

**6 WORLD** **BRASILE!**

- Far right's election gains rattle EU's traditional powers
- Blinken returns to Mideast as Israel-Hamas cease-fire proposal hangs in balance

**8 NATION**

- Top leaders from Nepal, Maldives, Mauritius, Seychelles call on Prez
- Not contesting J-K polls, won't humiliate myself by entering UT assembly: Omar

## Modi 3.0: Key ministers retain crucial portfolios

### Sonowal retains Shipping portfolio ● Pabitra Margherita appointed MoS in External Affairs and Textiles

**NEW DELHI, June 10:** Signalling continuity, Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Monday retained Amit Shah, Rajnath Singh, Nirmala Sitharaman and S Jaishankar in charge of the four high-profile ministries - Home, Defence, Finance and External Affairs - respectively in his new government.

The four ministers in charge of these portfolios make up the crucial Cabinet Committee on Security headed by the prime minister.

Among new entrants to the Union Cabinet, former Madhya Pradesh chief minister Shivraj Singh Chouhan has got Agriculture and Rural Development Ministries, while BJP president J P Nadda has returned to the Health Ministry, a portfolio he had held in the Modi government's first term before he took charge of the ruling BJP first as working president in 2019 and then as the full-fledged president in 2020.

Credited with boosting the highway network across the country, Nitin Gadkari has retained the charge of the Road Transport and Highways Ministry. Former Haryana chief minister Manohar Lal Khattar has been allocated Housing and Urban Affairs, and Power Ministries.

Ashwini Vaishnaw, a rising star in the government who was in charge of crucial Railways, and Electronics and Information Technology ministries, has not only retained



these portfolios but has also been given the important Information and Broadcasting Ministry.

Dharmendra Pradhan and Piyush Goyal will also continue to be in charge of the Education, and Commerce and Industry ministries respectively. Hardeep Singh Puri has retained the Petroleum and Natural Gas Ministry but has shed the Housing and Urban Affairs Ministry.

President Droupadi Murmu directed the allocation of portfolios to 72 members of the Union Council of Ministers, including the

prime minister, as advised by Modi, according to an official statement.

The BJP has retained most of the strategic ministries driving the government's signature programmes while giving up on a few for allies, especially the TDP and JD(U) which have got Civil Aviation, and Panchayati Raj, Fisheries, Animal Husbandry and Dairying respectively.

Kiren Rijiju has been moved from Earth Sciences to the Parliamentary Affairs Ministry, while Arjun Ram Meghwal will continue as Law Minister and Sarbananda

Sonowal has retained the Shipping portfolio. Bhpender Yadav has retained the Environment Ministry.

Among the five members of the BJP's allies in the Union Cabinet, JD(Secular)'s H D Kumaraswamy has got Heavy Industries, and Steel ministries, Jitan Ram Manjhi (HAM-Secular) has Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises Ministry, and Lalan Singh (Janata Dal-United) Panchayati Raj, Fisheries, Animal Husbandry and Dairying Ministries.

TDP's K Rammohan Naidu has got the Civil Aviation Ministry and LJP (Ram Vilas) leader Chirag Paswan has been allocated the Food Processing Industries Ministry.

BJP leader C R Patil has got the Jal Shakti Ministry, while another party leader Gajendra Singh Shekhawat, who held the portfolio in the government's previous term, will be the Culture and Tourism Minister.

Amit Shah has also retained the Cooperation Ministry, while Sitharaman will continue to handle the Corporate Affairs.

Virendra Kumar has retained the Social Justice and Empowerment Ministry, while Jual Oram is the new Tribal Affairs Minister. Pralhad Joshi, who earlier held Coal and Mines, and Parliamentary Affairs ministry, has been made in charge of Consumer Affairs, Food and (CONTD. ON PAGE-2)

## Suspected militants ambush Manipur CM's advance security convoy, one injured



**IMPHAL, June 10:** Suspected militants ambushed the advance security convoy of Manipur chief minister N Biren Singh in Kangpokpi district on Monday morning, leaving one personnel injured, police said.

The convoy was on its way to violence-hit Jiribam district when it came under attack around 10.30 am near Kotlen village along a stretch of National Highway-53, they said.

Multiple gunshots were fired at the vehicles of the security forces, who retaliated, a police officer said.

The driver of one of the convoy vehicles suffered bullet injuries on his right shoulder, and he is being taken to a hospital in Imphal, the officer said.

"Security forces have reached the ambush site, around 36 km from the state capital, and launched combing operations to trace the gunmen," he said.

"CM Biren Singh, who is yet to reach Imphal from Delhi, was planning to visit Jiribam to take stock of the situation in the district," an official told PTI. (CONTD. ON PAGE-2)

### HT BRIEFS

#### Burmese supari

**JORHAT:** A Haryana registered truck laden with 170 sacks of allegedly illegal 'Burmese supari' (arecanut) was seized by police from Lurukihat area under Bhogdoi Police Outpost here on Sunday night. According to sources, a police team after coming to know about a fully-loaded truck parked at the Lurukihat area containing some contraband goods reached the spot and found the vehicle loaded with alleged Burmese arecanut. The driver, handyman or any other crew of the truck were not found and search for them was on. Further investigate is on in the case. The vehicle is suspected to coming with the contraband item from Nagaland and had entered Upper Assam and was using the NH 715 (formerly NH-37) towards its destination.

#### Students felicitated

**HOWRAGHAT:** Two students who have done well in their HSLC exam were felicitated and awarded Rasmii Kropi Memorial Trust Award here. The award-giving ceremony was held in Mamoni Raisom Goswami Bhawan programme which was organised by Diphu Branch of Karbi Anglong District Lekhika Samaroh Samiti on Sunday. The students who got the award were Lumarson Timung and Biswajit Sarma. The occasion was attended by president of Diphu Branch, Karbi Anglong District Lekhika Samaroh, Geeta Bora; writer Rekibuddin Ahmed, mother of Rasmii Kropi, Geetanjali Das, journalist Kangbura Senar, etc.

#### NEET exam

**BOKAJAN:** Two from Bokajan passed the NEET exam with flying colours. They are Munmun Saikia and David G Momin. Munmun is the daughter of Deben Saikia and Reema Gogoi, resident of Talbalianj, Hanjanglangso. She was felicitated by Assam Jatiyatabadi Yuva Chatra Parisad (AJYCP) on her achievement in NEET Exam. AJYCP, Executive Member, Jitu Phukan; Advisor, Horen Engti; AJYCP, Bokajan, Secretary, Dulal Gogoi and others visited the residence of Munmun and felicitated her with a Karbi muffler and a citation. Munmun got 561 marks out of 720.

## People from Manipur taking refuge in Assam after fresh violence

**SILCHAR, June 10:** People affected by fresh incidents of violence in Manipur have started arriving in Assam's Cachar district in search of safety, the local MLA said on Monday.

Security along the inter-state border has been tightened, a police officer said.

Two police outposts, a forest beat office and at least 70 houses were torched in Jiribam by suspected militants on Saturday, leading to fresh tension in the neighbouring state which has been witnessing ethnic violence since May last year.

Residents of the bordering areas claimed that about 600 people have taken shelter in various parts of Lakhimpur in Cachar district, entering

the state by crossing the Jiri river over the last four days.

They are taking shelter in villages at Jiribam and Lakhimpur, though no government relief camp has been opened for them, they said.

"The people who have come from Manipur are being allowed to stay here safely. The local administration is taking all steps to ensure no spread of any violence here," Lakhimpur MLA Kaushik Rai told PTI.

Cachar superintendent of police Nomal Mahatto said that police and other security forces have been deployed in the border areas.

"There are no reports of any untoward incident in Cachar so far. Police patrolling in Jiribam on the

border as well as along the national highway and nearby villages is being conducted," he told PTI.

The SP added that the situation on the Assam side is completely under control and the police are keeping a strict vigil following the violence in Jiribam.

Jiribam, which has a diverse ethnic composition of Meiteis, Muslims, Nagas, Kukis and non-Manipuris, had so far remained unaffected by the ethnic strife that has been raging in the northeastern state since May last year.

The MLA said that most of the people who have entered Cachar are Kukis and Hmars. The ethnic conflict between Imphal valley-based Meiteis and (CONTD. ON PAGE-2)

## Assam moving towards green energy regime: Himanta

**HT Bureau**

**GUWAHATI, June 10:** Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma on Monday asserted that the state has been moving towards a green energy regime and necessary steps were taken to meet this target.

He said that priority was given to the power sector along with renewable energy for economic development.

"Assam is taking concerted steps in moving towards a Green energy regime and is fast implementing projects to meet this goal. The State will contribute in a major way towards Bharat's ambitious Net Zero Goals," wrote Sarma on micro-blogging site X.

He further said that the state gov-

ernment has taken new projects that include Lower Kapili Hydroelectric project which will have a capacity of 120 MW and a solar power collaboration with Oil India Limited also took place in the last three years of the present government.

According to the chief minister, the Assam renewable energy policy has a target to produce 1200 MW of energy that includes at least 1000 MW of solar energy.

"Several initiatives were taken to boost the renewable energy sector," he added.

Meanwhile, under Deendayal Upadhyay Gram Jyoti Yojana, 5 lakh 60 thousand households were electrified, spending more than ₹ 11,000 crores. (CONTD. ON PAGE-2)

## BJP expresses surprising poll results in Karbi Anglong

**HT Bureau**

**DIPHU, June 10:** Roland Killing, president of the BJP- East Karbi Anglong District Committee has expressed the party's unexpected performance in the recent elections.

"We didn't expect to secure 3 lakh votes; our initial expectation was lower than that. Through the media, we would like to extend our gratitude to the people of Karbi Anglong, West Karbi Anglong, and Dima Hasao." Killing said while speaking at the Atal Bihari Vajpayee Bhawan, BJP- East Karbi Anglong District Committee office. In the Lok Sabha elections of 2019, the BJP garnered 3,81,316 votes. This time, however, the party received 3,34,620 (CONTD. ON PAGE-2)

## Look forward to India, Maldives working together closely, says Jaishankar

**The ties between India and the Maldives came under severe strain since Muizzu took charge of the top office**

**NEW DELHI, June 10:** Union Minister S Jaishankar on Monday held separate bilateral meetings with Maldives President Mohamed Muizzu, Bangladesh Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina and Sri Lanka President Ranil Wickremesinghe.

Jaishankar also called on Nepal Prime Minister Pushpa Kamal Dahal 'Prachanda', Mauritius Prime Minister Pravind Jugnauth, Bhutan PM Tshering Tobgay and Seychelles Vice President Ahmed Afif. The seven leaders from India's neighbourhood and the Indian Ocean region were in Delhi to attend the swearing-in ceremony of Prime Minister Narendra Modi and the Union Council of Ministers on Sunday.

"Delighted to call on President Dr Mohamed Muizzu of Maldives

today in New Delhi. Look forward to India and Maldives working together closely," Jaishankar said on 'X'. Jaishankar was the external affairs minister in Modi's previous Cabinet. He took oath as a Union minister on Sunday.

It was Muizzu's first visit to India after he became the island nation's president on November 17 last year. The ties between India and the Maldives came under severe strain since Muizzu, known for his pro-China leanings, took charge of the top office.

Within hours of his oath, he had demanded the withdrawal of Indian military personnel from his country. The Indian military personnel were replaced by civilians earlier this month. After his meeting with Hasina, Jaishankar said, "Honoured to call on Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina of Bangladesh today. The India-Bangladesh Maitri continues to advance."

On his meeting with Wickremesinghe, Jaishankar said, "Appreciate President Ranil Wickremesinghe of Sri Lanka for receiving me this morning in New Delhi. Recognized the steady progress (CONTD. ON PAGE-2)

## AIUDF MLA Aminul Islam resigns from party post for poll debacle



**HT Bureau**

**GUWAHATI, June 10:** AIUDF MLA and party general secretary Aminul Islam resigned from his posts on Monday drawing speculations of resentment in Badruddin Ajmal's party.

Islam asserted that since he was one of the front leaders in the Lok Sabha elections, he has resigned taking responsibility for the poll debacle of the party.

However, he rubbished the rumours of him joining Congress or any other party. Meanwhile, another sen-

ior AIUDF leader Rafikul Islam said that the party will not accept Islam's resignation.

"I have been with the AIUDF since its inception in 2005. In the initial days, I was looking after the youth wing and later was shifted to an important post in the organisation. In the last several years, we have fought several elections, however, the results of the just concluded Lok Sabha poll was the worst," Aminul Islam told reporters here on Monday.

The AIUDF legislator also said that somebody must take the responsibility of the bad performance and he has taken it.

"The party will introspect about the bad show in the LS polls. If I was there, other people could not criticise me and since I have failed to take part in a good position, I must quit the post. I have taken this decision after a major introspection," he said.

Aminul Islam also dismissed the rumours of him being contacted by Congress to join the party. He mentioned, "I am in AIUDF and I will never leave the party. I am with Badruddin Ajmal. I have from my post of general secretary not from the party."

Meanwhile, Rafikul Islam said, "We have lost in the polls as a team. Aminul Islam cannot single handedly be held responsible for (CONTD. ON PAGE-2)

## Australian consul general visits ASDMA

**HT Bureau**

**GUWAHATI, June 10:** The Australian consul general in Kolkata, Hugh Boylan, along with Angelina Nair, senior research & visits officer, visited the Assam State Disaster Management Authority (ASDMA) on Monday to discuss disaster preparedness.

Gitanjali Bhattacharyya, IAS, Secretary of the Revenue & DM Department, welcomed Boylan and the senior officer of the Consulate to ASDMA, aiming to enhance coordination and collaboration between both countries in the near future.

During his visit, Boylan shared information on areas of international cooperation between India and Australia related to disaster management and allied sectors.

A team from ASDMA briefed the visitors with a small presentation on the activities of ASDMA. Boylan expressed keen interest in understanding Assam's disaster

## 41 sunstroke deaths reported in Odisha this summer: SRC

**BHUBANESWAR, June 10:** At least 41 sunstroke deaths have been reported in Odisha this summer, while 73 other cases are pending inquiry, according to an official statement.

During this summer season till Monday, 159 cases of alleged sunstroke deaths have been reported in the state.

Of these, 41 have been confirmed due to heat-related illnesses, while 45 deaths were found not to be due to sunstroke, while 73 remaining cases were pending inquiry, the statement issued by the Special Relief Commissioner (SRC) said.

Eight suspected sunstroke deaths were reported from different districts in the last three days and investigation is underway to ascertain the reasons behind the deaths, it

said. The state government had earlier asked districts to ensure post-mortem examination of every suspected sunstroke death for sanction of ex-gratia amounts.

Also, a joint inquiry by the local revenue officer and the local medical officer needs to be conducted to ascertain the exact cause of each death, officials said.

Heatwave conditions continued to put normal life out of gear in most places across Odisha on Monday. In its evening bulletin, the Bhubaneswar Meteorological Centre said 20 places in the state recorded a maximum temperature of 40 degrees Celsius or above on Monday.

Nuapada town in western Odisha was the hottest place in Odisha, recording a temperature of 44 degrees Celsius. It was followed (CONTD. ON PAGE-2)

## 'It is our effort to awaken our youths to reality' Assam Police's documentary on extremism 'Fehujali' to be screened at Mumbai film fest

**HT Bureau**

**GUWAHATI, June 10:** Short documentary 'Fehujali - The New Dawn', produced by Assam director general of police G P Singh, will be featured at the Mumbai International Film Festival starting on June 15, film director and inspector general Parthasarathi Mahanta said on Monday.

Notably, 'Fehujali' has already made a significant mark by winning the Best Short Documentary award at the 7th New Delhi Film Festival on March 28, 2024.

"We have seen some young boys & girls joining camps of terrorist groups, falling for various gimmicks being peddled. We decided to bring to the public domain true-life stories of disillusionment amongst those who had fallen prey



to such propaganda campaigns and joined terrorist organisations. They wanted to share their ordeal with other similarly placed youths to prevent them from making the

same mistake that they had made. It is our effort to awaken our youths to reality," said Singh.

Director Mahanta explained the film's narrative, stating, "The doc-

umentary ventures into the struggles of marginalized youths within the state, ensnared by extremist factions employing coercive methods, including financial enticement, as recruitment tactics.

The narrative unfolds the disillusionment faced by these individuals upon realising the futility of their purported mission to liberate Assam from India, recognising themselves as mere pawns manipulated by foreign interests exploiting misguided patriotism. Their journey back home is one marked by shattered dreams and newfound clarity." Through compelling cinematic storytelling, "Fehujali" serves as a clarion call to disenchant youth, urging them to avoid the allure of extremism and embrace (CONTD. ON PAGE-2)

# Sensex, Nifty breach record levels but settle lower amid profit-booking

**MUMBAI, June 10:** Benchmark equity indices Sensex and Nifty ended lower on Monday after hitting their all-time high levels in early trade amid selling in blue-chip IT stocks and HDFC Bank.

After breaching the 77,000-mark during the early trade, the 30-share BSE Sensex came under selling pressure at the fag-end of the session and ended 203.28 points or 0.27 per cent lower at 76,490.08. During the day, the benchmark jumped 385.68 points or 0.50 per cent to hit a new record of 77,079.04.

Halting its three-day rally, the NSE Nifty dipped 30.95 points or 0.13 per cent to settle at 23,259.20. Intra-day, it climbed 121.75 points or 0.52 per cent to hit the lifetime peak of 23,411.90.

Narendra Modi was sworn in as Prime Minister on Sunday for a record-equaling third term, heading a 72-member Union Council of Ministers that put emphasis on continuity, youth and experience, while also rewarding partners in the BJP-led National Democratic Alliance (NDA) government.

Among the 30 Sensex companies, Tech Mahindra, Infosys,



Wipro, Bajaj Finance, Mahindra & Mahindra, HDFC Bank, HCL Technologies and Tata Consultancy Services were among the major laggards. UltraTech Cement, Power Grid, Nestle, NTPC, Tata Steel and Axis Bank were among the biggest gainers.

"Volatility returned to markets, as Sensex slipped from its new high and fell sharply towards the close amid profit-taking in IT, metals and oil & gas stocks. Lacklustre sentiment also prevailed due to weak global cues after recent data

from the US indicated that rate cut may not happen soon," said Prashanth Tapse, Senior VP (Research), Mehta Equities Ltd.

In the broader market, the BSE smallcap gauge climbed 1.04 per cent and midcap index jumped 0.56 per cent. Among the indices, services rallied 1.61 per cent, realty jumped 1.34 per cent, commodities (1.28 per cent), utilities (1.11 per cent), healthcare (0.77 per cent) and industrials (0.49 per cent). IT, auto, metal and teck were the

laggards.

Foreign Institutional Investors (FIIs) bought equities worth ₹ 4,391.02 crore on Friday, according to exchange data.

"The Indian market currently lacks fresh catalysts following the formation of the new government at the centre, suggesting that some consolidation may occur in the near term. Institutional flows indicate a mixed trend, with FIIs gradually covering their shorts and DIIs booking profits after the market reached historic highs," said Vinod Nair, Head of Research, Geojit Financial Services.

In Asian markets, Tokyo settled in the green while Seoul ended lower. Markets in China and Hong Kong were closed for holidays.

European markets were trading in the negative territory. US markets ended lower on Friday.

Global oil benchmark Brent crude climbed 0.18 per cent to USD 79.76 a barrel. The BSE benchmark ended at 76,693.36, up 1,618.85 points or 2.16 per cent, on Friday. The Nifty settled with a jump of 468.75 points or 2.05 per cent at 23,290.15. (PTI)

## Rupee falls 10 paise to close at 83.50 against US dollar

**MUMBAI, June 10:** The rupee settled for the day lower by 10 paise at 83.50 (provisional) against the US dollar on Monday, following a rising American currency in overseas markets and a sluggish trend in domestic equities.

Forex traders said the downside in the rupee was restricted by easing political uncertainties as Narendra Modi was sworn in as Prime Minister on Sunday for a record-equaling third term. At the interbank foreign exchange, the local unit opened at 83.48 and settled for the day lower by 10 paise at 83.50 (provisional) against the American currency. On Friday, the rupee appreciated 13 paise to 83.40 against the US dollar. "We expect the rupee to trade with a slight negative bias on strong US Dollar amid rising expectations of a delay in interest rate cut by the US Federal Reserve due to tight job market," said Anuj Choudhary - Research Analyst at Sharekhana - Research Analyst at Sharekhana by BNP Paribas. However, softening crude oil prices and optimism over a stable government may support the rupee at lower levels. Traders may take cues from inflation data from India and the US. Investors may also watch out for the Federal Open Market Committee (FOMC) meeting this week. USD/INR spot price is expected to trade in a range of ₹ 83.20 to ₹ 83.80. Meanwhile, the dollar index, which gauges the greenback's strength against a basket of six currencies, was trading at 105.27, higher by 0.37 per cent. Brent crude futures, the global oil benchmark, advanced 0.21 per cent to USD 79.79 per barrel. Modi will be heading a 72-member Union Council of Ministers putting emphasis on continuity, youth and experience, while also rewarding partners in the BJP-led NDA gov't. Along with Modi, senior BJP leaders including Rajnath Singh, Amit Shah, Nitin Gadkari, Nirmala Sitharaman and S Jaishankar, all ministers in the Modi 2.0 cabinet, took oath as cabinet ministers at the Rashtrapati Bhavan. (PTI)

## Modi-led NDA govt must tackle unemployment problem, especially in unorganised sector: Rajiv Kumar

**NEW DELHI, June 10:** Prime Minister Narendra Modi led-NDA government in its third term must tackle the problem of unemployment in the country, especially in the unorganised sector and in small and medium enterprises, former NITI Aayog Vice Chairman Rajiv Kumar said on Monday.

Kumar also emphasised that the government now must finalise the four labour codes as it has been delayed beyond expectations.

"We must recognise that post-COVID economic recovery has been a K-shaped recovery. I think the most important reforms that the Modi government must take is one to tackle the unemployment problem, especially in the unorganised and the small and medium enterprises," he told PTI in an interview.

According to a recent International Labour Organization (ILO) report, the share of unemployed youths in India's total unemployed population was nearly 83 per cent in 2022. "Therefore the large corporations have done very well and, and also those who are highly skilled have done well. But at the lower end, people are without jobs and firms are struggling to expand their capacity," the eminent economist said.

According to Kumar, one of the two important things about generating employment is one to further ease the conditions of work for the small and medium enterprises. There is still a lot of regulatory and compliance burden that SMEs face. "So they have to be tackled along with the state governments," he said. On the four labour codes Kumar said "it has been a long time since they have been in the making, and I think they should be now finalised and made into statutes". Kumar also stressed on giving more attention on skilling of youth, especially to apprenticeship development, saying schooling and the education system in India is lagging behind the demand.

"Our apprenticeship program needs a far bigger push than we



have now and access to high quality education should be ensured because ultimately, these are the factors which will determine the employability and employment generation potential for our economy," he noted.

Modi was sworn-in as Prime Minister on Sunday for a record-equaling third term. Modi will be heading a 72-member Union Council of Ministers putting emphasis on continuity, youth and experience, while also rewarding partners in the BJP-led National Democratic Alliance (NDA) government.

Along with Modi, senior BJP leaders including Rajnath Singh, Amit Shah, Nitin Gadkari, Nirmala Sitharaman and S Jaishankar, all ministers in the Modi 2.0 cabinet, took oath as cabinet ministers at the Rashtrapati Bhavan.

Responding to a question that the government's disinvestment program may face a coalition hurdle, Kumar said disinvestment has already taken a backseat over the past five years.

He pointed out that targets of non-tax revenue and non-tax capital revenue have not been huge in the successive budgets in the last five years, except one year when Air India was privatised.

"I am not sure at all that the coalition dharma will be the cause for pushing this (disinvestment) in the background," Kumar argued.

The former NITI Aayog Vice Chairman emphasised that privati-

sation and generating the revenues from it to reduce India's public debt-to-GDP burden is a necessary and an important reform measure that should be taken.

"Also, to improve the efficiency of the public sector enterprises, especially the public sector banks, where I had advocated very strongly the privatisation of most public sector banks, except the State Bank of India," he said.

On a question concerning correlation between coalition governments and economic reforms, Kumar said the coalition governments have been far better in generating reforms.

He said being a coalition government, one should not believe that there will not be any reforms and they will be only populism. "I think all the three parties (BJP, TDP and JDU) who are coming together are pro-reform parties. And therefore, the pace reforms can and perhaps will continue, as in the last 10 years," he said.

Recently, Moody's Analytics has said reduced political stability and the need for consensus building in a coalition government will likely slow decision-making and erode investors' confidence in the near-term. In a post-election note, Moody's Analytics said the Lok Sabha election results mean dynamics are about to change in Parliament, as coalition partners will gain influence and leverage in policy decisions, allowing for a more inclusive approach to governance. (PTI)

closely for the next action from the Bank of Japan, whose monetary policy board meets later this week. The central bank raised interest rates earlier this year for the first time since 2007, but only to a range of zero to 0.1 per cent from minus 0.1 per cent.

The Japanese central bank's stance will similarly be eyed closely, especially with the domestic currency weakness prevailing. Japanese manufacturers are facing the fastest rise in input costs, S&P Global Market Intelligence said in a report. Unemployment has stayed relatively low in the world's fourth largest economy at about 2.6 per cent. Japan suffers a serious labour shortage, as its birth rate continues to drop, hitting a record low last year. The number of marriages have also fallen.

Such demographic trends could prove more dangerous in the long run, according to some analysts, who worry Japan is especially weak in per capita output, and its dimming cloud on the global stage might even lead to security risks.

Japan's GDP is expected to slip to No. 5 in magnitude after the US, China, Germany and India next year, according to the IMF. (AP)

# Asian markets mixed following hotter-than-expected US jobs report

**HONG KONG, June 10:** Asian markets were mixed on Monday after a jobs report released Friday came in hotter than expected, while the euro fell after French President Emmanuel Macron dissolved the National Assembly following a setback in Sunday's parliamentary election.

US futures and oil prices rose. Trading in Asia was muted with markets in China, Hong Kong, Australia and Taiwan closed for holidays. In Tokyo, the Nikkei 225 index was up 0.5 per cent at 38,872.19 after government data on Monday showed Japan's economy contracted at an annualised 1.8 per cent pace in January-March compared to the previous quarter, an upward revision from the previously announced 2 per cent drop.

