTI)

## OPPO Unveils A3 Pro at ₹17,999

HT Bureau

**GUWAHATI, June 25:** OPPO India has introduced the OPPO A3 Pro, an A-series smartphone designed to offer exceptional endurance and premium aesthetics. Priced from INR 17,999, the A3 Pro is built with a Damage-proof All-Round Armour Body, ensuring resistance to drops and impacts, while its IP54 certification confirms water and dust resistance. The phone also features Splash Touch technology, enabling use with wet hands.

The OPPO A3 Pro boasts a 120Hz Ultra Bright Display, AI LinkBoost, AI Eraser, and a robust 5,100mAh Hyper Energy Battery, which offers a lifespan of over four years and supports 45W SUPERVOOC™ Flash Charge.

Engineered for resilience, the Damage-proof All-Round Armour Body incorporates a reinforced internal structure and Blue Glass double tempered glass for the screen cover, providing substantial drop and impact resistance. Key internal components are protected with a Bio-mimetic Sponge for shock absorption. The device has earned SGS Drop-Resistance Certification (Standard) and SGS Military Standard Certification, underscoring its ruggedness.

To further guard against accidental drops, the A3 Pro comes with an Anti-Drop Shield Case. OPPO's testing revealed that the device survived 450 rotations in a tumble drum, showing a 200% increase in protection with the case.

## Adani to invest ₹ 2 lakh cr in renewable energy capacity addition by 2030

**AHMEDABAD, June 25:** Adani group is looking to invest about ₹ 2 lakh crore by 2030 to build 40 gigawatts of renewable energy generation capacity, as it targets net zero emissions across businesses by 2050, top officials said on Tuesday. The apple-to-airport conglomerate currently has over 10 GW of capacity to generate electricity from renewable sources like sun-light and wind energy and is looking to add 6-7 GW every year to reach 50 GW by 2030.

"Considering the ballpark number of ₹ 5 crore per megawatt, the investment could be in the range of ₹ 2 lakh crore by 2030," Adani Green Energy Ltd Executive Director Sagar Adani told reporters here.

Its CEO Amit Singh said the company would also build a 5 GW pump storage capacity to peak power demand during the night when sunlight is not available, and wind intensity is not strong enough to turn wind turbines to produce electricity. The carbon credits renewable capacity generates, together with a few other measures, will help turn the group net zero by 2050.

AGEL added 2.8 GW capacity in the 2023-2024 (April 2023 to March 2024) fiscal, which was 15 per cent of India's total renewable energy capacity addition, Singh said.

"This year, our target is 6 GW," he said.

Going forward, that kind of capacity addition or higher is likely every year, Adani said, adding that 80 per cent of the 50 GW capacity will be solar and the rest wind.

The conglomerate is building factories to make wafers used in solar panels to generate electricity and wind turbines.

Singh said the group is now looking at making 3 MW wind turbines for areas with lower

wind speeds. It currently makes wind turbines of 5.2 MW capacity that are suited for high-potential areas like Khavada in Gujarat.

India is the world's third-largest economy in terms of energy needs, and its energy demand is projected to surge 25-35 per cent by 2030. Its peak energy demand is estimated to be 366.4 GW by 2031-32. AGEL brought on a stream of 2,848 MW (2.8 GW) renewables capacity, the largest greenfield expansion in India's renewable energy sector. This included 2,418 MW solar and 430 MW wind projects.

Of the capacity commissioned in FY24 includes 2,000 MW of solar capacity from Adani Green Energy's World's largest renewable energy project of 30,000 MW, being built at Khavda, Gujarat. The project is spread across 538 square kilometres, almost five times the city of Paris. Once built, it will be the largest power plant in the world, regardless of the energy source.

AGEL is also targeting the addition of at least 5,000 MW pumped storage project (PSP) capacity by 2030 in the first phase, Singh said. It has begun the construction of the first 500 MW PSP in Andhra Pradesh. The company has a robust development pipeline of hydro-pumped storage projects across Andhra Pradesh, Maharashtra, Tamil Nadu and Telangana.

With this, AGEL has revised its renewable energy target to 50,000 MW from 45,000 MW by 2030. AGEL's current operational portfolio is 10,934 MW, which consists of 7,393 MW solar, 1,401 MW wind and 2,140 MW wind-solar hybrid capacity. It is the first company in India to surpass the 10,000 MW renewable energy capacity. (PTI)

## Ola electric launches 'Electric Rush' campaign

HT Bureau

**GUWAHATI, June 25:** Ola Electric has unveiled its 'Electric Rush' campaign, presenting a suite of offers totaling up to ₹ 15,000 on its S1 scooter lineup. Running until June 28, the campaign features flat discounts of ₹ 5,000 on the S1 X+ and ₹ 2,500 on the S1 Pro and S1 Air. Additionally, customers can enjoy up to ₹ 10,000 in extra benefits, including an exchange bonus of up to ₹ 5,000 on the S1 X+ and cashback of up to ₹ 5,000 on select credit card EMI transactions across the entire S1 range.

Ola Electric's diverse S1 portfolio comprises six models tailored to various range needs and price points. Recently, the company expanded into the mass-market segment with the S1 X series, available in three battery configurations—2 kWh, 3 kWh, and 4 kWh—priced at ₹ 74,999, ₹ 84,999, and ₹ 99,999, respectively. The premium models in the lineup include the S1 Pro, S1 Air, and S1 X+, priced at ₹ 1,29,999, ₹ 1,04,999, and ₹ 89,999, respectively.

As part of its commitment to enhancing the ownership experience, Ola Electric is offering an extended battery warranty of 8 years or 80,000 km at no additional cost for its entire product range. This initiative aims to alleviate concerns about EV longevity. Customers can also opt for additional warranties, extending coverage up to 100,000 km for ₹ 4,999 or up to 125,000 km for ₹ 12,999. Moreover, a 3KW fast charger accessory is available for purchase at ₹ 29,999.



tered the fourth round around 3pm," a source told PTI.

It is the 10th spectrum auction since the process for sale of radio-waves started through an online bidding process in 2010.

The last spectrum auction was held in August 2022, which, for the first time, included radio waves for 5G services.

The Department of Telecommunications (DoT) has initiated the spectrum auction and notice inviting applications was issued on March 8.

"The Ministry of Communi-

cations announced that the following spectrum bands will go up for bidding in the upcoming auction -- 800 MHz, 900 MHz, 1,800 MHz, 2,100 MHz, 2,300 MHz, 2,500 MHz, 3,300 MHz and 26 GHz.

"Total quantum of spectrum being auctioned is 10,522.35 MHz in various bands valuing ₹ 96,238.45 crores at reserve prices," the statement said.

The 3,300 Mhz band and 26 Mhz band are seen as suitable bands for 5G services. Reliance Jio has deposited the highest earnest money of ₹ 3,000 crore for the auction, which provides the company with the potential to bid for

maximum radio waves.

According to pre-qualified bidder details released by the Department of Telecommunications, Bharti Airtel has submitted the earnest money deposit (EMD) of ₹ 1,050 crore and Vodafone Idea (VIL) of ₹ 300 crore. Telecom industry body Cellular Operators' Association of India Director General SP Kochhar said the 5G auctions will catalyze the rapid rollout of 5G services across the country, leading to enhanced coverage and vastly improved connectivity.

"By bridging the digital divide, the 5G spectrum auctions will ensure that even the most remote areas of our country gain access to high-speed internet, thereby fostering greater economic opportunities and social advancement.

"The auctions also symbolize our commitment to 'Viksit Bharat' and we are confident that the outcomes of these auctions will lay a strong foundation for a prosperous and digitally empowered India," Kochhar said.

According to telecom expert Parag Kar, Reliance Jio can bid for 37.36 per cent of the total spectrum value based on EMD.

**CONSTRUCTION OF 4 (FOUR) NOS. LIFT AT LUMDING STATION**  
E-Tender Notice No. LMG/ENG/91  
OF 2024 Dated: 19-06-2024. E-Tenders are invited by the undersigned for the following works: **Brief Description of Item:** Construction of 4 (Four) nos. Lift at Lumding Railway station in connection with Amrit Bharat Station Scheme under ADENI/Lumding. **Tender Value:** ₹ 1,39,57,678.29. **Earnest Money:** ₹ 2,19,700. **Date & Time of closing of tender:** 15-07-2024 at 15:00 hrs. **of 15-07-2024 & opening at 15:00 hrs. of 16-07-2024.** The complete information with the tender documents of above e-tender will be available upto 15:00 hrs. of 15-07-2024 in the website [www.reps.gov.in](http://www.reps.gov.in)

**DRM (W), Lumding**  
**NORTHEAST FRONTIER RAILWAY**  
Serving Customers With A Smile



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- Om Birla is NDA's pick for Lok Sabha Speaker
- Atishi's indefinite hunger strike over water scarcity ends



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*ULFA-I had on December 15 claimed responsibility for the attacks*

## Attack on army camp in Assam: NIA files charge sheet against four

**NEW DELHI, June 25:** The National Investigation Agency (NIA) on Tuesday charge sheeted four accused, including a cadre of Myanmar-based banned terror outfit ULFA-I, involved in a conspiracy to target army camps in the state as part of an anti-India agenda.

Two motorcycle-borne cadres of the proscribed outfit had lobbed grenades at the military station in Lichubari in Jorhat district on December 14 last year as part of a bigger conspiracy to target army establishments across the north-eastern state, a statement issued by the NIA said.

It took place less than a month after a similar attack at an army camp in Kakopathar in Tinsukia district of Assam, it said.



The United Liberation Front of Asom-Independent or ULFA-I had on December 15 issued a press release claiming responsibility for the attacks.

The entire conspiracy, encompassing both the attacks, had been masterminded from across the international border in Myanmar by ULFA-I self styled (SS) captain,

identified as Abhijeet Gogoi alias Kanak Gogoi alias Rumel Asom alias Aicheng Asom alias Aishang Asom, along with ULFA-I chief Paresh Baruah alias Paresh Asom, the NIA said.

Another key conspirator behind these attacks was identified as the outfit's SS Brigadier Arunodoy Dohutia alias Arunodoi Asom, it added.

The NIA investigations in the Jorhat case had led to the arrest of three accused identified as Biplab Baruah, Biraj Kachari and Achyut Gogoi.

All three have been charge sheeted on Tuesday in a special NIA court in Guwahati along with SS Captain Aicheng Asom, who is still absconding. (PTI)

## Illegal syndicate being run, Debabrata Saikia urges Governor for inquiry



HT Bureau

**GUWAHATI, June 25:** The opposition leader in Assam Assembly, Debabrata Saikia has written a letter to Governor Gulab Chand Kataria for conducting an inquiry in an alleged boulder and stone syndicate

being operated in South Salmara district and those were transported to Bangladesh.

He said that this rampant syndicate was run in the name of Asom Gana Parishad (AGP) and that the district committee of the party has revealed it.

Saikia mentioned, "I would like to draw your kind attention to a stark revelation made by the Asom Gana Parishad (AGP), South Salmara Mankachar District Committee. As per revelation, boulder/stone syndicate is being carried out rampantly in the district in the name of AGP and transported to Bangladesh."

"As per stated figure, ₹ 4,700.00 (Rupees Four Thousand Seven Hundred) is charged per truck. Everyday more than 100 truck transports boulder/stone, thereby, collecting ₹ 4,70,000.00 (Rupees Four Lakh Seventy Thousand) per day, amounting to ₹ 1,41,00,000.00 (Rupees One Crore Forty One Lakh) per month," the letter further read.

Saikia claimed that such rampant illegal activities will drastically affect the forest and environment of the area and also affect revenue collection of the state.

"As such, I would request your honour to take the matter seriously and order an enquiry into the matter, and prevent any such illegal activities," he added.

## Lok Sabha braces for Speaker's election after 1976

**NEW DELHI, June 25:** The Lok Sabha will witness a rare election for the Speaker's post – the first since 1976 – as Congress member Kodikunni Suresh has been made the opposition candidate against NDA nominee Om Birla.

Congress leader Rahul Gandhi said Defence Minister Rajnath Singh failed to give an assurance on the opposition party's claim to the Deputy Speaker's post.

While elections to the Speaker's post were common before Independence, the position of the presiding officer of the Lok Sabha has witnessed contests only three in Independent India – in 1952, 1967 and 1976.

In 1952, Congress member G V Mavalankar was elected as the Lok Sabha Speaker. Mavalankar polled 394 votes against opponent Shantaram More, who managed to garner 55 votes.

In 1967, Tenneti Viswanatham contested the election for Lok Sabha Speaker against Congress nominee Neelam Sanjeeva Reddy.

Reddy was elected as the Speaker having polled 278 votes against Viswanatham's 207.

In the fifth Lok Sabha, the duration of the fifth session was extended by an year following the imposition of Emergency by the then Prime Minister Indira Gandhi in 1975. The then Speaker G S Dhillon had resigned on December 1, 1975.

Congress leader Baliram Bhagat was elected the Lok Sabha Speaker on January 5, 1976. Gandhi had moved the motion to elect Bhagat as the Speaker of the Lok Sabha, while Prasannabhai Mehta of the Congress (O) had moved the motion to elect Jana Sangh leader Jagannathrao Joshi to the post. Bhagat polled 344 votes against Joshi's 58.

In 1998, the then Congress leader Sharad Pawar had moved a motion to elect P A Sangma as the Speaker, which was negated. After the rejection of Pawar's motion, the then Prime Minister Atal Bihari (CONTD. ON PAGE-2)

## Assam Police fully prepared to implement new criminal laws: DGP

**GUWAHATI, June 25:** Assam police is fully prepared to implement the new criminal laws that will replace the colonial-era legislation starting next month, a top official said on Tuesday.

DGP GP Singh said the force has been preparing for these new laws for the last three years, since the first drafts were made public.

"Assam police is fully prepared to implement the new criminal laws from July 1. We urge the public and the media to cooperate with us in this regard," Singh said at a media workshop on the new laws, organised by the Press Information Bureau here.

Describing the new laws as a 'milestone event,' he added, "These laws mark a shift from the colonial period to laws reflecting the free will of our country."

He mentioned that the new laws will primarily require an augmentation of forensic capabilities, and steps in this regard have already been initiated.



Singh revealed that over 200 officers have been trained as crime scene experts at the National Forensic Sciences University (NFSU) in Gandhinagar. The state police has signed a memorandum of understanding with the institute to train a total of 500 officers.

"The training is ongoing in batches. Once the trained officers return, they will train their fellow officers in the state," he said.

Singh noted that the NFSU

Guwahati campus is already functional and that a proposal has been submitted to the state government for mobile forensic vans in all districts.

In addition to police officers, public prosecutors and judicial officials are also being prepared for the implementation of the new criminal laws, the DGP added.

Additional DGP (CID) MP Gupta, who made a presentation on the new laws, explained that their provisions will apply to cases registered after July 1, as there is no system of retrospective effect for laws.

He elaborated on how the focus in the new system has shifted from 'punishment to justice,' with special attention on victims and the use of forensic sciences to solve cases.

Gupta said that states have been given a five-year period to comply with all forensic science-related investigation requirements, but he is confident (CONTD. ON PAGE-2)

## No right to profess love for Constitution; Modi's dig at Cong on Emergency

**NEW DELHI/BHOPAL, June 25:** Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Tuesday said those who imposed Emergency have no right to profess their love for the Constitution, as top BJP leaders trained their guns on the Congress with two party chief ministers demanding apology from the main opposition party.

As the BJP and the Congress crossed swords on the 49th anniversary of imposition of Emergency, Modi also said that its dark days are a reminder of how the Congress subverted basic freedoms and trampled over the Constitution which every Indian respects greatly.

The Congress hit back at Modi and accused him of enforcing an "undeclared emergency" in the last 10 years which caused a "deep trauma" to democracy.

On June 25, 1975, the then Prime Minister Indira Gandhi declared a state of Emergency in the country, suspending civil lib-

erties, jailing opposition leaders and dissidents and effecting press censorship. Emergency was lifted on March 21, 1977.

In a no-holds-barred attack on the Congress, senior BJP leader and Union Home Minister Amit Shah said the opposition party crushed the spirit of the Constitution several times for the sake of "maintaining a certain family in power". He said the Emergency was the biggest example of the opposition party's long history of killing democracy and harming it repeatedly.

Madhya Pradesh chief minister Mohan Yadav while demanding an apology from the Congress said the Emergency was a "dark period" which caused shivers even after five decades.

"It was such a dark period that even today the whole country shivers on remembering it. The Congress should apologise for it. Many (CONTD. ON PAGE-2)

## Drugs worth ₹ 2.5 crore seized in Karimganj; 1 nabbed

**GUWAHATI, June 25:** In case of drug haul, Yaba tablets worth around ₹ 2.5 crore have been seized and one peddler was arrested from Karimganj district of the state, chief minister Himanta Biswa Sarma said on Tuesday.

"Based on intelligence inputs, an operation was conducted by @karimganjpolice, wherein they intercepted a two-wheeler carrying 10,000 YABA tablets worth ₹ 2.5 crore," he said in a post on X.

Sarma also said that one person has also been apprehended in this regard. The chief minister lauded the efforts of Assam Police towards making the state drug-free. Yaba or 'crazy medicine' in Thai is a tablet form of a mixture of methamphetamine (a powerful and addictive stimulant) and caffeine. (PTI)

## CEM Ronghang visits Bithung Rengthama constituency



**HT Correspondent DONGKAMUKAM, June 25:** Chief Executive Member (CEM) of Karbi Anglong Autonomous Council (KAAC), Tuliram Ronghang visited his constituency 6 Bithung Rengthama on Tuesday in West Karbi Anglong to take stock of the various issues facing it.

Speaking at a paddy seed and mosquito nets distribution programme organised by Bithung Rengthama BJP Mandal Committee, Tuliram Ronghang said, "I was one among the star campaigners in the last Parliamentary election and as such I could not address some issues in the constituency. We lost

a considerable number of votes in certain pockets. All are my brothers and sisters here. They are the ones who elected me in the last MAC election with a majority and I am hopeful that the trend will continue in coming Assembly elections as well."

The CEM assured the public that the Garo village in his constituency would be converted to a revenue village after the Assembly elections. He also urged all to stand united irrespective of their caste, creed and religion for the cause of the autonomous state status for Karbi Anglong and Dima Hasao districts.

"The recent floods are the worst that has affected the Bithung Rengthama constituency. The floods (CONTD. ON PAGE-2)

## 'Simply not for me': After consecutive defeats, Bhaichung Bhutia quits politics



**GANGTOK, June 25:** Indian football icon Bhaichung Bhutia on Tuesday announced that he was quitting politics, following his defeat in the recently held assembly elections in Sikkim.

Bhaichung, the vice president of the Sikkim Democratic Front (SDF), lost to SKM's Rikshal Dorjee Bhutia in the Barlung seat, which marked his sixth electoral defeat.

He joined politics in 2014 when the ruling TMC in West Bengal named him as its candidate for the Darjeeling Lok Sabha seat. In 2018, he took the plunge into the political arena of his state by forming the Hamro Sikkim Party. Last year, he merged his party with the Pawan Chamling-led SDF.

"Firstly, I would like to congratulate Mr PS Tamang and the Sikkim Krantikari Morcha (SKM) for winning the assembly elections. The people of Sikkim have given them a resounding mandate and I hope the SKM govt will work to fulfil their promises and take Sikkim to greater heights across all sectors," he said in a statement.

"After the 2024 election results, I have had the realisation that electoral politics is simply not for me. I am therefore quitting all forms of electoral politics with immediate effect," he added.

After losing the Darjeeling Lok Sabha constituency to the BJP in 2014, the TMC fielded Bhutia as its candidate for the 2016 West Bengal assembly elections in the Siliguri seat, but he lost to the CPI(M). Following the formation of his party (CONTD. ON PAGE-2)

## CBI files case against four in bank fraud case

**GUWAHATI, June 25:** The CBI on Tuesday said it has filed a case against four employees of the Assam Gramin Vikash Bank (AGVB) for an alleged criminal conspiracy that resulted in a loss of ₹ 8.28 crore to the lender.

According to an official statement, the accused, stationed at Madhapur branch in Jorhat district, purportedly conspired amongst themselves and with others to defraud the bank. Among them were three assistant managers and an office assistant (multi-purpose).