South Korea's Kospi slipped 0.7 per cent to 2,705.06.

Meanwhile, in Europe, far-right parties made major gains in parliamentary elections Sunday, leading French President Emmanuel Macron to announce that he was dissolving the National Assembly and calling a snap legislative election. This caused the euro to drop to its lowest price in nearly a month. On Monday dealing, the euro was trading at USD 1.0766. On Friday, the S&P 500 fell 0.1 per cent to 5,346.99, the Nasdaq

composite slipped 0.2 per cent to 38,798.99, and the Dow Jones Industrial Average slipped 0.2 per cent to 38,798.99.

US employers added 272,000 jobs in May, up from April and more than economists expected. The report also showed the unemployment rate rising for a second straight month. Overall, it signals continued strength in the jobs market, with some minor signs of weakening. The strong jobs market has supported consumer spending and the broader economy, but it has also been complicating the Federal Reserve's path ahead for interest rates.

The yield on the 10-year Treasury jumped to 4.43 from 4.29 per cent just before the jobs report was released. The two-year yield, which more closely tracks expectations for the Fed, jumped to 4.89 from 4.74 per cent prior to the report's release. Wall Street is hoping for at least one cut to the Fed's benchmark interest rate before the year ends. The central bank raised its interest rate to its highest level in more than two decades in an attempt to cool inflation to its target of 2 per cent.

However, inflation has been stubbornly hovering around 3 per cent after dropping sharply over the last two years. A strong economy could keep fuelling price in-

creases. A cooler economy can pull inflation lower and prompt the Fed to deliver the cuts to interest rates that traders desire. The danger is if the slowdown overshoots and turns into a recession, which would ultimately hurt stock prices.

Economic data from last week hinted that the economy could be cooling. The latest reports show that manufacturing contracted in May, worker productivity isn't as strong as economists thought and job openings are dropping.

Fed officials are expected to hold interest rates steady at their meeting later in this week. After the jobs report came out, investors took even more bets off the table that the Fed would cut rates at its July meeting, according to data from CME Group.

Wall Street has also been monitoring earnings from retailers, which have shown that customers have been pulling back on items that aren't essentials. Consumer spending has been the main support for the economy, but stubborn inflation is hurting consumers, especially those with lower incomes.

GameStop, the troubled video game retailer at the centre of the meme stock craze, slumped 39.4 per cent after reporting another quarterly loss and saying it planned to sell up to 75 million more shares. (AP)

## Gold remains flat at ₹ 71,800/10 grams; silver rises ₹ 200

**NEW DELHI, June 10:** Gold prices remained flat at ₹ 71,800 per 10 grams in the national capital on Monday. According to Saumil Gandhi, Senior Analyst of Commodities at HDFC Securities, gold traded flat on Monday, after Comex spot gold declined as much as 3.45 per cent on Friday, the most since August 2021.

However, silver prices rose ₹ 200 to ₹ 92,100 per kg. In the previous session, it had closed at ₹ 91,900 per kg. "In the Delhi markets, spot gold prices (24 carats) are trading flat at ₹ 71,800 per 10 grams, unchanged from the previous close," Gandhi said.

In the overseas markets, spot gold at Comex was trading at USD 2,293 per ounce, down USD 1 from the previous close. However, silver was quoted higher at USD 29.50 per ounce. It had ended at USD 29.15

per ounce in the previous session. "Gold prices traded within a narrow range, after a minor gap-down opening. This movement was mainly influenced by the strengthening US dollar, following strong nonfarm payrolls data," Jateen Trivedi, VP Research Analyst of Commodity and Currency at LKP Securities, said. The rupee settled for the day lower by 10 paise at 83.50 (provisional) against the US dollar on Monday. "Additionally, profit booking occurred due to indications that China might halt its gold purchases, suggesting that the yellow metal prices could be capped for a while," Trivedi said. Traders will now shift their focus to the upcoming US policy decision and Consumer Price Index (CPI) inflation data, both due on June 12, which will further provide more insights on the gold prices, he added. (PTI)

Contd. from Page 1...

## Modi 3.0: Key ministers retain

Public Distribution, and New and Renewable Energy Ministries. G Kishan Reddy has been handed over the Coal and Mines Ministry. Giriraj Singh has been shifted from the Rural Development and Panchayati Raj Ministries to Textiles. Jyotiraditya Scindia, former aviation minister, is now in charge of Communications, and Development of North Eastern Region Ministries.

Annapurna Devi is the new Women and Child Development Minister. Among Ministers of State with Independent Charge, BJP ally and RLD leader Jayant Chaudhary has been allocated Skill Development and Entrepreneurship Ministry and Shiv Sena leader Jadhav Prataprao Ganpatrao will handle Ayush Ministry.

Earlier, Modi held the first Cabinet meeting after his government was sworn in on Sunday and told his ministerial colleagues that most of them will continue to handle their existing responsibilities. The allocation of portfolios underlined the prime minister's faith in his colleagues, especially those handling the frontline ministries which shaped and drove the government's policies and programmes. (PTI)

## Suspected militants ambush

Two police outposts, a forest beat office and at least 70 houses were torched in Jiribam by suspected militants on Saturday in a fresh bout of violence in the ethnic strife-torn state. (PTI)

## People from Manipur

hill-based Kukis began in May last year and led to the deaths of over 200 people, besides rendering thousands of people homeless. (PTI)

## Assam moving towards

Moreover, under PM Sahaj Biji Har Ghar Yojana, 14 lakh urban and rural households were electrified in the state, the chief minister said.

## BJP expresses surprising

votes, reflecting a reduction of 46,696 votes. "We face challenges ahead. It's crucial to assess the areas where our vote percentage has decreased. We need to introspect on why this has happened, and within a week, we will convene a joint parliamentary meeting," Killing added.

Acknowledging the recent induction of Sarbananda Sonowal and Pabitra Margherita from Assam into the Centre, Killing expressed gratitude to Prime Minister Narendra Modi.

Responding to claims by APHLC that they secured 10 MAC seats in Karbi Anglong and West Karbi Anglong, Killing refuted their assessment. He further asserted that the BJP did not face losses in any of the six LA segments under the 6 Diphu (ST) Parliamentary Constituency.

Commenting on the decrease in BJP's poll percentage, Longsing Tokbi, state secretary of the ST Morcha, attributed it to the Congress's strategic voting. Tokbi alleged that Congress voters shifted their support to APHLC, impacting the BJP's performance. Selawar Bey, a BJP spokesperson, criticised APHLC, accusing them of misleading voters with false propaganda about non-tribal voter deletion.

Bey also claimed that APHLC garnered misleading votes, not genuine support.

## Look forward to India,

in India-Sri Lanka relations." "Great to meet PM Tshering Tobgay of Bhutan. Spoke about our unique and multifaceted friendship," Jaishankar said on the meeting with Tobgay.

He said the meeting with Mauritius Prime Minister Jugnauth, reflected the special bond between the two countries.

On the meeting with the Nepalese prime minister, Jaishankar said: "So glad to call on PM Pushpa Kamal Dahal 'Prachanda' of Nepal. Discussed the growing various facets of India-Nepal cooperation." (PTI)

## AIUDF MLA Aminul Islam

the poll debacle. The party has not accepted his resignation."

Notably, AIUDF has failed to open its account this time and all the party candidates lost polls. Since the party was formed in 2005, this is the worst performance of AIUDF in the Lok Sabha elections. The party chief Badruddin Ajmal was also defeated by a whopping margin of more than 10 lakh votes in Dhubri Lok Sabha seat.

## 41 sunstroke deaths

by Boudh (42.8), Paralakhemundi (42.4), Bolangir (42.2) and Baripada (42). Heatwave conditions would prevail in the districts of Balasore, Jagatsinghpur, Nayagarh, Khurda, Nuapada, Bolangir, Gajapati, Ganjam, Boudh, and Jharsuguda on Tuesday.

Similarly, hot and humid weather conditions would be experienced in Bhadrak, Jajpur, Kendrapara, Cuttack, and Puri districts on June 11, it said. (PTI)

## Assam Police's documentary

a path of purpose and righteousness. The documentary has garnered widespread acclaim and admiration, with audiences expressing profound appreciation for its powerful narrative and impactful message.

The screening of "Fehjuli" at MIFF underscores its significance not just as a cinematic achievement but also as a powerful tool for awareness and change.

# Japan's economy is shrinking, although slightly less than previously thought

**TOKYO, June 10:** The Japanese economy shrank at an annual rate of 1.8 per cent in the first quarter of this year, slightly better than the initial estimate at a 2.0 per cent contraction, according to revised government data Monday.

The revision was due to private sector investments, at minus 0.4 per cent, up from the previous minus 0.5 per cent.

Seasonally adjusted real gross domestic product, or GDP, a measure of the value of a nation's products and services, remained in negative territory, as exports and consumption declined from the previous quarter.

Quarter-to-quarter, the economy slipped 0.5 per cent in the January-March period, according to the Cabinet Office, unchanged from last month's results.

The annual rate measures what would have happened if the quarterly rate lasted a year.

Wage growth has been slow, and prices on imports have risen amid a decline in the Japanese yen against the US dollar. The dollar is trading at nearly 157 yen lately, up from about 140 yen a year ago.

The weak yen has tourism booming. But it makes imports



more expensive, a sore point for a nation that imports almost all its energy. Sluggish consumer spending has also been a drag on the economy. Private consumption accounts for half of Japanese economic activity.

Another negative is the ongoing scandal involving improper vehicle model tests at several major automakers, including Toyota Motor Corp., which form the pillars of Japan's brand power. Production was halted on some models.

Government officials raided the Tokyo headquarters of Honda Motor Co. Monday. Japanese

media reports said a raid was coming soon on Mazda Motor Corp. Toyota and Suzuki Motor Corp. have already been raided.

Last week, Toyota Chairman Akio Toyoda apologised for the wide-ranging fraudulent testing involving the use of inadequate or outdated data in collision tests, incorrect testing of airbag inflation, rear-seat damage in crashes and engine power.

The safety of the vehicles aren't affected, but the companies apparently wanted to speed up the testing process.

Investors are also watching

## NFR implements hot axle box detectors

HT Bureau

**GUWAHATI, June 10:** With a prime focus on safer train movements, the Northeast Frontier Railway has been actively working on detecting hot axle failures en route. For this purpose, Hot Box Detectors (HBD) have been strategically installed at the end of platforms at stations, where rolling in and rolling out examinations of trains are conducted. These sensor-based HBDs will detect instances of hot axles in running trains and alert railway staff to take preventive measures. Due to the continuous movement of wheels of coaches and wagons, ball bearings sometimes fail, leading to an increase in axle temperature, known as a hot axle. Various causes contribute to hot axle incidents, including overloading and faulty bearing conditions. During the years 2020-21, 07 cases; 2021-22, 9 cases; 2022-23, 14 cases; and in 2023-24, a single case of hot axle has been detected on freight trains by sensor-based HBDs.

A total of 16 hot box detectors have been installed across some important stations on the NF Railway. These stations include Kamakhya (2), Guwahati (4), New Bongaigaon (1), Rangapara North (1), New Jalpaiguri (4), and Kathar (4).

Given that hot axle incidents pose a major safety concern for railways, NF Railway is undertaking vigorous measures, including counselling of railway staff and inter-departmental coordination on safety standards, to prevent punctuality losses in train operations while ensuring safety.

## Collaboration aims to raise awareness and protect biodiversity through community engagement

# NGOs unite to combat wildlife crime along Assam-Arunachal border



HT Bureau

**GUWAHATI, June 10:** A meeting of representatives from various NGOs in Arunachal Pradesh and Assam has highlighted the urgent need to organise sensitisation and awareness programmes for grass-root communities residing near the fringes of the D'Ering Wildlife Sanctuary (Arunachal Pradesh) and the Pabo Reserve Forest (Assam) to prevent wildlife crimes.

The first-ever inter-state NGO coordination meeting was held in

Jonai on June 8, with the objective of tackling wildlife crime along the Arunachal Pradesh and Assam border. The gathering saw the participation of 22 dedicated individuals from non-government organisations, including Aaranyak, Save Pabo Rainforest (SPRF), Jonai, and the Community Surveillance and Monitoring Team (CSMT), Pasighat.

The participants unanimously agreed that educating the communities is crucial for the prevention of wildlife crimes such

as poaching and illegal trade. Aaranyak officials Dr Jimmy Borah and Ivy Farheen Hussain attended and deliberated on various topics on deterring wildlife crime in the area. The meeting also saw active participation from SPRF's secretary Royal Pegu, president Rajib Pegu, and their representatives, as well as CSMT lead Maksam Tayeng and his team from Pasighat.

The meeting decided to launch two awareness campaigns—one on the Assam side and the other on

the Arunachal side of the inter-state boundary. These campaigns are designed to inform and engage local communities about the importance of wildlife conservation and the detrimental impacts of illegal activities on the ecosystem.

Additionally, a comprehensive social survey will be conducted to assess the economic status of the communities living near these two critical wildlife habitats. The insights gained from this survey will aid in developing alternative livelihood programmes, thereby reducing reliance on activities that harm wildlife.

A key outcome of the meeting was the proposed collaboration between CSMT and the Village Defence Parties (VDP). This partnership aims to enhance monitoring and control measures to curb illegal wildlife trade in the region.

The meeting marks a significant step forward towards coordinated efforts to protect the rich biodiversity of the Arunachal-Assam border region. The collective resolve and strategic planning exhibited by the participants underscored a shared commitment to safeguarding wildlife for future generations.

## Adult BCG vaccination program set to kick off in Sivasagar



HT Correspondent

**SIVASAGAR, June 10:** In a major attempt to rid the country of the scourge of TB by 2025, the Health Department is ready to start the Adult BCG Vaccination Programme from Tuesday in two high-prevalence districts of the state, Sivasagar and Lakhimpur. Giving the details of the programme, Dr Saurav Kumar Gogoi, the joint director of Health and FW Department here, said that the BCG vaccine administered to babies works effectively till that age. People with diabetes and tobacco consumers will be given priority, as they are more susceptible to TB infection. Dr Gogoi said that the new programme is expected to eliminate the disease by the year 2025 as desired by Prime Minister Narendra Modi.

Dr Dwijen Koch, District TB Office, Sivasagar, said that a total of 152783 registered TB patients in the district will be brought to 7

designated vaccination camps in Kalugaon, Gaurisagar, Morabazar, Khelua, Demow, Gelekey, and Wood Urban Centre for vaccination and distribution of beneficiary kits provided by the government. Dr Koch said that the killer disease has spread its tentacles far and wide despite the best efforts to eliminate it through centrally orchestrated programs like DoT (Directly Observed Therapy) was launched vigorously due to the affected people's lack of awareness. Most of the beneficiaries discontinue the drugs once they regain vigor and thereby develop a resistant variety of TB. Dr Koch clarified that the vaccine BCG (Bacillus Calmette-Guérin) was first administered to humans in 1921 and is safe for all.

The meeting was also attended by Dr Sadhan Borah, sub-divisional health officer, Nazira, Jyotimita Saikia, PPM coordinator, Anjuma Changmai, district community mobiliser, and Anushree Phukan, district media coordinator.

## Man arrested for strangling wife in Guwahati

HT Bureau

**GUWAHATI, June 10:** One Soleman Ali strangled his wife Bijuli Kinnar at Hatigaon in Guwahati, police said on Tuesday.

The husband and wife duo were staying on rent at Bishnupath in Hatigaon.

"Accordingly, GDE Entry was made vide Hatigaon PS GDE No-806/22 dated: 22/06/2022, and a preliminary inquiry was carried out. The preliminary inquiry was conducted under Hatigaon PS UD Case No-11/22 Dated: 22/06/2022. Later, on receiving a complaint from Naziruddin Mandal, (brother of the deceased), Age- 30 years s/o- Safiur Rahman R/O-Palashkandi PS- Lakhimpur Dist. Goalpara, a regular case was registered vide Hatigaon PS Case No-304/22 U/S-304/34 IPC. The complainant suspected that Suleman Ali conspired to commit the murder of his Kinar Sister Bijuli," an official said.

Police said that the initial part of the investigation had revealed that the deceased Bijuli and her husband Suleman Ali used to fight over money and that Ali used to beat her regularly.

However, on the day of the incident, her husband Suleman Ali and her mobile phone could not be found by police.

During the course of the investigation, the then IO arrested one Rezzak Ali (30), a resident of Goalpara and Abdus Salam (38), a resident of Bongaigaon on suspicion. They revealed that the husband of the deceased had committed the murder and had been absconding ever since.

Subsequently, after thorough technical analysis and gathering of information from various sources, Hatigaon Police successfully apprehended Suleman Ali, the main culprit on June 7.

Police sources stated that accused Suleman Ali confessed that on the day of the incident, all four had consumed alcohol and after the two friends of Bijuli had gone, the couple picked up a fight, and under the influence of alcohol, the accused Ali strangled his wife Bijuli Kinnar to death.

## Cattle theft strikes Samar Dalani

HT Correspondent

**BISWANATH CHARIALI, June 10:** Two cattle heads belonging to Manbir Biswakarma, a resident of Lakhangarh, Samar Dalani under Sootea Police Station, were stolen on Sunday night from his cowshed. According to reports, the owner had checked his cowshed around 11:30 pm and found the cows safe. However, upon returning later, he discovered that both cows were missing. He promptly informed the local Village Defence Party (VDP) secretary and Sootea Police.

It is noteworthy that incidents of cow smuggling are on the rise in the Naduar area. Sonitpur Police, in collaboration with Jamuguri Police, had busted a gang of cow smugglers from the western part of Jamugurihat a month ago. Suspicious vehicles have been observed moving swiftly in the villages at night. Local residents have appealed to the civil and police administration to address the issue promptly. Many villages have initiated night patrols to safeguard their communities.

## Rabindranath Tagore University's NSS unit adopts Fakira Basti village in Hojai

HT Correspondent

**HOJAI, June 10:** In a significant step towards community development, Fakira Basti Village in Hojai district was formally adopted by the National Service Scheme (NSS) Unit of Rabindranath Tagore University, Hojai on Monday. To highlight the village adoption program, a newly constructed dining hall at the Fakira Basti LP School was also inaugurated simultaneously. The adoption is part of a broader initiative to enhance the quality of life in rural areas through educational and infrastructural development. The construction of the dining hall was undertaken by the NSS Unit of Rabindranath Tagore University as part of their commitment to improving educational facilities in the village.

The inauguration ceremony was graced by Prof Amalendu Chakrabarty, vice chancellor of Rabindranath Tagore University, who officially opened the new facility. Speaking on the occasion, Prof Chakrabarty emphasised the



importance of community engagement and the role of educational institutions in fostering development in rural areas. During the inaugural ceremony, Tilak Chandra Kalita, registrar-in-charge, and Dr Prem Sagar Prasad, NSS programme officer, along with other guests, shared the dais. Dr Prasad also outlined the future initiatives planned by the NSS Unit to support Fakira Basti, including health camps, educational workshops, and infrastructure development projects.

The villagers and the teachers

of Fakira Basti LP School expressed their gratitude to the university and the NSS for their support and contributions. The event concluded with a cultural program performed by the students of Fakira Basti LP School, showcasing the rich heritage and talent of the local community. This initiative marks the beginning of strong coordination between Rabindranath Tagore University and Fakira Basti Village, aiming to achieve sustainable development and improved living standards for the villagers.

## Special training sessions for PM Kisan implementation

HT Correspondent

**BISWANATH CHARIALI, June 10:** Special training sessions were organised by the District Agriculture Office, Biswanath, at various Gaon Panchayats of Biswanath district to ensure the smooth administration of the 17th installment of PM Kisan. These sessions covered a total of 9 Agriculture Development Circles of Biswanath.

The purpose of these special sessions is to facilitate the farmers cum beneficiaries under the central scheme. During the sessions, village nodal officers (VNO), common service centre (CSC) workers, and officials from the agriculture department were imparted training. Special emphasis was placed on ensuring the smooth functioning of the scheme to ensure that no genuine farmer is excluded and every eligible beneficiary receives the benefit. The special training sessions will continue until June 25 in different phases, as stated in a press release.

Farmers will be provided with assistance in E-KYC updation, linking Aadhaar with bank accounts, and other necessary procedures. Banewar Bay, the district agriculture officer of Biswanath, has appealed to the beneficiaries under the PM Kisan scheme to visit facilitation centers for guidance and assistance.

## New boys' hostel for Dima Hasao students inaugurated in Guwahati



HT Bureau

**GUWAHATI, June 10:** Dima Hasao Autonomous Council chief executive member Debolal Gorlosa inaugurated a 100-bed boys' hostel at Kahlipara in Guwahati for students of Dima Hasao studying in Guwahati. The programme coincided with the completion of eight years of his term as the chief executive member of the council. The project, worth ₹ 7.20 crore, was officially inaugurated by CEM Debolal Gorlosa in the presence of Dima Hasao Autonomous Council chairman Mohit Hojai, EM in charge of Education Donphainon Thaoson, Council MAC Rupali Langthasa, principal secretary Thai Tso Daulagupui, and council secretary A Nriame. Construction of the building, which is situated on an approximately 2-katha plot of land, began in November 2022.

Addressing the attendees during the inaugural programme, CEM Gorlosa delivered an inspiring speech, motivating the students to prioritise their duties as students while also contributing to society and being kind to those in need. EM Donphainon Thaoson and MAC Rupali Langthasa also delivered speeches during the occasion. Others present included executive members, members of the autonomous council, other council officials, line departments, and media persons.

## Program to aid needy 'Charaideo Batory' celebrates 13<sup>th</sup> anniversary

HT Correspondent

**DEMOW, June 10:** Aamar Prayash: A Platform for Positive Thinking, a Facebook page dedicated to fostering positive thinking, has launched the 'Manuhe Manuhar Babe' program in Demow. Their mission is to gather used clothing, shoes, and sandals to distribute to those in need who lack the means to acquire them. To contribute to this noble cause, individuals can reach out to Bitul Saikia, the chief administrator of Aamar Prayash: A Platform for Positive Thinking, via phone at 7002263896, 9859657358, or 9954372394.

SIVASAGAR, June 10:

The fortnightly newspaper published from Sonari, 'Charaideo Batory', observed its 13th anniversary on Sunday in a well-attended program at the Tourism Guest House near Charaideo Maidams. The management of the newspaper conferred the 'Charaideo Ratna Award 2024' upon noted young artist and singer Prasanta Rajkhowa. Dipak Bora, the Nitaipukhuri correspondent of the Dainik Janambhumi, was awarded 'The Best Young Reporter of the Year Award'. The executive president of the Assam State Journalists Union (ASJU), Manoj Kumar Borthakur, presided over the award-giving function. MLA, Sonari LAC, Dharmeswar Konwar, attended the function as the chief guest and in his speech, he emphasised the role of journalists in enlightening people with new ideas for developing their lives. He added that while journalists have the responsibility to publish the truth, the dissemination of wrong or fabricated news can seriously harm individuals and society. Delivering a lecture on 'Value-based journalism', Pradip Deka, the general secretary of ASJU, highlighted the close relations between newspaper owners and the ruling party, which he stated is detrimental to the free ecosystem for journalists.

HT Correspondent

**DIBRUGARH, June 10:** SPICMACAY, Dibrugarh Chapter inaugurated Sanskriti Yatra, a workshop demonstration series promoting Indian art forms and culture among school students at Dibrugarh Bengali High School on Monday.

The program was inaugurated by Dibrugarh Chapter chairperson Dr Raji Konwar, Sangeet Natak Akademi awardee Bhaben Borbayan, Dr Jadab Borah, Sattriya dancer and assistant professor at Dibrugarh University, and Dibrugarh Bengali High School headmistress Mita Das.

Through the Sanskriti Yatra Program, funded by the Governor of Assam, the Dibrugarh Chapter of SPICMACAY will hold workshops providing an opportunity for young school students to interact and learn from renowned artists.

Renowned Sattriya dancers and Sahitya Natak

## SPICMACAY launches Sanskriti Yatra to promote Indian art

HT Correspondent

AKADEMI Awardees, Anita Sharma and Bhaben Borbayan, along with Dr Jadab Borah, will conduct workshops in select schools of Upper Assam, providing training to students in the knowledge and technique of the Sattriya dance form.

The Dibrugarh Chapter of SPICMACAY aims to cover 15 government schools in the districts of Upper Assam, comprising Dibrugarh and Charaideo in the first phase.

SPICMACAY, the Society for Promotion of Indian Classical Music and Culture amongst Youth, is a voluntary organisation with over 300 chapters that actively seeks to promote Indian cultural heritage through Indian music, dance, crafts, and other aspects.

SPICMACAY, Dibrugarh Chapter chairperson Dr Raji Konwar stressed the role of SPICMACAY in shaping society and urged students to come and associate with the organisation.

Renowned Sattriya dancers and Sahitya Natak

## Empowering women through floriculture: Kurkuria's blooming transformation



HT Bureau

**GUWAHATI, June 10:** The Dr Naba Goswami Foundation, in collaboration with the Helpaid Foundation, has embarked on an ambitious project aimed at empowering women and fostering community development through floriculture. This initiative, spearheaded by Dr Naba Goswami, grandson of Pandit Hemchandra Goswami and son of the late Prafulla Chan-

dra Goswami and Gauri Praba Goswami, has adopted the village of Kurkuria near Narangi. Over the past year, the project has focused on training homemakers in professional planting and caring for flowering plants, providing them with seeds to cultivate. This not only enhances their horticultural skills but also creates a sustainable source of income for their families.

Every 2 to 4 weeks, vendors visit Kurkuria to

purchase the cultivated flowers, offering the women an additional source of income to support their households. Beyond the economic benefits, this initiative aims to transform Kurkuria into a tourist attraction, showcasing its vibrant and colourful flower gardens. Anjulina Deb Choudhary from the Helpaid Foundation has been actively involved in the project from its inception, playing a crucial role in its success.

In a significant development, Laxmi Kant Sharma has donated a Maruti van in memory of his beloved mother, the late Durga Devi Sharma. This generous contribution will be used to transport seeds and plants to various locations across Assam, enhancing the logistical capabilities of the project and supporting its expansion.

The floriculture initiative by the Dr Naba Goswami Foundation and Helpaid Foundation has made remarkable progress in empowering women and fostering economic development in Kurkuria. With the continued support and recent addition of a transportation vehicle, the project is poised for further growth and success. This initiative not only improves the livelihoods of the participants but also aims to position Kurkuria as a unique tourist destination, highlighting the beauty and potential of community-driven development.

## Sahaheedi Diwas of Guru Arjan Dev Ji revered in Haflong

HT Bureau

**GUWAHATI, June 10:** The Sahaheedi Diwas, commemorating the martyrdom of Guru Arjan Dev Ji, the fifth Sikh Guru, was celebrated on Monday by the Haflong Gurdwara Committee. Guru Arjan Dev Ji (April 15, 1563 – May 30, 1606) is revered as the first Sikh martyr who emphasised the importance of standing for truth and justice. He played a pivotal role in Sikh history by compiling the Adi Granth, the foundational scripture of Sikhism, which later became the Guru Granth Sahib.

The celebrations took place with great fervour at the Sri Gurdwara Sahib in Haflong. The day-long Gurbur included Sukhmani Sahib Path (a reading of sacred hymns), Kirtan (devotional singing), Ardas (prayers), and Guru Ki Langar (a communal free kitchen).

In a gesture symbolising compassion and hospitality, cold sweetened milk water was offered to passersby to help them beat the heat and to spread the message of truth and love. This service took place on the main road adjacent to the Gurdwara premises.

Nirmal Singh, the secretary of the Haflong Sri Gurdwara Committee, extended greetings to all community members in the Dima Hasao district, emphasising love, peace, and brotherhood. The event saw participation from hundreds of people, including members of the Sikh community and individuals from various backgrounds from Haflong and nearby areas, showcasing a spirit of unity and communal harmony.

## QUOTE OF THE DAY

You cannot step into the same river twice.  
-Heracitus

## Alarming trends in severe child food poverty

Child food poverty is a global crisis that transcends income levels, with a significant proportion of affected children coming from households in the middle and upper wealth quintiles. Recent data reveals that 54 percent of children living in severe food poverty belong to these wealthier households, highlighting that factors beyond income are driving this issue. This stark reality paints a distressing picture of children's nutrition. Many are missing out on essential nutrient-rich foods, while unhealthy options become more entrenched in their diets. Alarmingly, four out of five children in severe food poverty are limited to breast milk, dairy products, or a starchy staple like rice, maize, or wheat. This lack of dietary diversity is concerning, as less than 10 percent of these children consume fruits and vegetables, and fewer than 5 percent have access to eggs, meat, poultry, or fish. The proliferation of unhealthy foods among these children is particularly troubling. In Nepal, for instance, 42 percent of children in severe food poverty consume foods high in sugar, salt, and fat, and 17 percent regularly drink sweetened beverages.

The issue of child food poverty is further intensified by global and local crises. The economic fallout from the COVID-19 pandemic, the war in Ukraine, and localized conflicts and climatic shocks have compounded the challenges parents face in feeding their children. Since 2020, these factors have severely strained families' resources, making it even harder to provide adequate nutrition. The link between severe child food poverty and child undernutrition is evident. Countries with high rates of stunting also see a higher prevalence of severe child food poverty. In such nations, one in three children, or 32 percent, experience severe food poverty. This statistic is a stark reminder that food poverty is a critical driver of undernutrition, with long-term implications for children's health and development. Addressing this multifaceted crisis requires a comprehensive approach. While financial poverty is a significant factor, it is not the sole cause. Public health interventions must consider the diverse and complex causes of food poverty, including education, cultural practices, and access to nutritious foods.

Governments and international organizations need to prioritize child nutrition programs that extend beyond merely increasing food availability. Initiatives should focus on educating parents about balanced diets, providing access to a variety of nutrient-rich foods, and curbing the consumption of unhealthy options. Moreover, policies must be designed to build resilience against economic, environmental, and social shocks that exacerbate food insecurity. Investing in sustainable agricultural practices and local food systems is also crucial. By supporting local farmers and improving food supply chains, communities can become more self-sufficient and less vulnerable to global disruptions. Additionally, social protection programs, such as school feeding initiatives and nutritional support for pregnant women and young children, can provide immediate relief and long-term benefits. Ultimately, solving severe child food poverty requires a concerted effort from all sectors of society. Policymakers, health professionals, educators, and businesses must work together to create an environment where every child has access to nutritious food. The stakes are high, but the potential for positive impact is immense. Children are the future, and their health should be a paramount concern. By addressing the root causes of severe child food poverty and implementing holistic solutions, we can ensure that all children have the opportunity to grow, thrive, and reach their full potential.

## Remember IMEEC to pass through Adani's Haifa port in Israel

By: Er. Rajesh Pathak

Like Bollywood stars of India, the Islamic country, Maldives, stood against Israel. Unconcerned to the misdeeds of Hamas and keeping in the mind only Islam, it prohibited the tourists from Israel entering Maldives. But the way Israel responded that Palestine supporters in India should take the note of it. It urged its citizens to pay visit to Indian tourist spots which are waiting to welcome them. Forget Maldives, it added, and prefer enjoying more secured Goa, Andaman-Nicobar, Lakshadweep and many other places adjoining the immensely long stretch of sea shores dominated by the landscape with lingering beauty.

India and Israel share friendly diplomatic relations hardly ever backtracked from standing beside each other when required, except extremely unavoidable geo-political compulsions, of course. This is not all, however.

When the things are comprehensively viewed in perspective of geo-economics then only the potential of harm caused by the voices raised for the sake of narrow self-interest and due to rabid religiosity in favor of Palestine vis-à-vis Israel could be well gauged.

In the G-20 conclave organized in India the India-Middle East-Europe-Economic Corridor (IMEEC) is proposed to come up. Bypassing Suez-canal, IMEEC is to go through UAE, Saudi Arab, Jordan connecting Adani's Haifa sea-port in Israel, finally entering Europe than. Its importance could be understood by the fact that Suez canal situated in Red-sea offers very narrow passage causing the ships that pass through it getting huddled here.

Therefore the token system is evolved to tide over this problem, which, however, causes the wastage of much time at present.

Besides, it passes close to South African continent from where the Somalia's bands of pirates and Yemen's intransigent Houthis terrorists pose the trouble to shipping activities every now and then.

On the other side proposed corridor, IMEEC, has nothing to do with South Africa and their herds of troublesome elements. Moreover this new alternative provision of corridor would account for the cost of transportation to come down by as low as 40%. India and Israel are thus indispensable to each other, irrespective of their internal affairs.

More notably, who fell prey to the incitement conspired by Pro-Pakistan anti-national elements and stood in favor of Hamas, they seem to have forgotten the Lester-episode. When India won against Pakistan in Asia-cup cricket 2 years back, Lester city of England witnessed the riot against Indian fans celebrating the victory. Who attacked were the Pakistan-Bangladesh immigrants and also a section of people with pro-Pakistan mentality, though hailing from India!

Later PFI and Jihadists elements entered the scene and fuelled the incident more, engulfing ever more localities. Rioters covering their faces started causing damages selectively to the houses and cars parked in front of them displaying the symbol of Hindu god-goddesses. Tension spread 50 KM away from Lester across the city of Birmingham too, even as the rioters surrounded Durga-Bhavan Kendra, shouting anti-India slogans!



# Can Naidu be a key player on the national stage?

Since the final Lok Sabha results confirmed that Narendra Modi would fall short of a majority, attention has turned to the influence of his new allies in the National Democratic Alliance (NDA). On Friday, following the NDA members of Parliament meeting, it became evident that Nara Chandrababu Naidu and Nitish Kumar are no longer the political forces they once were. However, it would be unjust to criticize them for this decline; age and politics take their toll. Both leaders need Prime Minister Modi just as much as he needs them. It's important to note that Modi is not Atal Behari Vajpayee, and NDA 2.0 is a different entity from NDA 1.0.

The national media was rife with speculation that Naidu would prove to be a formidable force, keeping Modi tightly controlled by demanding numerous concessions, influencing appointments, and securing various favours. This was reminiscent of his approach during NDA 1.0 under Prime Minister Atal Behari Vajpayee. Back in 1998, Vajpayee, determined to maintain his position after losing it in 1996 following a brief 16-day term, returned to power. In 1999, he was voted out but managed to regain power with the steadfast support of allies like the Telugu Desam Party, who remained loyal throughout his one-year tenure.

From 1996 to 2004, during the administrations of H.D. Deve Gowda, Inder Kumar Gujral, and Atal Behari Vajpayee, Naidu en-

joyed significant power in New Delhi. Those nine years, while serving as the chief minister of united Andhra Pradesh and collaborating with prime ministers reliant on his support, shaped Chandrababu Naidu's political persona and national reputation. He seized the opportunity to lay the groundwork for today's Greater Hyderabad, transforming the "twin cities" of Hyderabad and Secunderabad by adding Cyberabad. This period was pivotal in establishing Naidu's local, national, and global stature.

What contemporary commentators often overlook is that during Vajpayee's era, the BJP held only 182 seats in the Lok Sabha, while the TDP had a substantial 29 seats, owing to the size of united Andhra Pradesh. In the current 18th Lok Sabha, Prime Minister Narendra Modi commands 240 MPs, whereas Naidu has a mere 16.

Numbers are significant, but beyond the numbers, the intentions, necessities, and obligations of a political leader with those numbers are crucial. As the chief minister of a reduced Andhra Pradesh, Naidu needs funds to drive development and build a new capital for the state. He aims to ensure a seamless succession within his party, preparing his son Lokesh to take over. With age and wisdom, yet pressed for time, Naidu will remain allied with Modi.

Despite this, Naidu still has the

potential to make an impact. Take into account the demeanor and statements of Naidu and Kumar at the NDA MPs meeting. Nitish Kumar tried to ingratiate himself with Modi, acting deferentially and catering to Modi's ego.

He dismissed the INDIA constituents, eager to cling to his position as the chief minister of Bihar. Furthermore, he cannot rely on the loyalty of his own 12 MPs, who could easily be co-opted by the BJP. In contrast, Naidu exuded confidence and composure. While expressing gratitude for the BJP's support in his victory, he also made sure to thank Rajnath Singh and Nitin Gadkari, underscoring a significant political message.

While Naidu's requests to Modi may primarily revolve around the needs of Andhra Pradesh, as the most experienced chief minister in India today (having first assumed office in September 1995), he holds the potential to play a significant national role as an advocate for a more decentralized governance system.

It's worth recalling that the TDP was founded in 1982 under the leadership of the formidable N.T. Rama Rao, in opposition to the centralization of power in New Delhi and its potential misuse. It was NTR who compelled Prime Minister Indira Gandhi to establish the Sarkaria Commission, which proposed measures to rebalance the relationship between the Centre and the States.

Although NTR primarily served

as a provincial leader during his tenure as chief minister, he assumed a significant national role as a staunch advocate for the rights of the states. He frequently invoked the opening lines of the Constitution, emphasizing that "India, that is Bharat, is a Union of States." One of NTR's renowned quotes, which I've often heard Prime Minister Manmohan Singh use with a smile to ease tensions with chief ministers pressing too hard for demands, was: "The Centre is a conceptual myth."

Throughout Modi's tenure in New Delhi, there has been a noticeable erosion of India's federal structure. He dismantled institutions like the Planning Commission and the National Development Council.

While serving as a chief minister, Modi was a staunch advocate for the states against central authority. However, as prime minister, he has consolidated power not only in Delhi but also within the Prime Minister's Office. Naidu now finds himself in a position where he must advocate for the interests of the states and also lend his voice to those calling for greater balance and transparency in the functioning of the Union government.

While Naidu's involvement in national politics during the United Front and Vajpayee eras is often discussed, many today may not fully grasp the extent of his contributions. He was the pioneering chief minister who capitalized on the opportunities presented by Prime Minister Narasimha Rao

and finance minister Manmohan Singh's policies, engaging directly with the World Bank to implement a state-level structural adjustment program.

This initiative earned him favor among corporate leaders both in India and abroad. Naidu was also the first chief minister to develop a comprehensive long-term development strategy, as evidenced by his groundbreaking "AP: Vision 2020" report. Well before Modi championed the concept of "Amrit Kaal" and the forthcoming 25 years, Naidu was diligently working according to a meticulously crafted plan and strategy.

During my recent meeting with Naidu a few months ago, I candidly expressed my concern that he might be resting too comfortably on his past achievements. While Brand Naidu may have been built on his past accomplishments, it's imperative to focus on what lies ahead. Over the next five years, Naidu's leadership in Andhra Pradesh, particularly in the construction of a new capital and the enhancement of state finances, will undoubtedly be scrutinized. However, equally crucial will be his ability to demonstrate effective political leadership at the national level.

While he has excelled in the former role in the past, the latter represents uncharted territory. To be remembered not only as a leader of Andhra Pradesh but also as a national figure, he must excel in both arenas. *(The writer can be reached at dipakkurmigpltd@gmail.com)*

## DEGREE OF THOUGHT

Dipak Kurmi

## Indian Muslims' under representation in elections 2024

By: Asad Mirza

The confidence with which the BJP's top brass in the country led by the Prime Minister Narendra Modi plunged into the electoral fray in 2024, belied its expectations, finally, and many say saved the country from falling further into an abyss of intolerance and majoritarianism.

In spite of a servile media, which throughout the election campaign became the mouthpiece of the ruling party, and which, once the process had ended, predicted more than 400 seats for the BJP, as per Modi's slogan 'Ab ki baar 400 paar' had to eat a humble pie when the real elections results started to come.

To say that BJP had no inkling of the coming fate would also be a mistake. This is evident by the fact that immediately after the first phase of the electoral process PM Modi immediately changed track and resorted to his old way of sowing the seeds of communalism through his speeches, targeting the Muslims in his speeches, crying and even claiming himself to be a demi-god.

However, all his pranks fell to the ground, as the election results proved. Additionally, what is more interesting here would be to analyse the factors, which were responsible for BJP's defeat, and which in fact will also prove the role played by the Muslims in elections of 2024.

In 2024, 78 Muslim candidates were in the fray, fielded by different political parties, out of them 24 Muslim candidates won the polls or a share of 4.42% in the parliament. In the 2019 elections, 115 Muslim candidates had contested and 26 won last time. That means the current Lok Sabha will have two less Muslim MPs. The only time when the percentage of Muslims MPs in the parliament was near two digits was in 1980 elections, with 49 Muslim MPs securing 9.04% of the MPs representation in the parliament.

There are only 15 Muslim-majority Lok Sabha constituencies, and in further 8 Muslims are in a dominant position, bringing the number of Muslim-influenced constituencies to just 23. In these 15

constituencies, the BJP had nominated Muslim candidates in six (two more than in 2014) and the Congress in nine (three more than in 2014).

This year, the BSP fielded 35 Muslim candidates, the highest among all political parties. The Congress came next, with 19 Muslim candidates, while the TMC had the third highest number of Muslim candidates in the fray this time. The Samajwadi Party (SP) fielded just four Muslim candidates, three contested from UP, while the fourth was being fielded from Andhra.

The maximum Muslim candidates contested in UP (22), followed by West Bengal (17), Bihar (seven), Kerala (six) and Madhya Pradesh (four). Assam, among the highest in terms of share of Muslims in the population, had three Muslim candidates, down from four last time.

One reason for an increasing number of Muslim candidates winning in 2024 was the INDIA alliance. In the last elections Muslims generally voted for the Samajwadi Party or the Congress. So, in the 2019 Lok Sabha, the Muslim votes were divided between Congress and the SP, as they contested separately. But this time the SP and the Congress remained together, so we can say that the Muslim votes remained consolidated.

The diminishing number of Muslim legislators could be attributed to the fact that most Opposition parties shied away from giving tickets to Muslim candidates, fearing a polarising contest since the BJP's advent to power. This accounts for under 5% of the strength of the Lok Sabha, much lower than the overall population of Muslims in India, which stood at 14% in 2011 census.

The reasons for the anti-Muslim consolidation in 2024 can be found in the consecration of the Ram temple and the dominance of the Hindutva narrative in all spheres. At the policy level, there were apprehensions about the Modi government's moves on the Citizenship Amendment Act (CAA) and National Register of Citizens (NRC): many viewed these as government tools to isolate

the community. Additionally, inter-community relations deteriorated further with increasing incidents of lynching occurring with impunity. However, though one may sound happy that so many Muslim candidates won, but this moment also offers an opportunity to the so-called Muslim religious, political and social leaders and even common Muslims to pause and reflect, whether the BJP's loss is their victory or not.

Besides going into the more obvious question of BJP's abhorrence to the Muslims, both as the party's candidates and electorates, the results should make us think where the Indian Muslims are standing 77 years after the independence.

Have they been successful politically, economically, educationally or socially or have they gone down the ladder, looking for affirmative actions form the successive governments but as a community, not doing enough on their own to achieve success. Though, by and large Indian Muslims have since 1947 hitched their wagon to the secular parties, yet they have not been able to form a political party of their own with an all-India presence and acceptability. What should be construed as the reason behind this lackadaisical approach? A lack of desire or an inability on their part?

Well, recently a video surfaced on X, showing a leader of Muslim Ulema saying that he does not endorse Indian Muslims' desire to support a Muslim political leader. In fact it is religious leaders like them who have always betrayed the Muslim community and have always sabotaged any plans by Indian Muslims to rise politically and this results in poor representation of Muslims in the parliament.

Perhaps it is time for the Muslim community to chart out a strategy to float a political party of its own, as they have seen that hitching their wagon to the so-called secular parties has not delivered the desired results for the community. Further to shun the blame of being appeased they need to assert, demand and deliver their own political future. *(The author is a Delhi-based senior political and international affairs commentator)*

## Far Right dominates in France as European parliament elections are on

By: Hansgeorg Hermann

As the European Parliament elections are on from June 6 to June 9, the bourgeois party Les Republicains, founded by Nicolas Sarkozy, the former president and adviser to current President Emmanuel Macron, is plummeting, as is the latter's Renaissance formation. So far, Le Pen's Rassemblement National, with its top candidate and new leader Jordan Bardella, is far ahead in all polls, with more than 31%.

Fascist leader Eric Zemmour and his Movement Reconquete could achieve between 6 and 7% of the vote on June 9. That is apparently reason enough for the former columnist of the conservative paper Le Figaro to declare the competition on the right-wing fringe "utterly useless."

In the duel of right-wing leaders organized by news channel BFM TV, Bardella made Macron's favourite, Valerie Hayer, who is in first place on the Renaissance electoral list for the vote in June, look pretty bad.

On May 1, the satirical weekly Le Canard Enchaîné sneered that the president would probably prefer to argue himself with his hated rivals on the right on the open TV stage. That is how miserable and terribly agitated Hayer has presented herself in public so far. Bardella patronizingly lamented to his counterpart on the day of the TV duel that she would have to carry Macron's "disastrous political record" through the election campaign.

In fact, the protagonists in the country's right-wing spectrum have been arguing for weeks about which position in the Ukraine war could be the most favourable for France—not writing Russia off, threatening to bomb it, or even sending soldiers to the east. Or about increasing youth violence in local schools, or about Macron's labour market and pension reform laws, all of which were pushed through parliament.

It was Macron's now infamous statements to students at the Sorbonne about the suppos-

edly imminent death of Europe if it could not agree on common "security, economy, and democracy" that gave the election campaign a certain spin in the direction of Brussels and Strasbourg. For fascist leader Zemmour in particular, it seemed like the right moment to completely write off the EU in its current state.

The current "bad Europe" supposedly had to be "abolished" because it was driving the "Islamization" of the continent and "tearing us apart." The "good, beautiful Europe" awaits a continent that needs to be reconquered from Islam, hence the party name Reconquete (Reconquest).

It is interesting to note that, according to the latest polls, Zemmour's list is about to catch up with Jean-Luc Melencchon's left-wing La France Insoumise and possibly also overtake the Greens—both are hovering at around 7%.

Zemmour's Reconquete is being led by Marion Marechal, Marine Le Pen's niece, who has declared war on her aunt and her aunt's top man Bardella—apparently because of what she perceives as the "left-wing deviation" of the party, which has been successfully "democratized" by her aunt Marine for years and used to bear the "better name" Front National under her racist grandfather, Jean-Marie Le Pen.

Hardly to be seen or heard is the bourgeois Catholic right of Les Republicains, which has largely written off its former patron. In fact, former head of state Sarkozy can be found much more often at Macron's side than among his former water carriers.

The only thing the Les Republicains grandees have in common is that the judiciary is hot on their heels—especially Sarkozy, who has to defend himself against accusations of fraud and bribery. Les Republicains leader Eric Ciotti, meanwhile, is an admirer and favourite of fascist leader Zemmour; both see France's six million Muslims as the end of Christian rule and culture in Europe. *(IPA Service)*

## POST BAG

### Redeem o'clock for BJP

Sir/Ma'am

The saffron party has managed one and supposedly the only chance to redeem themselves and become an all-serving rather than a billionaire-serving government. While many reports show a decline in poverty rates in the Modi era, their data is found to be incomplete and flawed. A World Bank report titled "Poverty and Shared Prosperity" (2022) indicated that over 70 million of the world population fell below the poverty line of which India alone accounted for 80 percent of that number.

Another study by researchers at the Azim Premji University titled "State of Working India" (2021) indicated that the number of people below the national wage threshold of 375 rupees per day has increased by over 230 million during the pandemic. These figures show that though India is the fifth largest economy of the world it has not yet solved even 1% of its core problem that is poverty. When a country is languishing at 107th position out of 121 in the Global Hunger Index, its Prime Minister should eat some humble pie and not beat any drums about the country's seemingly fabricated development.

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### Noteworthy accomplishment

Sir/Ma'am

Recently, Agnibaan marked the second instance of a privately constructed Indian rocket taking off. This accomplishment is noteworthy because the engine utilized a combination of gas and liquid fuel, a pioneering feat for the nation.

India's encouragement of a private space sector is commendable, as such initiatives transfer risks from public finances to private investment.

Even NASA is urging private enterprises to make significant strides in space exploration. As a recognized space power, India should advocate for global initiatives aimed at restraining the commercialization and militarization of space.

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# Why did young India not vote?

By: Ishika Satwika Singh

As the Lok Sabha 2024 elections unfolded across the nation, a concerning trend has emerged. The youth voter turnout has hit an all time low. According to the Election Commission of India, only 38% of eligible first-time voters, a mere 18 million out of 49 million, have registered to cast their ballots in this crucial electoral process. This stark reality is amplified in states like Bihar, boasting the highest concentration of youth, where a mere 17% of the youth population is registered to vote. Similarly, in Delhi, a meager 21% of its youth have engaged in the electoral process.

## Has the youth voter turnout always been this low?

According to the Election Commission (EC), the voter turnout for the 2019 elections was the highest ever, with a record 67.11% turnout, as compared to the 66.40% in 2014. EC pegged the total number of registered voters at 900 million. Of this, 15 million are said to be first-time voters in the 18-19 age group.

Similarly in 2014, Exit polls found that turnout in that election among Indians aged 18 to 25 surpassed that of the general population for the first time at around 70%. According to Scroll India's young first-time voters played a crucial role in bringing the Bhartiya Janata Party to power at the Centre as in that election, the BJP represented hope but five years later, in 2019, it represented a mixture of fear and hope.

## Why is young India not voting? Let's dive deeper:

According to Mark You Presence, an organization dedicated to empowering young voters in India, several factors contribute to the underwhelming youth voter turnout. Chaitanya Prabhu, the organization's founder while speaking to TOI, emphasized that it's unfair to fault young people for their disinterest in politics. He highlights that from early education through college, there's a pervasive perception that politics is a taboo subject. Studies have also found that a lack of civic education contributes to low youth voter turnout. Young individuals who are not adequately informed about the political process, including how to register and vote, are less likely to engage in electoral activities.

Research indicates that feel-



ings of political alienation, including distrust of political institutions and disillusionment with the political system also discourages young people from voting.

When individuals perceive politics as corrupt or unresponsive to their needs, they may opt out of participating in elections altogether. When young people feel politically alienated, it not only discourages their participation in elections but also undermines the democratic process as a whole. This disenchantment can lead to decreased voter turnout, skewing representation and potentially perpetuating cycles of disillusionment. Hence, political alienation is crucial for promoting a more engaged and inclusive democracy, where all voices feel heard and represented.

Studies show that young people often doubt the efficacy of their vote in influencing political outcomes. If they believe that their participation will not lead to meaningful change, they may choose not to vote. Young people are more likely to vote when they perceive election issues as personally relevant and significant. When political issues align with their values and priorities, they are more motivated to participate in the electoral process.

For instance India's youth continues to grapple with soaring unemployment rates, with 83% of the jobless population belonging to this demographic, according to India Employment Report 2024. If the political parties don't address the challenges that the youth of the country is facing, they get disinterested in voting. These findings highlight the need for political parties and candidates to demonstrate how voting can lead to tangible change.

When young people doubt the efficacy of their vote, they are

less likely to participate in elections. Therefore, efforts to illustrate the impact of voting on addressing pressing issues like unemployment can help mobilize youth engagement in the electoral process.

Another study highlights the practical barriers that impede youth voter turnout, such as registration requirements, lack of convenient polling locations, and restrictive voting laws. These barriers disproportionately affect young people, especially those from marginalized communities. Firstly, these barriers contribute to the underrepresentation of young voices in the political process, skewing democratic outcomes and diminishing the legitimacy of elected officials.

Secondly, failure to remove these barriers perpetuates systemic inequalities, as marginalized communities are disproportionately affected. This worsens existing disparities in political representation and worsens feelings of political alienation among youth, further eroding trust in democratic institutions. Thirdly, overcoming these practical barriers requires concerted efforts from policymakers, election officials, and civil society organizations.

Additionally, socialization also plays a crucial role in shaping young people's attitudes toward politics and voting. Factors such as family background, peer influence, and exposure to political discussions can impact whether individuals develop a habit of voting.