The CBI alleged that the accused orchestrated fraudulent sanctioning and disbursement of funds into fictitious self-help group (SHG) loan accounts. Subsequently, they allegedly transferred these funds into the savings account of one of the accused and other accounts, the agency said. "The accused thereby caused an estimated (CONTD. ON PAGE-2)

## Heavy rain lashes three Arunachal Pradesh districts

**ITANAGAR, June 25:** Heavy rain lashed Arunachal Pradesh's Leparada, Siang and Lower Siang districts triggering landslides that blocked roads, an official said.

A landslide that occurred near Siji bridge point has completely blocked the strategically important Likabali-Basar-Aalo-Mechuka and Likabali-Basar-Daporijo road, the official said. Talking to PTI over phone, Lower Siang deputy commissioner Rujum Rakshap said that a massive landslide occurred near Siji bridge point area.

He said an earthmover engaged to clear the debris, has been buried. The deputy commissioner termed reports that the earthmover driver and two helpers had been buried by the landslide as fake.

The executive magistrate and police have inspected the spot. The earthmover was buried by the landslide but there was no casualty, he added.

Rakshap said it will take at least two-three days to clear the debris. Leparada District Disaster Management Officer (DDMO) T Pema said officials of the district administration are assessing the situation, arising out of continuous downpour. She said officials are visiting wet rice cultivation fields submerged by water following heavy downpour.

The DDMO appealed to people living near river banks, and landslide-prone zones to move to safer locations.

"We are keeping a strict vigil in the flooded areas", she added. A landslide disrupted road communication in Siang district near Yeksing, blocking (CONTD. ON PAGE-2)

## 350<sup>th</sup> iDEX contract enables innovation in space electronics

## MoD, SpacePixxel to work on design, development of miniaturised satellite

**NEW DELHI, June 25:** The Union ministry of defence will collaborate with a private firm working in the space sector for design and development of a "miniaturised satellite" capable of carrying multiple payloads up to 150 kg, officials said on Tuesday.

The collaboration will follow a contract inked with SpacePixxel Technologies.

Innovations for Defence Excellence (iDEX), the flagship initiative of the ministry, signed the landmark 350th contract here on Tuesday.

"The contract was inked with SpacePixxel Technologies Pvt Ltd for design and development of a miniaturised satellite capable of carrying electro-optical, infrared, synthetic aperture radar and hyperspectral payloads up to 150 kg," the defence ministry said in a statement.



The 150th iDEX contract was signed in December 2022, and within a span of 18 months, the 350th contract has been signed, it said.

The contract was exchanged between Additional Secretary (Defence

Production) and CEO, Defence Innovation Organisation (DIO), Anurag Bajpai, and founder and CEO of SpacePixxel Technologies Awais Ahmed Nadeem Alduri in the presence of Defence Secretary Giridhar Ara-

mane and other senior civil and military officials of the ministry.

SpacePixxel has been actively working to build and launch high-resolution hyperspectral imaging satellites to provide detailed earth observation data, the statement said.

"This 350th iDEX contract enables innovation in space electronics, wherein many payloads earlier deployed on dedicated large satellites are now being miniaturised. The modular small satellite will integrate multiple miniaturised payloads as per requirement, providing advantages like faster and economical deployment, ease of manufacturing, scalability, adaptability and less environmental impact," it said.

In his address, the defence secretary appreciated the unwavering commitment of (CONTD. ON PAGE-2)



## QUOTE OF THE DAY

*Education is the movement from darkness to light.*  
- Allan Bloom

## Modi-RSS power struggle

The Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) is facing a significant internal conflict as Prime Minister Narendra Modi's power struggle with the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS) intensifies over the choice of the new party president. In its century-long history, the RSS has never experienced such an existential crisis. While past confrontations, like the 2003 clash with the Vishwa Hindu Parishad over the Ayodhya temple, were resolved without much fanfare, the current crisis is marked by egos and authoritarian dynamics. The discord between Modi and the RSS, particularly its chief Mohan Bhagwat, has been brewing for several years. RSS general secretary Dattatreya Hosabale's criticism of Modi's governance style since taking office in 2021 highlighted the growing rift. However, Bhagwat's reluctance to confront Modi directly has only emboldened the Prime Minister. Modi's centralization of power and his insistence on dictating the Sangh Parivar's functioning have strained relations with RSS leaders. His electoral strategies, including the "Modi's Guarantee" and "Abki baar 400 ke paar" slogans, have further deepened the skepticism within the RSS. A significant point of contention is Modi's reliance on turncoat MPs who have defected from other parties, particularly the Congress. Out of 240 elected BJP candidates, 132 are such turncoats, loyal to Modi rather than the RSS. This strategic move has ensured Modi's dominance but has alienated the RSS, which opposed their candidacies. The RSS's discomfort was further amplified when BJP President J.P. Nadda asserted that the party no longer needed the RSS's support, indicating a clear shift in the party's power dynamics.

Modi's attempts to install a loyalist as the new BJP president, sidelining the RSS's preferences, have intensified the conflict. The RSS is reportedly considering Sanjay Joshi or Vinod Tawade for the position, with Joshi known for his strained relations with Modi, while Tawade maintains amicable ties with both factions. Meanwhile, Modi and Amit Shah are pushing to extend Nadda's presidency until after crucial state elections in Maharashtra, Haryana, and Jharkhand, aiming to solidify Modi's control. This internal BJP turmoil has broader implications for the RSS's mission of transforming India into a Hindu Rashtra. While the RSS needs a BJP government for its ideological goals, it is increasingly wary of Modi's autocratic behavior. Modi's projection as the supreme leader of Hindutva, driven by a circle of Gujarati businessmen and industrialists since his tenure as Gujarat's Chief Minister, has fueled his ambitions. His systematic campaign against Muslims and the aggressive promotion of Hindutva are seen as tactics to consolidate his power and render the RSS irrelevant. The RSS's internal critique of Bhagwat's ambiguous stance towards Modi reflects a deeper organizational crisis. Bhagwat's failure to explicitly name Modi in his criticisms has led to dissatisfaction among RSS leaders, who see this as a sign of weakness.

Despite Modi's contributions to popularizing Hindutva and expanding the BJP's base, his authoritarian style and disregard for RSS's traditional role have created a profound schism. As Modi maneuvers to maintain his grip on power by possibly relaunching "Operation Lotus" to induct more defectors and secure a single-party rule, the RSS faces a crucial decision. Will it acquiesce to Modi's supremacy, or will it assert its foundational principles and reclaim its influence within the BJP? The outcome of this power struggle will shape the future of both the BJP and the broader Hindutva movement in India.

# The implications of Hekani Jakhalu's ULB election campaign rhetoric

*Manipulating, threatening, coercing voters is not just a crime; it is a deliberate betrayal of constitutional values and democratic process."*

Nagaland will conduct the Urban Local Bodies (ULB) elections in three Municipal Councils and 36 Town Councils on June 26. This will be the first-ever municipal election in the state with a 33% reservation for women, marking a significant step towards gender inclusivity in local governance. However, the election campaigns have already sparked controversy, particularly the speeches delivered by Hekani Jakhalu Kense, a member of the Nagaland Legislative Assembly. These campaigns have illuminated the current state of Nagaland politics and its trajectory, raising critical concerns about the nature of political discourse and the health of democratic processes in the state.

Jakhalu's speeches (which have been heavily viralized in social media) have displayed a tone of authority and manipulation, potentially polarizing the electorate. Her assertion, "Moi Dimapur 3 lah MLA ase etu karne I am saying it in Public - there is no space for non-NDPP Members taikhan bhi hoi member toh ase hoilebi that's politics," exemplifies favoritism and a lack of civility.

The persistent emphasis on "Jagah nai" (there's no space) for non-NDPP candidates, in an election overseen by the State Election Commission under Article 243 ZA, reveals a combative stance

and a misunderstanding of legal boundaries—no MLA has the authority to decide electoral participation.

Furthermore, Jakhalu's directive, "Government ko teh jai ase, Party kon tu Government teh jai ase tateh hi jai kene vote mari dibi," urging voters to support the ruling NDPP-BJP alliance, contradicts Article 326, which guarantees adult suffrage without political coercion.

Her rhetoric potentially violates Sections 123 (3) and 125 of the Representation of the People Act, 1951, which prohibit promoting enmity between classes in connection with elections. Also, the statement is likely to attract provisions under section 171C of Indian Penal Code, 1860. Hence, deserve attention and suitable legal action from the office of Hon'ble Chief Election Commissioner, State of Nagaland.

Jakhalu's claim, "...ami clarify kuri ase Jagah nai Jagah nai, etu social event nohoi toh, etu charity lagah kaam nohoi etu Politics ase, aru ami politics kheli ase - ek saath kheli thaki kene eman dhuk para alag alag kheli kene hari kene jiti kene aru ek sath buhi thakibo? Etu politics nohoi toh etu karne ami laga Ward 8 khan ke koi ase alag alag ticket para bhi jai ase, taikhan karne mistake para hoilebi by chance para hoilebi jitishey koilebi sorry taikhan karne jagah nai, amikhan laga NDPP Government party para council toh form kuribo, etia already majority punchi bole ase, dusra teh bhi position bishi bhal ase, ami khan hi kuribo dusra khan toh morom lagilebi politics



ase, ami koishey charity nohoi, bahar teh hi thakibo lagibo. Opposition teh hi thakibo lage taikhan", another statement at Ward 3 "Serious para bhabhoi lage, Ruling Government kon ase? NDPP ase. Kon kon a hishey koilebi

age teh bhi koishey but this is an important point I want to stress... kon jiti na jiti etu toh it does not matter at all, rule toh kon kuribo, NDPP kuribo because dimapur 3 teh toh NDPP hi jiti etu karne alliance bi hoijabo la kotha bi nai, eku alliance nai it's a fair fight...."

highlights a concerning view of political exclusivity. Her statements oscillate between dismissing opposition involvement and promoting her party's dominance, creating a confusing narrative for voters. This approach undermines the democratic principle of fair competition and could potentially influence voters through coercion, intimidation, or threat. Hence, the statement/s deserves to be thoroughly examined in the light of Section 171 C of the Indian Penal Code, 1860, which addresses undue influence at elections. Such statements warrant attention and suit-

able legal action from the office of the Hon'ble State Election Commissioner, State of Nagaland, to ensure that the integrity of the electoral process is maintained and that all candidates are provided with a fair opportunity to contest. It is imperative that democratic norms are upheld and that electoral campaigns are conducted within the boundaries of legality and ethical conduct. By taking appropriate measures, we can protect the sanctity of our democratic institutions and processes.

The people of Nagaland are increasingly aware of their legal and constitutional rights, and they can no longer be easily fooled by the political elites in the state. The rise of an intellectual middle class is gradually providing the necessary intellectual direction to the masses, empowering them to challenge unjust practices and demand accountability from their leaders. This shift signifies a growing political maturity and a more informed electorate capable of discerning true public interest from partisan manipulation.

The underlying theme of Hekani Jakhalu's

speeches emphasises 'teamwork' yet simultaneously rejects the inclusion of opponents in her 'team'. This contradictory stance suggests a narrow vision for leadership and governance. Jakhalu's declaration, "Dimapur 3 laga affair ase I'll be involved, very very heavily involved both in the campaign and even after winning I'll be part of everything," asserts an overwhelming control over local governance, which raises concerns about democratic representation and inclusive governance.

The implications of such rhetoric extend beyond immediate election results, potentially fostering a political environment where dissent is stifled and democratic processes are undermined. It is essential for leaders to encourage healthy debate and respect for differing opinions to strengthen the democratic fabric of our society. The ability to accommodate diverse viewpoints and foster an inclusive political climate is a hallmark of mature and effective governance.

Urban Local Bodies are pivotal in managing essential services and infrastructure, directly impacting citizens' daily lives. They are at the heart of democratic representation, addressing community needs and fostering development. Jakhalu's speeches, however, appear to prioritize the interests of the ruling party over the welfare of the people. Constructive criticism and diverse perspectives are vital for achieving public welfare goals. A single-minded approach to gov-

ernance stifles this necessary dialogue. It is essential to recall that the Indian Constitution exists to limit governmental power and ensure democratic integrity. Jakhalu's campaign rhetoric, with its undertone of polarization and authoritarianism, poses a risk to these constitutional values. As citizens, we must remain vigilant and demand that our elected representatives prioritize public welfare over partisan interests.

In conclusion, the trajectory of political discourse as demonstrated in these campaign speeches raises critical questions about the future of Nagaland's democracy. As the electorate, it is our duty to hold our leaders accountable and ensure that the principles of fairness, inclusivity, and constitutional adherence are upheld.

The health of our democracy depends on the active engagement and scrutiny of its citizens, ensuring that power is exercised responsibly and for the collective good. A vigilant and informed electorate is the best safeguard against the erosion of democratic norms and values. Our collective vigilance will determine the strength and resilience of our democratic institutions. Let us stand united in our commitment to democracy, fostering a future where every voice is heard and every citizen is valued. Together, we can build a more just and equitable society, guided by the principles of truth, justice, and equality. (The author can be reached at [mezhu03@gmail.com](mailto:mezhu03@gmail.com))

## Afghan Taliban leaders meeting with United Nations on June 30 has high significance

By: Girish Linganna

The Afghan Taliban leaders will join a two-day United Nations meeting about Afghanistan on June 30. They had missed the last two meetings. Their attendance shows progress and suggests that the global community may discover improved methods to engage with the unofficial leaders in Kabul. The main goal of the third round of talks is to boost international involvement with Afghanistan in a more organized and unified way, according to UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres.

In consonance with Kabul's agreement, chief Taliban spokesperson Zabihullah Mujahid told the Afghan media that the Taliban government had found the agenda of the forthcoming talks helpful for Afghanistan; so, there would be no preconditions this time around. Mujahid told Tolo News, as quoted by AL-MONITOR, "We'll announce who's in the delegation later. We believe this will benefit Afghanistan."

Taliban Foreign Ministry spokesman Abdul Qahar Balkhi, however, later reported that any alteration to the agenda or participation would be grounds for reconsideration.

Afghan Taliban skipped earlier conferences: Since the Taliban took power in 2021, Afghanistan's new government has not been recognized by any other country. The international community is struggling to find a way to engage with the Taliban constructively without encouraging its extreme elements.

In May 2023, Guterres started the first Doha conference to boost engagement and provide humanitarian aid to Afghanistan, without inviting the Taliban. The Taliban chose not to attend the second meeting in February, which included special representatives from 25 countries.

To ensure attendance at the third meeting, the Afghan government emphasised that only delegates they nominated should be accepted as the country's official representatives. They also demanded that Afghan civil society leaders and women's rights activists be left out of the process. They wanted meetings between their delegation and the UN to be organized at a very high level.

Because many of the Taliban's top leaders are still under UN sanctions for terrorism, Guterres said their demands were not acceptable.

At the same time, the government in Kabul was upset about a plan to appoint a UN special envoy to Afghanistan, which was suggested by a UN coordinator. According to the Taliban, this kind of action is usually taken for countries that are in conflict, or at war.

Riccardo Valle, director of research at The Khorasan Diary in Islamabad, told Al-Monitor about the possible effects of including the Taliban in 6th forthcoming talks. He said, "This time, the interim government has said it will join the talks. This

should be seen as a practical step by the Afghan Taliban to gradually become part of the international community."

According to Valle, the Taliban are joining the talks because of such important issues as getting international aid and creating economic opportunities for potential investors in the country. Although the UN has stated that including the Taliban in the talks does not mean they are recognized, it still represents a win for Taliban diplomacy. This allows them to stick to their key demands, while slowly improving their relationships with other countries, Valle noted.

Qatar and the Taliban: Qatar, despite being a small country in the Gulf Cooperation Council, has taken on the challenging role of engaging with the Taliban. It is providing a venue for the Taliban to negotiate with global powers. The effort has really paid off, as Doha has strengthened its diplomatic reputation—both regionally and globally—by acting as a bridge between Afghanistan and other countries.

Guido Steinberg, a researcher and senior associate at the German Institute for International and Security Affairs, says Qatar has been acting as a mediator in regional politics for nearly 20 years. According to a report by Al-Monitor, Qatar's main goal in doing this is to strengthen its position in the region. Although the second UN conference did not achieve any results because the Taliban did not attend, the UN and other important parties are urging the Taliban to join the next meeting. Qatar, as host, is thought to have been crucial in convincing them to participate.

The relationship between Doha and the Afghan Taliban is not new. Back in 2013, Qatar let the Taliban open a political office in its capital, Doha, and began acting as a mediator. Qatar not only helped organize the US-Taliban talks that resulted in the 2020 Doha Agreement, but also assisted in evacuating foreign troops and civilians from Afghanistan in 2021 when the Taliban took control and the US had to withdraw after 20 years.

Due to a UN visa ban and the fact that they cannot have an ambassador represent Afghanistan at the UN General Assembly, the Taliban now rely on their office in Doha to communicate and negotiate with other countries.

Valle spoke about whether Qatar's actions had made the Taliban more confident and accepted as a governing body by involving them in the negotiations. He said that Qatar followed a slow, long-term approach, and that was showing results, adding that the fact that the Taliban is taking part in the third UN meet in Doha supported this trend.

If Qatar keeps using the same strategy, the Afghan Taliban will likely become more involved in economic, political and, possibly, even diplomatic relations over time, Valle believes.

Khristo Ayad, a senior adviser at InStrat,

an independent research and advisory platform in Doha, told Al-Monitor that Doha has been crucial in facilitating and mediating ongoing communication with the Taliban since the West's retreat from Afghanistan in 2021. Although Qatar is well-known for its skill in soft-power diplomacy, its role as a mediator is closely connected to its international partners and the broader multilateral context.

Highlighting Qatar's skillful handling of a tough situation, Ayad stated that "there were concerns about how to set up a constructive engagement with Taliban-controlled Kabul to prevent worsening humanitarian conditions".

Describing Qatar's internationally coordinated efforts to bring the Taliban to the negotiating table should, possibly, be approached with more caution. From the beginning, Doha emphasised that its involvement was based on the need for constructive dialogue and a trust-building process, without compromising human rights and international standards.

Meanwhile, since the Taliban government has faced criticism from women's rights groups, there is significant pressure from various civil society organizations to prioritize women's rights and ensure Afghan women are included in the third UN conference in Doha. Last week marked 1,000 days since the Taliban banned education for girls over age 12, despite a global outrage. UNICEF had termed this a "sad and sobering milestone". One thousand days away from school means a loss of 3 billion learning hours for Afghan girls, it said.

Later, the Taliban expanded the ban to include universities, preventing many Afghan women from finishing their degrees. After gaining control, they also made women leave their jobs, except for those in the health sector. Additionally, women are not allowed to appear on TV, or visit parks, or go anywhere outside without a male guardian.

In his latest report, Richard Bennett, the UN's special expert on Afghan human rights, urged that the Taliban be held responsible for their actions against women and girls. He said the Taliban had given birth to a system that discriminated against women and girls, segregates them and excluded them. The Taliban refuse to change their policies on women and girls, sticking to a strict, extreme, Shariah interpretation of religion and local culture. They argue that calls to lift the ban are interfering in Afghanistan's internal matters.

Qatar has raised similar concerns, notes Ayad. In a recent UN statement, Qatar's representative underscored the growing problems in Afghanistan, such as the worsening humanitarian and economic situations, poor living conditions and severe human rights issues. They particularly highlighted the challenges faced by women and girls, including their basic freedom and right to education and work. (IPA Service)

## Ambubachi Mela: A unique celebration of divine fertility

By: Dipak Kurmi

The Ambubachi Mela is one of the most significant and intriguing religious gatherings in eastern India. Held annually at the renowned Kamakhya Temple in Guwahati, Assam, this festival draws hundreds of thousands of devotees and curious onlookers from across India and beyond. The mela, which typically takes place in June during the monsoon season, is a fascinating blend of ancient fertility rituals, Tantric traditions, and Hindu worship practices.

At its core, the Ambubachi Mela is a celebration of the divine feminine and the power of creation. The festival centers around the belief that the presiding goddess of the Kamakhya Temple, Devi Kamakhya, undergoes her annual menstrual cycle during this time. This unique concept sets Ambubachi Mela apart from many other Hindu festivals and provides insight into the region's rich cultural and spiritual heritage.