## What happens when young people don't vote?

When the youth of a country doesn't vote, the consequences echo throughout the democratic landscape, shaping both political representation and governance. Firstly, underrepresentation becomes a glaring issue as the absence of youth participation

leads to their marginalization in the political process. Without their input, policies and decisions made by elected officials may fail to adequately address the unique needs and concerns of young people, resulting in a government that overlooks a significant portion of its population.

Moreover, low youth voter turnout undermines the legitimacy of elected officials and the democratic process itself. When a sizable segment of the population abstains from voting, questions arise about the representativeness and effectiveness of the government in addressing the interests of all citizens. This erosion of democratic legitimacy can breed cynicism and apathy among young people, further perpetuating a cycle of disengagement from the political system.

The impact of low youth voter turnout is particularly acute for marginalized communities, worsening existing inequalities. Without active participation from young people, especially those from disadvantaged backgrounds, their voices remain marginalized, leading to policies that fail to address systemic issues such as poverty, discrimination, and lack of access to education and healthcare.

Furthermore, when the youth demographic doesn't engage in voting, their concerns and priorities are often overlooked by policymakers. This neglect can perpetuate cycles of social and economic stagnation, as issues such as unemployment, affordable housing, and environmental sustainability, which disproportionately affect young people, are not given the attention they deserve.

Ultimately, low youth voter turnout contributes to a broader trend of civic disengagement and apathy. When young people feel disconnected from the political process, they may become disillusioned with democratic institutions, leading to further disengagement and alienation from civic life. Addressing this trend requires concerted efforts to not only remove practical barriers to voting but also to cultivate a culture of civic participation and political empowerment among young people.

Only then can the full potential of democracy be realized, with all voices heard and represented in the governance of their societies. (Courtesy: Youth Ki Awaaz)

# Baobab trees come from Madagascar - study reveals that seeds, seedlings floated to mainland Africa and Australia

By: Andrew R Leitch

There are eight species of baobab in the world, and they have a surprising distribution. Six are found in Madagascar, an island in the Indian Ocean; one is found on the continent of Africa; and the last is far away in Australia.

The origin of this group of plants has fascinated people for a long time. I joined a global team of plant genetics and genomics researchers led by Tao Wan and Qing Feng Wang of the Wuhan Botanical Gardens in China and Ilia Leitch of the Royal Botanic Gardens at Kew in London to sequence, assemble and study the genomes of all eight baobab species.

Baobabs are a remarkable key-stone species, capable of supporting a wide diversity of animals for food and shelter. They can reach huge dimensions (depending on the species) in both height and diameter. The largest species can tower above the understorey vegetation. When you encounter a big African baobab on its own, it really is like "Home Tree" in the movie Avatar, not only because of its size, but also because it supports such a huge variety of life.

From an in-depth analysis of genomic data, we were able to explore how much genetic diversity there is in each species. This is important because it can indicate how resilient each species is to some of the big environmental challenges baobabs are facing, such as land use problems and climate change, and hence their risk of extinction.

Our research found that the baobabs we see today all originated in Madagascar. They started evolving to form the distinct species around 21 million years ago. Later, two of these species travelled to Africa and Australia before the lineages went extinct in Madagascar.

## The evolutionary history of baobabs

In the baobab genomes, we found evidence of ancient hybridisation between species. This means they must all have lived together on Madagascar at some point, and interbred. By adding geological and palaeoclimate data, we were able to calculate that on Madagascar, different species of baobab evolved, influenced by ice ages and sea levels that rose and

fell over millions of years.

The African species (*Adansonia digitata*), like the Australian species (*Adansonia gregorii* and also known as "boab"), almost certainly left Madagascar as seeds or seedlings, floating on piles of debris clumped together as rafts, that were carried out to sea by rivers swollen from flash storms. The early African baobab pioneer probably arrived within the last 12 million years.

From there it expanded in number, often with the help of elephants which eat its seeds. Many baobab seeds pass through elephants undamaged and are deposited in piles of dung, up to 65km away from where the elephant ate the baobab fruit.

We think that by the time the baobab trees spread across the continent to west Africa, a cell division mistake had occurred in the generation of the pollen or eggs, resulting in African baobab seedlings having increased chromosome numbers in their cells (from 88 to 168). Such an increase in chromosome number is common in plants and is known as polyploidy. Polyploidy is a process that genetically isolates the plant from its parents. Unlike most animals, plants can self pollinate to increase their numbers. Thus a genetic mistake, in rare circumstances, can generate a new species.

The new polyploid baobab is then likely to have become the dominant species of Africa, replacing its parent lineages across the continent. This may have happened over about 2,500 years, based on calculations of how fast elephants can move baobab seeds.

I say that the polyploid baobab replaced its parents. But did it? We are currently investigating whether the ancient form of baobab (possibly a form named *Adansonia kilima*) still exists in Zimbabwe and on the slopes of Mount Kilimanjaro and beyond.

Scientists assumed this after an analysis of baobab leaves and chromosome numbers in those areas suggested that they came from two different baobab species. But these reports remain to be verified. Further detective work is clearly needed to track down whether *Adansonia kilima*, the baobab with the original chromosome number of 88, still exists.

## Their astonishing growth

# What foods are high in protein?

By: Jenna Fletcher

Eating foods high in protein has many benefits, including muscle building and feeling fuller after eating. Although eating lots of protein may be beneficial, eating a balanced diet is essential to staying healthy.

Protein is an essential nutrient that is important in many bodily functions. It provides the building blocks for cells and helps to maintain muscle mass.

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

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

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

## High protein foods

**1. Salmon**  
Salmon is a fatty fish, meaning it is full of omega-3 fatty acids. Salmon is also an excellent source of protein and can help a person feel more satisfied at meals. One salmon fillet (178 g) contains 39.3 g of protein.

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

**3. Beef**  
Beef offers high amounts of protein per serving. A 3-ounce serving (85 g) of ground beef contains about 21.3 g of protein. There is a range of different types of beef to choose from. It is best to choose lean beef as much as possible to help limit intake of saturated fats to no more than 5-6% of daily calories for optimal heart health.

**4. Tuna**  
Tuna is an excellent and widely available source of protein. It is also a great source of

heart healthy unsaturated fatty acids.

One can (107 g) of tuna contains around 20.3 g of protein. Canned tuna is a helpful pantry staple to keep on hand. It is shelf-stable and relatively affordable compared to many other animal protein sources.

A person can add tuna to salads, sandwiches, and snacks.

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

**6. Pork**  
Lean pork is a good source of protein. Pork roasts and tenderloin are good choices for meals. People should avoid processed pork products such as bacon because they are higher in saturated fat and sodium. One 4 oz (113 g) serving of pork contains around 19.1 g of protein.

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

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

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

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

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

A hardboiled egg makes a convenient high protein snack. Not

every vegetarian diet includes eggs. A lacto-ovo-vegetarian diet includes eggs and dairy.

**10. Greek yogurt**  
Plain, low-fat Greek yogurt packs as much as 19.9 g of protein in a 7 oz (200 g) serving. Flavoured Greek yogurts often contain a lot of added sugar, so be sure to read the nutrition label. For a delicious Greek yogurt breakfast or snack with no added sugars, opt for plain Greek yogurt and top with your favourite fruits, nuts, and seeds.

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

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

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

Use 1-2 tablespoons of nut butter on whole grain toast, in a smoothie, or as a dip for apple slices and fresh veggie sticks for a protein boost. The amount of protein per serving can depend on the type of nut butter.

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

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

**Vegan high protein foods**  
Below are some examples of high protein foods that are suitable for people following a

vegan diet.

**15. Black beans**  
Black beans can be an inexpensive source of protein. A person can prepare black beans in a variety of ways, making them a very versatile ingredient when preparing meals.

One cup (172 g) of black beans contains around 15.2 g of protein.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

**22. Spirulina**  
Spirulina is a bacteria that grows in both fresh and salt waters. It offers a variety of nutrients and protein from a small amount of its powdered form. One cup (112 g) of spirulina contains around 64.4 g of protein. A person can add powdered spirulina to smoothies, salads, soups, and baked goods. Spirulina is also available in tablet form as a dietary supplement.

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

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

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

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

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

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

**27. Peas**  
Peas are high in protein, fiber,

and other nutrients. Frozen peas are inexpensive, easy to find, and suitable in a lot of recipes.

Cooked green peas offer about 4.12 g of protein per half cup (80 g).

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

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

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

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

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

**31. Lentils**  
Lentils pack a hefty dose of plant protein and fiber. They are very affordable and may promote heart health. One cup (198 g) of cooked lentils contains around 17.9 g of protein.

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

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

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

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

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

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

**35. Chia seeds**  
This tiny seed packs around 4.68 g of protein per ounce, along with omega-3s, fiber, and calcium. People following a vegan diet often use chia seeds as an egg substitute, and many people enjoy adding them to smoothies or salads for extra health benefits.

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

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

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

**38. Spelt**  
Spelt is a type of hulled wheat with a very high protein content. It has risen in popularity and is often available with specialty flours. Spelt flour contains 14.5 g of protein per 100 g.

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

**Summary**  
There are many potential sources of protein people can choose from. Many protein sources offer additional nutrients that benefit overall health as well. Aiming for a balanced diet with a variety of protein sources can help a person maximize healthy fats, vitamins, minerals, and fiber. (Courtesy: Medical News Today)

# Far right's election gains rattle EU's traditional powers, leading Macron to call snap polls

Global trade tensions and rising anti-immigrant sentiment cause divisions

**BRUSSELS, June 10:** Far-right parties rattled the traditional powers in the European Union with major gains in parliamentary seats, dealing an especially humiliating defeat to French President Emmanuel Macron, who called snap legislative elections.

Some ballots in the vote for the European Parliament were still being counted Monday, but the outcome showed the 27-nation bloc's parliament membership has clearly shifted to the right. Italian Premier Giorgia Meloni more than doubled her party's seats in the assembly.

And despite being hounded by a scandal involving candidates, the Alternative for Germany extreme right party still rallied enough seats to sweep past the slumping Social Democrats of Chancellor Olaf Scholz.

Sensing a threat from the far right, the Christian Democrats of EU Commission President Ursula von der Leyen had already shifted further to the right on migration and climate ahead of the elections — and were rewarded by remaining by far the biggest group in the 720-seat European Parliament and de facto brokers of the ever-expanding powers of the legislature.

But the surge by nationalist and populist parties across Europe will make it much harder for the assembly to approve legislation on issues ranging from climate change to agriculture policy for the next five years.

Undoubtedly however, the star on a stunning electoral night was the National Rally party of Marine Le Pen, which dominated the French polls to such an extent that Macron

immediately dissolved the national parliament and called for new elections to start later this month. It was a massive political risk since his party could suffer more losses, hobbling the rest of his presidential term that ends in 2027.

Le Pen was delighted to accept the challenge. "We're ready to turn the country around, ready to defend the interests of the French, ready to put an end to mass immigration," she said, echoing the rallying cry of so many far-right leaders in other countries who were celebrating substantial wins.

Her National Rally won over 30% or about twice as much as Macron's pro-European centrist Renew party that is projected to reach less than 15%.

Macron acknowledged the thud of defeat. "I've heard your message, your concerns, and I won't leave them unanswered," he said, adding that calling a snap election only underscored his democratic credentials.

In Germany, the EU's most populous nation, projections indicated that voters had not been dissuaded by the AfD's scandals as it rose to 16.5%, up from 11% in 2019. In comparison, the combined result for the three parties in the German governing coalition barely topped 30%.

Scholz's governing Social Democratic party was humiliated as the Alternative for Germany surged into second place. "After all the prophecies of doom, after the barrage of the last few weeks, we are the second strongest force," a jubilant AfD leader Alice Weidel said.



Overall across the EU, two mainstream and pro-European groups, the Christian Democrats and the Socialists, remained dominant in the voting that concluded Sunday. The gains of the far right came at the expense of the Greens, who were expected to lose about 20 seats and fall back to sixth position in the legislature. Macron's pro-business Renew group also lost big.

After having flirted during campaigning with the idea of working with a political group further right, von der Leyen offered late Sunday to build a coalition with the Social Democrats, which mostly held its ground in the elections, and the pro-business Liberals.

"We are by far the strongest party. We are the anchor of stability," von der Leyen said. Reflecting on the rise of the far-right and good showing of the far-left, she added that the result brings "great stability for the parties in the center. We all have interest in stability and we all want a strong and effective Europe."

In the legislature, provisional results showed that the Christian Democrats would have 189 seats, up 13, the Social Democrats 135, down 4 and the pro-business Renew group 83, down 19. The Greens slumped to 53, down 18.

Germany, traditionally a stronghold for environmentalists, exemplified the humbling of the Greens, who were predicted to fall from 20% to 12%. With further losses expected in France and elsewhere, the Greens' defeat could well have an impact on the EU's climate change policies, still the most progressive across the globe.

Senior party members in the EU's parliament were due to hold talks on Monday to see what alliances might be established. Key to the future working of the assembly will be whether the far right unites in a strong enough bloc to challenge the main pro-European groups.

The elections come at a testing time for voter confidence in a bloc of some 450 million people. Over the last five years, the EU has been shaken by the coronavirus pandemic, an economic slump and an energy crisis fueled by Russia's war in Ukraine. But campaigning often focused on issues in individual countries rather than on broader European interests.

Since the last EU election in 2019, populist or far-right parties now lead governments in three nations — Hungary, Slovakia and Italy — and are part of ruling coalitions in others including Sweden, Finland and, soon, the Netherlands. (AP)

# Ukraine's air force may keep F-16 warplanes abroad to protect them from Russian strikes



**KYIV, June 10:** Ukraine may keep some of the F-16 fighter jets it's set to receive from its Western allies at foreign bases to protect them from Russian strikes, a senior Ukrainian military officer said on Monday.

Belgium, Denmark, the Netherlands and Norway have committed to providing Ukraine with over 60 U.S.-made F-16 fighter jets to help it fend off Russian attacks.

Ukrainian pilots are currently undergoing training to fly the warplanes ahead of the deliveries expected to start later this year.

Serhii Holubtsov, head of aviation within Ukraine's air force, said that "a certain number of aircraft will be stored at secure air bases outside of Ukraine so that they are not targeted here."

Holubtsov told the U.S. government-funded Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty that those F-16s could be used to replace damaged aircraft as they undergo repairs as well as for training Ukrainian pilots abroad.

"This way, we can always have a certain number of aircraft in the operational fleet that corresponds to the number of pilots we have," he said. "If there are more pilots, there will be more aircraft in Ukraine."

Russian President Vladimir Putin has warned that Moscow could consider launching strikes at facilities in NATO countries if they host the warplanes used in Ukraine. "If they are stationed at air bases outside the Ukrainian borders and used in combat, we will have to see how and where to strike the assets used in combat against us," Putin said last year. "It poses a serious danger of NATO being further drawn into the conflict."

In March, the Russian leader again warned Ukraine's Western allies against providing air bases from where the F-16s could launch sorties against the Kremlin's forces. Those bases would become a "legitimate target," he said.

"F-16s are capable of carrying nuclear weapons, and we will also need to take that into account while organizing our combat operations," Putin stated.

The F-16s require a high standard of runways and reinforced hangars to protect them from attacks on the ground. It's not clear how many Ukrainian air bases can meet those requirements, and Russia would be certain to quickly target a few that could accommodate them once the jets arrive.

Ukraine's Western allies are trying to bolster military support for Kyiv as Russian troops have launched attacks along the more than 1,000-kilometer (620-mile) frontline, taking advantage of a lengthy delay in U.S. military aid.

Ukraine is currently fighting to hold back a Russian push near its second-largest city of Kharkiv, less than 30 kilometers (less than 20 miles) from the border.

The U.S. and other NATO allies have responded to the latest Russian offensive by allowing Ukraine to use weapons they deliver to Kyiv to carry out limited attacks inside Russia.

The decision could potentially impede Moscow's ability to concentrate its troops for a bigger offensive near Kharkiv and in other border areas.

Last week, Putin responded by warning that Moscow "reverses the right" to arm adversaries of the West worldwide.

"If they supply (weapons) to the combat zone and call for using these weapons against our territory, why don't we have the right to do the same?" Putin said.

He didn't specify where such arms might be sent. The U.S. has said that Russia has turned to North Korea and Iran to beef up its stock of relatively simple weapons, but Moscow could dip into its stock of high-tech missiles to share with adversaries of the West if Putin decides to fulfill his threat. (AP)

# Pak PM Sharif vows to 'eliminate terrorism' after 7 soldiers killed in attack

**ISLAMABAD, June 10:** Pakistan Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif on Monday pledged to "relentlessly eliminate terrorism" from the country after seven soldiers, including a Captain, were killed in a terrorist attack in the restive Khyber Pakhtunkhwa province a day earlier.

The incident occurred when the convoy of security personnel heading towards Kachi Qamar, Sarband Post of the Lakki Marwat district, came under attack by the terrorists.

The terrorists blasted an improvised explosive device (IED) initially and later opened fire on the convoy. "Deeply saddened by the martyrdom of Pak Army personnel, including a Captain in a targeted attack in Lakki Marwat District," Sharif said in a post on X.

"The sacrifices of our brave soldiers and citizens is a debt on us that we must repay by relentlessly eliminating terrorism from our nation," he said, condoling the deaths.

According to the security officials, Lakki Marwat is a hotbed of the Tehreek-e-Taliban Pakistan (TTP) terrorists. Pakistan has been facing a resurgent TTP, which allegedly has a strong presence in Afghanistan and uses its territory to hide and train and also launch cross-border attacks. Islamabad has been pushing Kabul to take action against them, but so far, it has been of no avail. (PTI)

# Blinken returns to Mideast as Israel-Hamas cease-fire proposal hangs in balance after hostage rescue



**CAIRO, June 10:** U.S. Secretary of State Antony Blinken returns to the Middle East this week as a proposed Israel-Hamas cease-fire deal hangs in the balance after the dramatic rescue of four Israeli hostages held in Gaza in a major military raid and turmoil in Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's government.

With no firm response yet from Hamas to the proposal received 10 days ago, Blinken on Monday will start his eighth diplomatic mission to the region since the conflict began in October. He will meet with Egyptian President Abdel Fattah el-Sissi in Cairo before traveling to Israel, Jordan and Qatar.

While President Joe Biden, Blinken and other U.S. officials have praised the hostage rescue, the operation resulted in the deaths of a large number of Palestinian civilians that may complicate the cease-fire push by emboldening Israel and hardening Hamas' resolve to carry on fighting in the war it initiated with its Oct. 7 attacks in Israel.

"It's hard to say how Hamas will process

this particular operation and what it will do to its determination about whether it will say yes or not," Biden's national security adviser, Jake Sullivan, said Sunday. "We have not gotten a formal answer from Hamas at this time."

In his talks with el-Sissi and Qatari leaders, whose countries are the main mediators with Hamas in the cease-fire negotiations, Blinken will stress the importance of persuading the militants to accept the three-phase proposal on the table. The plan calls for the release of more hostages and a temporary pause in hostilities that could lead to the complete withdrawal of Israeli forces from Gaza.

"We are hopeful that with enough of a chorus, the international community all speaking with one voice, Hamas will get to the right answer," Sullivan told ABC's "This Week."

But Hamas may not be the only obstacle. Although the deal has been described as an Israeli initiative and thousands of Israelis have demonstrated in support of the deal, Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu has expressed skepticism, saying what has been presented publicly is not accurate and rejecting calls for Israel to cease all fighting until Hamas is eradicated.

Netanyahu's far-right allies have threatened to collapse his government if he implements the plan, and Benny Gantz, a popular centrist, resigned on Sunday from the three-member War Cabinet after saying he would do if the prime minister did not formulate a new plan for postwar Gaza. In the aftermath of the

hostage rescue, Netanyahu had urged him not to step down.

Blinken has met with Netanyahu, Defense Minister Yoav Gallant, Gantz and Israeli opposition leader Yair Lapid on nearly all of his previous trips to Israel. Officials said Gantz's resignation would not necessarily affect Blinken's schedule. U.S. State Department spokesman Matthew Miller said Friday that Blinken would use the trip to "discuss how the cease-fire proposal would benefit both Israelis and Palestinians."

Miller said the deal would not only alleviate the humanitarian crisis in Gaza but also set the stage for a reduction in tension along the Israel-Lebanon border and create conditions for broader Israeli integration with its Arab neighbors, strengthening Israel's long-term security.

Despite Blinken's roughly once-a-month visits to the region since the war began, the conflict has ground on with more than 36,700 Palestinians killed, according to the Gaza health ministry, which does not differentiate between civilians and combatants in its counts. Meanwhile, the war has severely hindered the flow of food, medicine and other supplies to Palestinians, who are facing widespread hunger. U.N. agencies say more than 1 million people in Gaza could experience the highest level of starvation by mid-July.

In Jordan, Blinken will participate in an emergency international conference on improving the flow of aid to Gaza. (AP)

# 90 countries to attend Swiss-hosted Ukraine peace summit that Russia is snubbing

**BERN, June 10:** Nearly 90 countries and organizations, half from Europe, have confirmed attending the Swiss-hosted Ukraine peace summit over the weekend despite Russia's refusal to participate, Switzerland's president said Monday.

Viola Amherd told reporters in the Swiss capital that the summit, on Saturday and Sunday, will aim to chart a path toward possible peace nearly 28 months after Russian forces invaded Ukraine and the war grinding on.

"This is not about propaganda," said Amherd. "This is about the basis of humanitarian aid provided by Switzerland, based on fostering peace (and) to provide a platform to initiate a dialogue."

The Swiss president added that most participants — about half of which will be represented at the level of head of state or government — are country leaders, but "a handful" are from organizations like the United Nations.

Some heads of state or government, including French President Emmanuel Macron and German Chancellor Olaf Scholz, are expected to attend the summit at the Buergenstock resort overlooking Lake Lucerne.

U.S. Vice President Kamala Harris will take part on behalf of the United States. President Joe Biden's national security adviser, Jake Sullivan, will join Harris as part of the U.S. delegation.

About 160 invitations have been sent out and Amherd said it was not a "disappointment" for the Swiss government that fewer than 100 have so far announced participation in the first phase of the peace process.

Swiss authorities said the final list of participants was expected by Friday, but key developing countries like Turkey, South Africa and Brazil haven't indicated whether they would attend. India they said, will take part but it isn't clear at which level.

Brazil and China said they wouldn't take part unless both sides — including Russia — were at the table, according to Swiss officials.

Beijing has been one of the top supporters of Russian President Vladimir Putin since the war started, and has said the criteria for its participation will be "hard to meet."

Foreign Minister Ignazio Cassis also addressed reporters, saying Switzerland has repeatedly acknowledged that there cannot be a peace process without Russia. "The question is not whether Russia will be on board, the question is when."

He also said Switzerland is in frequent contact with authorities in Moscow about the conference.

Ukraine has helped coordinate the summit, and President Volodymyr Zelenskyy is expected to attend. Cassis said Swiss officials had to balance considerations that Ukraine might not have attended if Russia was represented.

Swiss officials say the conference aims to set a course toward "lasting peace" in Ukraine, to reach a "common understanding" toward getting there, and draw up the "roadmap" on how to get both sides involved in talks. Nuclear security, humanitarian aid and food security are also on the summit's agenda. (AP)

# South Korea says North Korea is installing its own loudspeakers along the border

**SEOUL, June 10:** South Korea's military on Monday said it's detecting signs that North Korea is installing its own loudspeakers along their heavily armed border, a day after the South blared anti-Pyongyang propaganda broadcasts over its speakers for the first time in years as the rivals engage in a Cold War-style psychological warfare.

The South's resumption of its loudspeaker broadcasts on Sunday was in retaliation for the North sending over 1,000 balloons filled with trash and manure over the last couple of weeks. North Korea has described its balloon campaign as a response to South Korean civilian groups using balloons to fly anti-North Korean propaganda leaflets across the border. Pyongyang has long condemned such activities as it's extremely sensitive to any outside criticism of leader Kim Jong Un's authoritarian rule.

The tit-for-tat over speakers and balloons has deepened tensions between the Koreas as talks over the North's nuclear ambitions remain stalled.

In their latest nuclear planning talks in Seoul, U.S. and South Korean officials reviewed an undisclosed guideline mapping out their nuclear deterrence strategies to counter growing North Korean threats.

They also discussed strengthening the allies' combined military training involving strategic U.S. assets, the participants said in a news conference.

Cho Chang-rae, South Korea's deputy defense minister for policy, and Vipin Narang, acting U.S. assistant secretary of defense for space policy, refused specific comment when asked to assess the threat posed by North Korea's balloon activities.

Seoul's Joint Chiefs of Staff didn't immediately comment on

the number of suspected North Korean speakers or where along the border they were spotted being installed. It said the speakers were still silent as of Monday afternoon.

South Korea on Sunday activated its loudspeakers for an initial broadcast into North Korea, which reportedly included news, criticism about North Korea's government and South Korean pop music.

Hours later on Sunday, Kim's powerful sister warned that the South created a "prelude to a very dangerous situation." She said South Korea would witness an unspecified "new response" from the North if it continues with the broadcasts and fails to stop civilian activists from flying anti-



North Korean propaganda leaflets across the border.

"I sternly warn Seoul to immediately cease its dangerous activities that would further provoke a crisis of confrontation," Kim Yo Jong said through state media.

Lee Sung Joon, spokesperson of South Korea's Joint Chiefs of Staff, said Kim's comments represented a heightened verbal threat from North Korea but he did not provide a specific assessment on the actions the North might take. Lee said the South was conducting broadcasts in sites where soldiers have sufficient protection and are equipped to swiftly hit back if attacked.

"(We) don't think that they could provoke us that easily," Lee said during a briefing on Monday.

The Joint Chiefs of Staff didn't specify the border area where Sunday's broadcast took place or what was played over the speakers. It said that any additional broadcasts are "entirely dependent on North Korea's behavior."

The South withdrew loudspeakers from border areas in 2018, during a brief period of engage-

ment with the North under Seoul's previous liberal government.

In deciding to restart the loudspeaker broadcasts, South Korea's presidential office berated Pyongyang for attempting to cause "anxiety and disruption" in the South and stressed that North Korea would be "solely responsible" for any future escalation of tensions.

The North said its balloon campaign came after South Korean activists sent over balloons filled with anti-North Korean leaflets, as well as USB sticks filled with popular South Korean songs and dramas. Pyongyang is extremely sensitive to such material and fears it could demoralize frontline troops and residents and eventually weaken leader Kim Jong Un's grip on power, analysts say.

In 2015, when South Korea restarted loudspeaker broadcasts for the first time in 11 years, North Korea fired artillery rounds across the border, prompting South Korea to return fire, according to South Korean officials. No casualties were reported. (AP)

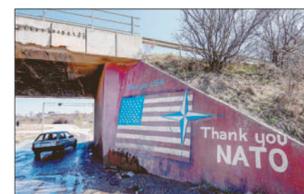
# Kosovo celebrates 25th anniversary of the withdrawal of Serbian forces after NATO bombing

**PRISTINA, June 10:** Kosovo on Monday celebrated the 25th anniversary of the withdrawal of Serbian forces following a 78-day NATO bombing campaign, which opened the way for its independence nine years later.

Ethnic Albanian separatists of the Kosovo Liberation Army fought a 1998-1999 war with Serbian forces in what was then the province of Kosovo. About 13,000 people, mostly ethnic Albanians, died and about 1 million were deported until the NATO bombing resulted in the Serbian withdrawal and the establishment of an international force known as Kosovo Force, or KFOR. Kosovo declared independence

in 2008, which Belgrade doesn't recognize. Former U.K. Prime Minister Tony Blair, who was in office at the time, took part in a special parliamentary session in the capital, Pristina, to celebrate the anniversary. Former Italian Premier Massimo D'Alema and Albanian Prime Minister Edi Rama participated in other ceremonies.

"The fight for Kosovo was not only for Kosovo but for all of us, including my own country, who believe that freedom and justice are worth standing up for and if necessary, fighting for," Blair said in a speech. "Had we allowed Kosovo and its people to continue to be brutalized, their rights stripped from them, their futures stolen, our



own future in countries like mine would have been diminished."

Kosovo-Serbia ties remain tense and the 13-year-long normalization talks facilitated by the European Union have failed to make

progress, especially following a shootout last September between masked Serb gunmen and Kosovo police that left four people dead. NATO-led KFOR peacekeepers have increased their numbers and equipment along the Kosovo-Serbia border.

The EU and the United States are pressing both sides to implement agreements that Serbian President Aleksandar Vucic and Kosovo Prime Minister Albin Kurti reached in February and March last year.

Serbia's and Kosovo's chances of joining the EU one day are jeopardized by their refusal to compromise, according to the bloc's foreign policy chief, Josep Borrell. (AP)

## 2 dead, houses damaged in flash flood in Sikkim village



**GANGTOK, June 10:** Two persons died and several houses were damaged after heavy rain triggered a flash flood in Majua village in Sikkim's Namchi district on Monday morning, officials said.

The incident took place in Yangang area of the district, around 53 km from here, they said.

"Apart from the two deaths, a woman was seriously injured after the flash flood hit the village around 6 am, while another person is missing. The injured has been rushed to Singtam District Hospital. At least seven houses have also been damaged," an official said.

The state's disaster management teams are carrying out rescue work at the spot with the help of police personnel and locals, he said.

Sikkim Krantikari Morcha supremo Prem Singh Tamang took stock of the situation. He took oath as the state's chief minister for a second term later on Monday. (PTI)

# CM terms ambush as attack on himself and people of state

## Manipur CM condemns ambush on advance security convoy

**IMPHAL, June 10:** Manipur chief minister N. Biren Singh on Monday condemned the ambush on his advance security convoy near Kotlen in Kangpokpi district in which a driver was injured.

He termed it a direct attack on himself and the people of the state, assuring that the "rule of law" will be established.

Speaking to reporters at Shija hospital, where the injured person is undergoing treatment, Singh said, "It is very unfortunate and highly condemnable. It's an attack on the chief minister, which means a direct attack on the people of the state. The state government has to do something...we will take a decision."

Singh explained that fortunately the person was not seriously injured. He added, "Earlier, the state government did not retaliate much in the hope that an understanding could be achieved through talks."

"However, certain violent acts have been perpetuated on people as if a state government does not exist. This has hurt me deeply. There have been consistent insults



to existing state machineries, and we have tolerated them for so long. The attack on an advance security team of the CM is an attack on the CM himself," Singh said, adding, "All are requested to decide for themselves who are with the government and who are against it."

On his recent interactions with the affected people of Jiribam,

Singh said, "I spoke with them over the phone and told them I would come in two or three days and look into their requirements, and they were happy. I returned from Delhi as the situation in the state was important."

He had gone to Delhi to attend the swearing-in ceremony of Prime Minister Narendra Modi, which he

described as his responsibility as a Chief Minister.

Earlier in the day, suspected militants ambushed the advance security convoy of Manipur chief minister N Biren Singh in Kangpokpi district, leaving one person injured, police said.

The convoy was on its way to violence-hit Jiribam district when it came under attack around 10.30 am near Kotlen village along a stretch of National Highway-53, they said. Multiple gunshots were fired at the vehicles of the security forces, who retaliated, a police officer said.

Meanwhile, additional state and central forces, including Assam Rifles and CRPF, rushed to the ambush site and launched search operations to apprehend the perpetrators. However, no arrests have been made.

Jiribam district has been affected by violence since June 6. More than 70 houses have been torched, along with two police outposts and one forest beat office. Around 600 people have been displaced due to the violence. (PTI)

## Prem Singh Tamang takes oath as Sikkim CM



**GANGTOK, June 10:** Sikkim Krantikari Morcha (SKM) supremo Prem Singh Tamang on Monday took oath as the chief minister of the Himalayan state for the second consecutive term.

The 56-year-old politician was administered the oath of office and secrecy by Governor Lakshman Prasad Acharya at a function held in Paljor Stadium in Gangtok.

Eleven other ministers also took oath along with him.

Thousands of SKM supporters turned up to witness the swearing-in ceremony and cheered for their leader who took oath in Nepali.

The stadium erupted in loud sounds of firecrackers as Tamang was sworn in. The bursting of firecrackers is otherwise prohibited in Sikkim.

Along with the chief minister, 11 other ministers were sworn in, including Sonam Lama, Arun Kumar Upreti, Samdup Lepcha, Bhim Hang Limboo, Bhoj Raj Rai, G T Dhungel, Puran Kumar Gurung, Pintos Namgyal Lepcha, Nar Bahadur Dahal, Raju Basnet and Tshering Thendup Bhutia.

The council of ministers in Sikkim can have a maximum strength of 12 including the chief minister.

While three ministers -- Arun Kumar Upreti, Nar Bahadur

Dahal and Raju Basnet -- took oath in Nepali, eight other ministers took oath in English.

Only four ministers of the previous government have been retained.

The chief minister has rewarded two SKM MLAs Bhoj Raj Rai and Raju Basnet with ministerial berths for defeating SDF supremo and former chief minister Pawan Kumar Chamling in Poklok-Kamrang and Namcheyung assembly constituencies respectively.

Tamang also included Nar Bahadur Dahal, a first-time MLA from Khamdong-Singtam, in the cabinet for defeating Mani Kumar Sharma, who had revolted against the chief minister in the previous term.

Women, however, failed to get representation in the Tamang cabinet despite four women getting elected on SKM tickets, including the CM's wife Krishna Kumari Rai.

Around 30,000 SKM leaders and workers attended the elaborate swearing-in ceremony for which the state government had declared a half working day for government employees and closed the educational institutions around the state capital as part of security measures for the function. (PTI)

## RNPO expresses concern over violence in Jiribam

**IMPHAL, June 10:** The Rongmei Naga People's Organisation (RNPO) - Assam, Manipur, Nagaland and elsewhere - said it is deeply concerned regarding the flare up of communal tension and ethnic violence between the Kuki-Zo tribal groups and the Meitei community in the Jiribam in Manipur.

In a statement issued on Monday, the RNPO said that in this flare up properties worth crores of rupees have been burnt down and destroyed on both sides. Besides, lives of innocent citizens of both the communities have been affected.

"The RNPO on behalf of the entire Rongmei community would like to appeal to the leaders including civil society organisations and general public of both the communities to extend the olive branch in order to save the innocent general

public and their valuable property (assets)".

The RNPO also appealed to the armed outfits and militant groups of both the communities to shun violence and engage in dialogue to restore normalcy in the strife torn state at the earliest in the larger public interest.

The RNPO, while sharing the grief and sorrow of the bereaved families at the loss of their near and dear ones, strongly condemned those violent activities perpetrated through mob and armed outfits to the innocent common public on both sides. It also appealed to both the central and state governments to deploy adequate security to protect the lives and properties of the innocent public of both the communities.

It further said that Jiribam is one of the smallest districts with a cosmopolitan demography in the

state. Kuki-Zo, Rongmei Naga, Meitei, Meitei Pangal, Bengali, Khasi, etc. communities have been residing together peacefully for the past many years and that the RNPO appealed to all the communities concerned residing in the district to restore and maintain social harmony.

Further, the RNPO said Jiribam district shares its border with Tamenglong district, whose population consists of Zeme, Liangmai, Rongmei, Inpui (Naga groups) and also some Kuki-Zo pockets and Khasi. It appealed to both the state government and the public to respect the sanctity of the district boundary of the respective district prior to the creation of seven new districts in 2016 by the state government.

The RNPO then reminded the people that Naga people in their consultative meeting held under

the aegis of United Naga Council (UNC) on May 16 at Senapati neutralized they would maintain neutrality, but play the role of peace maker in the ongoing Kuki-Zo Meitei ethnic conflict.

"As the Rongmei Naga group is part and parcel of the big Naga family, we have been maintaining neutrality with regard to the ongoing ethnic conflict between the Kuki-Zo and Meitei communities," the RNPO added.

However, the RNPO said the Naga community has been extending humanitarian services to both the Meitei and Kuki-Zo innocent public whenever and wherever they have been in need of their services. Hence, it appealed to both the communities to not harm the Rongmei innocent people and their properties wherever they live within the state or outside. (NNN)

## Gambegre MLA resigns after being elected as MP

**SHILLONG, June 10:** Three-time Gambegre legislator, Saleng A Sangma, has tendered his resignation as member of the Meghalaya Legislative Assembly after being elected as an MP from the Tura Lok Sabha seat.

His resignation was accepted by Assembly's commissioner and secretary, Andrew Simons on Monday. Saleng was accompanied by the working president of the Meghalaya Pradesh Congress Committee (MPCC) and former minister, Deborah Marak and Congress Mahilas.

Saleng defeated chief minister's sister and former Tura MP, Agatha K Sangma by a massive margin of over 1.55 lakh votes.

Addressing the media, Saleng said, "I got elected for the Lok Sabha and hence, I have decided to vacate the Gambegre legislative assembly seat." He informed that he would discuss with his people and party leaders in regards to the selection of an apt candidate for the upcoming bye-election for the Gambegre seat. (NNN)

## PM Modi congratulates Tamang on his second innings as Sikkim CM

**NEW DELHI, June 10:** Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Monday congratulated Prem Singh Tamang on taking oath as the chief minister of Sikkim and wished him a fruitful tenure.

Modi said on X that he looked forward to working with Tamang for the state's progress.

"Congratulations to Shri @PSTamangGolay on taking oath as the chief minister of Sikkim. Wishing him a fruitful tenure and looking forward to working with him for Sikkim's progress," the prime minister said.

Tamang, 56, has become chief minister for the second consecutive term.

His Sikkim Krantikari Morcha returned to power in the state by a landslide victory, winning 31 seats in the 32-member assembly. The opposition Sikkim Democratic Front, which ruled the state for 25 years in a row till 2019, could manage only one seat.

Meanwhile, Tamang asserted that his party SKM would continue supporting the NDA as the central government under Prime Minister Modi has assisted in the development of Sikkim.

Speaking to PTI Video, Tamang said, "The priority of our government in this term would be BIPASHA (Bijli, Paan, Sadak, Swasthya, Siksha, Rojgar)." He said his party won the assembly elections because of the development work done by his government despite facing severe challenges during the COVID-19 pandemic.

On his party's support to the Modi government, "In my first tenure as well, we had supported the NDA... we will always support NDA as they have supported our state."

"Earlier, Sikkim did not get any support from the Union government, but after Modi ji came to power, we are getting full support for the development of the state," he added. (PTI)

## Recognition of Khasi, Garo languages, ILP among top priorities of Tura MP

**SHILLONG, June 10:** Newly elected Tura MP Saleng A Sangma on Monday asserted that the inclusion of Khasi and Garo languages of Meghalaya in the Eighth Schedule of the Constitution and the implementation of Inner Line Permit in the northeastern state would be among his top priorities.



The Congress leader resigned as the MLA of Gambegre seat, in a letter to Andrew Simon, commissioner secretary

of Meghalaya Assembly.

Simon, who was also the opposition whip in the assembly, said people of Garo Hills have voted for him as they have lost faith in the ruling NPP and its candidate Agatha K Sangma. He has defeated three-time MP Agatha K Sangma by a margin of over 1.55 lakh votes.

"As an MP, I would take up various issues but my top priorities would be getting recognition for Khasi and Garo languages, implementation of Inner Line Permit (ILP) and improvement in health and education sectors in Meghalaya," he said.

When asked about allegations of Assam chief minister Himanta Biswa Sarma that people of a particular religion did not support the NDA in parts of Northeast, Sangma said, "He might have some mental disorder... he was the one who played politics by openly warning and even shutting down many religious minority institutions in Assam." (PTI)

## Urban affairs minister reviews Mission Flood Free Guwahati

**HT Bureau GUWAHATI, June 10:** State housing and urban affairs and irrigation minister Ashok Singhal on Monday reviewed progress of Mission Flood Free Guwahati, Mission Amrut and Swachh Bharat Mission (Urban).

Senior officials of the technical branch of the state housing and urban affairs department and directorate of urban and rural planning were also present on the occasion.

The minister discussed the long-term measures to be undertaken under Mission Flood Free Guwahati to pave the way for an effective solution to the perennial problem of artificial flooding in the city.

Noting that excess water coming down from the hills of Meghalaya as one of the reasons behind artificial flooding in the city, Singhal brainstormed on ideas to divert the water directly to Deepor Beel or Brahmaputra without allowing the water to enter the city.

The minister also held discus-

sions regarding complete decontamination of the sewerage system of the city. He laid stress on cleaning the natural water sources, stopping illegal excavation and illegal construction in the interest of freeing sewers, rivers and reservoirs. He stressed on taking effective measures to prevent encroachment. He directed the officials of the Guwahati Municipal Corporation and Mission Flood Free Guwahati to work in coordination with the councils of the civic body as well as the forest department for this purpose.

In another important meeting held on Monday, the latest status of urban drinking water supply schemes undertaken in various cities of the state under Amrut 2.0 was reviewed. The meeting also reviewed the Nagaon Water Supply Scheme worth ₹ 238.33 crore, Dibrugarh Water Supply Scheme worth ₹ 193.93 crore and Silchar Water Supply Scheme worth Rs 177.47 crore under the first phase of the mission. Singhal also took

stock of water supply schemes under Amrut 2.0 in Bihpuria, Jorhat, North Lakhimpur, Lakhimpur (Kachar), Kokrajhar (2nd phase), and Rangia.

Singhal also emphasised on solid waste management, wastewater management, proper supervision of public toilets and ensuring 100 per cent garbage collection from the houses of residents of different municipalities under the Swachh Bharat Mission (Urban). He also held two other important meetings with the technical branch of the housing and urban affairs department and top officials of the directorate of urban and rural planning.

The meetings were attended by Guwahati Metropolitan Development Authority vice-chairperson Mukuta Deka, commissioner-secretary of housing and urban affairs department Kabita Padmanabhan, Guwahati Municipal Corporation commissioner Meghvidhi Dahal and Kamrup (Metropolitan) district commissioner Sumit Sattawan among others.

## HSYF blames cement factory of destroying Bthar forest

**SHILLONG, June 10:** The Hima Sutnga Youth Federation (HSYF) demanded the Meghalaya state government to direct the Cosmos Cement Limited to stop mining of limestone and felling of trees from forest areas under Elaka Sutnga in East Jaintia Hills.

HSYF president Nangbha Nongtdu alleged that the cement company was responsible in destroying the Bthar forest situated along Umthe,

Umkbob, Tongspo and Umshngain villages under Elaka Sutnga.

Nongtdu claimed that the forest area was situated not less than 2-3 kilometer to the company and to acting Doloi gave the permission to its management to utilize it.

He added that the Dorbar of Elaka Sutnga had held a meeting and had taken a unanimous decision to not allow the mining of limestone, sand

and felling of trees in the forest areas. However, the illegal activities of the company continue unabated.

"As residents of Elaka Sutnga we don't want to take matters into our hands and hence, we urge the state government and the department concerned to intervene and direct the Cosmos Cement Limited to stop utilizing the forest of the Elaka," said Nongtdu. (NNN)

## Tripura govt to start paddy procurement from June 15

**Paddy to be procured at minimum price of ₹ 21.83 per kg**

**AGARTALA, June 10:** The Tripura government will start procurement of paddy directly from farmers from June 15, state food and supplies minister Sushanta Chowdhury said on Monday.

Paddy will be procured at a minimum support price of ₹ 21.83 per kg and the process would continue till July 15, he said.

"The state government has decided to procure 15,000 metric tonnes of paddy at an MSP of ₹ 21.83 per kg from the farmers in 31 blocks of six districts. The process will commence on June 15 and will continue till July 15," Chowdhury told reporters.



State agriculture minister Ratan Lal Nath, cooperative minister Sukla Charan Noatia, besides Chowdhury, will flag

off the paddy procurement process at Julaibari in South Tripura district.

Chowdhury said that paddy procurement has brought a sea

change in the financial condition of the farmers.

The minister said that the amount would be credited to the farmers' accounts within 24 hours of procurement.

Chowdhury, who also holds the transport portfolio, said that the Centre could not declare Maharaja Bir Bikram Airport as an international one due to the imposition of the model code of conduct.

"Once the immigration facility is granted to the airport by the Union ministry of home affairs, the international service from Agartala to Bangladesh's Chittagong will start," he said. (PTI)

No.Misc/2/XXXVI/1023

### SHORT TENDER NOTICE

Dtd.10/06/2024

Sealed tender in prescribed form affixing court fee stamp of Rs. 0.25 (Rupees Eight & paise twenty five) only for each group separately are hereby invited from Registered Contractors of Irrigation Deptt., Assam for the following works and will be received up to 2.00 P.M. on 24-06-2024 and will be opened on the same date and place at 3.00 P.M. by the undersigned in presence of tenderer or their authorised representative if any so desire.

In case of any unavoidable circumstances or any Govt. Holiday being declared on that day, the same will be received and opened on the next working day at the same place and time.

Sl No.	Name of Scheme	Approximate value of works	Time of completion
1	Renovation of Left Side Canal of Athaibari F.I.S. under SOPD(G) for the year 2023-24..	Rs. 24.997 L in a single group.	6 (Six) months
2	Renovation of Earthen Canal and raising of Spillway Crest of Konnyamoti F.I.S. under SOPD(G) for the year 2023-24..	Rs. 24.962 L in a single group.	6 (Six) months

Location :- Kokrajhar West Sub-Division (Irrigation), Ramfalbil & Gossaigaon Sub-Division (Irrigation), Gossaigaon.

Approx. Value of Work :- Rs.49.959 L (As per Group List)

Time of Completion :- As per Group List.

Earnest Money :- 2% of the value of the Work (1% for S.C.S./T/O.B.C. & M.O.B.C. Category)

Detailed specification of item & other terms and condition may be obtained from O/O the Undersigned on written request depositing a sum of Rs. 300.00 (Rupees Three hundred) only by cash on all working days during office hours.

Sd/-Executive Engineer  
Gossaigaon Kokrajhar West Division  
(Irrigation), Gossaigaon.

IPR/BTC/2024-25/07

# Top leaders from Nepal, Maldives, Mauritius, Seychelles call on President Murmu

**NEW DELHI, June 10:** President Droupadi Murmu on Monday met top leaders from Nepal, Maldives, Mauritius, and Seychelles and discussed different development-related matters of mutual interest.

During her meeting with Nepalese Prime Minister Pushpa Kamal Dahal 'Prachanda', she said Nepal is a priority partner under India's 'Neighbourhood First' policy and conveyed the country's commitment to "further strengthen our unique ties".

Both the leaders discussed ways to take forward the developmental initiatives across various sectors in Nepal, which are benefiting the people of the two countries, a statement issued by the Rashtrapati Bhavan said.

Welcoming Maldivian President Mohamed Muizzu, Murmu conveyed her greetings to the new government and the people of Maldives. She expressed confidence that the island nation will continue on the path of prosperity and development under Muizzu's leadership.



"Both leaders noted the long-standing and multifaceted ties between two countries and highlighted important pillars of our wide-ranging bilateral cooperation including people-to-people linkages, capacity building cooperation, economic and trade relations and development cooperation," the statement said.

This was Muizzu's first visit to India after he became the island

nation's president on November 17 last year. The ties between India and the Maldives came under severe strain since Muizzu, known for his pro-China leanings, took charge of the top office.

Within hours of his oath, he had demanded the withdrawal of Indian military personnel from his country. The Indian military personnel were replaced by civil-

ians earlier this month.

Murmu expressed hope that India-Maldives relations will continue to strengthen in the years to come, it added.

During her interaction with Mauritius President Pravind Kumar Jugnauth, Murmu fondly recalled her successful state visit to Mauritius as the chief guest for the National Day celebrations in March earlier this year, and her interactions with the Mauritian leadership and people.

She reaffirmed that Mauritius is an important maritime partner of India in the Indian Ocean Region, as part of Vision SAGAR and "our commitment to advance the shared vision of peace, security, and growth in the Indian Ocean Region".

"Both leaders expressed satisfaction at the impressive progress registered in various sectors of bilateral cooperation, and agreed to continue working together to further deepen the unique and multifaceted India-Mauritius partnership," the statement said. Vice President of the Republic

of Seychelles Ahmed Afif called on President Murmu.

Afif represented Seychelles at the swearing-in ceremony of the new government held at Rashtrapati Bhavan.

Murmu reaffirmed India's commitment to support Seychelles in its developmental aspirations as well as further enhance the people-to-people connect and security cooperation, guided by Vision SAGAR - Security and Growth for All in the Region.

Afif conveyed the greetings of President Wavel Ramkalawan and the people of Seychelles to Murmu and expressed happiness on visiting India on his first official visit.

Both leaders discussed India's developmental partnership support and capacity-building assistance in Seychelles, and the longstanding defence cooperation in the Indian Ocean region, the statement said.

"They agreed to continue working together to further strengthen the bilateral ties for mutual benefit," it added. (PTI)

## Not contesting J-K polls, won't humiliate myself by entering UT assembly: Omar



**SRINAGAR, June 10:** National Conference (NC) leader Omar Abdullah on Monday ruled out the possibility of him contesting the forthcoming elections to the Jammu and Kashmir assembly but said he would be leading his party's campaign for the polls. The former Jammu and Kashmir chief minister also said he will not humiliate himself by entering the legislature of a Union Territory (UT).

On his defeat in the Lok Sabha election to jailed contestant Sheikh Abdul Rashid alias Engineer Rashid in Baramulla, Abdullah said in electoral politics, one has to be ready for a loss as well.

"If you set aside the fact that I lost, on the whole I think the NC has a lot to be satisfied for... as far as my own seat is concerned, how can I be anything but disappointed. But that is electoral politics for you. If you are not prepared to lose, you should not file your papers. I cannot say the result was an expected lines. But it is what it is," he told PTI in an interview.

The NC leader said he will lead his party's campaign for the assembly elections in Jammu and Kashmir.

"No, I am not contesting the assembly elections. I will not fight a UT election. I am absolutely clear on that. I will help my party. I will lead the campaign, I will do whatever I have to for the NC. But I will not enter an assembly of the UT of J-K," he said.

"I will fight for our statehood to be restored to us. I will fight for a full state of J-K with no dilution. Then, if possible, I will seek an opportunity to enter the assembly and play my part there. But, I will not humiliate myself by entering a UT (assembly)," the NC vice president said.

In 2019, the Centre abrogated Article 370 of the Constitution which granted special status to the erstwhile state of Jammu and Kashmir and bifurcated the state in Union Territories of Jammu and Kashmir and Ladakh.

Asked if he was hopeful for early restoration of statehood to Jammu and Kashmir as the BJP did not get a majority on its own in the recently concluded Lok Sabha polls, Abdullah said the prime minister and the home minister of the country have made a commitment to this effect both inside and outside Parliament.

While Narendra Modi was sworn in as prime minister and his council of ministers took oath on Saturday, portfolios are yet to be assigned. When the Article was abrogated, Amit Shah was the Union home minister.

"I would like to believe that the commitments of the prime minister and the home minister mean something. They have com-

mitted to the statehood both inside as well as outside Parliament. Unless, they want the whole world to question their credibility, I am sure they will fulfil what they have said," the NC leader said.

On the conduct of the assembly elections, Abdullah said he would not have been so hopeful had the Supreme Court not directed that the polls be held by September 30.

"I would not have been as hopeful of assembly elections and statehood even if the BJP was not reduced to a minority government or the coalition government at the Centre. The elections are happening not because the BJP wants the elections, but because the Supreme Court has ordered them," he said.

In the general elections, the BJP on its own won 240 seats and formed government along with its National Democratic Alliance (NDA) partners.

Abdullah said while he was satisfied with the NC's performance in the Lok Sabha polls, it was hard for him not to take the loss in Baramulla personally.

"The biggest challenge for us right now as a party is to get a bit of morale back. The truth is that this election loss has hit us all hard, some harder than others. It is difficult for me not to take this loss personally. But it is what it is. The NC did really well, I want my party cadre to realise that we may have lost one Parliament seat, but as a party, we did a phenomenal job against the tsunami in north Kashmir, nobody could have done better," he said.

"So, I think we need to focus on the positives. The positive is that we are by far the single largest party in J-K, we have the largest vote share and we will carry this momentum to the assembly. Now, the unknown factors will be what Engineer Rashid will do, how that will translate on the ground. It is alright, we will see," he said. Abdullah dismissed the suggestion that the outcome of the polls in Kashmir was personality driven than party agenda driven, saying nobody wants a parliamentary election on their personality.