**The Kamakhya temple and its significance:** The Kamakhya Temple, perched atop the Nilachal Hills in western Guwahati, is one of the most revered Shakti shrines in India. What makes this temple particularly special is that there is no traditional idol of the goddess.

Instead, Devi Kamakhya is worshipped in the form of a yoni-like stone over which a natural spring flows. This symbolism is deeply tied to the temple's focus on fertility and the creative power of the feminine.

According to Hindu mythology, the temple marks the spot where Sati's yoni (female genitalia) fell to earth after Lord Shiva carried her dismembered body across the land in grief. This legend imbues the site with immense spiritual significance and

connects it to the broader narrative of Shakti worship in Hinduism.

The festival timeline: The Ambubachi Mela typically lasts for four days, with the most intense activities occurring at the beginning and end of the festival. Here's a breakdown of the event:

**1. Closing of the temple:** On the first day, the temple doors are closed to all devotees. This marks the beginning of the goddess's menstrual period.

**2. Period of restrictions:** For the next three days, the temple remains closed. During this time, devotees observe various restrictions as a sign of respect for the goddess's state. These include refraining from cooking, performing puja, reading holy books, and engaging in farming activities.

**3. Purification and reopening:** On the fourth day, elaborate rituals are performed to bathe and purify the goddess. The temple doors are then reopened, allowing devotees to enter and receive darshan (view) of the deity.

**4. Distribution of prasad:** After the reopening, special prasad (blessed offerings) is distributed to the faithful. This prasad comes in two forms: Angodak, which is water from the spring that flows over the stone yoni, and Angabastra, a piece of the red cloth used to cover the yoni during the days of menstruation.

**Tantric connections and spiritual practices:** The Ambubachi Mela is deeply intertwined with Tantric traditions, which have a strong presence in eastern India. During the festival, the usually secluded Kamakhya Temple becomes a hub for Tantric practitioners and devotees.

Many Tantric babas (holy men) make rare public appearances during these four days, emerging from their year-round seclusion to participate in the festivities.

The gathering attracts a diverse array of spiritual seekers, including:

- Sadhus and sadhvis (holy men and women) with long matted hair
- Black-clad Aghora ascetics
- Khade-babas (standing babas)
- Bauls (mystical minstrels from Bengal)
- Intellectual and folk Tantrics

Many of these practitioners claim to possess extraordinary psychic and spiritual powers. Some perform public demonstrations of their abilities, such as standing on one leg for hours or balancing their entire body weight on their heads. These displays add to the festival's mystical atmosphere and attract curious onlookers from around the world.

**Fertility rituals and blessings:** Given its association with the goddess's menstrual cycle, the Ambubachi Mela is strongly connected to concepts of fertility and creation. Many couples struggling with infertility attend the festival, seeking blessings and miracle cures from the goddess and the assembled holy men.

The belief in the power of the goddess's menstrual flow extends to the land itself. It is said that during this time, the earth becomes fertile and ready for procreation. This concept ties the spiritual aspects of the festival to the agricultural cycles of the region, highlighting the deep connection between religious practice and the natural world in Indian culture.

**Cultural significance and tourism:** The Ambubachi Mela has grown beyond its religious roots to become a major cultural event and tourist attraction for Assam. The festival provides a unique window into the spiritual practices and beliefs of the region, attracting scholars, journalists, and curious travelers from around the globe.

For many attendees, the mela offers a rare opportunity to witness and potentially interact with practitioners of esoteric Tantric traditions. The gathering of such a diverse array of spiritual seekers creates a vibrant atmosphere of cultural exchange and exploration.

**Challenges and controversies:** As with many large religious gatherings, the Ambubachi Mela faces certain challenges and has been the subject of some controversy. The massive influx of pilgrims and tourists can strain local infrastructure and create logistical difficulties for organizers.

Additionally, the open practice of some Tantric rituals and the claims of miraculous powers by certain babas have drawn criticism from skeptics and more orthodox religious leaders.

However, efforts have been made in recent years to better manage the festival's growth and address concerns while preserving its unique character and spiritual significance. The Ambubachi Mela stands as a testament to the enduring power of India's spiritual traditions and the continued relevance of goddess worship in contemporary Hindu practice. This festival offers a fascinating glimpse into a world where ancient rituals, esoteric practices, and modern devotion intersect.

As the mela continues to grow and evolve, it remains an important cultural touchstone for Assam and a source of intrigue for spiritual seekers and cultural enthusiasts alike. The Ambubachi Mela's celebration of the divine feminine and its embrace of the natural cycles of creation serve as a powerful reminder of the diverse and complex tapestry of Indian spirituality. (The writer can be reached at [dipakkurmipltd@gmail.com](mailto:dipakkurmipltd@gmail.com))



# “No amount of coffee can keep me awake”: Impact of long COVID on women

By: Ishika Satwika Singh

Women's health has often been marginalized in medical research and healthcare practices, historically. For many years, clinical studies primarily focused on male participants, leading to a significant gap in understanding and addressing the unique health needs of women. This oversight has resulted in delayed diagnoses, inadequate treatment protocols, and a general lack of awareness about conditions that disproportionately or exclusively affect women. The repercussions of this neglect are evident in various health outcomes, including the management of chronic illnesses, reproductive health, and more recently, the differentiated impact of conditions like long COVID.

A recent study has revealed that women with long COVID exhibit a broader range of symptoms compared to men. Long Covid, or post-acute sequelae of SARS-CoV-2 infection (PASC), is a condition where symptoms persist for weeks or months after recovering from the acute phase of COVID-19. Common symptoms include fatigue, shortness of breath, cognitive issues (“brain fog”), muscle and joint pain, and sleep disturbances.

The exact cause is unclear, but it may involve ongoing inflammation and immune system issues. It can affect people of all ages, even those with mild initial infections. This finding is crucial for understanding the gender-specific impacts of long COVID and addressing the unique challenges faced by women in their daily lives, workplaces, and educational environments.

Let's dive deeper; The study analyzed data from thousands of long COVID patients and discovered that women reported a wider variety of symptoms than their male counterparts. These symptoms include chronic fatigue, brain fog, sleep disturbances, joint pain, heart palpitations, and anxiety, among others. While both men and women suffer from long COVID, the multiplicity and intensity of symptoms in women appear more pronounced.

My friend's mother, who was a teacher for over 15 years, has quit her job because she feels “too weak and flushed during the day” to continue working. She retired early, explaining, “It was a task to keep up with the students as I would constantly feel drained. Checking answer sheets, attending back-to-back lectures, and the general job stress became too hard to cope with.” Since contracting Covid, she has been falling sick constantly and finds life difficult overall. Now, she stays at home and holds a passion for gardening.

These array of symptoms that women experience can significantly disrupt daily routines and activities. Chronic fatigue and brain fog hinder their ability to perform household tasks, manage family responsibilities, and engage in social activities. Sleep disturbances can lead to further exhaustion and decreased cognitive function, worsening the struggle to maintain a normal lifestyle. Joint pain and heart palpitations can limit physical activity, reducing overall mobility and independence.

Women with long COVID face substantial challenges in the workplace as well. The symptoms can impede their productivity and reliability, making it difficult to meet job expectations. Chronic fatigue and cognitive impairments affect their ability to focus, remember details, and make decisions, which are crucial for most job functions. The workplace is already skewed against women, with persistent gender biases, wage gaps, and underrepresentation in leadership roles creating a challenging environment. Long COVID adds another layer of difficulty, worsening these existing inequalities and making it even harder for women to navigate their professional lives.

This situation necessitates negotiations with employers for accommodations such as flexible work hours, remote work options, and extended sick leave. However, workplaces are often dismissive of women's health concerns, frequently undermining the seriousness of their symptoms and the need for appropriate accommodations. This dismissive attitude can make it particularly challenging for women with long COVID to secure the necessary support, further complicating their ability to manage their health while meeting job expectations.

Physical symptoms of long COVID, such as chronic fatigue, pain, and breathlessness, can significantly impact the mental health of women. Studies have shown that persistent physical health issues are closely linked with increased rates of anxiety, depression, and emotional distress. For instance, a study published in The Lancet reported that patients with long COVID frequently experience psychological symptoms, including post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), as a result of their ongoing health struggles.

This psychological burden is often compounded by the frustration and helplessness of dealing with unpredictable and debilitating physical symptoms, further worsening mental health issues. The interplay between physical and mental health challenges creates a vicious cycle that can be particularly severe for women, who may already face additional stressors related to gender-based disparities in healthcare and societal expectations.

My friend, who is a UPSC aspirant, is suffering from long Covid, which has significantly affected her mental health. She constantly struggles with brain fog and fatigue which is making it difficult to retain information like she used to. Preparing for such a competitive exam has become a major challenge. She says, “No amount of coffee can keep me awake for more than a couple of hours. I've started taking some vitamin supplements, which have helped with the weakness a bit, but I'm still far from how

I used to be and it's disheartening”.

For women pursuing education, long COVID symptoms can derail their academic progress. Brain fog and fatigue make it hard to concentrate during lectures, complete assignments, or prepare for exams. Sleep disturbances can lead to inconsistent attendance and participation. The necessity for extended deadlines or medical leave may arise, requiring negotiations with educational institutions. However, the variability in institutional support can result in uneven academic experiences and potential delays in educational attainment. This inconsistency arises because not all educational institutions have standardized policies or sufficient resources to accommodate students with long COVID.

Some may offer flexible deadlines, remote learning options, and mental health support, while others may lack such provisions, leaving students to navigate their challenges with minimal assistance. This disparity can lead to significant setbacks for students, such as falling behind in coursework, struggling to keep up with peers, and even facing the possibility of extended graduation timelines.

Additionally, the stress of managing a chronic illness without adequate institutional support can worsen both physical and mental health issues, further hindering academic performance. For women, who often shoulder additional responsibilities and face unique societal pressures, these challenges are even more pronounced, potentially affecting their long-term career prospects and financial stability.

A significant issue that worsens long COVID is the lack of discussion about nutrition and diet, which are crucial for managing chronic illnesses. According to a YKA survey on nutrition, 64.2% of respondents reported that diet and nutrition were not discussed with them when they were between 10-19 years of age. Among those who did receive this information, only 26.68% received it from their parents or caregivers.

This lack of early nutritional education leaves many women ill-equipped to manage their long COVID symptoms effectively through dietary adjustments. Understanding the importance of nutrition could help alleviate some of the symptoms and improve overall health, but the absence of such discussions hinders this potential benefit.

The broader range of symptoms experienced by women highlights the need for gender-specific healthcare approaches. Women may require more comprehensive and multidisciplinary care strategies to manage their symptoms effectively. Additionally, healthcare providers need to be aware of the gender differences in symptom presentation to avoid misdiagnosis or underdiagnosis of long COVID in women.

## What can be done?

Supporting women with long COVID requires a multifaceted approach, beginning with raising awareness and education. Employers and educational institutions need to be informed about the gender-specific impacts of long COVID to promote an environment of understanding and support. These gender-specific impacts include a broader range of symptoms that women tend to experience more intensely, such as chronic fatigue, brain fog, sleep disturbances, joint pain, heart palpitations, and anxiety.

Women may also face additional societal and familial pressures, such as caregiving responsibilities, which can compound the difficulties of managing long COVID. By recognizing the unique challenges that women face, these entities can better accommodate their needs, helping them balance their health and responsibilities effectively.

Implementing flexible work and study policies is another critical measure. Such policies allow women to manage their symptoms without compromising their professional or academic responsibilities. Flexible hours, remote work options, and lenient deadlines can significantly alleviate the pressures that worsens long COVID symptoms, promoting a healthier and more productive lifestyle.

Access to comprehensive healthcare services tailored to women's specific needs is essential for effective symptom management. Healthcare providers should offer personalized care plans that address the physical, mental, and emotional aspects of long COVID. Ensuring that women have access to these resources can lead to better health outcomes and an improved quality of life.

NIH in their initiative stated how specialized long COVID clinics should be established. Creating dedicated clinics that offer a multidisciplinary approach can help manage the diverse symptoms associated with long COVID. The study suggests that there should be efficient collaboration between primary care providers, pulmonologists, cardiologists, neurologists, and mental health professionals for the treatment of diverse long COVID symptoms.

According to a study, there should be an increased awareness among healthcare providers as educating healthcare providers about the prevalence and impact of long COVID in women will ensure timely recognition and treatment. Additionally, providing women with resources and information about long COVID will also help them to advocate for their health needs.

The findings of the study underscore the complex and multifaceted challenges women with long COVID face. Addressing these challenges requires a concerted effort from healthcare providers, employers, educational institutions, and policymakers. By recognizing the broader range of symptoms in women and implementing supportive measures, we can better assist women in managing long COVID and maintaining their quality of life. (Courtesy: Youth Ki Awaaz)

# Like Penelope Bridgerton, some 18<sup>th</sup>-century women wrote satirical periodicals to get back at society

By: Adam J Smith

In the world of Bridgerton, everyone reads the scandalous gossip columns of Lady Whistledown. That Lady Whistledown's acid pen belongs to none other than the ever-polite Penelope Bridgerton proved a shocking twist, but not one without historical precedent.

The history of 18th-century print is littered with striking instances in which women, like Bridgerton, used cheap print – such as magazines and periodicals – to deliver stunning satirical blows to the male-dominated status quo. They also used them to signal solidarity to the women living quietly and politely within society.

## Eliza Haywood

Eliza Haywood (1693-1756) was such a woman. Haywood's best-known novella, Fantomina (1725), tells the story of a young lady who falls for a dashing gallant who, unfortunately, doesn't like sleeping with the same woman twice. Our heroine therefore adopts a series of disguises so she can sleep with him again and again. By presenting a scenario

in which a young woman gratifies her sexual appetites without sacrificing her reputation, Fantomina asks why it is that we expect “constancy” in women but not in men.

Ultimately, our heroine falls pregnant and is sent to live out her days in a convent abroad. The apparent lesson is that vice is vice, even if nobody knows about it. For this reason, the tale could be circulated as a work of conduct literature: a genre designed to teach readers, usually women, how to behave. Along the way, however, Haywood has stealthily foregrounded a serious double standard for her readers.

Haywood was not alone in smuggling subversive content into conduct books. In 1753, Jane Collier published An Essay on the Art of Ingeniously Tormenting, a guide designed to teach women how to torment their husbands. As Collier explains, a true tormentor does not kill their enemy, but instead “wastes them by degrees” over as long a period as possible by teasing, nagging and embarrassing them. “The cat doth play”, she writes:

“and later slays”.

From 1741 to 1746, Haywood ran a monthly periodical called The Female Spectator, which courted an audience of female readers. This was a practice the writer Jonathan Swift disparagingly called “fair sexing”: appealing to a second-hand readership of women who might inherit the paper when their husbands had finished with it. Proudly presenting itself as a magazine by women and for women, however, Haywood self-consciously carved out a space to celebrate female readers and campaign for female education.

Haywood followed The Female Spectator with The Parrot (1746), a periodical written from the perspective of a green parrot. By the time we meet Haywood's parrot, he has lived for decades and has been owned by hundreds of different people from across the globe. This has left him with a sour view of humanity, whom he considers far too keen to judge a person's qualities on their external appearances.

Often disregarded as a “pretty prattler” who can

only repeat words without understanding and appreciated primarily as an object, if not ignored entirely, the parrot feels a keen solidarity with the women he observes. He concedes that women are by no means perfect, but that they do what they must to survive in a world ruled by men, concluding that “whatever faults [women] are guilty of in this kind, ought, me thinks, in a greater measure to be imputed to the men”.

## Charlotte Lennox

Between 1760 and 1761 the Scottish author Charlotte Lennox, published The Lady's Museum, a periodical promising to teach and entertain female readers. This publication pre-empted Mary Wollstonecraft's famous condemnation in the Vindication of the Rights of Women (1792) of the “false education” which had historically taught women that they are inferior to men.

In it Lennox declares that: “we live no longer in an age when prejudice condemned woman [to] shameful ignorance.”

However, though Lennox hopes that this new print culture offers an

opportunity for female education, she also warns against assuming that women of prior eras were not keen and capable thinkers. There have always been women, she writes, who could be found “shaking off the yoke of fashion”, who “ventured to think justly, and speak with propriety”, and who are “not ashamed of being more learned than the idle man of fashion”. These women existed in history, Lennox assures her readers, they just need to be “found”.

We would do well to remember Lennox's appeal to broaden our historical assumptions and remember that progressive values are not merely a phenomenon of our own time. Bridgerton uses fantasy to present us with a vision of the 18th century that appeals to our modern sensibilities and aligns with our commitment to social justice. But reading 18th-century women writers like Haywood and Lennox reveals that we don't need fantasy to find these values – there were voices expressing them at the time. We just need to find them. (Courtesy: Scroll.in)

# Home remedies for prickly heat

By: Shahnaz Husain

The common summer irritant prickly heat is back as temperatures rise. Prickly heat, also known as heat rash can turn out to be a nightmare in summer. Heat rash is a painful skin condition that often occurs in hot weather. A heat rash occurs when excessive perspiration clogs the skin pores and the sweat cannot get to the surface of the skin giving rise to bacterial infection resulting in blisters or small red round bumps that prick or sting the skin causing irritation and inflammation. Prickly heat rashes are seen along skin folds such as the neck, waist, armpits, and groin. Heat rash is common in newborns because their sweat glands are still developing. Symptoms of heat rashes are inflamed skin or red rashes, small blisters, itching and irritation. A prickly, burning or itchy sensation may also accompany heat rash.

Heat rash can happen for various reasons, including being in a hot, humid environment, wearing tight, synthetic clothing, long-lasting bed rest and intense exercise. People with overweight or obese

and people who sweat easily are more likely to get prickly heat. Home remedies for prickly heat:

## 1. Multani Mitti

Fuller's Earth popularly known as Multani Mitti is an excellent home remedy to clear clogged pores, treat prickly heat and make the skin supple and fresh.

Make a paste of Multani Mitti with rose water/plain water and apply over the affected areas, for 30 minutes and rinse well with cool water. It reduces inflammation and skin irritation. Apply this paste daily for effective results.

## 2. Aloe Vera

Aloe vera is renowned for its cooling and moisturising properties. Aloe vera has many medicinal, healing and soothing properties. Aloe vera is a natural moisturiser with potent anti-inflammatory and cooling properties.

Applying fresh aloe vera gel directly to the rash can help reduce itching and inflammation. Extract the Aloe Vera gel from a fresh Aloe Vera leaf, apply it to the affected area and let it absorb into the skin to soothe irritation and promote healing and rinse it off with cold water. This serves as an

excellent home remedy for prickly heat. Repeat this process 2-3 times a day for optimal results. You can also apply it before bedtime and wash it off with cold water in the morning.

## 3. Neem Leaves

Neem leaves are natural solutions for prickly heat. It has antibacterial and anti-inflammatory properties that help soothe itching caused by prickly heat.

To use neem leaves, boil a handful of fresh leaves in water for about 20 minutes. Allow the water to cool, then strain the leaves and use the neem-infused water to wash the affected area. Alternatively, you can make a paste from neem leaves and apply it to the rash. Grind fresh green Neem leaves with water, apply the paste, let it dry for 15 minutes and then rinse with cold water

## 4. Cool Compresses

Applying a cool compress to the affected area can provide immediate relief from the itching and discomfort associated with prickly heat. Simply soak a clean cloth in cold water, wring out the excess, and gently place it on the rash for 10-15 minutes. Repeat this process several times a day to reduce in-

flammation and soothe irritated skin. Rubbing ice cubes over the rashes 2-3 times daily has a great soothing effect. (do not leave packs on longer than 20 minutes per hour). Alternatively, a cold water bath would reduce the intensity of prickly heat.

## 5. Apply sandalwood

Sandalwood paste/powder is an old-age remedy for reducing prickly heat, due to its analgesic and anti-inflammatory properties. Make sandalwood paste in rose water/water and apply it on the heat rash-affected areas, let it dry and then rinse with cold water. Never use sandalwood talc or any talcum powder to treat prickly heat, it is not advisable medically

## 6. If your child is suffering from prickly heat then

Put your child in a cool environment, give your child cool baths, Loosen your child's diaper if it rubs against the rash area. Don't put the steroid cream under the diaper. Dress your child in breathable clothing, such as cotton. Cover your child with as few layers of clothing as possible. (The author is an international fame beauty expert and is called the herbal queen of India)

# Want to get pregnant? Read this

By: Dr Divya Vora

Obesity in women triples infertility risks; shedding just 5 per cent of body weight can aid fertility. In men, obesity disrupts hormones crucial for sperm count and mobility, contributing to a third of male-related infertility, points out gynaecologist Dr Divya Vora.