"You win it because of the organisation. You win it because of the campaign that you run. I think Aga Rubullah (NC winner from Srinagar Lok Sabha seat) and Mian Altaf Ahmad (NC winner from Anantnag-Rajouri seat) would be the first people to tell you that of course they were strong candidates, but they also had a strong party behind them," he said. Abdullah said they were able to get votes from the areas that they did not expect, and in numbers that they did not expect. "So, their personalities definitely helped us, how could they not, but, it is not just the personality," he added. (PTI)

## PM's raising of Katchatheevu issue during poll campaign was 'highly irresponsible': Congress

**NEW DELHI, June 10:** Hitting out at Prime Minister Narendra Modi for raising the Katchatheevu issue during the Lok Sabha polls campaign, the Congress on Monday said it threatened to derail India's relationship with Sri Lanka and asked if he and his colleagues would apologise for having created this "huge scare" with a neighbouring country. Congress leader Jairam Ramesh also said raking up of the issue was "highly irresponsible" and a "severe distortion of history".

In the run-up to the polls in Tamil Nadu, External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar had claimed that former prime ministers of the Congress displayed indifference to the Katchatheevu island and gave away Indian fishermen's rights despite legal views to the contrary.

Jaishankar made the remarks at a press conference after Modi cited a media report to assert new facts revealed that the Congress "callously" gave away the Katchatheevu island to Sri Lanka. In a post on X, Ramesh noted Sri Lankan President Ranil Wickremesinghe was present during Sunday's swearing-in ceremony.

"Remember the Katchatheevu issue that was 'manufactured' by the 'one-third prime minister' during the election campaign and taken up by his colleagues to gather support for the BJP in Tamil Nadu. This was highly irresponsible and a severe distortion of history," Ramesh said.

It threatened to derail India's relationship with Sri Lanka, the Congress general secretary added.

Ramesh said the people of Tamil Nadu gave a befitting reply to it.

"But will Mr Modi and his colleagues apologise for having created this huge scare with our neighbour, especially when he boasts of a Neighbourhood First policy?" Ramesh asked. Hitting back at the BJP over the issue, opposition leaders back then had cited a 2015 RTI reply that stated the agreements in 1974 and 1976 did not involve either acquiring or ceding of territory belonging to India and asked if the "change" in the Modi government's stance was for "election politics". (PTI)

## LS polls: People voted to check power from being in hands of 1 or 2 persons, says Sharad Pawar



**PUNE, June 10:** NCP (SP) chief Sharad Pawar on Monday said that in the recently held Lok Sabha polls, the people voted to put a check on power being concentrated in the hands of one or two persons.

He said it would have been difficult for the ruling BJP to achieve the majority mark of 272 in the 543-member Lok Sabha had it not received the support of the Nitish Kumar-led JD(U), Telugu Desam Party of N Chandrababu Naidu and other allies.

Pawar also exhorted his party workers to be ready for the Maharashtra assembly elections due later this year and claimed the power of the state will be in their hands after the polls. He was addressing the NCP (Sharadchandra Pawar) workers as the party celebrated its 25th foundation day at its office here, days after his outfit won 8 out of 10 Lok Sabha seats it contested from Maharashtra as part of the opposition alliance in the 2024 general polls.

Though the BJP could not get a majority on its own in the recent Lok Sabha polls, the party-led National Democratic Alliance secured 293 out of 543 seats.

Pawar said today, the country is going through a different situation.

"The government's reins are in the hands of (Prime Minister) Narendra Modi but looking at the poll results, the people's mandate is not of their convenience. Compared to the seats

they won five years ago, their numbers have reduced this time. Their strength and majority in Parliament have reduced," he said.

"Had they not received the support of JD(U), and Telugu Desam Party and other allies in Andhra Pradesh, it would have been difficult for them to achieve the majority mark," the former Union minister said.

In the last five years, only one or two persons ran the government as per their will and they did not think about the country in a broader perspective and emphasised on the centralisation of power, he claimed.

"But fortunately, the people of the country, anticipating the situation ahead, voted in a way to put a check on power being in the hands of one or two persons," he said.

Though there has not been a complete decentralisation of power, a process has begun of having an administration which will go on the path of decentralisation of power, the former Maharashtra chief minister said.

On the occasion, Pawar hoisted his party's flag in the presence of his daughter and Baramati NCP (SP) MP Supriya Sule, other leaders and workers.

"In the last 25 years, we worked towards spreading the party's ideology and we will take the party ahead with all our might," the NCP founder said.

"Now it is my and your collective responsibility to work and aim for the state assembly elections so that after the poll results, power will be in your hands and we will ensure the use of power will be for the common people and those who are marginalised," he said.

Pawar formed the Nationalist Congress Party (NCP) in 1999 after breaking away from the Congress.

The NCP split in July last year after Ajit Pawar and some other MLAs joined the Shiv Sena-BJP government in the state.

In February this year, the Election Commission announced the Ajit Pawar faction as the real Nationalist Congress Party and allotted the NCP symbol 'clock' to the group.

The NCP (SP) of Sharad Pawar was later allotted the symbol of "man blowing turba" (a traditional trumpet) to contest polls. (PTI)

## With coffers running dry, Chandrababu Naidu faces huge task to deliver 'Super Six' promise

**AMARAVATI (ANDHRA PRADESH), June 10:** TDP supremo N Chandrababu Naidu who is set to take the reins of power in Andhra Pradesh shortly will have the daunting task of making bleak coffers ring to fulfill the "Super Six" that his party promised during the run-up to the recently concluded Assembly polls.

Naidu is scheduled to be sworn in as Chief Minister of Andhra Pradesh on June 12.

As a precursor to his journey of financial challenges, Naidu needs over Rs 4,500 crore to disburse social pensions to about 65 lakh beneficiaries by July 1.

As part of his "Super Six", Naidu promised to hike the monthly pension to Rs 4,000 from the existing Rs 3,000 along with a backlog of Rs 3,000 (Rs 1,000 for April, May and June) from July.

All together it would cost the exchequer Rs

4,500 crore in July, besides salaries to employees and pensioners which is pegged at another Rs 6,000 crore.

The new TDP government will have to mop up over Rs 10,000 crore to fulfill the financial requirements for July, a retired senior bureaucrat said. According to him, the state government has a committed expenditure of nearly Rs 1.30 lakh crore annually to meet the requirements of salaries, pensions, loan repayments and interests.

According to the Reserve Bank website, the Andhra government offered to sell securities worth Rs 2,000 crore on June 11 through auction.

The state needs Rs 2,600 crore every month to meet the social pension alone.

Similarly, as part of the manifesto, the Telugu Desam Party promised free travel to women in government-run buses.

An official of Andhra Pradesh State Road Transport Corporation said the APSRTC earns about Rs 450 to Rs 500 crore through ticket revenue monthly and women passengers are expected to be in the range of 35-40 per cent.

He, however, said there was no study on women travellers done so far in the state.

According to him, the Telangana RTC which implements a similar scheme estimated that women constitute nearly 50 per cent of the total commuters. Towards the free travel scheme, the new government will have to reimburse nearly Rs 2,000 crore annually to the APSRTC.

Under "Super Six", the TDP also promised Rs 15,000 to every school-going child per annum.

The outgoing YRS Congress Party government had earmarked Rs 6,500 crore towards a similar scheme called "Amma Vodi." (PTI)

Prataprao Jadhav of Shiv Sena was sole representation in new Modi government who took oath with independent charge

## Shiv Sena deserved Cabinet berth: MP Barne; supporting govt unconditionally, says Shrikant Shinde



**PUNE, June 10:** Shirang Barne, an MP of Shiv Sena led by Eknath Shinde, on Monday expressed disappointment over the party not getting a Cabinet berth in the newly-formed Narendra Modi-led government and alleged partiality.

Shiv Sena Party Leader in Lok Sabha Shrikant Shinde, however, clarified that the party was supporting the government unconditionally and no bargaining or negotiation for power was involved.

Barne, who retained the Maval seat for the third time by defeating Sanjog Waghare Patil of Shiv Sena (UBT), pointed out that despite Shiv Sena winning seven seats in the recent Lok Sabha elections, the party was only allotted a Minister of State (MOS) position in the Modi 3.0 government.

Barne said even leaders like HD Kumaraswamy and Jitan Ram Manjhi whose parties won two and one seats, respectively, were made Union cabinet ministers.

He mentioned that Udayanraje Bhosale, the BJP MP from Satara, deserved a cabinet position as well.

"We were expecting that Shiv Sena would get a Cabinet ministry, but even parties that won only one

seat received Cabinet berths. For example, HD Kumaraswamy of JD(S), whose two MPs got elected, secured two berths, and Jitan Ram Manjhi, who won one seat from Bihar, was also given a Cabinet berth," Barne told reporters.

Prataprao Jadhav of Shiv Sena was the sole representation in the new Modi government who took oath as a Minister of State with independent charge on Sunday.

Barne added that Shiv Sena had won seven seats in Maharashtra of the 15 contested, whereas BJP bagged nine of 28.

"We were expecting at least one Cabinet and one MOS berth for Shiv Sena which is the oldest ally of BJP," he said. Alleging partiality in the distribution of Cabinet berths, Barne claimed that after JD(U) and TDP, Shiv Sena is the third largest ally of the BJP.

"Chirag Paswan, whose party won five seats, was also given a Cabinet berth. But Shiv Sena got only one MOS berth. I feel that there is partiality against Shiv Sena. Considering that we will face assembly elections together in the next three months, it is expected that Sena should get fair treatment," he added.

He recalled that Eknath Shinde's "bold step" in the state led to the transition of power in Maharashtra.

Considering all these factors, we expect a justified stance from the BJP, Barne added.

Shrikant Shinde stated, "We have already made it clear that we are supporting the government unconditionally. This nation has asked and needs the leadership of Prime Minister Modi ji. There's no bargaining or negotiation for power.

"We have extended an unconditional support to an ideological coalition. We want Prime Minister Modi to carry forward the noble work of nation-building. The party, all MLAs and MPs are faithfully committed to the NDA," he added.

Eknath Shinde had split Uddhav Thackeray-led Shiv Sena and joined the BJP-led government in June 2022 with a bulk of MLAs loyal to him. Subsequently, he took oath as the chief minister.

Six MPs from Maharashtra were inducted into the Modi 3.0 coalition government on Sunday, with the BJP securing four berths and allies Shiv Sena and RPI (A) getting one each.

In the new government, BJP MPs Nitin Gadkari and Piyush Goyal were retained as cabinet ministers. Raksha Khadse, BJP's lone woman MP from Maharashtra, and first-time MP Murlidhar Mohol were sworn in as Ministers of State.

Among BJP's allies, RPI (A) chief Ramdas Athawale was retained as an MoS with independent charge, while Prataprao Jadhav was inducted as an MoS with independent charge. Notably, the NCP led by Deputy CM Ajit Pawar, a member of the BJP-led Mahayuti alliance, on Sunday refused to accept the Minister of State offer, demanding a Cabinet berth for Rajya Sabha member Pratul Patel due to his experience. (PTI)

## BJP Odisha legislature party to meet today to choose CM

**BHUBANESWAR, June 10:** The BJP legislature party of Odisha will hold a meeting on Tuesday to elect the chief minister of the state and the new government will take oath the next day, a senior party leader said. The BJP on June 4 secured a majority by winning 78 seats in the 147-member Odisha Assembly. However, the party is yet to choose a leader who will be at the helm of the state. While the chance of senior Odisha MP Dharmendra Pradhan becoming the next chief minister of the state seems bleak after his induction into the Modi 3.0 government, the focus is now on Brajarajnarayan MLA-elect Suresh Pujari, who returned from New Delhi on Monday. Vijay Pal Singh Tomar, the BJP's Odisha in-charge, said, "The legislature party meeting will be held on Tuesday and the new government will take oath on June 12."

"Experienced leaders led by newly-appointed observers Rajnath Singh and Bhupender Yadav will hold a discussion with the legislators," Pujari told reporters. (PTI)

## PMO has become catalytic agent infusing new energy into system: PM Modi

**NEW DELHI, June 10:** Prime Minister Narendra Modi said Monday his office has become a "catalytic agent" which infuses new energy and dynamism into the system, and claimed that it used to be seen as a big power centre 10 years ago.

Addressing staffers of the Prime Minister's Office (PMO) after he began his third term, Modi said his only goal is "nation first" and his only motivation "Viksit Bharat", adding that this was his expectation from them as well.

"My every moment is for the country," Modi said, asserting that he has promised to work round the clock to achieve the goal of India becoming a developed country by 2047.

The PMO should be for service and it should be a people's PMO and not Modi's, he said, adding that he was not born to rule and he does not think about accumulating power.

The prime minister said the 140 crore people of India are always on his mind and he considers them a

form of God.

In the last three months, Modi, in an apparent reference to the election campaign, said he witnessed their strength, dedication and energy for a new resolve.

That is why people have again given him the opportunity to serve the country, Modi said, a day after he was sworn in to office.

According to an official statement, he said, "We have tried to develop the PMO as a catalytic agent which becomes a source of new energy and inspiration."

He underlined that those who are part of his team have no constraints of either time or ideas. "Entire nation has faith in this team," Modi said.

The prime minister took the opportunity to thank those who have been a part of his team and also reached out to those who wish to join and become a part of the journey of "Viksit Bharat" for the next five years and dedicate themselves to nation building.

He said he wanted to take the nation to new heights and exhorted

his team to breach the global benchmark while outperforming the work done in the last 10 years. "We must take the nation to the heights no other nation has ever achieved," Modi said.

He said prerequisites of success are clarity of thought, faith in conviction and the character to act. "If we have these three things, then I don't believe failure will be anywhere near."

Lauding employees of the government of India who dedicated themselves to a vision, he said they deserve a huge share of credit for the government's achievements. "These elections put a stamp of approval on the efforts of government employees," Modi said.

He encouraged the team to develop new ideas and boost the scale of work being done. "The prime minister concluded the address by throwing light on the secret of his energy and said that a successful person is one that keeps the student within him alive," the statement said. (PTI)

### Take steps to eliminate NEET, says panel; wants Plus 2 marks as sole criteria for medical admission

**CHENNAI, June 10:** Retired judge of Madras High Court Justice A K Rajan has asked the Tamil Nadu government to take immediate steps to eliminate National Eligibility-cum-Entrance Test (NEET) through legal and/or legislative procedures and make higher secondary examination marks the sole criteria for admission to first year medical programmes.

The government should ensure equality in opportunity to students from different boards of education and normalisation of scores may be followed, the retired judge who headed a high-level committee, has recommended.

The panel was constituted after DMK stormed to power in the state in 2021, to study the impact of the NEET-based admission process.

The committee's report, based on extensive data analysis and inputs from students, parents and the public, has been published and shared with various state governments to expose NEET's anti-poor and anti-social justice nature.

"DMK was the first to foresee the hazards of #NEET and undertook a large-scale campaign against it," Tamil Nadu Chief Minister and DMK president M K Stalin, said in a post on the social media platform X, sharing the comprehensive report submitted to his government, in English and other regional languages.

In its recommendations, the committee said "the State government may undertake immediate steps to eliminate NEET, as qualifying criteria for admission to medical programmes, by following the required legal and/or legislative procedures."

The government may take a stand that the words 'University education found in Entry 25 List III is a 'general provision and 'Regulation of Universities' in Entry II is a 'special' provision: Entry 32 is an exclusive State subject that cannot be ignored.

Admission to affiliated colleges under the Tamil Nadu Dr. MGR Medical University are governed by Act 3 of 2007 and hence admission to those seats will be filled as per the provisions of that Act. In this regard, the state may follow the required procedures to satisfy the legal and constitutional provisions, it said.

Alternatively, the state government may pass an Act, similar to the Act 3/2007, indicating the need for elimination of NEET at all levels of medical Education, and get the President's assent for the same to ensure social justice and protect all vulnerable student communities from being discriminated in admission to medical education programmes.

The higher secondary scores should become the sole admission criteria for admission to first degree medical programmes, and that to ensure equality in opportunity to students from different boards of education, normalisation of scores may be followed, the committee recommended.

The socio, economic and other demographic 'adversities' that cause poor performance of all relevant students, mainly the disadvantaged and underprivileged, in their HSC examination shall be identified, and according to the degree of intensities of adversities, re-profiling of scores can be done using a pre-developed framework of Adversity Score'.

It emphasised the reformation of school education up to HSC so that 'learning' as opposed to 'coaching' is fostered, and right from curriculum through teaching and learning to learning assessment (Board Examination), shall be tweaked toward enabling and empowering students with subject knowledge and higher order skills.

The rote form of learning assessment that leads to coaching shall be eliminated and that the acquired knowledge and skills shall be focussed, it said.

As far as deemed universities are concerned, an Act has to be passed by the Tamil Nadu Assembly to bring all the deemed universities of Tamil Nadu under its purview, as under Act 3/2007 and the President's assent has to be obtained.

"Based on the recommendations in the report, a Bill seeking exemption from NEET was unanimously passed by the Tamil Nadu Legislative Assembly. It is now awaiting Presidential assent, after an inordinate delay from the Tamil Nadu Governor's side," Stalin said.

As nationwide opposition to NEET grew due to the recent large-scale discrepancies, "we are sharing the report of Justice A K Rajan Committee in English and all major Indian languages for everyone to better understand the ill-effects of NEET," the Chief Minister said in his post. (PTI)

# J&K bus terror attack: Combing operation launched to track down terrorists; NIA, SIA visit spot

**JAMMU, June 10:** A massive manhunt is underway for three foreign terrorists, possibly of the Lashkar-e-Taiba, responsible for the deadly attack on pilgrims in Jammu and Kashmir's Reasi that resulted in the loss of nine lives, including a two-year-old, officials involved in the investigation said on Monday.

Based on the statements recorded by those injured in the attack, the officials said they have not ruled out the possibility of a fourth person being present at the spot who acted as a lookout for the three terrorists.

Nine people were killed and 41 injured as the terrorists opened fire at the 53-seater bus, on its way from the Shiv Khori temple to the Mata Vaishno Devi shrine in Katra, causing it to veer off the road and fall into a deep gorge near the Teryath village of the Poni area of Reasi on Sunday.

The bus was ferrying pilgrims from Uttar Pradesh, Rajasthan and Delhi.

Following the attack, a joint operation was launched involving the police, the Army, the National Investigation Agency (NIA) and central intelligence agencies.

Survivors of the attack are recording their statements as part of the ongoing probe into the attack, while a thorough combing operation is underway to track down the perpetrators, the officials said.

The Resistance Front (TRF), a shadow group of the banned Lashkar-e-Taiba terror outfit, initially claimed responsibility for the attack but



retracted its statement later.

Among those killed in the attack are two-year-old Titu Sawhney and his mother Pooja from Rajasthan. They were among four people from the state who lost their lives in the attack.

Three of the deceased were from Uttar Pradesh. The driver and the conductor of the bus, both from Reasi, were also among the victims.

The officials said five of the nine deceased

had gunshot wounds.

They added that 41 people were injured in the attack and 10 of them had bullet injuries. Some of those injured were undergoing treatment in hospitals across Jammu and Reasi districts.

Security forces suspect the terrorists are hiding in the mountainous terrains of Rajouri and Reasi, and have intensified combing operations in the region.

"A search operation has been launched in the

area," Senior Superintendent of Police, Reasi, Mohita Sharma said, adding that village defence committees have also been geared up.

Jammu and Kashmir Lieutenant Governor Manoj Sinha condemned the attack, calling it a part of a malicious scheme to disrupt peace in the region.

Expressing solidarity with the affected families, the administration has approved ex gratia payments of Rs 10 lakh for the families of the deceased and Rs 50,000 for those injured.

Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Union Minister Amit Shah have been briefed on the situation, with assurances that those responsible for the attack will face justice, Sinha said.

"The attack is a despicable attempt to instigate turmoil in Jammu, but we are resolute in our commitment to safeguard the region," Sinha said during a visit to the Government Medical College to enquire after the injured.

In a related development, the separatist all-gam Hurriyat Conference condemned the terror attack and said the conglomerate "has and will always condemn all forms of violence against humanity. The loss of precious human lives is deeply disturbing".

Anti-Pakistan protests broke out across the Jammu region, including Katra, Doda town and Kathua district, calling for increased security measures to prevent such incidents.

Accusing Pakistan of sponsoring terrorism in Jammu and Kashmir, the protesters demanded action against the neighbouring country. (PTI)

## Farmers hail Gujarat govt's special scheme for construction of crop storage godowns

**AHMEDABAD, June 10:** The Gujarat government's special scheme, offering subsidies to farmers for constructing their own storage godowns, has emerged as a boon for numerous beneficiaries across the state, protecting crops from untimely rain, theft, and wildlife intrusion.

Under the Chief Minister Crop Storage Scheme, farmers receive a subsidy of Rs 75,000 to build their own storage facilities, empowering them to store and safeguard their crops for extended periods.

Darshan, a farmer from Gondal taluka of Rajkot district, highlighted the challenges faced by farmers like him, including the risk of crop spoilage and financial losses due to insufficient storage options.

"We do not get adequate price for the harvested crop which suffers destruction as we cannot store it," he said.

Vikrambhai, another farmer from Para Pipaliya in Rajkot district, echoed similar sentiments, emphasising



sing the menace of crop theft and wildlife intrusion compounding the financial losses.

Previously, the absence of adequate storage facilities forced farmers to sell their produce immediately after harvesting, often at very low prices, leading to significant losses.

However, the implementation of this scheme has provided much-needed relief to agriculturists, allowing them to store their produce securely and sell it at opportune moments.

This scheme has given them respite and peace of mind, they said.

"Previously, we had to sell the crop immediately after it was harvested, which is no longer the case. The government has provided assistance that allows us to store the produce in warehouses. Every farmer should take advantage of this scheme," said Darshan.

After learning about the government's godown subsidy, Vikrambhai found a solution to his problems.

"Farmers should take advantage of these schemes of the government. There are many subsidies from the government which are beneficial for the farmers," he said.

This initiative assumes greater significance considering the estimated 22 per cent wastage of food-grain output annually in India.

With their own storage facilities, farmers are no longer compelled to sell at low prices in the market. They can instead wait for favourable market conditions, thereby reducing wastage and maximising profits. (PTI)

## IAF chief to attend graduation ceremony at Air Force Academy, Dundigal

**NEW DELHI, June 10:** IAF Chief Air Chief Marshal V R Chaudhari will attend the graduation ceremony at the Air Force Academy (AFA), Dundigal, in Hyderabad that will be held on June 15 with traditional military splendour, officials said on Monday.

This will mark the successful completion of pre-commissioning training of flight cadets of the flying and ground duty branches of the Indian Air Force (IAF), the defence ministry said in a statement.

"The Combined Graduation Parade (CGP) of the 213 Officers' Course at the Air Force Academy (AFA), Dundigal, Hyderabad, will be held on 15 June, 2024, with traditional military splendour, to mark the successful completion of pre-commissioning training of flight cadets of the Flying and Ground Duty branches of the Indian Air Force (IAF)," it said.

Air Chief Marshal V R Chaudhari would be the Reviewing Officer of the parade, the statement

said. During the function, he will confer the President's Commission to the graduating trainees.

The ceremony includes presentation of 'Wings' to flight cadets, officers of the Indian Navy, Indian Coast Guard and officers from friendly foreign countries who would be successfully completing their flying training. Being the culmination of a demanding period of training, the occasion marks the most important milestone in any military aviator's career, it said.

"The flight cadet from the flying branch who stands first in the order-of-merit will be awarded the Chief of the Air Staff 'Sword of Honour' and the President's Plaque for excelling in overall training. This Fit Cdt also has the privilege of commanding the parade," it said.

The Reviewing Officer will also present the President's Plaque to the trainee standing first in the overall order-of-merit among ground duty branches. (PTI)

## Army launches integrated generator monitoring, control system 'Vidyut Rakshak'

**NEW DELHI, June 10:** A tech-based innovation -- an integrated generator monitoring, protection and control system -- developed by the Indian Army was launched on Monday.

'Vidyut Rakshak', developed by the Army Design Bureau (ADB) was launched here by the Army's Vice Chief Lt Gen Upendra Dwivedi.

Army Chief Gen Manoj Pandey, in his message, appreciated the ADB and said, "While the Indian Army is observing the 'Year of Tech Absorption', this milestone success of Vidyut Rakshak from 'innovation to induction' sets precedence and signifies Indian Army's commitment and efforts to leverage technology as a catalyst for transformative change."

Vidyut Rakshak is an Internet of Things-enabled integrated generator monitoring, protection and control system. The Internet of Things (IoT) is a network of interrelated devices that connect and exchange data with other IoT devices and the cloud.

"The innovation is applicable on



all existing generators held with the Indian Army, irrespective of their type, make, rating and vintage. Apart from monitoring generator parameters, it enables fault prediction, and prevention and automates manual operation through a user-friendly interface, saving manpower," a senior official said.

The launch event on Monday encompassed the roll-out of the first production units of Vidyut Rakshak.

Lt Gen Dwivedi remotely switched on generators located in Jammu and Kashmir's Srinagar and viewed the parameters of the generators remotely. He appreci-

ated the initiatives of ADB in the domain of tech absorption, the official said.

During Aero India 2023, an MoU was signed between the Indian Army and Foundation for Innovation and Technology Transfer (FITT), IIT Delhi, for 'Production of Innovations', the Army said.

Through this MoU, Vidyut Rakshak was steered as the first such innovation whose transfer of technology was concluded with a production agency in a formal ceremony held in the presence of Gen Pandey during the 'Indian Army Ideas and Innovation Competition' on December 5, 2023, in New Delhi, the official said.

Vidyut Rakshak has been developed by Major Rajprasad R S and was displayed recently during the 'Exercise Bharat Shakti' and was witnessed by Prime Minister Narendra Modi, the Army said.

Recently, the Army also secured a patent for another innovation of Major Rajprasad called 'Portable Multi-Target Detonation Device', which has already been inducted in the Indian Army, it said. (PTI)

## HC dismisses husband's bail plea in wife's dowry death case, says allegations serious

**NEW DELHI, June 10:** The Delhi High Court has refused to grant bail to a man, accused in a case of dowry death of his wife, saying the allegations against him are serious in nature and showing any leniency in such cases may send an inappropriate signal to the society at large.