Female fertility may be a sensitive subject. But according to the World Health Organisation, the estimated prevalence of infertility in India is between 3.9 and 16.8 per cent. And this number is only growing, owing to increase in smoking, alcohol consumption, stress, and unhealthy eating habits among the young.

With the fast-changing pace at which our lifestyle has changed, it is not surprising that fertility is being impacted by the same. Working professionals with increased stress levels, especially women choose to delay their pregnancies, and conceive later in life.

There are women and men who want to start a family, but end up changing their minds delaying their decisions for a later age, which may or may not affect the health of the foetus. Lifestyle adjustments, I believe, can help create a conducive environment for pregnancy.

## What causes infertility in young women?

The first reasons you need to rule out are the medical ones. These could range from disorders and abnormalities to even impacting long-term conditions and age.

**Ovulation disorders:** Conditions like polycystic ovary syndrome (PCOS), hyperprolactinemia, and thyroid issues could be reasons why there is a disruption in the egg release.

**Uterine or Cervical abnormalities:** Polyps or fibroids in the uterus, or cervical issues, can hinder conception to begin with.

## Fallopian Tube Damage:

Pelvic inflammatory disease can lead to damage or blockage of the fallopian tubes, which is where the egg travels from.

**Endometriosis:** When the uterine lining grows outside the uterus, it can cause fertility problems.

**Primary ovarian insufficiency:** Early menopause can occur before age 40, causing menstruation to cease.

**Pelvic adhesions:** Scar tissue from infections or surgeries can bind organs and affect fertility.

**Medical conditions:** Certain disorders, like poorly controlled diabetes or autoimmune diseases, may impact menstruation and fertility.

**Age:** The quality and quantity of eggs decline with age, reducing the chances of conception. This is why many choose to freeze their eggs.

**STIs and STDs:** Chlamydia and gonorrhea can also lead to infertility.

After ruling out the above or speaking to your medical professional about the solutions going forward if you do have any of these causes, a key aspect to focus on is your lifestyle. For this, it is important to note that while the bodily conditions listed here are female, both men and women need to alter their lifestyles for the better. Here are some factors that need to be paid attention to.

## How to alter your lifestyle to improve fertility

## Weight management and exercise

Maintaining a healthy weight and engaging in regular exercise is pivotal for both genders. Obesity in women triples infertility risks; shedding just 5 per cent of body weight can aid fertility. In men, obesity disrupts hormones crucial for sperm count and mobility, contributing to a third of male-related infertility.

## A nourishing diet

Diet profoundly influences egg and sperm health. The Fertility

Diet, rooted in scientific research, underscores the importance of dietary adjustments. Opt for full-fat dairy, as opposed to low-fat alternatives, which diminish ovarian function.

Lean towards plant and meat-based protein, while curbing excessive animal protein. Incorporating soy is beneficial for female fertility, though men should avoid it due to potential sperm count reduction. Fiber-rich foods, dark leafy greens, beans, and walnuts promote fertility, while trans fats and processed foods should be avoided.

## Nutrient supplementation

Prenatal vitamins are vital for hormone balance, egg development, and fetal growth. Essential nutrients like folate, vitamins A, iron, B6, and B12 support a healthy pregnancy. Iron supplementation reduces fertility challenges.

Antioxidants such as vitamins C, E, folic acid, selenium, and zinc safeguard sperm from oxidative stress. Vitamin D is indispensable for hormonal function, and its deficiency is linked to infertility.

## Moderate exercise and good oral hygiene

Balanced exercise, up to an hour daily, enhances fertility and sperm quality. Conversely, minimal or excessive exercise may compromise fertility. Extremes aren't beneficial for your body's sense of balance. Maintaining oral health, by addressing gum disease and cavities, positively impacts pregnancy outcomes.

## Limit toxins and stress management

You are what you eat. If you are eating a lot of junk or packaged food every day, chances are that you maybe on a toxic diet. Similarly, watch out for your smoking and drinking habits. Quitting smoking is crucial, as it elevates infertility risks by 13 per cent, prolonging conception duration and raising miscarriage chances.

Alcohol consumption detrimentally affects both genders' fertility and should be avoided. Stress management through practices like acupuncture, yoga, meditation, and massage can foster fertility. At work, night shifts also contribute to an adverse impact on hormone production.

## Understand fertility cycle and use lubricants

Understanding the fertility cycle aids conception timing. While timing intercourse improves chances, it does not affect fertility itself. Using sperm-friendly lubricants devoid of spermicides is advised.

## Adequate sleep and other practices

Adequate sleep boosts melatonin production, crucial for fertility. Reduced cortisol levels from sleep support testosterone. For men, avoiding tight clothing, prolonged bike rides, hot tubs, and laptop placement on the lap mitigates scrotal temperature elevation and promotes healthy sperm production. In order to improve your overall health and fertility, these are some basic guidelines to remember and follow:

## Quit smoking

Smoking accelerates ovarian aging and reduces egg count so both men and women for quality sperm and eggs should not smoke

## Limit alcohol

Excessive drinking increases ovulation issues and so there is no lower limit as it is best to avoid it completely

## Moderate caffeine

Intake under 200mg per day generally does not affect fertility but as mentioned, excess is the enemy of balance

## Avoid Toxins

Environmental pollutants like pesticides can impact fertility and so one must minimize exposure to them. Incorporating these lifestyle changes complements medical interventions, which then significantly bolster fertility prospects. (Courtesy: Rediff.com)



# Israeli SC says ultra-Orthodox men must serve in military



**JERUSALEM, June 25:** Israel's Supreme Court on Tuesday ruled unanimously that the military must begin drafting ultra-Orthodox men for military service, a decision that could lead to the collapse of Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's governing coalition as Israel continues to wage war in Gaza.

The court ruled that in the absence of a law that distinguishes between Jewish seminary students and other draftees, Israel's compulsory military service system applies to the ultra-Orthodox like any other citizens.

Under longstanding arrangements, ultra-Orthodox men have been exempt from the draft, which is compulsory for most Jewish men and women. These exemptions have long been a source of anger among the secular public, a divide that has widened during the eight-month-old war, as the military has called up tens of thousands of soldiers and says it needs all the manpower it can get. Over 600 soldiers have been killed.

Politically powerful ultra-Orthodox parties, key partners in Netanyahu's governing coalition, oppose any change in the current system. If the exemptions are ended, they could bolt the coalition, causing the government to collapse and leading to new elections.

During arguments, government lawyers told the court that forcing ultra-Orthodox men to enlist would "tear Israeli society apart." The court decision comes at a sensitive time, as the war in Gaza drags on into its ninth month and the number of dead soldiers continues to mount. The court found that the state was carrying out "invalid selective enforcement, which

represents a serious violation of the rule of law, and the principle according to which all individuals are equal before the law." It did not say how many ultra-Orthodox should be drafted.

The court also ruled that state subsidies for seminaries where exempted ultra-Orthodox men study should remain suspended. The court temporarily froze the seminary budgets earlier this year. In a post on the social media platform X, cabinet minister Yitzhak Goldknopf, who heads one of the ultra-Orthodox parties in the coalition, called the ruling "very unfortunate and disappointing." He did not say whether his party would bolt the government.

"The state of Israel was established in order to be a home for the Jewish people whose Torah is the bedrock of its existence. The Holy Torah will prevail," he wrote.

The ultra-Orthodox see their full-time religious study as their part in protecting the state of Israel. Many fear that greater contact with secular society through the military will distance adherents from strict observance of the faith.

Ultra-Orthodox men attend special seminaries that focus on religious studies, with little attention on secular topics like math, English or science. Critics have said they are ill-prepared to serve in the military or enter the secular work force. Religious women generally receive blanket exemptions that are not as controversial, in part because women are not expected to serve in combat units.

The ruling now sets the stage for growing friction within the coalition between those who support drafting more ultra-Or-

thodox and those who oppose the idea. Ultra-Orthodox lawmakers are likely to face intense pressure from religious leaders and their constituents and may have to choose whether remaining in the government is worthwhile for them.

Shuki Friedman, vice-president of the Jewish People Policy Institute, a Jerusalem think tank said the ultra-Orthodox "understand that they don't have a better political alternative, but at same time their public is saying why did we vote for you?"

The exemptions have faced years of legal challenges and a string of court decisions has found the system unjust. But Israeli leaders, under pressure from ultra-Orthodox parties, have repeatedly stalled.

It remains unclear whether Netanyahu will be able to do so again. Netanyahu's coalition is buoyed by two ultra-Orthodox parties who oppose increasing enlistment for their constituents. The long-serving Israeli leader has tried to adhere to the court's rulings while also scrambling to preserve his coalition. But with a slim majority of 64 seats in the 120-member parliament, he's often beholden to the pet issues of smaller parties.

Netanyahu has been promoting a bill tabled by a previous government in 2022 that sought to address the issue of ultra-Orthodox enlistment. But critics say that bill was crafted before the war and doesn't do enough to address a pressing manpower shortfall as the army seeks to maintain its forces in the Gaza Strip while also preparing for potential war with the Lebanese Hezbollah group, which has been fighting with Israel since the war in Gaza erupted last October. With its high birthrate, the ultra-Orthodox community is the fastest-growing segment of the population, at about 4 per cent annually. Each year, roughly 13,000 ultra-Orthodox males reach the conscription age of 18, but less than 10 per cent enlist, according to the Israeli parliament's State Control Committee. (AP)

## S Korea slams N Korea's fresh trash balloon launches



**SEOUL, June 25:** South Korea threatened on Tuesday to restart anti-Pyongyang frontline propaganda broadcasts in the latest bout of Cold War-style campaigns between the rivals after North Korea resumed its trash-carrying balloon launches. On Monday night, North Korea floated huge balloons carrying plastic bags of rubbish across the border in its fifth such campaign since late May - an apparent response to South Korean activists flying political leaflets via balloons.

In a Tuesday speech marking a Korean War anniversary, South Korean President Yoon Suk Yeol called North Korea's balloon activities "a despicable and irrational provocation." He said South Korea will maintain a firm military readiness to repel any provocations by North Korea.

Later Tuesday, Yoon boarded a visiting US aircraft carrier docked at a southeastern port and told American and South Korean troops there that the two countries' alliance is the world's greatest and can defeat any enemy. Yoon became the first sitting South Korean president to board a US aircraft carrier since 1994.

South Korea's military said North Korea floated about 350 balloons in its latest campaign, and about 100 of them eventually landed in South Korean soil, mostly in Seoul and nearby areas. Seoul is about 40-50 kilometres away from the border. The military said the trash carried by the North Korean balloons were mostly papers and that no hazardous items were found.

In its earlier balloon launches, North Korea dropped manure, cigarette butts and waste batteries along with cloth scraps and waste papers in various parts of South Korea. No major damage was reported. In response, South Korea redeployed gigantic loudspeakers June 9 along the border for the first time in six years and briefly resumed anti-North Korean propaganda broadcasts. (AP)

## WikiLeaks founder Julian Assange stops in Bangkok on his way to a US court and later freedom

**BANGKOK, June 25:** A plane carrying Julian Assange landed on Tuesday in Bangkok for refuelling, as the WikiLeaks founder was on his way to enter a plea deal with the US government that will free him and resolve the legal case that spanned years and continents over the publication of a trove of classified documents.

A chartered flight from London that Assange's wife, Stella, confirmed was carrying her husband landed at Don Mueang International Airport. Officials there told The Associated Press the plane was scheduled to continue on to Saipan, the capital of the Northern Mariana Islands, a US commonwealth in the Pacific, where Assange is expected to appear in court on Wednesday.

He's expected to plead guilty to an Espionage Act charge of conspiring to unlawfully obtain and disseminate classified national defence information, according to the US Justice Department in a letter filed in court.

Assange is expected to return to his home country of Australia after his plea and sentencing. The hearing is taking place in Saipan because of Assange's opposition to travelling to the continental US and the court's proximity to Australia, prosecutors said.

The guilty plea, which must be approved by a judge, brings an abrupt conclusion to a criminal case of international intrigue and to the US government's yearslong pursuit of a publisher whose hugely popular secret-sharing website made him a cause celebre among many press freedom advocates who said he acted as a journalist to expose US military wrongdoing.

Investigators, in contrast, have repeatedly asserted that his actions broke laws meant to protect sensitive information and put the country's national security at risk.

Stella Assange told the BBC from Australia that it

had been "touch and go" over the past 72 hours whether the deal would go ahead but she felt "elated" at the news. A lawyer who married the WikiLeaks founder in prison in 2022, she said details of the agreement would be made public once the judge had signed off on it.

"He will be a free man once it is signed off by a judge," she said, adding that she still didn't think it was real.

She told Britain's PA news agency that the flight was costing Assange USD 500,000 and they would start a fundraising campaign to help pay for it.

Kristinn Hrafnsson, editor-in-chief of WikiLeaks, said the deal for Assange came about after the growing involvement of Australian Prime Minister Anthony Albanese.

"This is the result of a long, long process which has been going on for some time. It has been a tough battle, but the focus now is on Julian being reunited with his family," Hrafnsson told the PA news agency. "The most important thing is that Julian is free and he is finally able to enjoy the big blue sky."

In a statement posted on the social media platform X, WikiLeaks said Assange boarded a plane and departed Monday after leaving the British prison where he has spent the last five years. WikiLeaks applauded the announcement of the deal, saying it was grateful for "all who stood by us, fought for us, and remained utterly committed in the fight for his freedom."

Albanese told Parliament that an Australian envoy had flown with Assange from London.

"Regardless of the views that people have about Assange's activities, the case has dragged on for too long," Albanese said. "There's nothing to be gained by his continued incarceration and we want him brought home to Australia." (AP)

### OFFICE OF THE DISTRICT PRIMARY EDUCATION DEPARTMENT KARBI ANGLONG AUTONOMOUS COUNCIL :: DIPHU

No: KAAC/DPED/Tender/2010-12/276-Pt-I/ 177

Dated: 24.06.2024

#### SHORT TENDER NOTICE

Sealed tender affixing non-refundable KAAC money receipt of Rs. 10.00 (Rupees ten) only eventually to be drawn up in form are hereby invited from KAAC registered contractors and will be received by the undersigned from 25/06/2024 to 03/07/2024 and will be opened during office hour on the same day and place at 2:00pm in presence of tenderers or their authorized agent if any. If the day of opening of tender happens to be a holiday, a non working day the tender will be opened on the next working day. The undersigned has the right to accept/reject any or all tenders in part or whole without assigning any reason thereof and will not be bound to accept the lowest tender.

Sl. No.	Name of Work/Scheme	Estimate Amount	Earnest Money	Time allowed for completion
1	Major repairing of Amduba LP School	Rs. 6.00 L	ST/SC-1% Others-2%	30 days
2	Construction of new school building at Punduri Makha LP School	Rs. 6.00 L	ST/SC-1% Others-2%	30 days
3	Repairing & renovation of Rongkangtui LP School, Umniem	Rs. 6.00 L	ST/SC-1% Others-2%	30 days
4	Repairing of Munjili LP School	Rs. 3.00 L	ST/SC-1% Others-2%	30 days
5	Repairing of Langkarom LP School	Rs. 3.00 L	ST/SC-1% Others-2%	30 days
6	Repairing of Chekso LP School	Rs. 6.00 L	ST/SC-1% Others-2%	30 days
7	Construction of kitchen shed at Chomkan Thongnokbe LP School	Rs. 6.00 L	ST/SC-1% Others-2%	30 days
8	Repairing & renovation of Engti Kaibong LP School	Rs. 6.00 L	ST/SC-1% Others-2%	30 days
9	Repairing & renovation of Kitchen shed at Tur-er Tisso Muzadar English LP School	Rs. 6.00 L	ST/SC-1% Others-2%	30 days
10	Construction of new RCC Ringwell at Majbesti Hindi LP School	Rs. 2.00 L	ST/SC-1% Others-2%	30 days
11	Construction of new RCC Ringwell at Jirim-Borholi English LP School Hawaipur	Rs. 2.00 L	ST/SC-1% Others-2%	30 days
12	Construction of new RCC Ringwell at Theso Hindi LP School, Theso Ronghang	Rs. 2.00 L	ST/SC-1% Others-2%	30 days
13	Repairing of Amparchung LP School, Ronghidi	Rs. 6.00 L	ST/SC-1% Others-2%	30 days
14	New construction of Langtuk Thepi School	Rs. 6.00 L	ST/SC-1% Others-2%	30 days
15	Repairing of Howraghat Town LP School	Rs. 6.00 L	ST/SC-1% Others-2%	30 days
16	Repairing of Hidiso LP School	Rs. 6.00 L	ST/SC-1% Others-2%	30 days
17	Repairing of Saloni LP School	Rs. 6.00 L	ST/SC-1% Others-2%	30 days
18	Repairing of school building at Etapara LP School	Rs. 6.00 L	ST/SC-1% Others-2%	30 days
19	Construction of additional class room at Purajan LP School (Bheloghat)	Rs. 6.00 L	ST/SC-1% Others-2%	30 days
20	Repairing & renovation of Borganga LP School, Teke Rongpi gaon	Rs. 6.00 L	ST/SC-1% Others-2%	30 days
21	Repairing of Adai Hanse LP School	Rs. 2.00 L	ST/SC-1% Others-2%	30 days
22	Repairing of Donghap English LP School	Rs. 2.00 L	ST/SC-1% Others-2%	30 days
23	Repairing of Mistribali LP School	Rs. 2.00 L	ST/SC-1% Others-2%	30 days
24	Repairing of Noupuni LP School	Rs. 6.00 L	ST/SC-1% Others-2%	30 days
25	Repairing of Tumenglangso LP School, Langsoliat	Rs. 6.00 L	ST/SC-1% Others-2%	30 days
26	Repairing of Longnit Majgaon LP School, Thapadao gaon, Mohongdijua	Rs. 6.00 L	ST/SC-1% Others-2%	30 days
27	Repairing of Harche-Ali LP School, Longnit	Rs. 6.00 L	ST/SC-1% Others-2%	30 days
28	Repairing of Hatigarh LP School, Bormanathi	Rs. 6.00 L	ST/SC-1% Others-2%	30 days
29	Repairing of Waisong LP School	Rs. 6.00 L	ST/SC-1% Others-2%	30 days
30	Repairing & renovation of Morakordoiguri Ghatuwal Gaon Assamese LP School	Rs. 6.00 L	ST/SC-1% Others-2%	30 days
31	Repairing of Nambornadi LP School	Rs. 6.00 L	ST/SC-1% Others-2%	30 days
32	Repairing of Merabheti LP School	Rs. 6.00 L	ST/SC-1% Others-2%	30 days
33	Repairing of Deihors Singnar LP School	Rs. 6.00 L	ST/SC-1% Others-2%	30 days
34	Repairing of Sarthe Teron LP School	Rs. 6.00 L	ST/SC-1% Others-2%	30 days
35	Repairing of Taradong LP School	Rs. 6.00 L	ST/SC-1% Others-2%	30 days
36	Repairing of Hanboka LP School	Rs. 6.00 L	ST/SC-1% Others-2%	30 days
37	Construction of Kitchen Shed & toilet at Japijuri LP School	Rs. 11.96 L	ST/SC-1% Others-2%	30 days
38	Repairing of Diring LP School	Rs. 6.00 L	ST/SC-1% Others-2%	30 days
39	Construction of boundary wall at Haluwa LP School (Phase-I)	Rs. 6.00 L	ST/SC-1% Others-2%	30 days

(CONTD. ON PAGE-7)



## Akhilesh Singh, Pramod Boro discuss collaborative initiatives NTPC and BTC strengthen ties



**HT Correspondent KOKRAJHAR, June 25:** Akhilesh Singh, head of project (HOP) and business unit head at National Thermal Power Corporation, had a productive meeting with Pramod Boro, the chief executive member of Bodoland Territorial Council and NTPC

Bongaigaon Salakati recently. The meeting highlighted the collaborative efforts between NTPC and the BTC administration, focusing on Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR), sustainability, and environmental conservation in the region which has been aimed to make welfare and developmental

activities. Boro appreciated the diligent efforts of NTPC Bongaigaon Salakati in these crucial areas and lauded the company's commitment to powering the nation 24x7. He acknowledged the significant impact of NTPC's initiatives on the community and the environment.

During the interaction, Singh briefed Boro on various ongoing and upcoming initiatives of NTPC. He expressed gratitude towards the BTC administration for their unwavering support in key areas such as digital literacy classes, skill development, sanitation, empowerment, and health. These initiatives are designed to uplift and empower the local communities, contributing to the overall development and well-being of the region.

The meeting was attended by senior officials from NTPC Bongaigaon Salakati including Onkar Nath, AGM (HR), Roshan Dungdung, DGM (HR), and Smt Aditya Thakuri, CSR Executive and officials of BTC Administration. Their presence depicts the commitment of NTPC's leadership towards enhancing community engagement and fostering sustainable development.

NTPC remains dedicated to its mission of sustainable growth and community development, ensuring that its operations benefit not just the nation but also the local communities in which it operates.

## NECTAR inaugurates Remote Pilot Training Organisation

**HT Bureau**

**GUWAHATI, June 25:** In a significant stride towards empowering the youth and boosting the regional economy, the North East Centre for Technology Application and Reach (NECTAR) has proudly inaugurated Northeast India's third Remote Pilot Training Organization (RPTO). This pioneering initiative, launched in collaboration with Jawaharlal Nehru College, Boko and training partner EduRade — a brand owned by RC HobbyTech Solutions Pvt. Ltd. (RCH) and it is situated at Jawaharlal Nehru College, Boko.

NECTAR undertook this opportunity to showcase the capabilities of Agriculture drones for spraying and how it can increase the source of livelihood to the people of North East.

A unique type of drone named as Aerostatic Drone which has high endurance capabilities for surveillance and monitoring was also showcased during the event.

NECTAR's RPTO was inaugurated on June 25, 2024 with first batch of female pilots getting training from the 8 North Eastern states of the country. In the auspicious presence Laya Madduri, IAS, Secretary, Department of Science and Technology, Government of Assam as Chief Guest, Nandita Das, MLA, Boko LAC and Lakshi Kanta Samah, president, Governing Body, JN College as the guests of honour.

Arun Kumar Sarma, Director General, NECTAR embarked the importance of Drone ecosystem in the North East. He further stated that the establishment of an RPTO in the Northeast region significantly enhances the employability of locals by providing specialized drone pilot training, aligning with the DGCA standards. This RPTO will also be align to Drone Didi scheme so that women of NE can extract maximum benefit out of this scheme.

Accordingly, NECTAR RPTO at Boko will be initially focusing on producing women pilot in NE so that they can avail the Drone Didi scheme. NECTAR is in touch with all state Govt. department and requested them to nominate members for the drone pilot (only women) training program. Initial few batches will be concentrated on only women pilot training. This



certification equips individuals with highly sought-after skills in various sectors such as agriculture, logistics, and emergency response, opening diverse career opportunities.

Laya Madduri, IAS, Secretary, Department of Science and Technology, Government of India stressed that drones will be the game changer in the North East. She told the participants that within a very short span of time international drone technology is now reaching in the rural areas of the North East due to efforts of the Prime Minister and central government through schemes such as Drone didi. She also narrated an incident of how a drone was used to deliver the relief materials in the flood affected areas of Cachar. She said that being the Secretary of the Department of Science and Technology she will extend all the help in the drone sector for the outreach of drone technology in Assam as well as North East India. She further inaugurated the NECTAR's RPTO with the first batch of 10 female candidates and visited the drone simulation room, classrooms and also flew the drone under the supervision of Drone Instructors. She also took the overview of the Aerostatic Drone and understood the importance of Aerostatic Drones for forest surveillance, wildlife monitoring and for planning flood rescue operations.

Nandita Das, MLA, Boko Legislative constituency was excited with the opening of RPTO in the Boko. She said that it will bring prosperity in the region and will set an example for the whole Assam. She said that till today she only knew that drones can be used for wedding photography only but

came to know about various applications such as agriculture, drone planning, oil and gas agencies, emergency response etc. She told the participants that she will extend all the help from her side and will get more schemes through the science and technology minister of the state. She also emphasised about popularising the drone technology to the masses.

Tapan Dutta, Principal, JN College, Boko extended his gratitude to Dr Arun Kumar Sarma, Director General NECTAR for providing the opportunity to his college in opening the RPTO. He said that the students of college will benefit from the RPTO and drone technology. He also extended his regards to all the dignitaries and participants for attending the event.

The establishment of this DGCA-approved RPTO marks a crucial milestone in advancing drone technology education and training in the region. It represents NECTAR's initial step towards fostering technological growth, with many more initiatives to follow. DGCA-approved RPTOs, such as the one at Boko, are tasked with delivering drone pilot training programs that meet stringent DGCA standards. These meticulously designed programs provide comprehensive knowledge and hands-on skills essential for aspiring remote pilots to obtain certification, underscoring the necessity of having an RPTO in the region.

The strategic collaboration between NECTAR, EduRade and Jawaharlal Nehru College, Boko in the Northeast region significantly enhances the employability of locals by providing specialized drone pilot training, aligning with the DGCA standards.

### Rhino strays into Dikhowmukh fields

**HT Correspondent SIVASAGAR, June 25:** A stray rhino was found roaming around the fields near the historic Ramkha Peeth Devalay by the local people of Deugharia, Dikhowmukh on Tuesday. On receiving information, forest officials made blank fires to chase it towards Telaidunga. Two stray rhinos came to the area last year as well.

### Janjhi College student secures 1st class in Sanskrit

**HT Correspondent SIVASAGAR, June 25:** Jyoti-mani Deka of HNS Janjhi College secured 1st class 1st position while Garima Gogoi of the same college achieved 1st class 4th and Nishita Baruah 1st class 9th position in the BA final semester examination under the Dibrugarh University. The overall pass percentage of the college is 84 p.c. including 72 students securing first class in various subjects. In the Commerce section, the college achieved 92p.c. success.

## Trains cancelled and diverted

**HT Bureau**

**GUWAHATI, June 25:** NFR has cancelled and diverted trains in view of proposed non-interlocking works between Chaygaon & Mirza section under Rangiya division.

Train no. 15602 (Guwahati – Dhubri) Express, train no. 05803 (New Bongaigaon – Guwahati) Passenger Special, train no. 05020 (Guwahati – Mendipathar) Passenger Special and train no. 07523/07524 (New Bongaigaon – Guwahati – New Bongaigaon) DEMU will remain cancelled from June 25 to 27.

Train no. 15601 (Dhubri – Guwahati) Express, train no. 05804 (Guwahati – New Bongaigaon) Passenger, train no. 05019 (Mendipathar – Guwahati) Passenger Special will remain cancelled from June 26 to June 28.

Train no. 05608 (Guwahati – Medipathar) Passenger and train no. 05697 (New Jalpaiguri – Guwahati) Special will remain cancelled on June 26.

Train no. 05698 (Guwahati – New Jalpaiguri) Special will remain cancelled on June 25.

Train no. 05607 (Mendipathar – Guwahati) Passenger will remain cancelled on June 27.

Train no. 12346 (Guwahati – Howrah) Saraighat-Express commencing journey on June 27 and train no. 15662 (Kamakhya – Ranchi) Express commencing journey on June 25, will be diverted via Kamakhya – Rangiya – New Bongaigaon.

Train no. 12345 (Howrah – Guwahati) Saraighat-Express commencing journey on June 25 and 26, train no. 22511 (LokmanyaTilak Terminus – Kamakhya) Express commencing journey on June 25, 2024 and train no. 12503 (SMVT Bengaluru – Agartala) Hum-safar Express commencing journey on June 25, 2024 will be diverted via New Bongaigaon – Rangiya – Kamakhya.

## Domestic workers in Jorhat demand minimum wage

**HT Correspondent**

**JORHAT, June 25:** Grihakarmit Adhikar Suraksha Samiti (the body of household and domestic workers, Jorhat, on Monday staged a demonstration in front of the Assistant Labour Commissioner (ALC) office, here seeking fulfillment of several demands, which included fixing of minimum wages, timely payment of the wages and a weekly off day.

The protesters stated that a large number of household workers were employed by the people in their houses daily to carry out all kinds of household chores and they (workers) have to toil very hard without any break in a week. Stating that the household workers were one of the most neglected lot, the protesters pointed out

they were paid meagre amount as there was no minimum amount fixed for their wages and no law, rules of the Government to grant them legitimate rights.

Alleging that the workers did not have any job security as they were often abruptly fired by their employers and also not paid their wages on time many-a-occasions, the protesters further alleged of ill-treatment meted to them by many employers. The workers later submitted a memorandum to the ALC seeking fulfillment of their demands by the Government by attending to their grievances mentioned above. They also sought setting up of a cell at the ALC office here to receive complaints regarding problems faced by them at their work places to get early redressal.

## Dawson HS and MP school principal lauded

School was established in 1916 at Nagaon and played a pivotal role in the field of education

**HT Correspondent**

**NAGAON, June 25:** Dawson HS and Multi Purposes School, a historic and a pioneer institute of education in Nagaon marked a tremendous academic feedback in 2024 after decades owing to the strict administration, sacrifice as well as hard-work of the incumbent principal of the institution here.

Dawson HS and MP School was established in 1916 at Nagaon and played a pivotal role in the field of education in the district since its establishment and set a centenary long glorious history in teaching as well as learning in the district. Since the beginning of the twenty first century, the historic glory of the institution started to sliding from its pace due to various reasons. At this transitory stage, Tapan Kumar Baidya, dedicated and hardworking person joined in the institution as a principal and insisted on creating a sustainable environment of learning and decorated the school campus with the facilities of art and crafts from historical point of view.

Besides, along with scenic environment, he also gave more importance on friendly relationship between teachers and students so that the clouds of hesitation could be removed from the mind of the students. As a result of his dedication as well as his enormous initiatives and hardwork, Dawson HS and MP School registered a historic mark in science, arts and commerce stream in HS Final Examination 2024 and also secured the first position in science stream in the district.

Rajnandini Baidya from Dawson HS and MP School, bagged 2nd position in science stream in the state with 481 total marks while Sivangi Kashyap from Salt Brook school, Dibrugarh secured the first position in the state with 484 total marks out of 500. A total of 46 students in science stream from Dawson HS and MP School appeared in HS Final Examination 2024 and all of them registered a record with passing in first division.



Similarly, in commerce stream, 37 students appeared in the examination and all of them cleared the examination successfully. Besides in arts stream, out of 156 students, 147 students successfully cracked the examination in the current academic session.

It is pertinent to mention here that such heroic performance is an ultimate fruit of dedication, sacrifice as well as hardwork of Tapan Kumar Baidya, the principal of the institution. The guardians, well-

wishers, the members of school management committee and other students of the institution expressed their gratitude and highness to the school - head on this awesome academic pursuits and success, asserted in a press note here.

No.CHR/PWD(R&B)/N-14/Pt/2017-18/411

Dtd.24/06/2024

### SHORT NOTICE INVITING TENDER

Sealed tenders affixing a non-refundable court fee stamp of Rs. 8.25 (Rupees eight & paise twenty five) only with a validity period of 180 days, which will subsequently be converted and drawn up in the printed F-2 form are invited from the registered contractors under PWD of Class- III (Three), Class-II (Two) & Class-I (A, B & C) (R&B) category according to their eligibility for submitting tenders for the work stated below. The tenders will be received by the undersigned up to **12.00 Noon on 05/07/2024** and will be opened on the same date & place at **2.15 P.M.**

Sl No.	Name of Work	Tender Amount (in Rs.) (including GST LWC & Agency charges)	Earnest Money (in Rs.) (1% ST, SC, OBC-1% & GEN-2%)	Cost of Tender Papers (in Rs.)	Time of Completion in day
1	"Restoration of Damaged road Row for laying of Carbon Steel Pipeline by open tranche from (i) Amguri (4) to Bengtol gate (0) on LHS side parallel from Amguri-Bengtol Gate road, Length=4.00 Km".	Rs.11,28,906.00/-	1% -Rs.11,289/- 2% -Rs.22,578/-	Rs.1000/-	4(Four) Months
2	"Restoration of Damaged Road ROW for laying of Carbon steel Pipeline by open tranche from (i) IOCL refinery main gate (0.3) to Dhaligaon (2.15), Length=1.850 Km".	Rs.15,74,669.00/-	1% -Rs.15,746/- 2% -Rs.31,493/-	Rs.1000/-	4(Four) Months

Detail N.I.T. may be seen in all working days in the office of the undersigned. Tender paper will be issued to the contractor or their authorized agent up-to 12.00 Noon on all working days from **26/06/2024 to 05/07/2024** in the office of the undersigned on payment in the form of Bank Draft/ Demand Draft, duly pledged to the Executive Engineer, PWD Chirang (R&B) Division, Kajalgaon. Payable at Kokrajhar, SBI main Branch. The contractor should submit attested copy of Registration Certificate for the year 2024-2025, GST, Labour Licence, PAN along with the tenders. In case the office remain closed on the tender receiving/opening the same will be received/opened on the next working day.

Sd/-  
Executive Engineer, PWD,  
Chirang(R&B) Division, Kajalgaon.

IPR(BTC)/C/2024-25/58

(CONTD. FROM PAGE-6)

Details tender documents may be obtained from the office of the undersigned during office working hours.

### Terms & Conditions:-

N.B.

- The rate to be quoted as % (percent) above/below/as per schedule of rate for building/sanitary works/works under APWD for the year 2020-21.
- Earnest money should be deposited in favour of the undersigned in the form of Call deposit/Bank Draft and should be attached with the tender and without which no tender will be accepted.
- The works must be carried out as directed by the Executive Engineer (Works), KAAC, Diphu.

### The following documents should be enclosed with the tender,

- Professional Tax Clearance Certificate.
- GST Clearance Certificate.
- Council Registration.
- Call Deposit 1% for ST and 2% for others.
- Payment will be made subject to availability of fund.
- The undersigned is not bound to accept the lowest quoted rate.

Sd/-  
District Primary Education Officer  
Karbi Anglong Autonomous Council,  
D I P H U

Memo No: KAAC/DPED/Tender/2010-12/276-Pt-I/177 (A)

Date: 24.06.2024

No.DPRD/BTC/15FC/VI/Baksa-2/2024/21 Dated Kokrajhar the 20<sup>th</sup> June 2024  
**PRESS NOTICE**  
In cancellation of the earlier NIT vide No.DPRD/BTC/15FC/VI/Baksa-2/2024/16, Dtd.27/02/2024, The Director, P&RD, BTC, Kokrajhar invites bids for work "Const. of road with earth filling and sand gravelling from Mithinga Daimary house to Kula Boro house in Jharkona village " Under 15<sup>th</sup> Finance Commission **Untied Grant 2023-24**, for A/A amount of **Rs.25,00,000/- (rupees forty five lakh) only** from the registered contractors of Class – II (A,B & C) category of Assam PWD (Roads) / (Building ), BTC.  
Details may be seen at website <http://assamtenders.gov.in> and also at the Office of the undersigned during office hours.  
Sd/-Director,  
Panchayat & Rural Development,  
BTC, Kokrajhar  
IPR(BTC)/C/2024-25/63

No.DPRD/BTC/15FC/VI/Baksa-1/2024/21 Dated Kokrajhar the 20<sup>th</sup> June 2024  
**PRESS NOTICE**  
In Cancellation of earlier NIT vide No.DPRD/BTC/15FC/VI/Baksa-1/2024/16, Dtd.27/02/2024, The Director, P&RD, BTC, Kokrajhar invites fresh bids for work "Const. of road with earth filling and sand gravelling along with 1 RCC slab culvert from Pullo house to Hirachupa Borpothar Naamghar" Under 15<sup>th</sup> Finance Commission **Untied Grant 2023-24**, for A/A amount of **Rs.45,00,000/- (rupees forty five lakh) only** from the registered contractors of Class – II (A,B & C) category of Assam PWD (Roads) / (Building ), BTC.  
Details may be seen at website <http://assamtenders.gov.in> and also at the Office of the undersigned during office hours.  
Sd/-Director,  
Panchayat & Rural Development,  
BTC, Kokrajhar  
IPR(BTC)/C/2024-25/62



# Om Birla is NDA's pick for LS Speaker

Oppn forces election by fielding K Suresh

NEW DELHI, June 25: The ruling BJP-led NDA on Tuesday maintained its streak of continuity in its third term by fielding previous Lok Sabha Speaker Om Birla for the crucial parliamentary position again, but its bid for a consensus was thwarted by the opposition which forced an election by nominating Kodikunnil Suresh as its candidate.

The opposition's last-minute decision to go for a rare contest came after senior BJP leaders did not agree to its precondition that the INDIA bloc must be offered the post of Deputy Speaker in lieu of supporting Birla, who is the clear favourites in case of an election.

A brief interaction involving Congress leader K C Venugopal and DMK's T R Baalu from the opposition side and Union ministers Rajnath Singh, Amit Shah and J P Nadda, who is also the BJP president, at Singh's office in Parliament to evolve a consensus ended in acrimony as both sides stuck to their position.

Both opposition leaders walked out, with Venugopal accusing the government of not following the "convention" of an opposition candidate for the Deputy Speaker's position and announcing the decision to field a candidate against Birla.

Union ministers Piyush Goyal of the BJP and Lalan Singh of the JD(U) accused the opposition of resorting to pressure politics and putting forth preconditions despite senior ministers' assurance that its demand will be considered when the time to pick the Deputy Speaker comes.



"There can be no pressure politics," Union minister and JD(U) leader Lalan Singh told reporters, while Goyal said democracy cannot be run on preconditions.

The scheduled day for picking the Speaker is Wednesday and if an election occurs, it will be only the third time in Lok Sabha's history, official sources said.

With the NDA having 293 MPs in its kitty and the INDIA bloc 233, numbers clearly favour Birla in Lok Sabha, which currently has 542 members after Rahul Gandhi resigned from one of the two seats he was elected from. At least three independent members also support the opposition.

BJP sources claimed that the Congress has been the main aggressor on the issue and some other INDIA bloc members are not very keen on a contest.

If Birla, the BJP MP from Kota, is elected, it will be fifth time that a Speaker would serve beyond the tenure of one Lok Sabha. Though Congress leader Balram Jakhar is the only presiding officer to have served two complete terms extending seventh and

eight Lok Sabha.

A third-term MP, Birla is also a three-term former Rajasthan MLA and has risen through the ranks in the BJP. Suresh, his rival for the Speaker's post, is a eighth-term MP from Kerala and hails from a Dalit community.

If a division of votes takes place in Lok Sabha on Wednesday, then paper slips will be used as the electronic system is not operational yet in the new Lok Sabha where members are still in the process of being allocated their seats.

Seasoned BJP leader Rajnath Singh had taken the lead in reaching out to opposition parties over the issue as Birla emerged as the NDA's consensus choice and met its senior leaders, including Prime Minister Narendra Modi.

Suresh said it is not about winning or losing, but about a convention that Speaker will be of ruling party and deputy speaker from the opposition.

"Last two Lok Sabhas, they denied us deputy speaker's post because they said you are not recognised as the opposition. Now we are recognised as the opposition, (and) deputy speaker post is our

right. But they are not ready to give us. Till 11.50, we were waiting for reply from government's side but they did not give any reply," he told reporters.

Congress general secretary Jairam Ramesh said this has come barely 24 hours after the prime minister advocated consensus in running the country.

"Convention has been that the Speaker is elected unanimously and the deputy speaker's post goes to the opposition," Ramesh said.

He accused Prime Minister Modi of breaking this tradition.

"It is actually no surprise. He has still not woken up to the reality of the 2024 poll verdict which was a PPM defeat for him--personal, political and moral," he posted on X.

Sources said more than 10 sets of nominations (called notices for motion) were filed in support of Birla's candidature, including from Prime Minister Modi, Union ministers Shah, Singh and Nadda, and members of BJP allies like TDP, JD(U), JD(S) and LJP (R).

Three sets of nominations were filed in support of Suresh.

Known of its knack of springing surprises, the BJP leadership chose to stick to Birla in line with its decision to retain its old hands in key positions.