The high court said the allegations in the case point out that even in this era, married women are being humiliated, abused and beaten by their husbands and in-laws for want of non-fulfilment of their desire for being provided with money or dowry.

"Considering the overall facts and circumstances of the case, the gravity of the allegations and the fact that showing leniency in such cases may send an inappropriate signal to society at large, this court is not inclined to grant bail where a woman has lost her life prima facie due to torture meted out to her due to non-fulfilment of demand of money and dowry by the applicant and his family members," Justice Swarana Kanta Sharma said.

"In the above terms, the present petition stands dismissed," Justice Sharma said.

The woman was brought dead to the hospital in October 2021 with an alleged history of hanging at home. During the investigation, her parents submitted that their daughter had been harassed for dowry by her husband and his family members.

The family claimed that since the husband of the deceased was having an extramarital affair with another woman and had also married her, their daughter was under a lot of mental trauma.

They claimed that the man and his family were

pressuring her to bring money to run their business and when she refused, they would beat her.

It was alleged that due to such mental and physical harassment, the victim had committed suicide.

A case was registered at the Kanjhawala police station here for the alleged offences of cruelly treating a married woman by her husband and his family members and dowry death under the Indian Penal Code.

The man sought bail contending that he was falsely implicated in the case and there was no material on record which corroborates the allegations.

He claimed that no demand of any kind of dowry was made on his behalf or his family before or during the subsistence of the marriage.

The high court, while denying bail to accused Tilak, said the case was full of such instances which prima facie point out how the woman, even in the present modern times, was being pressured to bring more money to run her husband's business since the beginning of their marital life.

"There are instances of the applicant (Tilak) repeatedly beating the deceased in front of her family and also taking her (to her) parental home at 12 O'clock in the night and creating a ruckus in her brother's marriage and thus humiliating them socially and publicly, which is of unexplainable trauma and torture not only to the deceased who would have carried this burden of guilt that because of her, her family was being ill-treated, abused and publicly shamed," the high court said, adding that the allegations in the case are serious in nature. (PTI)

## North-bound arm of Mumbai coastal road inaugurated

**MUMBAI, June 10:** The north-bound arm of the Mumbai Coastal Road - from Marine Drive to Haji Ali - was inaugurated on Monday, marking a crucial phase in the metropolis's infrastructure upgrade as it will drastically reduce travel time for motorists. Chief minister Eknath Shinde, along with Deputy Chief Ministers Devendra Fadnis and Ajit Pawar, rode a vintage Rolls Royce to mark the formal inauguration of the Dharamveer Swaraj Rakshak Chhatrapati Sambhaji Mumbai Coastal Road.

Vehicular movement on the route was allowed from 4 pm on Monday, a civic spokesperson said. Initially, the Mumbai civic body had announced that the road stretch would be open for vehicles from Tuesday.

Like the south-bound arm, which opened for vehicular movement in March this year, the northern arm of the coastal road will be operational between 7 am and 11 pm on weekdays. At present, the south-bound arm caters to vehicles travelling between Worli and Marine Drive.

The north-bound arm will be operational only between Marine Drive and the vehicular interchange at Haji Ali. Civic officials stated that the operational length of the north-bound arm is around 6.25 km, while the south-bound arm covers an eight-kilometre stretch.

Pegged at a cost of ₹ 13,000 crore, the coastal road is a high-speed corridor that will connect the Bandra Worli Sea Link with Marine Drive through a series of tunnels, vehicular interchanges, and bridges.

Shinde said the opening of the 6.25-km-long northbound corridor will make the travelling experience "pleasant" for people. He referenced a tweet by actor Amitabh Bachchan after the inauguration of the south-bound arm of the coastal road. (PTI)

## Delhi Zoo to add advance ticket booking option on website

**NEW DELHI, June 10:** The National Zoological Park in Delhi's Pragati Maidan will soon introduce an option on its website allowing visitors to book their tickets up to 15 days in advance. The new option will also allow visitors to reschedule their outing and refunds on ticket cancellations, an official said on Monday. As of now, if any visitor wants to visit the zoo, they can only buy tickets on the same day until 5 pm, after which the counters close for booking. As the central zoo attracts a huge footfall, the zoo's director said management plans are underway and several issues will be addressed in the coming months. "There were issues with the payment gateway, so we are opening an additional payment gateway for the convenience of visitors," Sanjeev Kumar, director of the National Zoological Park, told PTI. He said that currently, visitors can buy tickets for the day until 5 pm and they are valid only for the same day. "To address this issue, we will be launching a portal for advance booking." (PTI)

# Northwest, east India in for another heat wave spell

**NEW DELHI, June 10:** Northwest and east India are in for another spell of extreme heat, with temperatures predicted to rise by two to three degrees over the next five days, the India Meteorological Department said on Monday.

India experienced multiple intense and prolonged heat waves in April and May which tested the limits of human endurance and the country's disaster preparedness, as many states, including Uttar Pradesh, Bihar and Odisha, reported heat wave-related deaths.

"Heat wave to severe heat wave conditions (are) likely over northwest and east India during the next five days," the IMD said in a statement.

The heat wave is likely to impact parts of Jammu and Kashmir, Himachal Pradesh, Uttarakhand, Punjab, Haryana, Delhi, Rajasthan, Madhya Pradesh, Jharkhand, Odisha and Gangetic West Bengal, the Met office said.

Experts say the extreme heat is a result of the naturally occurring El



Nino phenomenon -- unusual warming of the ocean surface in the central and eastern tropical Pacific Ocean -- and the rapidly increasing concentration of greenhouse gases in the atmosphere.

Studies show that rapid urbanization has worsened the warming in urban areas, with outdoor workers and low-income households bearing the maximum impact.

The heatwave in May saw several

places across the country, including the hills of Assam, Uttarakhand, Himachal Pradesh and Arunachal Pradesh, recording all-time high temperatures. The mercury breached 50 degrees Celsius in Rajasthan and reached this mark in Delhi and Haryana.

Similar heatwaves could occur once every 30 years and these have already become about 45 times more likely due to climate change, 'World Weather Attribution', a group of leading climate scientists said last month.

There are concerns that heat waves in April and May have played a role in the lower-than-usual voter turnout during the seven-phase general elections in India that began on April 19 and ended on June 1, the second longest after the 1951-52 parliamentary elections.

According to the Central Water Commission, water storage in 150 major reservoirs in India dropped to just 22 per cent of their live storage this week, exacerbating water shortages in many states and significantly affecting hydropower generation.

The intense heat has already driven India's power demand to a record 246 gigawatts, with air conditioners and coolers in homes and offices running at full capacity.

India recorded nearly 25,000 suspected heat stroke cases and 56 deaths due to heat-related illnesses from March to May, PTI reported earlier, citing data from the health ministry.

According to data compiled by the National Centre for Disease Control (NCDC), 46 of these deaths were recorded in May alone (till May 30). Between May 1 and 30, 19,189 suspected heat stroke cases were reported in the country.

The data does not include deaths from Uttar Pradesh, Bihar and Delhi, and could just be the tip of the iceberg, officials said on condition of anonymity.

Severe heat waves have impacted a large number of people in parts of India for three consecutive years, affecting health, water availability, agriculture, power generation and other sectors of the economy.

According to a World Bank report, India could account for 34 million of the projected 80 million global job losses from heat stress-associated productivity decline by 2030.

Studies also show India faces food losses worth USD 13 billion a year, with only four per cent of fresh produce covered by cold chain facilities. (PTI)

**CORRIGENDUM NO. 02 & 03 AGAINST TENDER NOTICE NO. : CON/2024/MAY/01, Dated : 04.05.2024**

Corrigendum-02 & 03 for Tender No. CE/CON/D-K/MB/2024/03 has been published. For details please visit [www.treps.gov.in](http://www.treps.gov.in).

**Chief Engineer/Con-6, Maitagan North-east Frontier Railway (Construction Organisation)**

"SERVING CUSTOMERS WITH A SMILE"



## 'RULE NAYA, GAME WAHI': 'BIGG BOSS OTT 3' HOST ANIL KAPOOR LEAVES FANS EXCITED WITH NEW PROMO

**MUMBAI, June 10:** Reality show 'Bigg Boss OTT' is expanding with the third season, which will be hosted by veteran actor Anil Kapoor.

On Monday, the makers unveiled a new promo of the show in which Anil Kapoor can be seen assuring fans that they are in a treat for sure.

"Rule naya, game wahi.... Bhaut ho gaya re jhakkas ab aur hoga kuch khaas," the 'Mr India' star can be heard saying in the clip.

Fans are excited to see how Anil Kapoor will deal with the contestants in the show.

"Anil Kapoor is giving NAYAK vibes here... can't wait for this season," a social media user commented.

"Anil Kapoor in a new avatar," another one wrote.

Excited to host the third season of 'Bigg Boss OTT', Anil Kapoor in a statement said, "Bigg Boss OTT and I are a dream team! We're both young at heart; people often say – jokingly – that I'm reverse ageing, but Bigg Boss is – seriously- timeless. It feels a bit like going back to school, trying something new and exciting."

He added, "Having said that, I've always approached all my projects with sincerity and a commitment to hard work and I'm going to bring that same energy (times 10!) to Bigg Boss! Unscripted reality has something for everyone – laughter, drama, and surprising twists, and I can't wait to bring my own flavour to it."

'Bigg Boss OTT 3' will be out on JioCinema from June 21.

Bigg Boss OTT, a spin-off of the immensely

popular Bigg Boss franchise, first debuted on Voot, with filmmaker Karan Johar as the host. However, the reins were later handed over to Bollywood megastar Salman Khan for the second season.

Meanwhile, on the acting front, Anil Kapoor will be seen in action-drama 'Subedar'. The film will be directed by Suresh Triveni, who previously directed T-Series' comedy-drama 'Tumhari Sulu' (2017) and 'Jalsa', both headlined by Vidya Balan. Vikram Malhotra, Suresh Triveni, and Anil Kapoor serve as producers for the film."

In an adrenaline – fueled action drama, Subedar Arjun Singh grapples with civilian life, navigating a strained relationship with his daughter, and societal dysfunction. The man who once fought for the nation must now fight enemies within to protect his home and family," read the official synopsis of the project. (AGENCIES)

## Salman Khan to start shooting for 'Sikandar' from June 18

**NEW DELHI, June 10:** Superstar Salman Khan is set to begin filming on his upcoming film Sikandar from June 18, the makers said on Monday.

Salman will play the titular role in the movie, which will be directed by A R Murugadoss of Ghajini and Holiday: A Soldier Is Never Off Duty fame.

Set to be released in theatres on Eid 2025, the project will be produced by Sajid Nadiadwala's banner Nadiadwala Grandson Entertainment. It also features Pushpa: The Rise star Rashmika Mandanna.

According to the makers, the first shooting schedule will commence with an action scene to be shot at 33,000 feet above sea level aboard an aircraft featuring Salman.

While Salman's last big-screen appearance was 2023's Tiger 3, Rashmika was Animal which was released in the same year. (PTI)



## I GET MY VALIDATION FROM THE AUDIENCE: KARTIK AARYAN

**NEW DELHI, June 10:** Actor Kartik Aaryan says he doesn't believe in running behind films that check mark his acting chops or get him in the good books of critics. The actor said he instead looks for stories that have the potential to draw audiences to theatres.

Aaryan's latest big-screen release is sports drama "Chandu Champion", directed by Kabir Khan.

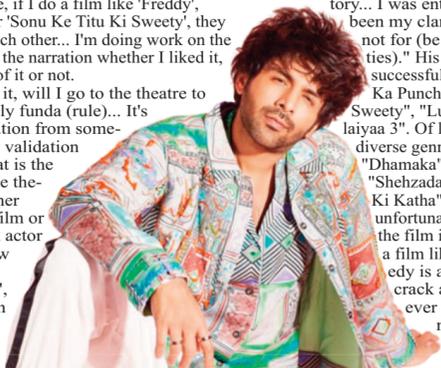
"All the films that I've been doing showcase a different side of me. For example, if I do a film like 'Freddy', 'Satyaprem Ki Katha' or 'Sonu Ke Titu Ki Sweety', they are all different from each other... I'm doing work on the basis of what I heard in the narration whether I liked it, and I want to be a part of it or not.

"Am I able to watch it, will I go to the theatre to watch it? That's my only funda (rule)... It's not like (I need) validation from someone or critics. I get my validation from the audience. That is the audience is going to the theatres to watch it, whether they are enjoying the film or not," the Gwalior-born actor told PTI in an interview here.

"Chandu Champion", set to hit the screens on Friday, is the story of India's first Para-

lympic gold medalist Murlikant Petkar. It follows the journey of the titular hero across ages and phases, including being an Indian Army soldier, a wrestler, a boxer, a 1965 war veteran and a swimmer. Aaryan, 33, said the movie wasn't a sad story but one which will inspire viewers in an entertaining manner. "I never felt this was a sad, gloomy film. It's a story of triumph of the human spirit. It goes in that zone and it's celebratory... I was entertained by the narration. That's

been my clarity that whenever I do a film, it's not for (be a tick mark for) my acting (abilities)." His name has been associated with successful comedy films such as the "Pyaar Ka PUNCHAMA" series, "Sonu Ke Titu Ki Sweety", "Luka Chuppi", and "Bhool Bhulaiyaa 3". Of late, Aaryan has tried his hand at diverse genres through thrillers like "Dhamaka" and "Freddy", action comedy "Shehzada", and romantic drama "Satyaprem Ki Katha". According to the actor, comedy is unfortunately treated as an easier genre in the film industry. "It takes a lot of acting in a film like 'Sonu Ke Titu Ki Sweety'. Comedy is a genre that's very difficult to crack and you'll get this answer whenever you ask any actor or director. It's not an easy thing. I don't know it, I do it. (PTI)



## Chiranjeevi, Sidharth Malhotra, Varun Dhawan congratulate Modi for third consecutive term as PM

**NEW DELHI, June 10:** Film stars Chiranjeevi, Sidharth Malhotra, Varun Dhawan, Kamal Haasan and Paresh Rawal Monday congratulated Narendra Modi for taking oath as the prime minister for the third consecutive term. Modi, 73, was sworn in as the PM for the third time in a row at a grand ceremony at the Rashtrapati Bhavan Sunday evening here.

He became only the second prime minister after Jawaharlal Nehru to secure a third consecutive term. Telugu superstar Chiranjeevi, who was named a Padma Vibushan recipient earlier this year, extended his wishes to the prime minister on X. "Hearty Congratulations to Shri @narendramodiji on being sworn in as the Hon'ble Prime Minister of India for a historic third term! I wish you and all the wonderful ministers in your cabinet all the strength to take our country forward on the path of prosperity and glory," he wrote. His son and RRR star Ram Charan also congratulated Modi. "Congratulations to India's beloved Prime Minister @narendramodiji and #NDAGovernment commencing your historic third term. Looking forward to a more prosperous India under your reign. Jai Hind #Narendramodi #PMOath #ModiCabinet," Charan said.

"PM @narendramodi, congratulations for a historic 3rd term. Jai Hind," wrote Malhotra on his Instagram Stories. His "Student of the Year" co-star Varun Dhawan tagged Modi on X and said: "May you guide our country to greater heights. Hari Om." Haasan, founder of political party Makkal Needhi Maaim in Tamil Nadu, urged the prime minister to work together to create a "more inclusive India". "Nations that harness their greatest strength – their people – shall accomplish the greatest glories. Congratulations to the Hon. Prime Minister of India, Shri @narendramodiji, on your third term.

"In the spirit of national interest, unity, and patriotic

duty, let the elected representatives of the 18th Lok Sabha work together to fulfil the dream of a stronger, brighter, and more inclusive India. Jai Hind!" he wrote in an X post. Rawal, former BJP MP from Ahmedabad East Lok Sabha seat, said Indian citizens look forward to more terms under the Modi government. "The people of India extend their heartfelt best wishes to our respected leader Shri @narendramodiji on this historic occasion of him becoming the Prime Minister for the third time. Remember one thing that the people love you a lot, so they will not just count till three, they will keep counting further. Jai Ho. Jaikar Ho."

"Congratulations to Shri Narendra Modiji on your remarkable third term as our Prime Minister. India's future certainly looks bright with your leadership at the helm," wrote Malayalam superstar Mohanlal on X. He also congratulated actor and BJP's sole MP from Kerala Suresh Gopi (Thiruvananthapuram) and Kerala BJP General Secretary George Kurian on being sworn in as Union Ministers of State.

"I extend my congratulations to Thiru. @narendramodi Avl on being sworn in as @PMOIndia for the third consecutive term," said Tamil cinema star Vijay, according to his political party Tamilaga Vettri Kazhagam's official X page. In an X post, Suneil Shetty wished Modi "continued strength and wisdom in your leadership".

The prime minister's swearing-in ceremony was attended by a host of film celebrities, including Shah Rukh Khan, Akshay Kumar, Rajinikanth, BJP MP-elect from Mandi Kangana Ranaut, Anil Kapoor, Anupam Kher, Raveena Tandon, Vikrant Massey, Anuradha Paudwal, Rajkumar Hirani, Mahaveer Jain, and Kailash Kher. After the ceremony, Kher shared the video of Modi taking oath on his official X page. (PTI)

# Kavin and Mohsin: The gritty and passionate Honda India Racing riders

**MOTEGI (JAPAN), June 10:** Kavin Samaar Quintal's bike engine seized, he crashed and everything went black around him during Honda India Talent Cup back in 2020.

Such was the ferocity and impact of the crash that at least 13 screws had to be placed inside his body, including nine in his collar bone, for the treatment of his injuries. But that did not deter him from pursuing his passion—bike racing.

During the Thailand Talent Cup in 2022, the Chennai racer again met with a crash when the rider ahead applied sudden brakes and rammed into him. His race suit tore up, leaving him with laceration and burn injury in his right arm.

That also did not discourage the then 16-year-old Kavin.

His parents were not worried or scared either. After all he was just following the family tradition, where enduring crashes on the race circuit was the norm. Kavin's grandfather and maternal uncles knew exactly what it meant to leave a race circuit with broken bones.

In contrast, Mohsin Paramban's family got to know about the dangerous passion of their kid when one fine day he landed home with a broken leg, plastered heavily, in 2020.

That was during the Honda Talent Cup in Chennai, where he had finished inside the top-7 in 2019 without any professional training and even without any experience riding a racing bike. That performance earned him the chance to train with and compete for Honda India Racing.

A country where cricketers can earn the status of immortals, an athlete pursuing a career in a sport that flirts with danger all the time won't earn any recognition, let alone rewards for showing incredible skills.

"It's a bit sad. Everybody likes speed and talk about it but this sports has no recognition in India. I would love to contribute in growing the popularity of this sport," said 18-year-old Kavin, who mostly trains in Spain and has competed for several teams in Europe.

Kavin rides in AP250 class in Asia Road Racing Championship (AARC) but reckons that he is ready to jump to the 600cc class.

"My body and my racing style suit 600cc class more. I would love to graduate to that level soon. I had a win in 600cc in Europe. I am a lot more smooth when I ride a 600cc bike. I conserve the tyre more, I am confident; and can be



very aggressive if required," he said with spark in his eyes. He hit a top speed of 263kmph recently.

While Kavin is lucky to have a family that backs him and he can afford to train in Europe, Mohsin does not have that luxury.

The racer from Mallapuram only

trains when he is with Honda team for AARC, otherwise, he just works on his body. His father works in a mechanical shop in Dubai. Understandably, he has no financial backing.

Luckily, his team Honda India Racing, supports him in following his passion.

The team has invested millions of dol-

lars to keep the racing tradition going, though a podium finish has eluded them in AARC. Kavin's 11th place finish has been the best show for Honda India Racing in season 2024.

His eighth place finish in season 2023 has been Kavin's best show in AP250 class so far.

Mohsin has managed only two points this season and has gone without points in four consecutive races.

"We don't charge these riders anything for having this racing seat. They have earned it and we support them. HMSI (Honda Motorcycle and Scooter India) has DNA which Honda has. It is said, 'if Honda does not race, then there is no Honda,'" said a HMSI official, explaining the team philosophy.

"We have a plan in place. Everybody asks us when we are going to have that podium finish (in AARC) but podium are not everything in racing. We tasted podiums in 2014, 2016 and 2022 in other events. We have teams now in three events: -- Asia Talent Cup, Tahiti Talent Cup and AARC."

The official explained that for Indian riders to do well, a lot needs to change in the country.

In India, the racing age starts at 15,

while in other Asian nations it is as low as 7-8. By the time an Indian racer starts to learn the ropes, the other Asian racer of the same age has 5-7 year of experience under their belt.

"This makes all the difference. FMSCI makes the regulations and probably they can have a re-look at that. There have been discussions around that in the past and the racing age was lowered to 11 but it was again brought back to 15," said the official.

"We have a plan. We search, nurture the talent and then help the racer grow professionally. Podium is not the ultimate goal, it's a journey. The podium will come automatically when the plan works."

Kavin explains how the racing culture is at a different level in Europe.

"They train 12 days in two weeks. The intensity is at a completely different level, while in India we train only three times a week because there are not enough racing tracks in India," said Kavin.

Interest in motorsport is largely restricted to Southern part of the country and losing the F1 race, which was held in NCR for three years, did not help the cause. (PTI)

## Had tears in my eyes when I read about his accident: Shastri on Pant

**NEW YORK, June 10:** Former India head coach Ravi Shastri has revealed that the news of Rishabh Pant's life-threatening car accident in 2022 had left him in tears and it felt "even worse" when he saw the charismatic wicketkeeper in hospital at that time.

Pant met with an accident at the Delhi-Dehradun highway on the night of December 30, 2022. His car caught fire but he made a lucky escape even though his injuries were quite severe.

After a year of intense recovery and rehab, he returned to professional cricket during the Indian Premier League this year and made his Team India return this month in the ongoing T20 World Cup in the Americas.

"I had tears in my eyes when I read about his accident. And when I saw him in hospital, it was even worse," Shastri said in a video posted by BCCI.

"And then for him to come back from there and be back in the A-zone playing one of the biggest



games of all time -- India vs Pakistan -- is heartwarming," he added referring to India's six-run win on Sunday in which Pant made 42.

The 26-year-old's 31-ball knock and his brilliant wicket-keeping played a crucial role in India's win.

Following the match, Shastri presented him with BCCI's Fielder of the Match recognition and lauded him for his innings and

comeback.

"Batting... everybody knew what you were capable of -- the X-factor you have. But, your wicket-keeping and the range of movement that got back so quickly after the operation is a tribute to how much you worked hard."

"And not just for yourself, it's an inspiration to millions across the globe that from adversity and

jawns of death, you can snatch a win as well. So well done, fantastic. Keep up the good work, and keep going. Enjoy, guys; well played today."

It was the second consecutive win of the event for the Men in Blue, taking them to the top of their group.

Shastri said on Sunday it was a "typical India-Pakistan game" with edge of the seat action that the fans enjoyed.

"It was a fabulous game -- a typical India-Pakistan game where the pendulum swings from one side to the other. It's a game that puts everyone on the edge," he added.

"A lot of people suffering from weak hearts have problems with heart attacks, so there are a lot of ambulances all over the place. And that showed today, with the game going all the way down to the wire."

"In the end, it's the team that ceases the big moments and holds their nerve; they come out on top." (PTI)

## We showed great resilience and teamwork in Pro League: Harmanpreet

**NEW DELHI, June 10:** The Indian men's hockey team captain Harmanpreet Singh on Monday his players showed great resilience and teamwork in their recent FIH Pro League matches, and the campaign has provided valuable lessons ahead of the Paris Olympics.

India concluded their Pro League campaign with a commendable 24 points from 16 matches, which included five wins, three shootout victories, five defeats, and three shootout losses.

Currently, the Indian team is at fourth position in the points tally.

"The FIH Pro League 2023-24 has been an incredible journey for us. Some of our victories against strong teams like the Netherlands 2-2 (4-2 SO), Argentina (5-4), and

Germany (3-0) highlight the hard work and determination of our squad."

"We have shown great resilience and teamwork throughout the tournament," the star drag-flicker said in a Hockey India release.

Harmanpreet also emphasised the significance of this tournament as a preparatory event for the Paris Olympics.

"This league has been crucial in helping us understand our strengths and areas for improvement. Competing against top-tier teams has given us valuable insights into our game."

"We now know where we stand and what we need to work on to perform at our best on the global stage."

The tournament saw participa-

tion from nine formidable teams, including Argentina, Australia, Belgium, India, Netherlands, Germany, Great Britain, Spain, and Ireland.

Despite the FIH Pro League continuing until June 30, India played their 16th and final match on Sunday, wrapping up an intense and competitive season.

Harmanpreet emerged as a stand-out performer, finishing as the top scorer for India.

With 12 goals to his name, he is also currently the joint leading scorer in the tournament alongside Australia's Blake Govers and the Netherlands' Jip Janssen.

Harmanpreet's scoring prowess was evident as he netted eight goals from penalty corners and four from penalty strokes. (PTI)

## Gulveer Singh eclipses 5,000m national record

**PORTLAND (USA), June 10:** Asian Games bronze medalist athlete Gulveer Singh shattered the men's 5,000m national record to finish second at the Portland Track Festival High Performance Meet here. Competing in the Paul Banta Memorial race, the 26-year-old clocked 13:18.92 to better the earlier national mark of 13:19.30 set by Avinash Sable at the Sound Running On Track Fest in Los Angeles last year. Gulveer, who hails from western Uttar Pradesh, now holds the national record in both 10,000m and 5,000m races. He had won the 10,000m bronze medal at the Hangzhou Asian Games last year in a time of 28:17.21 seconds. (PTI)

## Bumrah is a genius, want him in this kind of mindset throughout WC: Rohit

**NEW YORK, June 10:** India captain Rohit Sharma has termed Jasprit Bumrah as a genius and wants his lethal weapon to perform at the same level for the entire duration of the T20 World Cup.

Bumrah was magnificent in India's six-run victory over Pakistan in which he had figures of 3/14 in four overs which included an astounding 15 dot balls while defending a paltry total of 119 on Sunday.