Though the Speaker is independent of political and executive control, realpolitik considerations are often the driving force behind the choice for the Chair which is the nerve centre of Parliament's functioning. (PTI)

# Atishi's indefinite hunger strike over water scarcity ends with her hospitalisation

NEW DELHI, June 25: Delhi Water Minister Atishi's indefinite hunger strike to demand water for the national capital amid its ongoing scarcity came to an end after she was hospitalised due to her worsening health conditions in the early hours of Tuesday. Atishi, who holds multiple portfolios in the Delhi government, was admitted to the emergency ICU at the Lok Nayak Hospital, and her condition is stable now. Delhi BJP president Virendra Sachdeva wished her good health and happiness, even as he said, "She should stop misleading the public." Giving an update on Atishi's health, the hospital's Medical Director Dr Suresh Kumar said her condition is stable but she is in ICU.

"She was advised hospitalisation last evening after her sugar levels declined and the presence of ketones was detected in her urine. She had declined hospitalisation. However, at midnight, as her condition deteriorated and she was drowsy, she was admitted. She is currently stable and in the ICU. Her blood tests are being done," the senior doctor said.

The doctor said she is being given water and is on intravenous therapy. Her sugar levels had declined to 36mg/dL.

Explaining the consequences of the sharp decline, Kumar said if a person's sugar level goes below 50 mg/dL, it can have serious consequences.

"Brain cells need glucose and if glucose does not reach them, it causes drowsiness and unconsciousness. If not given medical attention on time, a patient can go into a hypoglycemic coma. The fall in blood sugar levels can also lead to multiple organ failure. Hypoglycemia is a medical emergency for brain cells and other organs if not addressed in time," he added.

The normal sugar levels in the blood should be between 70 mg/dL and 100 mg/dL. Atishi had begun her hunger strike on June 21. AAP Rajya Sabha MP Sanjay Singh said the minister ended her indefinite fast after she was hospitalised.

At a press conference here, Singh said Atishi's health deteriorated after being on fast for nearly five days and she was admitted to the LNJ Hospital around 3.45 am.

Atishi is now admitted to the ICU and tests are being conducted, so the indefinite hunger strike has been stopped, he said. (PTI)

Office of the  
HEADMASTER CUM SECRETARY  
LANG- ANG TOKBI MEMORIAL ENGLISH HIGH SCHOOL  
KLURDUNG::BAKALIA::KARBI ANGLONG-782482

Date: 25/06/2024

In pursuance of SMDC resolution, it is hereby invites the interested candidate for walk in interview for document verification for the vacants post given below of Lang-ang Tokbi memorial English High School (Adhoc) which will be held on 01/07/2024 at the school premises at 10:30 am positively. The post are purely Adhoc basis. An application will be received from 26/06/2024 to 30/06/2024 till 3:00 pm.

The vacant post are given below and special preference will go to the local candidate:

Name of post	Requisite qualification	No. of post
Asst. teacher	B.A	1
chowkider	HSLC	1

N.B: Applicants are generally requisite qualification for Asst. teacher is B.A & B.Ed ( from recognized university will be preferred).

Complete Bio-data scanned copy of educational testimonial from HSLC onwards alongwith original documents and recent passport size photo should be submitted at the time of interview.

No TA/DA will be provided for the purpose.

\*Applicants has to deposit Rs.300 during submission of Application for maintenance purpose.

Sd/-  
HEADMASTER CUM SECRETARY  
LANG-ANG TOKBI MEMORIAL ENGLISH HIGH SCHOOL  
Contact No: 8133979446

OFFICE OF THE  
DIPHU MUNICIPAL BOARD: DIPHU: KARBI ANGLONG  
[Dtcdiphubbranch1@gmail.com](mailto:Dtcdiphubbranch1@gmail.com)

NO. DMB/W/ SWM/2011-12/15/ 831

Dated Diphu the 21.06.2024

Inviting Request for Proposal

RFP No. DMB/RFP-01/2024 Dated:12.06.2024.

Diphu Municipal Board, Assam, Invites RFP through e-tender (Two bid system Technical & Financial bid from the eligible contractor/ agencies/firms/for following works/job under SBM (U)Tranche-2.0. Details Terms & conditions will be uploaded at the e-procurement portal website [www.assamtenders.gov.in](http://www.assamtenders.gov.in)

Sl.NO	Description of Work	Estimated Amounts	Earnest Money 1%	Bid Processing Fees
1.	To select agency for Establishment & Commissioning at Diphu MB, Assam Waste to Compost & MRF	223.74	2,23,740.00	4,000.00

Schedule for Bid Procedure

Sr.	Events Description	Estimate Date & Time.
a)	Tender publication Date	21.06.2024 at 15.00 hrs
b)	Start Date to seek clarification	21.06.2024 from 17.00 hrs through portal
c)	End Date to seek clarification	24.06.2024 at 15.00 hrs
d)	Pre-Bid Meeting	25.06.2024 at 14.00 hrs in the office of the DMB, Diphu
e)	Start Date of Submission	21.06.2024 at 17.00 hrs
f)	End Date of Submission	15.67.2024 at 14.00 his
g)	Opening of Technical Bid	16.07.2024 at 15.00 hrs
h)	Closing of Technical Bid	Will be intimated after finalization of technical bid
i)	Download Bid Documents from	<a href="https://www.assamtenders.gov.in/">https://www.assamtenders.gov.in/</a>
j)	Address for Correspondence	Chairman/Executive Officer, Diphu Municipal Board, Assam.

All the necessary terms and conditions to participate in the bidding process are described in the bid document which uploaded in the portal. The interested bidders are requested to read the RFP and bid document carefully before submitting their bid.

Sd/-  
Executive Officer  
Diphu Municipal Board,  
Diphu  
Memo. NO. DMB/W/ SWM/2011-12/15/ 831(A) Dated Diphu the 21.06.2024

## AAP to move SC against stay on bail for CM Kejriwal

NEW DELHI, June 25: The Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) on Tuesday said it disagrees with the Delhi High Court order staying the bail granted to Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal by the trial court and will challenge it in the Supreme Court.

The trial court had granted bail to Kejriwal on June 20 in the money laundering case stemming from the alleged Delhi excise policy scam and ordered his release on a personal bond of ₹ 1 lakh.

The high court stayed the trial court order on Tuesday.

A vacation bench of Justice Sudhir Kumar Jain said the trial court failed to appreciate the material placed before it by the Enforcement Directorate and did not apply its mind while deciding the AAP leader's bail plea.

The judge also said the trial court ought to have given adequate opportunity to the agency to argue its case.

Reacting to the development, the AAP said they will approach the apex court.

"We disagree with the Delhi High Court order. We will challenge it in the Supreme Court," the party said.

When asked about the high court order at a press conference, Delhi cabinet minister Saurabh Bharadwaj said the AAP's legal team will decide the future course of action. (PTI)

## Bihar govt cancels ₹ 826 crore-contracts awarded during 'Mahagathbandhan' regime

PATNA, June 25: The NDA government in Bihar has cancelled 350 contracts worth ₹ 826 crore, which were awarded during the previous 'Mahagathbandhan' dispensation in the state for supplying drinking water in rural areas, a minister said on Tuesday.

The decision to cancel the contracts was taken after an inquiry by the Public Health Engineering Department revealed that there were "irregularities in the process of selecting contractors", he said.

"During the previous grand alliance regime in the state, many contracts were awarded by the department. An inquiry by the department revealed that due process was not followed in awarding 350 contracts worth ₹ 826 crore. These were related to the rural water supply, including the installation of hand pumps and mini water supply systems," PHED Minister Niraj Kumar Singh told PTI.

The department has handed over the preliminary inquiry report to the competent authority in the state government for a thorough probe, he said.

"I recently called a meeting of senior officials of the department after getting the report, and later the cancellation order was issued," he said, adding that strict action would be taken against those who would be found guilty.

RJD leader Lalit Yadav was the PHE minister during the previous grand alliance government in the state.

Altogether 1,160 contracts worth ₹ 4,600 crore of the PHE department were awarded by the previous government in 17 months, Singh said.

"We have so far cancelled 350 contracts, the remaining are being examined," he said.

The minister, however, refused to give details of the alleged irregularities detected by the department.

"It is not appropriate time to divulge the details as the matter is being investigated by a competent authority," he said.

According to documents available by PTI, Banka district tops the list where a maximum of 106 contracts related to rural water supply systems have been cancelled, followed by Jamui (73), Lakhisarai (20), Aurangabad (18) and Ara (11).

Commenting on the Bihar government's decision to cancel the contracts of the PHE department, RJD's state unit spokesperson Mrityunjay Tiwary, said, "Chief Minister and JD(U) supremo Nitish Kumar and BJP leaders are scared of our leader Tejashwi Yadav. The previous 'Mahagathbandhan' government in the state had executed several people-friendly projects and taken major decisions like employment to 7-8 lakh youths and providing social security to the economically and socially weaker sections of the society."

The NDA partners are also "scared" of the impact of the welfare initiatives taken by the previous government, which benefited lakhs of people in the state, he claimed.

"RJD is not scared of any probe...let them (the NDA government) do whatever they want to," he added.

The PHE department is responsible for ensuring the installation of hand pumps and mini water supply systems in small habitats and wards. (PTI)

# WHO urges member countries in Southeast Asia to take steps to eliminate illicit tobacco trade

NEW DELHI, June 25: The World Health Organization on Tuesday called on member countries in the Southeast Asia Region to take effective steps to track, trace and eliminate illicit trade of tobacco products and control unrecorded alcohol.

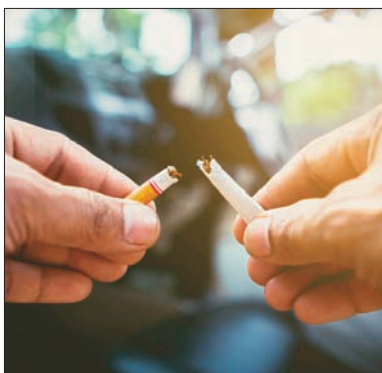
It cautioned that all forms of tobacco and alcohol, legal or illegal, are harmful to health.

"Effective control of illicit tobacco trade and unrecorded alcohol is a challenging and daunting task but now is the time to prudently make our decisions and choose the best way forward," World Health Organization (WHO) Regional Director Saima Wazed urged in her opening remarks at a regional workshop in New Delhi to address the challenges of illicit tobacco trade and unrecorded alcohol.

"As a first step, all our remaining member states should become parties to the WHO FCTC (Framework Convention on Tobacco Control) protocol to eliminate illicit trade in tobacco products," she said.

India and Sri Lanka from the WHO's Southeast Asia Region are parties to the WHO FCTC protocol so far.

Wazed also called on member countries to devote optimal resources to develop, implement and sustain effective track-and-trace mechanisms for tobacco products.



Progress in combating illicit trade has been slow in the region, with appropriate policies and tools either not in place or not optimally implemented, she said.

Experience from many countries shows illicit trade can be successfully addressed, even when tobacco taxes and prices are raised. This results in increased tax revenues while simultaneously reducing tobacco use, Wazed said.

"It is essential to compile existing and generate new regional evidence to enable policymakers to make better-informed and more effective policy decisions to monitor and combat illicit tobacco trade and unrecorded alcohol," she added.

An estimated 25 per cent of global alcohol consumption is unrecorded. This is usually of a lower price and appeals

to consumers from low socioeconomic status and people with underlying alcohol use disorders. It is often irregularly labelled and frequently contains unknown ethanol percentages and potentially toxic compounds. It is a complex interplay of these factors that make unrecorded alcohol potentially more harmful than regulated alcohol, the regional director said.

Unrecorded alcohol consumption is associated with disproportionate harm that goes beyond toxicity. Online sale of unrecorded alcohol, which circumvents alcohol availability regulations, is an emerging challenge, she said.

Wazed added tobacco use is a significant risk factor for cardiovascular and respiratory diseases, more than 20 different types of cancer, and many other debilitating health conditions. Excessive alcohol consumption has several negative health consequences. It is a risk factor for mental disorders, communicable and noncommunicable diseases, premature mortality, injury, and domestic violence. In addition to the valuable lives lost, both tobacco and alcohol have substantial economic and societal costs.

The workshop is exploring integrating "quitlines" for tobacco, alcohol and substance use, besides global best practices to monitor and combat illicit tobacco trade and unrecorded alcohol consumption. (PTI)



**GOVERNMENT OF ASSAM  
OFFICE OF THE DEPUTY DIRECTOR (HILLS)  
PANCHAYAT AND RURAL DEVELOPMENT  
DIPHU, KARBI ANGLONG**

No. DDPRD/H/Acctts-275/AA-SOPD/AAP/2023-24/ Dated: Diphu the 24<sup>th</sup> June 2024

**NOTICE INVITING TENDER**

In pursuance of the KAAC Administrative Approval No. KAAC/P&RD/SOPD/AA/2023- 24/53/28, Dated: 15/06/2024, sealed tenders are hereby invited from the local contractors with affixing KAAC receipt of ₹ 10/- (**Rupees Ten**) only from the citizen of India. The contractor has to submit his/her tenders from **25/05/2024** to **09/07/2024** during working hours in the office of the undersigned specifying the works intended from the lists mentioned below:

Group No.	Name of Schemes	Estimated Amount	Remarks
1	2	3	4
1	Construction of 7 nos. rural huts at Uttar Borbil @ ₹ 1.50 lakhs.	₹ 10,50,000.00	
2	Construction of 7 nos. rural huts at Basa Teplong @ ₹ 1.50 lakhs.	₹ 10,50,000.00	
3	Construction of 4 nos. rural huts at Bhel Gaon @ ₹ 1.50 lakhs.	₹ 6,00,000.00	
4	Construction of 7 nos. rural huts at Teke Rongpi village @ ₹ 1.50 lakhs.	₹ 10,50,000.00	
5	Construction of 7 nos. rural huts at Kehai Teron village @ ₹ 1.50 lakhs.	₹ 10,50,000.00	
6	Construction of 3 nos. rural huts at Kat Chirui village @ ₹ 1.50 lakhs.	₹ 4,50,000.00	
7	Construction of 7 nos. rural huts at Virvar @ ₹ 1.50 lakhs.	₹ 10,50,000.00	
8	Construction of 4 nos. rural huts at Baputi Teron village @ ₹ 1.50 lakhs.	₹ 6,00,000.00	
9	Construction of 4 nos. rural huts at Kasojan @ ₹ 1.50 lakhs.	₹ 6,00,000.00	
10	Construction of 7 nos. rural huts at Bheloghat @ ₹ 1.50 lakhs.	₹ 10,50,000.00	
11	Construction of 4 nos. rural huts at Sildharampur @ ₹ 1.50 lakhs.	₹ 6,00,000.00	
12	Construction of 4 nos. rural huts at Mon Timung village @ ₹ 1.50 lakhs.	₹ 6,00,000.00	
13	Construction of 4 nos. rural huts at Sarthe Rongphar village @ ₹ 1.50 lakhs.	₹ 6,00,000.00	
14	Construction of 4 nos. rural huts at Sing Teron village @ ₹ 1.50 lakhs.	₹ 6,00,000.00	
15	Construction of 4 nos. rural huts at Buraso Engti village @ ₹ 1.50 lakhs.	₹ 6,00,000.00	
16	Construction footbridge (No. 1) at Taralangso KYF Food Sub-Committee venue, Diphu.	₹ 7,00,000.00	
17	Construction footbridge (No. 2) at Taralangso KYF Food Sub-Committee venue, Diphu.	₹ 7,00,000.00	
18	Construction footbridge (No. 3) at Taralangso KYF Food Sub-Committee venue, Diphu.	₹ 7,00,000.00	
19	Construction footbridge (No. 4) at Taralangso KYF Food Sub-Committee venue, Diphu.	₹ 7,00,000.00	
20	Construction footbridge (No. 5) at Taralangso KYF Food Sub-Committee venue, Diphu.	₹ 7,00,000.00	
21	Construction footbridge (No. 6) at Taralangso KYF Food Sub-Committee venue, Diphu.	₹ 7,00,000.00	
22	Construction footbridge (No. 7) at Taralangso KYF Food Sub-Committee venue, Diphu.	₹ 7,00,000.00	
23	Construction of Karbi Lammet Office building at Achot Terang village.	₹ 10,00,000.00	
24	Construction of Community Hall at Basa Teplong, Kajasera.	₹ 15,00,000.00	
25	Construction of slab culvert at Kajesera river, Duhuidi Teron gaon (Phase-II)	₹ 5,00,000.00	
26	Repairing/renovation of Officer's Quarter of Dy. Director (Hills), P&RD at Panchaat Colony.	₹ 15,00,000.00	
27	Supply/replacement of 20 nos. Solar Street Light at the o/o Dy. Director (Hills), P&RD complex.	₹ 8,00,000.00	
28	Internal electrification of Grade-IV Staff Quarter at Panchayat Colony occupied by Sri Suraj Dorjee, Peon	₹ 2,00,000.00	
29	Construction of Open Stage at Mensing Rongpi Gaon.	₹ 10,00,000.00	
30	Construction of Foot over bridge at Korkanthi river, Dokmoka.	₹ 5,00,000.00	
31	Construction of Waiting Shed at Bohalangso Tinali under Bithung Rengthama Constituency.	₹ 5,00,000.00	
32	Construction of 2 nos box culvert at Sar ik Arong to Jolahot under Bithung Rengthama Constituency.	₹ 4,00,000.00	
33	Construction of 2 nos box culvert at Bordogka under Bithung Rengthama Constituency.	₹ 4,00,000.00	
34	Construction of Waiting Shed at Kathar Arong, Kollonga under Bithung Rengthama Constituency .	₹ 5,00,000.00	

**Terms and Conditions:**

- Sealed tenders will be received at the office of the undersigned on working days from **25/06/2024 to 09/06/2024** during working hours only. No tenders will be accepted after **3.00PM on 09/06/2024**. The sealed tenders will be opened on the last tender date in the presence of the tenderer or his/her authorized agent and if the date fixed for opening of tenders falls on any holiday or bandh, the same will be opened on the next working day.
- The contractor(s) must submit his/her up-to-date P. Tax (**up to 31/03/2025**), GSTIN Registration certificate, Tribe/Caste certificate and other relevant documents.
- The contractor(s) have to quote the rate of works not exceeding the above schedule of rate.
- The contractor(s) belonging to ST, SC, OBC will have to deposit 1% earnest money and the contractor(s) belonging to General categories will have to deposit 2% earnest money of the estimated amount in the form of a call deposit in favour of the **Deputy Director (Hills), Panchayat and Rural Development, Diphu, Karbi Anglong, Assam.**
- The contractor(s) may approach the office of the undersigned for detailed estimates against the work tendered anytime at all working hours.
- The undersigned reserved all the rights to accept or reject any tender without assigning any reason thereof; the decision of the authority stands final.

Sd/-  
Deputy Director (Hills)  
Panchayat and Rural Development,  
**DIPHU, KARBI ANGLONG**

Memo No. DDPRD/H/Acctts-275/AA-SOPD/AAP/2023-24/916 Dated: Diphu the 24<sup>th</sup> June 2024

**KARBI ANGLONG AUTONOMOUS COUNCIL  
OFFICE OF THE EXECUTIVE ENGINEER:::  
WEST KARBI ANGLONG WATER RESOURCES DIVISION,  
DONGKAMUKAM.**

NO. EE/WRD/DNK/NIT/2022-23/

Dated, / /2024

**SHORT TENDER NOTICE**

Sealed tender in plain paper to be eventually drawn in H/F-2 Form affixing non refundable council cash receipt of Rs.10 (rupees ten ) only for each package separately is hereby invited from the registered contractors/suppliers of Class-I (A,B,C) of W.R Deptt and Class-III of West Karbi Anglong W.R. Division, Dongkamukam and will be received in the office of the undersigned upto 2.00 P.M of 06/07/2024 (provided it remain a working day, else the next working day will be treated as last date of receiving and opening of tender and will be open on the same date, hour and place. Intending tenderers or their authorised agents may remain present at the time of opening of tenders, if they so desired. If the opening of tender date falls on any bandh then the next working day will be valid.

**Earnest money:-** 2% for general and 1% for S.C/S.T/OBC to be enclosed along with the tender in each package separately in the form of NSC/Call deposit from any National Bank.