"He is going from strength to strength (Bumrah). We all know what he can do. Not going to talk too much about him."

"We want him to be in that mindset throughout the World Cup. He is a genius, we all know that," Rohit said, praising one of India's greatest fast bowlers.

Rohit said India had the belief that they would win the match because the pitch was not that conducive for batting.

"With a bowling line-up like that you feel confident to do the job. Halfway through the stage when they were batting, we got everyone together and said that if it can happen to us, it can happen to them."

The skipper, however, did admit that they should have batted better after being 89 for 3 at one stage.

"We didn't bat well enough.



Halfway through our innings we were in a good position. We didn't put enough partnership there and fell short with the bat," Rohit said about losing 7 wickets for 28 runs.

"We spoke about every run matter on a pitch like that. There was enough on the pitch. It was a good wicket to be honest, compared to the last game."

"Little contribution from everyone can make a huge difference."

Bumrah, who has now won back-to-back man of the match awards, felt that the pitch was slightly easier for batting in the second half as sun came out.

But he said the entire bowling unit was very disciplined in its effort.

"It feels really good. We felt we were a little under and the wicket

got a little better after the sun came out. We were really disciplined so it feels good."

Since it was a two-paced wicket, the idea was to hit the seam and get some lateral movement, said Bumrah.

"Tried to hit the seam as much as I could, tried to be as clear as I could with my execution and it all came out well so I felt happy," he said.

Both Rohit and Bumrah acknowledged the vociferous support that they had received at the Nassau Cricket County Ground.

"Felt like we were playing in India, really happy with the support and that gives us energy on the field. We focus on the now."

"We've played two games and played really well. You stick to

your processes and look to play well."

Pakistan skipper Babar Azam felt that the 59 dot balls which they conceded during their chase became the turning point.

"We bowled well. In the batting, we lost back-to-back wickets and consumed too many dot balls. Again, we weren't up to the mark in the first six," he said.

Asked about the strategy, Babar said it was about playing normal cricket.

"Tactics were simple to play normally. Just strike rotation and the odd boundary. But in that period, we had too many dot balls. Can't expect much from tail-enders."

Babar had a contrarian view on the surface unlike many who felt the ball wasn't coming onto the bat.

"Pitch looked decent. The ball was coming on nicely. It was a little bit slow, and some balls had extra bounce," he said.

Pakistan will have to win against Canada and Ireland by big margins and hope that USA don't beat one among Ireland or India to enter the Super Eight stage.

"Have to win the last two matches. Will sit and discuss our mistakes but looking forward to the last two matches." (PTI)

## Theegala tied 15th, Scheffler wins the Memorial



**DUBLIN (OHIO), June 10:** Indian-American golfer Sahith Theegala shot a disappointing three-over 75 in the final round to tumble out of contention for a top-10 finish and ended tied 12th at the Memorial golf tournament here.

Even par after four rounds, Theegala was tied 12th alongside Rory McIlroy (76). Another Indian-American, Akshay Bhatia (76), was four-over and tied 22nd.

Scottie Scheffler had just one birdie on the final day, but it was enough to get him the title, his fifth win of the season and the 11th of his career on the PGA TOUR.

Leading by four shots after three rounds, Scheffler shot two-over 74, his highest final round score in two years, but it still won him the title at the tough and demanding Muirfield Village course.

At the end of it all, he got the handshake from Jack Nicklaus, who called him "a survivor".

From 10-under for 54 holes, Scheffler finished at eight-under and won by a stroke over Collin Morikawa (71) at seven-under in swirling winds and extremely firm greens. Despite his 74, Scheffler never lost his lead.

Scheffler won USD four million from this Signature Event and its USD 20 million purse. His earnings are now over USD 24 million for the year, breaking the PGA TOUR season earnings record -- and it's barely June.

It was Scheffler's sixth win since the Hero World Challenge hosted by Tiger Woods in December, 2023. This was his 11th consecutive tournament with a top 10. (PTI)

## Vinesh's request accepted IOA, WFI to provide extensive support to Olympic-bound wrestlers

**NEW DELHI, June 10:** Indian Olympic Association will provide "extensive support" to the six Olympics-bound wrestlers, with the national Olympic committee and WFI also accepting ace grappler Vinesh Phogat's request for more aid for training.

Six Indian grapplers -- Vinesh Phogat (50kg), Antim Panghal (53kg), Anshu Malik (57kg), Nisha Dahiya (68kg) and Reetika Hooda (76kg) in women's section and Aman Sehrawat (57kg) in men's -- have qualified for Paris.

IOA president PT Usha said in a statement on Monday the aim of the exercise is to ensure peak performance of the wrestlers.

"By providing an extensive support team, we aim to ensure that our wrestlers have access to the best resources, enabling their peak per-



formance. This decision aligns with our commitment to foster an environment where athletes can thrive," said Usha. IOA and WFI are planning a support team for wrestlers that will include coaches, physiotherapists, nutritionists, mental-conditioning coaches, and other essential staff in the days leading up to the Olympics.

Wrestling Federation of India president Sanjay Singh said more support staff will be provided to Asian Games gold medalist Vinesh for her Paris training. (PTI)

## Nagal attains 77th place in ATP rankings; set to represent India in Paris Olympics



**NEW DELHI, June 10:** India's Sumit Nagal climbed 18 places to a career-best 77th in the latest ATP rankings issued on Monday, all but sealing a spot in the Paris Olympics men's singles draw.

Nagal has 713 ATP points. The improvement in his rankings was due to Nagal bagging the men's singles crown at the Heilbronn Neckarcup 2024 Challenger event in Germany on Sunday, beating Switzerland's Alexander Ritschard in a three-set thriller.

The Indian won 6-1 (6-5)-7-6-3 in the final that lasted two hours and 22 minutes. Rankings, as on Monday, will be the basis for deciding entries for the Games.

As per the established criteria, the top 56 players, both in men's

and women's rankings, will attain automatic qualification for the Olympics but no more than four per country can make the cut for the Games, a rule which allows lower ranked players to sneak into the draw.

Nagal looks good to secure the last available ranking-enabled spot in the draw. The last time India had a player in the Olympics main draw was the 2012 Games when Somdev Devvarman made it thanks to a wildcard.

"Elated to win the title in Heilbronn this week. It was an important week for me, and I'm proud to have produced my best tennis when it mattered the most," Nagal posted on X after his final win.

"If I win a match like this, I can be proud because the fight was insane. Ranking is secondary, first goal is to play good tennis," he said at the end of his match.

The 26-year-old Nagal would be the sole Indian in the men's singles event in Paris. The International Tennis Federation will notify national federations about qualified athletes by June 12, following which National Olympic Committees will confirm their entries by June 19. (PTI)

## Prannoy to spearhead Indian challenge in Australia Open badminton



**SYDNEY, June 10:** HS Prannoy will look to regain his lost form when he spearheads India's challenge at the Australian Open badminton tournament starting here on Tuesday.

Prannoy, seeded fifth here, didn't have best of results in the last two tournaments. He was stunned by compatriot Meiraba Luwang Maisnam in the men's singles opening round of Thailand Open last month.

If that was not enough, world No. 10 Prannoy lost to world No. 11

Kenta Nishimoto 13-21 21-14 15-21 in a 45-minute Round of 16 match in Singapore Open.

And the Indian will be desperate to turn things around in the BWF Super 500 event here as he opens his campaign against Ygor Coelho of Brazil.

Sameer Verma will play Chico Aura Dwi Wardoyo of Indonesia in the opening round, while Ravi faces a tough opponent in eighth seed Loh Kean Yew of Singapore.

Other Indians to feature in the men's singles are Mithun Manjunath, who will take on Indonesia's Alwi Farhan, Kiran Geoghe who is up against Canada's Xiaodong Sheng, S Sankar Muthusamy Subramanian who is pitted against top seed Jonathan Christie of Indonesia.

In women's singles, eighth seed Aakarshi Kashyap will lead the Indian charge. She will play Ukraine's Polina Buhrova in the opening round.

Ashmita Chaliha will play Peru's Ines Lucia Castillo, Anupama

Upadhyaya will lock horns with Malaysia's Wong Ling Ching, Samiya Imad Farooqui has a tough opponent in top seed Akane Yamaguchi of Japan, while Keyura Mopati and Malvika Bansod will feature in an all-Indian contest.

No Indian features in the men's doubles, while Panda sisters, Rutuparna and Swetaparna, seeded seventh, and the pair of Harshita Rout and Sruti Swain will lead India's charge in the women's doubles.

There are three Indian pairs in the mixed doubles.

Eighth seed B Sumeeth Reddy and Sikki Reddy will play Malaysian duo of Wong Tien Ci and Lim Chiew Sien in their opener, while Tarun Kona and Sri Krishna Priya Kudaravalli will be up against another Malaysian combination of Hoo Pang Ron and Cheng Su Yin.

The third Indian mixed doubles pair of Ayush Raj Gupta and Sruti Swain will play against Australian duo of Jordan Yang and Sydney Tjonadi in the opener. (PTI)

In the two matches so far, the 2009 champions never really looked the formidable side it was once known to be

## Demoralised Pakistan eye big win against Canada to keep T20 WC hopes alive



**NEW YORK, June 10:** Shocked by the USA and scarred by India, Pakistan have little to play for and everything to lose when they meet Canada in their penultimate group league encounter of the T20 World Cup here on Tuesday.

If the Super Over loss against the co-hosts in their opening Group A match was not enough, Pakistan slumped to six-run loss at the hands of arch-rivals India in a low-scoring match here on Sunday.

Pakistan's Super Eight qualification chance now hinges on winning big against Canada and Ireland, besides hoping that the Americans lose big to India and Ireland.

Even in that scenario, both the teams will end on four points each and it will boil down to which team has a better net run rate. Hence Pakistan can only pray for

divine intervention in best case scenario.

USA after two wins enjoy a healthy run-rate of +0.626 and just a victory against Ireland would suffice while Pakistan with a dismal NRR of -0.150 would not only need to win but also by comprehensive margins.

In the two matches so far, the 2009 champions never really looked the formidable side it was once known to be.

There seems to be no clarity in Babar Azam's leadership. The two factions in the team -- one led by the skipper with his close friends Mohammed Rizwan and Shadab Khan while other including, recently sacked Shaheen Shah Afridi is also making matters worse.

Not a single department clicked for Pakistan in the two matches so far and they will need a more cohesive effort in the remaining

matches to give themselves an outside chance.

While Babar and Shadab Khan scored 40 odd runs against USA to post 159 for 7, Pakistan failed to defend the target, losing the match in Super Over.

And then while chasing an underwhelming 120-run target, none of the Pakistani batters could up the ante as they consumed 59 dot balls to be restricted 113 for 7.

Pakistan's major concern going forward is the underwhelming performance of their batters as the likes of Fakhar Zaman, Imad Wasim, Shadab Khan and Ifthikhar Ahmed played loose shots to make life difficult for them against India.

While Mohammed Rizwan took 44 balls to score his 31 runs, Wasim consumed 23 balls for his 15.

The only bright sport for Pak-

istan on Sunday was the performance of their bowlers with Naseem Shah (3/21) and Mohammad Amir (2/23) leading from the front.

But premier fast bowler Shaheen needs to take more responsibility upfront in the remaining two games to give Pakistan an outside chance. He has hardly been able to get swing in conducive conditions.

Going forward Pakistan will have to do some soul searching if they want to revive their faltering campaign.

Canada, on the other hand, are placed third in Group A with one win out of two games.

After the seven-wicket loss to USA, Canada bounced back in style to beat Ireland by 12 runs in their next match.

In Navneet Dhaliwal, Canada have a veteran top-order batter who was a part of that 2019 victory over Ireland, and a lot will be riding on him.

Canada will also take heart from the defeat against the USA because they had posted an imposing 194, albeit in a losing cause.

**Teams:**  
**Canada:** Saad Bin Zafar (captain), Aaron Johnson, Ravinderpal Singh, Navneet Dhaliwal, Kaleem Gordon, Dilon Heyliger, Jeremy Sana, Dillon Dutta, Pargat Singh, Nicholas Kirton, Rayyankhan Pathan, Junaid Siddiqui, Dilpreet Bajwa, Shreyas Movva and Rishiv Joshi.  
**Pakistan:** Babar Azam (c), Abrar Ahmed, Azam Khan, Fakhar Zaman, Haris Rauf, Ifthikhar Ahmed, Imad Wasim, Mohammad Abbas Afridi, Mohammad Amir, Mohammad Rizwan, Naseem Shah, Saim Ayub, Shadab Khan, Shaheen Shah Afridi, Usman Khan  
 Match starts: 8pm IST. (PTI)

## Chhetri-less India enter testing transition phase with crucial WC qualifier against Qatar



**DOHA, June 10:** The influential Sunil Chhetri's absence will be a difficult void to fill as the Indian football team enters a testing transition phase with a crucial FIFA World Cup qualifying match against heavyweights Qatar here on Tuesday.

The 39-year-old Chhetri called time on his glorious international career by playing in last week's fixture against Kuwait in Kolkata, which ended in a goal-less draw as the team failed to give him a fitting farewell. Chhetri ended with 94 goals in 151 matches, having led the country with aplomb for more than a decade.

The Indian team will be led by the 32-year-old first-choice goalkeeper Gurpreet Singh Sandhu, who has so far appeared in 72 internationals and is the most experienced player in the 23-member squad after Chhetri's retirement.

An acid test awaits India as they run into two-time Asian champions Qatar at the Jassim bin Hamad Stadium, knowing well that a defeat will end their campaign and dash all hopes of securing a maiden entry into the third round of the World Cup Qualifiers.

India remain in the second spot with five points and a goal difference of -3. Afghanistan, who also played out a 0-0 draw with Qatar in their last outing in Hofuf, Saudi Arabia, are in third spot with a goal difference of -10, the stalemate making the job much more difficult for Igor Stimac's wards.

Qatar, who have already qualified for the third round as group-toppers, have named a largely

youthful squad, with 21 out of their 29 players below the age of 24.

"We have watched the Afghanistan versus Qatar game and will work on the attacking transition, with a hope to start scoring goals from the chances we create," said Stimac on arriving here.

India had their first practice in Doha on Sunday evening and are having the official training session on Monday at the match venue.

For the Blue Tigers, a result is a must. If they lose against Qatar, they will be eliminated from the FIFA World Cup Qualifiers third round.

They will then be doing battle in the AFC Asian Cup Qualifiers third round matches for a place at the 2027 tournament in Saudi Arabia.

However, if India beat Qatar, they will be in pole position to make the World Cup Qualifiers third round and a direct spot at the Asian Cup thanks to their much-superior goal difference over Afghanistan.

If India draw against Qatar, they will qualify for the third round only if the match between Kuwait and Afghanistan, which will kick off in Kuwait City two hours after India's match, also ends in a draw.

In that scenario, India will finish second in the group with six points, the same as Afghanistan, but with a better goal difference.

Kuwait are at the bottom of the table with four points but with Qatar already through to the third round, all the other three teams remain in contention for the second and final berth from Group A.

For over a decade, one question that has dogged Indian football is, "Who, after Sunil Chhetri?"

The team is yet to find a lethal striker to succeed him.

Rahim Ali struggled as a substitute in the previous match and lacked clinical finishing skills. The likes of Manvir Singh, Vikram Paratap Singh and David Lalhansanga comprise India's forward line but they are yet to make a statement upfront.

Match starts at 9.15PM IST. (PTI)

## Malik accuses Wasim of deliberately wasting balls against India

**KARACHI, June 10:** Former skipper Salim Malik has accused Imad Wasim of deliberately wasting balls in Pakistan's six-run loss to arch-rivals India in the T20 World Cup in New York.

Chasing an underwhelming 120-run target, Pakistani batters consumed 59 dot balls to be restricted to 113 for 7 in New York on Sunday.

Wasim took 23 balls to score his 15 runs in the losing cause.

"You look at his (Wasim) innings and it appears as if he was wasting balls not scoring runs and making things difficult in the run-chase," Malik said on 24 News channel.

Another former captain Shahid Afridi feels all is not well in the Pakistan dressing room and some players have issues with skipper Babar Azam.

"A captain brings everyone together, either he spoils the team environment or he builds the team. Let this World Cup finish, and I will speak openly," said Afridi.

"I have such a relationship with Shaheen (Afridi) that if I talk about him, people will say I am favouring my son-in-law," he added.

Afridi's daughter is married to left-arm pacer Shaheen, who was removed as T20 captain just before the World Cup after just one series in New Zealand.

Former speedster Shoaib Akhtar minced no words in criticising Pakistan's below-par performance, saying the Babar Azam-led side doesn't deserve to be in the Super Eight stage.

"I think I should have a template text. Disappointed & hurt automatically set to be posted. The whole nation is down and out. Morale is down. Somehow you have to show intent to win. Do Pakistan deserve to be out of Super Eight? God knows," Akhtar said in a video message on 'X', formerly twitter.

Former England cricketer Michael Vaughan feels Pakistan lacks self-belief. "Sometimes really poor pitches produce the best games .. this was one of them .. Pakistan just don't believe they can win .. Simple as that .. #INDvsPAK." (PTI)

## MCA president Amol Kale dies



**MUMBAI, June 10:** Mumbai Cricket Association president Amol Kale died of a cardiac arrest in New York after attending the T20 World Cup match between India and Pakistan.

On Sunday, Kale was present at the Nassau County Cricket Stadium to watch the game between the arch-rivals along with other MCA officials including secretary Ajinkya Naik and apex council member Suraj Samat.

The 47-year-old Kale had become the MCA president after defeating former India and Mumbai cricketer Sandip Patil in the elections held in October 2022. During his tenure, the MCA had taken some vital decisions including the move to match the BCCI match fee for all its red-ball players for the upcoming 2024-25 season. (PTI)

## Lamichhane to join Nepal team in West Indies for last two league matches

**KINGSTOWN (ST VINCENT), June 10:** Denied US visa, Nepal's most high-profile cricketer Sandeep Lamichhane is joining his team for its Caribbean leg of the T20 World Cup campaign, the country's cricket association said on Monday.

Lamichhane, who had an eight-year sentence for rape overturned on appeal because of "lack of evidence", was denied US visa twice last month despite interventions from the Nepal government.

The 23-year-old was initially included in Nepal's 15-member squad for the tournament last month.

The T20 World Cup is being co-hosted by the United States and West Indies.

"We would like to inform you that Nepali player Sandeep Lamichhane will be included in the Nepali national cricket team for the ongoing ICC Men's T20 World Cup 2024 in West Indies," the CAN said in a statement.

Lamichhane also confirmed the development on X.

"I am now joining the national team for the last two matches in the West Indies and looking forward to fulfilling my dreams and the dream of all cricket lovers," Lamichhane posted on X, formerly Twitter.

He was arrested in October 2022 over allegations of raping an 18-year-old woman, leading to his suspension by the CAN. But



after he was acquitted by the Patan High Court in May, the player was reinstated by the country's apex cricket body.

Lamichhane's addition to the Nepal squad will have to be approved by the ICC's Event Technical Committee.

Nepal take on South Africa on June 14 and play Bangladesh on June 16. (PTI)

## Pakistan lost the plot after 15 overs, players under pressure: Kirsten

**NEW YORK, June 10:** by Pakistan's sudden disintegration in the T20 World Cup match against India here, the team's recently-appointed head coach Gary Kirsten said his batters "lost the plot" after 15 overs and are under pressure after failing to perform at their best.

Pakistan are on the verge of being eliminated from the tournament after consecutive losses to debutants USA and arch-foes India. The loss to Rohit Sharma's on Sunday was a classic case of implosion with the side going from 80/4 in the 15th over to ending at 113/7 while chasing a modest 120.

Kirsten emphasised the significance of strike rotation, particularly on challenging surfaces like the one here. He said his team failed to follow the strategy.

"I think certainly on a pitch like that, it is really, really important to be able to rotate the strike. So, I agree with that that sometimes it's fun to watch a game like this where it's not only about hitting boundaries," Kirsten said in the post-



match press conference.

"But you also have to be able to use 120 balls really well. As I said, we did for 15 overs and then we lost the plot...we're losing too many wickets.

"As a batting unit, you can't lose as many wickets as we are losing. Players have got to take responsibility when that opportunity comes," he added.

Pakistan were guilty of consuming 59

dot balls during the chase. Indian pace spearhead Jasprit Bumrah did the most damage with figures of 3/14 in his four overs.

The side's next game will be at the same venue against Canada on Tuesday. It will be a virtual do-or-die encounter for the runners-up of the last edition.

"These guys are all international players and they're aware that when they're not performing at their best that there's going to be pressure put on them. That's understandable," Kirsten, who has coached the 2011 ODI World Cup-winning Indian team, said.

"...but a lot of these guys have played a lot of T20 cricket around the world over many, many years and it's really up to them to decide how they're going to take their games forward," the South African stated.

Asked if the team lacks the ability to handle pressure, Kirsten stressed upon the importance of continual growth and adaptation in the fast-paced world of international cricket. (PTI)

## Year ago people asked if I am finished, now they say I am at my best: Bumrah



**NEW YORK, June 10:** Jasprit Bumrah couldn't help but laugh at how the narrative about him has changed in a year's time -- from being someone whose career is finished to the one who is at the peak of his prowess.

In 2022, Bumrah underwent surgery for a lower back stress fracture and missed the T20 World Cup in Australia. Just before his comeback in a home bilateral series, he developed a strain and was out for more than 10 months. As a result, people

were sceptical of his ability to handle the workload of three formats.

But Indian cricket's rare gem sealed the lips of 'Doubting Thomases' with 67 wickets across three formats in the last year, including a match-winning 3/14 against Pakistan in the low-scoring T20 World Cup thriller on Sunday.

"See a year ago, the same people were saying that I might not play again and my career is over and then now the question changed," he said taking a shot at all those who doubted his ability to fight back.

India restricted Pakistan to 113/7 after posting a mere 119 here thanks largely to Bumrah's stupendous performance.

He understands the fickle nature of criticism and knows that despite being a cliched phrase, controlling the controllables works best for him.

"For me, I am not looking at whether I am bowling at the best of my ability. I try to solve the problem that is there in front of me. I know it's a cliched answer...but I was trying to focus on what is the best option over here on a wicket like this," the 30-year-old revealed.

"How do I make shot-making difficult? What are the best options for me? So that

way, I try to stay in the present and focus on what I have to do."

Outside noise and pressure can gobble one up in a high-stakes game. But it's something that Bumrah successfully avoids by creating his own bubble.

"Because if I look at the outside noise, if I look at people and pressure and emotion takes over, then things don't really work for me," the 30-year-old explained.

The IPL-17, that concluded last month changed, that concluded last month saw an unprecedented 1260 sixes being hit on tracks that resembled roadways. The 'Impact Player' rule also hurt top quality bowlers who were often dispatched to the stands with disdain.

"When it's bat vs bat, I switch off the TV. I have been a fan of bowling since childhood. When there is a challenge between bat and ball, that is the game I like," Bumrah said.

But the Indian bowling unit that has come for the T20 World Cup hasn't shown any scars of the IPL.

"Obviously, the IPL that we played was not very bowler-friendly but we are very happy that we didn't come here with that baggage and when we are getting help here, we were trying to use it. (PTI)

## Carlos Alcaraz owns 3 Grand Slam titles; Wimbledon title defense starts July 1

**PARIS, June 10:** Carlos Alcaraz plans to continue his tradition of celebrating Grand Slam titles with tattoos by getting ink of the date he won his first French Open championship and a drawing of the Eiffel Tower. That art, to help remember Sunday's 6-3, 2-6, 5-7, 6-1, 6-2 comeback against Alexander Zverev in the final at Roland Garros, will go near Alcaraz's left ankle. His right ankle already bears the date of his 2023 Wimbledon triumph and an image of a strawberry; his left arm carries the date of his first major trophy, which arrived at the 2022 U.S. Open.

At the rate he's going, the 21-year-old from Spain might run out of skin. Alcaraz, though, noted Sunday that he assured his mother he will not keep printing the dates of every Slam victory for the rest of his career on his body. Instead, he'll keep it to just dates of the first title from each of the four most important events in tennis -- which means all that remains is the Australian Open, and who would doubt that he eventually will add that one, too?

As it is, Alcaraz is the youngest man to collect a Slam title on clay, grass and hard courts, much as he was the youngest, at 19, to reach No. 1 in the ATP rankings.

Jannik Sinner is No. 1 in the rankings for the first time and already is looking ahead to Wimbledon. French Open director Amélie Mauresmo says she has some ideas to help avoid so many empty seats. Coco Gauff is a Grand Slam champion in singles and doubles, exceeding her own expectations.

"My game suits ... every surface," he explained, "because I practice it."

He first learned the sport on clay, he finds himself most comfortable on hard courts -- he sought to excel there because

that's what is used at most tournaments -- and his always-look-to-attack style is a perfect fit for grass, as his win over seven-time Wimbledon champion Novak Djokovic in last year's final at the All England Club proved. Alcaraz's title defense there begins July 1.

Of course, he said, he works on his defense. And his drop shots and volleys are valuable tools, as Zverev and so many others see. But Alcaraz's underlying principle is this: "My main goal is being aggressive, as much as I can."

In the semifinals in Paris, he wore down Jannik Sinner -- who replaced the injured Djokovic at No. 1 in the rankings on Monday, ahead of No. 2 Alcaraz -- and came back from a two-sets-to-one deficit by grabbing eight of the last 11 games in a 4-hour, 9-minute match.

In the final, Alcaraz wore down the fourth-ranked Zverev, again erasing a 2-1 deficit in sets, this time by rolling through 12 of the last 15 games in a 4-hour, 19-minute match.

"We're both physically strong, but he's a beast. He's an animal, for sure. The intensity he plays tennis at is different to other people," Zverev said. "He can do so many different things."

Alcaraz dealt with cramps against both Sinner and Zverev and said the real key, he has found, is in the mind.

"If you're not strong in your head and you don't show mental strength," Alcaraz said, "you won't win Grand Slams."

Greatness has been predicted of him for quite some time and, so far, he has met the outsized expectations. The standards he's setting only serve to increase the volume of the praise -- and the projections of what might be possible. (AP)