SI No.	Package no.	Name of Schemes	Amount (In Rs.)
1	1	Immediate measures to Protect bank erosion at Garo gaon (Phangthengprang) with porcupine screens and Bamboo screens from the river Kopili in West Karbi Anglong District.	2,000,000.00
2	2	Immediate measures to protect bank erosion at Das gaon (Kheroni) with bamboo screen from the river Kopili in West Karbi Anglong District.	2,000,000.00
3	3	Immediate measures to protect bank erosion at Goroimari with bamboo screen from the river Kopili in West Karbi Anglong District.	2,000,000.00
4	4	Immediate measures to protect bank erosion at Bali Gaon near forest I.B with Porcupine Screens from the river Kopili in West Karbi Anglong District.	2,000,000.00
5	5	Immediate measure to protect Taradubi Ringbund at Ch. 14m from the erosion river Kopili in West West Karbi Anglong District.	500,000.00
6	6	Immediate measure to protect Taradubi Ringbund at Ch. 950m from the erosion river Kopili in West West Karbi Anglong District.	2,000,000.00
7	7	Immediate measure to protect Taradubi Ringbund at Ch. 115m from the erosion river Kopili in West West Karbi Anglong District.	2,000,000.00
8	8	Immediate measures to Protect bank erosion at Japan Hanse with Bamboo screens from the river Kopili In West Karbi Anglong District.	2,000,000.00
9	9	Immediate measures to protect bank erosion at Bilokso with bamboo screen from the river Kopili in West Karbi Anglong District.	2,000,000.00
10	10	Protection of Jor terang village from the erosion of river Dongka in west karbi Anglong Dist	2,000,000.00
11	11	Protection of Kro chingvai village from the erosion of river Dongka in West Karbi Anglong District.	2,000,000.00
12	12	Immediate measures to protect bank erosion at Sildubi with bamboo screen from the river Kopili in West Karbi Anglong District.	2,000,000.00
13	13	Immediate measures to protect bank erosion at Kharupintha (Baithalangso) with bamboo screen from the river Karbi Langpi in West Karbi Anglong District.	1,775,000.00
14	14	Immediate measures to protect bank erosion near Hongkram Tinali on the R/B of river Karbi Langpi In West Karbi Anglong District.	2,000,000.00
15	15	Repairing and Renovation of Water Resources Inspection Bungalow at Bhelapara In West Karbi Anglong District.	4,000,000.00

**N.B:-**

- The details particulars can be seen in the office of the undersigned in any working day during office hours before the last date of receiving the Tender.
- Details Schedule of Item is enclosed.
- All the terms and conditions are as per N.I.T. and F-2/H/K-2 form of the tender.
- The payment will be made subject to availability of fund received from the KAAC.
- All Works must be completed within Stipulated time.
- The undersigned reserved the right to accept/reject any or all tender in part or in full without assigning any reason thereof and the undersigned does not bind himself to accept the lowest tender rate.

Sd/-  
Executive Engineer  
West Karbi Anglong W.R Division,  
Donkamukam.

Memo NO. EE/WRD/DNK/NIT/2022-23/ 498

Dated, 15/06/2024



# Part of me was panicked: Irene Taylor on directing 'I Am: Celine Dion' documentary

**NEW DELHI, June 25:** Oscar nominee Irene Taylor says she "panicked" a bit when she was asked to make a documentary on a celebrity as popular as Celine Dion, but she agreed to come on board after she got to know the singer personally.

"I Am: Celine Dion", a 1.42 hour-long documentary, is a moving portrait about the era-defining musician braving a rare autoimmune neurological disorder called the Stiff-Person Syndrome. It started streaming on Prime Video from Tuesday.

The filmmaker said it wasn't until she developed a fondness for Dion that she decided to direct the film. Taylor is best known for Academy Award-nominated "The Final Inch", about the global effort to eradicate polio, and "Hear and Now", a documentary memoir following her deaf parents as they receive a complex implant surgery.

"Part of me was panicked because I had never made a film about a celebrity before. I had never had a really strong motivation to do that. I thought 'What am I going to do?'"

Just go on tour with her? Is that interesting? I don't really know."

"But, I knew I really liked her because I had got to know her and I got the sense that she would be authentic with me. So, I agreed to get on board and make the film," Taylor told PTI in an interview.

According to the makers, "I Am: Celine Dion" is a raw and honest behind-the-scenes look at the iconic superstar's struggle with the life-altering illness which has affected her singing.

Dion, the voice behind powerful ballads "My Heart Will Go On", "That's The Way It Is", "The Power of Love", and "I'm Alive", was already unwell when she started filming for the documentary. And this was something the singer and her management team shared with Taylor just before they started shooting.

"Shortly before we started filming, her management and Celine herself confided in me that she was ill. They didn't know what the problem was but they were in the

process of getting to the bottom of it.

"When I was told that it had become much more clear that I'm not going to go on tour with her. I might, but if I do, she'll be sick. The film is not just about the illness, it's about many other things. But I knew that would give me focus," she added.

Something shifted in the Las Vegas-based singer when she announced her diagnosis in a social media post in December 2022, the director recalled.

In a tearful video on Instagram, Dion had told fans and followers that she was suffering from SPS and cancelled her European tour set for February 2023. "I saw something shift in Celine when she made that Instagram post that came out... a year and a half ago. When we were shooting the film, there is what I call the before Instagram post era and after Instagram post era," Taylor added.

The 56-year-old singer, the filmmaker said, made the revelation on social media because she was "consumed with guilt of lying". (PTI)

# Jai Mehta on video of Nagarjuna's security pushing fan: Celebs should be less self-obsessed



**NEW DELHI, June 25:** Eminent personalities need to start being a little less self-obsessed and a little more giving, said filmmaker Jai Mehta, reacting to the viral video of Telugu superstar Nagarjuna's bodyguard pushing a differently-abled fan at an airport. On Sunday, the video started doing rounds on social media. It showed the actor walking out of an airport accompanied by his security detail and his "Kubera" co-star Dhanush.

The fan, apparently a cafe staff, tried to come close to Nagarjuna but was pushed by his bodyguard, making him stumble and almost fall. The bodyguard, however, helped him up. Nagarjuna later apologised for the incident, saying he was unaware about what had happened. "This just came to my notice... this shouldn't have happened!! I apologise to the gentleman and will take necessary precautions that it will not happen in the future!!" Nagarjuna wrote on Sunday as he shared the video on his X account. Jai Mehta, son of filmmaker Hansal Mehta, posted a lengthy note on X on Monday and said the security detail of celebrities need to be sensitised about treating fans in a respectful manner.

"The security guards ought to be educated on how to control a crowd better and more respectfully. Celebrities/Politicians/Sportsmen need to start being a little less self-obsessed and a little more giving."

"Don't get me wrong here. I love this actor. I've always loved him. But I hate that he didn't even bother to look at the person that walked into him and didn't even bother to look back the person that got shoved away from him by his security guard!" Jai Mehta posted.

The reason for the mammoth success of actors is "respect, adulation and admiration" they receive from "inconsequential" people, he added.

The director, known for his work on series "Lootere" and "Scam 1992: The Harshad Mehta Story", then talked about his brother Pallava, who has Down's syndrome and is a big fan of Bollywood superstars Shah Rukh Khan and Salman Khan. "What would really break my heart is... if I ever took my younger brother to an industry film screening with me, and by chance at this event his two idols were present. I wouldn't want my brother's innocence and lack of understanding to get him pushed/ flung by anybody that way. No matter who they are," he said. "... I guess I'll just need to teach the handicapped kid to keep his head down and his mouth shut instead of teaching an educated person with a sound state of mind to be a little more aware and gentle," he added.

Hansal Mehta shared his son's post on X and said Pallava is also a "fan" of Nagarjuna. "I'd requested through his brother, his close friends at various times that meeting the star would mean the world to him. And it would be my gift to my boy. When his eyes were operated the first person he recognised in the newspaper was that star," he said. However, there was no response from the actor's team, the filmmaker revealed.

"I gave up. Now over the years Pallu's cognitive abilities have declined. And this will have no meaning even if it has to happen," he added. (PTI)

# 'Munjya' collects ₹ 105.95 crore at box office

**MUMBAI, June 25:** Horror comedy "Munjya" has crossed ₹ 100 crore mark at the domestic box office, the makers announced on Sunday.

Directed by Aditya Sarpotdar, the Hindi film stars Sharvari Wagh, Abhay Verma and Mona Singh in the lead. It was released in theatres countrywide on June 7.

Production banner Maddock Films shared the update on its official Instagram page.

"Munjya" is making a permanent place in everyone's hearts," the banner captioned the post, stating the total domestic collection of the film stands at ₹ 105.95 crore in 18 days of its release.

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

It also features Suhass Joshi, Ajay Purkar, Sathyaaraj and Bhagyashree Limaye in pivotal roles. (PTI)



# RANA DAGGUBATI ANNOUNCES NEW FILM '35'

**HYDERABAD, June 25:** Actor Rana Daggubati's next film as a producer is titled "35" and is set to release on August 15.

The film is directed by Nanda Kishore Emani and "explores the poignant tale of an eleven-year-old child who challenges the fundamentals of mathematics, finding profound life lessons through the teachings of his school dropout mother", according to a release.

"I was instantly drawn by this drama woven with conflict, love, and bonding between mother and her two strikingly different children. One who resists learning things, and considers maths as an illogical subject, and the other child who is smart and obedient yet torn by the conflict in the family," Daggubati said in a statement. (PTI)



# New stories are leading to a more inclusive space: Actor Surbhi Jyoti

**NEW DELHI, June 25:** Actor Surbhi Jyoti, best known for her roles in TV shows such as "Qubool Hai", "Naagin" and now OTT drama "Gunnah", says it is a good time to be an actor as there is space for all kind of stories to be told.

The actor is happy that the focus is on to bring relatable content whether it is in television, OTT or cinema for "every type of character, actor and age group".

"You don't have to look a certain way to be able to play lead roles and that's how it should be because when you say that cinema is a reflection of society, then it better be a reflection of the society. It's a good thing that new stories are leading to a more inclusive space by presenting realistic and relatable characters," Jyoti told PTI in an interview.

The actor said "Gunnah" on Disney

Hostar gave her a chance to portray an unconventional character of a businesswoman Tara who plays the love interest of the protagonist.

"It was an intriguing character and different from what I have done till now. When I read the script, I just decided that I have to play this role," she said about the character.

Jyoti, who completed her masters in English literature and was planning to enroll in PhD, said she entered the acting profession by chance as she grew up believing that she would be a great teacher. "I used to do a lot of theatre in college as that was my passion, but I always planned on becoming a teacher and was focused on that. I never thought acting could be my profession because in a small-town middle-class family, it's not the first choice, especially for girls to go to Mumbai and find a career in the field of acting," she

said.

Gul Khan, the producer of "Qubool Hai", saw Jyoti's theatre work and contacted her offering the role, the actor said, recalling how her mother thought it was a fraud call.

"My mother said it just does not happen that you are sitting in Jalandhar one day and you get a call from Mumbai to become an actor. My father was like, 'If you want to give it a shot, go ahead and if it is not right, you can come back'. The producer ended up being a genuine person and that's how I came to Mumbai," the actor said.

For now, Jyoti is happy with all the praise coming her way for "Gunnah".

"I am not going to bound myself to one space that I now I will only do OTT or TV or just films. I am open to new stories and working with talented people." (PTI)





# Spain beat Albania 1-0 at Euro 2024 to finish perfect group stage

**DUESSELDORF (GERMANY), June 25:** Spain changed almost its entire lineup and still kept up its victorious start to the European Championship with a 1-0 win over Albania, which was eliminated.

With his team already assured of winning Group B, coach Luis de la Fuente changed 10 of his starters and Spain won all three group games at a Euros for the first time since 2008, when it went on to win the tournament.

A 13th-minute goal from Ferran Torres and goalkeeper David Raya's stoppage-time save from Armando Broja ensured Spain completed the group stage without conceding a goal. "Every player is ready to play in this first 11 and that's key. Anyone can decide a game for you and players coming off the bench are very important as well," Torres, who made his first start of Euro 2024, said through a translator. "I will try to make things difficult for my coach so that he will have to play me."

Torres scored with a deflection off the post from Dani Olmo's pass, and put his fingers to his ears in his goal celebration. He said the gesture meant he was listening to the fans, not blocking anything out. "I don't have anything to prove out there," Torres added.

Italy was the second qualifier from Group B after drawing with Croatia 1-1.

Albania needed at least a draw to have any hope of qualifying for the knockout stages for the first time, even as one of the best third-place teams. The loss meant it placed last.



Albania's failure to beat Spain meant England, France and the Netherlands were all assured of qualifying for the knockout stages, regardless of what happens in their last group games.

All of those teams were on four points from two games and would qualify at least as one of the best third-placed teams.

Spain got the job done, but this 1-0 win was far less convincing than the victory by the same margin over Italy in its

last game. Defender Aymeric Laporte was the only player to start both.

For much of the first half, Spain seemed on course for a big win, but Olmo and Mikel Merino in particular missed good chances. Albania didn't record a shot until the 45th minute. Albania finally started to put pressure on Spain midway through the second half.

Forward Broja came off the bench and forced a good save from Raya.

De la Fuente responded by sending on forwards Alvaro Morata and Lamine Yamal off the bench as Spain started to waste time. Broja tested Raya again in stoppage time as Spain held on.

"We left it all on the pitch. I have no regrets for my players," Albania coach Sylvinho said. Albania was without forward Mirlind Daku, who was suspended by UEFA on Sunday

after joining supporters' nationalist chants with a megaphone following the 2-2 draw with Croatia on Wednesday.

Albania's soccer federation was fined over incidents at both of its first two games. It looks set to face yet more charges after fans lit flares at the Spain game and a supporter ran onto the field. Spain will play its last-16 game on Sunday in Cologne against a third-place team. (AP)

*Only guy who put us in the semifinals was Brian Lara and we proved him right: Rashid*

**KINGSTOWN, June 25:** West Indian batting great Brian Lara had predicted Afghanistan would reach the T20 World Cup semifinals nearly a month before the tournament began and now that the giant-slayers have made it, skipper Rashid Khan said he is immensely proud to have proved the legend right.

Afghanistan continued their brilliant run at the T20 World Cup as they marched to their first-ever World Cup semifinal with an eight-run win over Bangladesh in the last Super 8 clash here.

"The only guy who put us in the semifinals was Brian Lara and we proved him right. When we met him at a welcome party, I told him we won't let you down," Rashid said at the post-match presentation.

Lara, in an interaction with PTI editors at its headquarters last month, had predicted that Afghanistan would be among the semifinalists in the mega-event.

"Afghanistan, they are capable of getting into the (last) four," Lara had said, while picking his tournament favourites.

Rashid said the conviction that they could advance to the semifinals was ignited by their triumph over heavyweights New Zealand in the group stage.

"It's a dream for us to be in the semifinals. The way we started the tournament, the be-

lief came when we beat New Zealand. It's unbelievable," he recalled.

Afghanistan also picked up a historic win over Australia before beating Bangladesh in the final Super 8 fixture to set up semifinal date with South Africa on June 27.

Against Bangladesh, Afghanistan were restricted to 115/5 but the bowlers led by Naveen Ul Haq and Rashid propelled them to a thrilling eight-run win.

"We thought 130-135 was a good score but we fell 15 runs short. We knew they would come hard at us and we knew that is what we could take advantage of. We didn't need to do anything extra, just be clear in our plans.

Pacers Naveen and Fazalhaq Farooqi have excelled with the new ball all through the campaign and Rashid couldn't be happier.

"In T20s if you get a good start, it helps us in the middle overs. They have given great starts to us in the whole competition. It makes it easier for us to go harder at the batsmen.

"They have delivered, they were very clear in their minds," Rashid said.

On the several rain interruptions that eventually led the match to be truncated, Rashid said they were mentally ready to pick all 10 wickets. (PTI)

*A lot of credit for my wickets goes to Bumrah: Arshdeep*

**GEORGETOWN (GUYANA), June 25:** The pinpoint accuracy of Jasprit Bumrah allows other bowlers in the Indian team to go for wickets even in extreme pressure situations, said pacer Arshdeep Singh.

The 25-year-old left-arm pacer is among the leading wicket-takers in the T20 World Cup with 15 scalps in six games at an average of 11.86 and economy rate of 7.41 runs per over.

Bumrah, on the other hand, has taken 11 wickets in the same number of games, conceding just 4.08 runs per over, a rarity in the shortest format. "I guess a lot of credit goes to Jasprit because he puts a lot of pressure on the batters. He gives what, three or four runs in and over," Arshdeep said after the 24-run win over Australia in Saint Lucia on Monday.

"So, batsmen are coming hard against me and when they are trying, I just have to try and bowl my best ball and there are a lot of chances of getting wickets there because on the other hand they see the runs are not coming and the asking rate is going high.

"So, they take more risk against me and there's a chance always of getting a wicket there. So there's a

lot of credit of my wickets that goes to Jasprit," he said. Spinner Kuldeep Yadav once again provided the wickets when the team was in need and only three games into the tournament, he has taken his tally to seven scalps.

"Kuldeep is a champion spinner. Whenever he gets a chance, he delivers and he's always been in the wickets and today as well he was bowling from the tough end and even against the wind, he managed to bowl at around 6 an over and took crucial wickets.

"He is a really important player in our team and we are looking forward to take all from him and we hope he takes a lot of wickets," said Arshdeep, who had David Warner caught in the slips on Monday. India face England in the second semi-final here on Thursday and they will have last edition's crushing semifinal loss to the defending champions in mind before taking the field at the Providence Stadium. Asked about his plans for the semifinals, Arshdeep added: "Right now, I'm not expecting anything out of that game, just we'll have a little celebration after this game and a long travel day ahead." (PTI)

# Brazil held to 0-0 draw by Costa Rica in a stunner to open Copa America group play

**INGLEWOOD (US), June 25:** Brazil was held to a 0-0 draw by Costa Rica, with the international powerhouse inauspiciously failing to break through in its Copa America opener.

Although Brazil controlled play and outshot Costa Rica 18-2, the Seleção was held scoreless by a defense led by goalkeeper Patrick Sequeira, who made three saves while recording the team's fourth consecutive clean sheet.

Brazil had an apparent goal by Marquinhos disallowed in the first half after a lengthy VAR check, but the team known for decades of sublime offensive play never got closer to a score — and never got a break on several questionable refereeing calls — in front of a lively crowd of 67,158 dominated by their yellow-clad fans at SoFi Stadium.

The result left Colombia on top of Group D after its 2-1 victory over Paraguay. Brazil has won the Copa America nine times, but its current transitional squad led by Real Madrid stars Vinicius Júnior and Rodrygo got off to a discouraging start.

Brazil coach Dorival Júnior said the result wasn't thoroughly



poor, noting his team's wide advantages in possession and chances.

"I believe that in context, it was a well-played game," Dorival said through an interpreter. "We passed the ball well and we created good opportunities. We weren't happy with the finishes, I agree. But in general, I think we presented very positive things. Nowadays it will be like this. We have to find ways and solutions to score. We're always working on it, every moment." The draw was a

monumental achievement for Costa Rica, an undermanned CONCACAF team with the youngest roster in the tournament but a reputation for overachievement and sturdy defending led by Sequeira, who plays for Ibiza in Spain's third division.

Costa Rica head coach Gustavo Alfaro, the Argentine veteran leading his first major tournament since his hiring last November, was pleased by his team's tenacity. "I hope (opponents) start looking at us with respect," Alfaro said

through an interpreter. "Everyone thought we were dead before the movie started. We are going to play all the games as if they were the final."

Los Ticos had lost nine straight meetings with Brazil, but Alfaro's young group capably handled a night that could have left them starstruck.

"All this is a nice reward for these kids," Alfaro said. "When Vini greeted them, it meant a lot to them. He is someone who plays at the highest level, and for us who are starting out, it was a very big test."

Brazil controlled from the start with 75% possession in the first half, but couldn't break through.

Vinicius was taken down in the box in the 22nd minute by a big hit from Haxel Quirós, but got no whistle.

In the 30th minute, Rodrygo went low to head on Raphinha's free kick to Marquinhos, who banged it home at the far post. A 3 1/2-minute VAR review followed, and Mexican referee César Ramos eventually agreed with the assistant's decision to wave it off for offside by a minuscule margin. (AP)

*Italy advances at Euro 2024 after Zaccagni equalizer in injury time against Croatia*

**LEIPZIG (GERMANY), June 25:** Italy substitute Mattia Zaccagni scored in the last minute of stoppage time for Italy to advance to the knockout stage of the European Championship after drawing Croatia 1-1.

Luka Modric's second-half strike looked like sending Croatia through as the Group B runner-up, but Zaccagni swept a brilliant shot inside the far post in the eighth minute of added time to cap a furious finale from the defending champions.

Croatia coach Zlatko Dalic was unhappy so much time was added after a battling performance from his side.

"You can't have eight minutes of added time after that game, it's nonsense," Dalic said. "There weren't so many breaks in play, or so many fouls to justify that. I don't want to cause a fuss but I think Croatia needs to be acknowledged and respected. We played for almost three hours."

Italy needed a point to progress, while Croatia realistically needed a win to stay in the tournament. The Croats have two points from their three games and were at the mercy of other results to see if it's enough to scrape through as one of the best third-place finishers.

Dalic made no mention of waiting. He already believes his side is out.

Italy will face Switzerland in the round of 16 on Saturday in Berlin's Olympiastadion, where the final is on July 14.

"We were a bit soft at times in the game, we didn't produce our best football," Italy coach Luciano Spalletti said. "When you can afford to draw the game, that's how it goes, you know a draw is enough, you are a bit more timid."

But Spalletti bristled at a question asking if he was concerned about his team trailing going into stoppage time.

"Worries and concerns are part and parcel of this job," the Italy coach said. "We did what we needed to do."

Modric scored 33 seconds after having a penalty saved by Italy goalkeeper Gianluigi Donnarumma to become the oldest goal-scorer ever at the tournament. Modric, at 38 years, 289 days on Monday, broke the record held by Ivica Vastic, who was 38 years, 257 days, when he scored for Austria against Poland at Euro 2008. (AP)

# Test cricket at very low point in West Indies, I see mass exodus of players to US: Sarwan

**GEORGETOWN (GUYANA), June 25:** Ramnaresh Sarwan, one of the most prolific batters to have played for the West Indies, is leading a comfortable life after retirement but when one talks him to him about the health of Test cricket in the region, he paints a grim picture, fearful of a talent exodus to the USA.

The unexpected growth of T20 cricket and players' preference for the shortest format has put red-ball cricket on the backburner. First-class teams play as little as five games per season, which Sarwan thinks should be increased to at least 10.

Speaking to PTI, the 44-year-old also lamented the lack of cricket facilities in the region. He featured in 87 Tests and 181 ODIs aggregating more than 10,000 runs across formats and played alongside fellow Guyanese Shivnarine Chanderpaul and the great Brian Lara for the better part of his career.

"Yeah well Test cricket is at a very low point to be honest. Among the games that we are

playing again in the Caribbean, I don't think it's sufficient to develop our players but I also think there is this major threat of T20 cricket where a lot of people are showing interest in the shortest format," he said.

"I think one of the biggest challenges we've had is facilities in the region. I think the cricket board has been working on it. So we'll see what happens," he added.

Sarwan has nothing against players making money from the plethora of franchise leagues but the lure is impacting the format he loves and took great pride playing.

With the way the game is going, Sarwan foresees a mass exodus of the Caribbean players to mainland America where the game has got a major push with hosting of the T20 World Cup and inclusion of the sport in the 2028 LA Olympics programme.

"I think having T20 format in the US which is so close to the Caribbean with so many players of course they would have the opportunity now to participate in



the short format of the game in the US.

"So you might find a lot of people jumping ship in terms of coming to the US and start participating in T20 and of course try and see if they could find a way in terms of becoming legal in the US and then start hopefully pushing the play in the US," said Sarwan, who also spends a lot of time in the US.

The former West Indies captain has lot on his plate. He runs a couple of restaurants in Georgetown, one being an Italian-American joint and the other serves Thai and Indian fusion food.

Talking more about Tests, Sarwan, who was known for his sound technique and wrist work, said an immediate solution is not in sight.

"I don't think it's something that can be done only in the Caribbean. I think the ICC probably would have to intervene to put a limit in terms of how many T20 tournaments are being played around the world.

"Of course you want to have the best players available for all

those leagues and of course you also want to be able to represent the countries. So I think it's a major challenge in terms of saying what is the ideal scenario. At some point in time, the ICC probably would have to intervene which I really don't see happening in the near future," said Sarwan.

Has the pride of playing for West Indies diminished in the era of T20 leagues?

"I don't want to say it's diminished. But probably because of the shorter format of the game, it has taken a lot of players' attention. So, they probably would have worked more in the shorter format rather than the longer format."

"We all know what Test cricket requires. We just don't call it Test cricket because of the term test cricket, right? It's been over five days and of course the test is usual in every aspect you could possibly think of."

"That is one of the reasons, like I said, the guys have probably lost their focus on the longer format," Sarwan reasoned. (PTI)



# Oscar, Emmy? Naib's cramp during Afghanistan vs Bangladesh match sparks controversy

**KINGSTOWN, June 25:** Gulbadin Naib dramatically falling on his back, clutching his thigh after Afghanistan coach Jonathan Trott signalled his players to slow things down in the T20 World Cup match against Bangladesh caused both amusement and annoyance as former players questioned the genuineness of his discomfort.

Naib, who was fielding in the slip cordon, complained of cramps during the 12th over bowled by spinner Noor Ahmad, after Trott was seen on camera

asking his players to slow down as Bangladesh had fallen behind on the Duckworth-Lewis par score in the rain-hit Super 8 clash.

The match saw frequent rain interruptions and Bangladesh, at that stage, were 81 for 7, two runs behind on the DLS par score in a revised chase of 114 in 19 overs. Afghans eventually prevailed by eight runs to enter their maiden World Cup semifinal.

"The coach sends a message out to say slow it down, slow it down and the first slip just dives



on the ground needlessly. That is unacceptable. Gone off anyway. I

get that might have gone off any way for the rain," said Simon

Doull while commentating. Zimbabwean commentator Pommie Mbangwa quipped: "Oscar, Emmy?"

Naib was given treatment and was taken off the field by teammate Naveen-ul-Haq and a support staff as it started raining again and players ran to the dugout.

"Kabi khushi kabi gham main huta hai (It happens sometimes when you are happy or when you are sad. Hamstring)," Naib later said in a post on X, dotted with laughing emojis.

This was in response to a tongue-in-cheek post by India off-spinner Ravichandran Ashwin. "Red card for Gulbadin Naib," Ashwin had said.

When play resumed after a short delay, the target for Bangladesh was revised.

Naib was soon back on the field in the 13th over with Najibullah Zadran substituting him briefly. The all-rounder also rolled his arms over and dismissed Tanzim Hasan in the 15th over to reduce Bangladesh to 92 for 8.

Social media was also abuzz

with players and fans reacting to the incident.

Former England skipper Michael Vaughan wrote: "Spirit of cricket is alive & kicking... Great to see Gulbadin become the first cricketer in the history of the game to get a wicket 25 mins after being shot..."

Former New Zealand cricketer and commentator Ian Smith said: "I've a dodgy knee for the last 6 months, I am gonna see Gulbadin Naib's doctor straight after the game. He's the 8th wonder of the world right now." (PTI)

## Fifties and hundreds don't matter, I want to bat with tempo: Rohit Sharma



**GROS ISLET (ST LUCIA), June 25:** He fell short of a potentially record-shattering hundred, but milestones "don't matter" to India skipper Rohit Sharma, whose sole aim while batting is to "put bowlers under pressure" by hitting them all over the field.

Rohit's 92-run knock that came off 41 deliveries steered India to a 24-run win over former champions Australia in their final Super 8 outing of the ongoing T20 World Cup on Monday. The record for the fastest T20 World Cup hundred belongs to West Indian swashbuckler Chris Gayle, who pulled it off in 47 deliveries in the 2016 edition.

Expectedly adjudged player of the match for the memorable effort, which was punctuated by eight sixes and seven fours, the 37-year-old said his focus was only on maintaining the "tempo" of the match. India will take on England in the second semifinal on June 27.

"It was a good wicket, and you want to try and back yourself to play those kinds of shots. I've been trying to do that for a few years now, and I'm glad it came off today. The fifties and hundreds

don't matter, I wanted to bat with the same tempo and carry on.

"You want to make big scores, yes, but at the same time you want to make the bowlers think where the next shot is coming, and I think I managed to do that today," he added.

"You need to put the bowlers under pressure, and you need big scores for that. I tried to access all sides of the field, not just one side."

Winning was not a 'breeze' for India and Rohit said he had to tweak his batting style to take the wind out of the 2021 champions' sails.

Rohit played some delectable strokes on the off side after his opening partner Virat Kohli departed for a duck. With wind a perpetual hindrance, Rohit said he had to play more strokes on the off side to negate the impact.

"I thought right from over number one, there was a strong breeze blowing across. They (Australia) changed their plan, bowling against the breeze, so I realised I had to open up the off side as well," he said.

"You've got to factor in the

breeze and understand that the bowlers are smart as well and open up all sides of the field. When you keep an open mind and not just think of one shot, you can access all areas of the field," said the India skipper after the match.

"...when you're playing on grounds like this where wind is a factor, anything is possible, but I thought we used the conditions very well. It was very pleasing to see how we were getting through those overs and getting the wickets at the same time."

Rohit also said he knew wrist-spinner Kuldeep Yadav would be at his potent best in the West Indies after encountering seamer-friendly conditions in the US. Kuldeep repaid his faith with excellent figures of 2/24 in his four overs on Monday.

"Kuldeep, we understand the strengths he has, but you have to use it when you need it. The pitches in New York were seamer-friendly, but we knew he would play a big role later."

The skipper added that he would like India to continue playing the same way in the knockouts as well.

"We don't want to do anything different (in the knockouts). We want to play the same way, understand what the individuals need to do in a given situation, and play freely."

"So far we've been doing that consistently, and semifinals, we have to try and do the same thing. It'll be nice (to play England in the semifinal). Nothing changes for us, we want to focus on what we can do as a team, and take the game on."

Australian skipper Mitchell Marsh, who was guilty of grassing a sitter and also failed to build on his good start with the bat, conceded that India were better on the day.

"It's disappointing...today India got the better of us. I think over the course of 40 overs there's a lot of small margins, but honestly, India were the better team," he admitted.

"We've seen for 15 years what Rohit Sharma can do in that kind of mood, and he got off to an absolute flier. In a run chase like that, you're in it if you can keep it at tens (10 runs per over) for as long as possible, but India were too good for us." (PTI)

## You'll struggle to find a guy that's had as big an impact on all three forms: Ponting

**DUBAI, June 25:** Former skipper Ricky Ponting on Tuesday paid glowing tributes to retired opener David Warner for his "unbelievable" career across all three formats and said it will be difficult to find someone like him because of the impact that he had on Australian cricket.

Warner's 15-year-old international career came to an end after Afghanistan beat Bangladesh in



three formats for Australia." Ponting said during the ICC's Digital Daily show.

"We know he retired in the summer from test cricket, but you'll struggle to find a guy that's had as big an impact on all three forms in Australian cricket than David Warner has."

The 37-year-old Warner had played under Ponting's captaincy and later was coached by him as part of IPL franchise Delhi Capitals.

"I've been able to play with him. I've been able to coach him in the IPL the last couple of years, and I really enjoy his company. So, he should be very proud of what he's done," Ponting said.

Australia lost to India by 24 runs in their final Super 8 match in Gros Islet, Saint Lucia on Monday night before Afghanistan's victory over Bangladesh knocked the 2021 champion out of the semi-final race.

Having already retired from Tests last year and One-Day Internationals at the start of this year, Warner had announced that he would call time on his international career after the T20 World Cup.

With Australia set to enter a new era without Warner, pacer Josh Hazlewood acknowledged that his absence in the dressing room would be hard to fill.

"We'll definitely miss him around the group, out in the field and off-field. (An) amazing all-format career," he said.

"It's sort of been a slow burn with Test cricket, and ODI cricket and now T20. So, life without him, we've sort of gotten used to it a little bit ... it's always different when you lose a player that's been there for so long."

Although Warner might be retired from all international formats now, he had stated that he will consider returning to the Aussie ODI fold for the Champions Trophy early next year if he continues to fare well. (PTI)

## Warner makes low-key exit from international cricket after Afghans beat Bangladesh in T20 WC

**KINGSTOWN, June 25:** Australia batting great David Warner's 15-year-long international career, dotted with glorious achievements and controversies in equal measure, has come to an anti-climactic end after Afghanistan beat Bangladesh, eliminating the former champions from the T20 World Cup at the Super Eight phase.

Australia, the 2021 champions, finished at third place in the Super 8s Group 1 table with just two points -- from the win against Bangladesh. They had suffered a shocking loss to Afghanistan and a humbling defeat to India.

The 37-year-old Warner, who made his international debut in January 2009 in a T20I match, thus made a low-key exit from international cricket with Australia's 24-run loss to India on June 24 at Gros Islet being his last match.

There was no guard of honour or standing ovation, befitting one of Australia's all-time great batters. He made six runs off six balls in the match, edging Arshdeep Singh as Suryakumar Yadav took a low catch. He walked off the pitch with his head down, not knowing whether that was his last game.

Warner's retirement has been gradual. He played his final ODI match in the World Cup final win over India in November 2023 and his last Test against Pakistan in January. He has long signalled that this T20 World Cup would be his final tournament.

He retires as Australia's highest scorer and seventh-most prolific batter in the world in T20 format with 3,277 runs from 110 matches, at an average of 33.43 and strike rate of 142.47. He scored one hundred and 28 fifties in the shortest format.

From 112 Tests, he has scored 8,786 runs at an average of 44.59 with 26 hundreds and 37 fifties between 2011 and 2024.

He also scored 6,932 runs from 161 ODI matches at an average of 45.30 with the help



of 22 centuries and 33 half centuries.

Warner, who has 49 centuries across formats and close to 19,000 runs in international cricket, had acknowledged that his name will forever be linked to the sandpaper gate scandal that took place at Newlands, Cape Town during a Test match against South Africa in 2018.

Warner's involvement in the scandal in the Newlands Test, when Cameron Bancroft used sandpaper to scuff the ball earned him a one-year ban, the same punishment as that of the then skipper Steven Smith. Warner was also banned for life from taking any leadership role in the Australian cricket setup.

"I think it's going to be inevitable that when people talk about me in 20 or 30 years' time, there will always be that sandpaper scandal," he said last week at North Sound ahead of Australia's Super 8 clash against Bangladesh. "But for me, if they're real cricket tragics and they love cricket, (as well as) my closest supporters, they will always see me as that cricketer - someone who tried to change the game."

"Someone who tried to follow in the footsteps of the openers before me and try and score runs at a great tempo and change Test cricket in a way."

Warner was also a part of the IPL side Sunrisers Hyderabad from 2014 till 2021, and led the franchise to its only title in 2016. (PTI)

## Equestrian Agarwalla to represent India in Paris Olympics

**NEW DELHI, June 25:** Asian Games medalist Anush Agarwalla will represent the country in the dressage event of the Paris Olympics after pipping close contender Shruti Vora on better average, the Equestrian Federation of India (EFI) said on Tuesday.

Agarwalla, who bagged gold in team dressage and bronze in individual dressage events at the 2022 Hangzhou Asian Games, was picked ahead of Vora after a careful evaluation of the recent performances of the two contenders.

It will be India's first ever entry at the dressage event of the Olympics as largely riders in past editions competed in eventing categories only.

Agarwalla (with his horse Sir Caramello Old) has been consistent since the qualification period began last year and achieved Minimum Eligibility Requirement four times, while veteran Vora earned the required two MERs this month.

When an average was taken out of the contenders in the assessment, Agarwalla emerged winner. He had an average score of 67.695 per cent which was better than Vora's 67.163 per cent.

"As per the criteria set by EFI, a rider-horse combination is required to achieve a minimum of 67 per cent twice between January 1, 2023 and June 24, 2024 to be eligible for the Paris Games qualification," the federation said in a release.

"According to EFI selection criteria, if more than one athlete is eligible then the athlete with the highest average in Grand Prix out of the best four events in the past one year shall be chosen to participate."

Vora (with horse Magnanimous) had earned her second MER of the year with her second-place finish at the Brno Grand Prix in Czech Republic, where she scored 68.174 in the dressage event, thereby becoming eligible for Olympic qualification.

Vora had earned her first MER early this month when she became the first Indian rider to win a three-star Grand Prix event Dressage World Cup, held in Lipica, Slovenia with 67.761.

Her other two GP performances had scores of 66.543 per cent and 66.174 per cent which were below MER level.

Agarwalla achieved MERs four times -- 67.936 per cent (Wiesbaden, May 2024), 68.261 per cent (December 2023 in Mechelen), 67.152 per cent (December 2023 in Frankfurt), and 67.804 per cent (October 2023 in Wrocław).

The decision was taken unanimously by the EFI's executive council.

Fouaad Mirza had represented India at the 2020 Tokyo Games. Before him, Imtiaz Anees competed in 2000 Sydney Games, while Indrajit Lamba competed in 1996 Atlanta Games. (PTI)



## Afghanistan's run to semifinals will inspire youth back home, says Rashid

**KINGSTOWN, June 25:** Skipper Rashid Khan believes that Afghanistan's maiden T20 World Cup semifinal qualification, following spectacular wins over New Zealand and Australia along the way, is a momentous feat that will inspire the youth of the strife-torn nation.

Afghanistan, who became a full ICC member only in 2017, scripted history by qualifying for their maiden T20 World Cup semifinal with a win over Bangladesh here.

"I think the semi-final is going to be a massive, massive like inspiration for the youngsters back home in Afghanistan. That Afghanistan team get into the semis for the first time," Rashid said at the post match press conference.

"And we have done it under 19 level, but this level we haven't done that. Even Super Eight was first time for us and then in semis," he added.

Moments after the win, visuals of jubilant fans back home celebrating Afghanistan's historic achievement started doing the rounds on social media.

With the feat, Afghanistan have showed how much they have progressed in the white ball formats. At last year's ODI World Cup, they upset defending champions England and former winners Sri Lanka and Pakistan. They are continuing their giant slaying run at the T20 World Cup having beaten heavyweights New Zealand and Australia.

"The cricket we have played in the whole tournament so far - I think we



deserve to be in the semis. The way everyone took the responsibility of getting into the game and performing best for the team," said Rashid.

"So, I don't know how I can describe my feeling but it's a massive achievement for us as a team and as a nation to be in the semis and now looking forward to the semis."

The Afghanistan cricket team is a group of individuals who have honed their skills by playing their trade in T20 leagues around the world. But when they come together to play for their country, it's hard to find a more passionate bunch.

Afghanistan have found the perfect head coach in former England cricketer Jonathan Trott, who balances things out with his calm and composed

demeanour. The result is a side high on self belief.

"To me, there is no good team and bad team. Every team is equal to each other. As long as a day, we took the right decision the right time, and that's where the difference comes when you're a loser. So other than that, skill-wise, everyone is equal, I think," Rashid said.

An unbeaten South African team awaits them in the semifinal. But the Proteas were stretched a few times in the tournament, especially by minnows Nepal, who stumbled at the final juncture, losing by a run.

"Well, it's always you get that kind of inspiration for any team you watch on TV and those small totals when

team defend that it gives you lots of things to learn from and definitely the way Nepal performed in the whole competition was something pleasing to see."

"They have played great cricket against all the sides they have played. And that's how T20 is all about. You need to have that kind of self-belief that we are capable of beating any side as long as we do the right thing in the right time and we're making sure we keep the thing simple."

There was a moment during the game against Bangladesh when Gulbadin Naib dramatically fell on his back, clutching his thigh after Trott signalled his players to slow things down.

But minutes later, not only was the all-rounder back on the field but he also went on to take Tanzim Hasan's wicket, causing several former players and commentators to question the genuineness of his discomfort.

But Rashid thought to play down the incident.

"Well, he had some cramp, I don't know what happened to him and I don't know what's going on in social media but that doesn't matter - it's just the end field injury which comes and then we haven't lost any overs, the rain came and we just went off, it's not something like brought a massive difference in the game."

"We came back on field after five minutes and there was no massive difference. For me, it's just like a small injury comes in, then you have to take some time." (PTI)