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India overtakes Japan as 4th largest economy

We are now a USD 4 trillion economy, says NITI Aayog CEO

NEW DELHI, May 25: India has become the fourth largest economy in the world, overtaking Japan, NITI Aayog CEO BVR Subrahmanyam has said.

Subrahmanyam said the overall geopolitical and economic environment is favourable to India. "We are the fourth largest economy as I speak. We are a USD 4 trillion economy as I speak," he said.

Citing IMF data, Subrahmanyam said India today is larger than Japan. Till 2024, India was the fifth-largest economy in the world.

"It is only the US, China and Germany which are larger than India, and if we stick to what is being planned and what is being thought through, in 2.5-3 years, we will be the third largest economy," Subrahmanyam said.

The International Monetary Fund (IMF), in its World Economic Outlook (WEO) report released in April had said that India is expected to be the fourth largest



economy in the world with a GDP of USD 4.19 trillion in 2025, ahead of Japan. India's nominal GDP for 2025 (FY26) is expected to be USD 4.187 billion marginally more than the likely GDP of Japan which is estimated at USD 4.187 billion, the IMF had said.

According to IMF data, India's per capita income has doubled

from USD 1,438 in 2013-14 to USD 2,880 in 2025.

The IMF in its WEO report also said the Indian economy is projected to grow at 6.2 per cent in 2025-26, slower than earlier estimated rate of 6.5 per cent, due to escalated trade tensions and global uncertainty.

"For India, the growth outlook is

relatively more stable at 6.2 per cent in 2025, supported by private consumption, particularly in rural areas," the IMF had said.

According to the report, the global growth is projected at 2.8 per cent in 2025, lower by 0.5 percentage points estimated earlier. In 2026, the global economy is estimated to grow at 3 per cent.

NITI Aayog approach paper titled "Viksit Rajya For Viksit Bharat @ 2047" said from being considered a part of the 'fragile five' economies of the world, India rose to become the top five economies of the world in just a decade.

The World Bank defines high-income countries as those whose annual per capita income is more than USD 14,005 (2024-25). India has the potential and aims to be a high-income country by 2047. The approach paper said a Viksit Bharat @ 2047 will be a USD 30 trillion economy. (CONTD. ON PAGE-2)

Scores of 'doubtful citizens' picked up across Assam

GUWAHATI, May 25: Scores of people were "picked up" from across Assam on Sunday on suspicion of being "doubtful citizens", officials said, adding that their documents were being verified.

The operation was based on a central directive to act against Bangladeshi citizens who are staying in India illegally, they said.

"Accordingly, we launched the operation. Scores of people have been picked up and their documents are being checked," an official at the Assam Police Headquarters told PTI on the condition of anonymity. He declined to share details such as the total number of people held, stating that the operation is ongoing.

Around 150 people were "picked up" from various locations of the Kamrup Metropolitan district since Saturday night, a source at the Guwahati Police said.

"They have been kept at Rupnarayan Police Reserve and their papers



are being checked," he said.

Many people, who were declared as 'foreigners' by the legal system, have been absconding, and they are being tracked at present, officials said.

"Besides that, many suspected foreigners are also living in the state. We are trying to locate them in this operation," another official

said. The entire operation is being carried out under the supervision of the Assam Police Border Organisation, headed by an Inspector General rank officer.

On Saturday, nine Bangladeshis staying illegally in India were arrested in Morigaon district. All of them had been declared foreign nationals by (CONTD. ON PAGE-2)

PM asks NDA govts in states to adopt best governance practices for 'Viksit Bharat'



NEW DELHI, May 25: Prime Minister Narendra Modi asserted on Sunday that caste enumeration is a step towards bringing into the mainstream of development those left behind, as he emphasised that his government does not believe in caste politics but in the empowerment of the marginalised.

Addressing a conclave of NDA chief ministers and deputy chief ministers, Modi said the success of Operation Sindoor was an endorsement of the country's push towards self-reliance in the defence sector, an apparent reference to the important role played by indigenous defence technology in the recent India-Pakistan conflict, sources said.

Presentations on seven best governance practices, including the Uniform Civil Code in Uttarakhand, in as many states were made by different CMs and deputy CMs. Modi suggested forming a committee to study them and how they can be integrated elsewhere.

A synergised effort from the NDA-ruled states can speed up the realisation of 'Viksit Bharat', he added.

Sources said the prime minister also asked leaders to avoid the tendency to speak out of turn, seen as an expression of disapproval in the backdrop of political rows triggered by insensitive and contentious remarks made by the members of the

ruling alliance at several places following Operation Sindoor.

Briefing reporters, BJP president J P Nadda said 20 chief ministers and 18 deputy chief ministers attended the conclave in which two resolutions -- one hailing the valour of armed forces and Modi's brave leadership in the context of the recent military action and another praising the decision of caste enumeration in the next census -- were passed.

Nadda said the prime minister in his remarks praised the bravery of the armed forces. Modi also emphasised the goal to turn India into a developed country at a fast pace and to make it "powerful, capable and self-reliant", the BJP president noted. A census of castes, Nadda said, was always part of the ruling alliance's imagination, noting that the Bihar government headed by JD(U) leader and chief minister Nitish Kumar was the first to do it.

The resolution has made it clear that the NDA does not believe in caste politics but acknowledges the need for a caste census to bring into the mainstream of development the deprived, exploited, Dalits and others left behind. It is the need of the society, he added. Andhra Pradesh Chief Minister and TDP president N Chandrababu Naidu did not attend the meeting due to a prior commitment in his (CONTD. ON PAGE-2)

Sonowal congratulates citizens as India becomes world's fourth-largest economy

HT Correspondent
DIBRUGARH, May 25: The Union Minister of Ports, Shipping & Waterways (MoPSW), Sarbananda Sonowal, on Sunday congratulated the people of India on the country's rise as the world's fourth-largest economy, crediting the achievement to the astute, dynamic, and strong leadership of Prime Minister Narendra Modi since 2014.

Hailing this historic transformation of India in last decade, the Member of Parliament (MP) from Dibrugarh called upon the citizens of the country to commit to the cause of nation building and work sincerely towards realising Prime Minister Narendra Modi's vision of 'Viksit Bharat'.

"Prime Minister Narendra Modi ji's 'Mann Ki Baat' has consistently inspired the citizens of the nation through transformative ideas and stories of courage from across the country," said Sonowal while addressing a gathering at the "Mann Ki Baat" listening event and "Tiranga Yatra" held at Booth No. 112 in West Mandal here.

The Union minister said that listening to today's address once again left me inspired, adding, "The Prime Minister has urged all citizens to dedicate



themselves to building a developed and self-reliant India. Under his leadership, India has emerged as the world's fourth-largest economy. We must commit ourselves to taking this journey of growth and prosperity to even greater heights and ultimately achieve Modi ji's vision of a Viksit Bharat."

Joining the Tiranga Yatra to celebrate the success of Operation Sindoor, Sonowal paid tribute to the valour of India's armed forces and credited their fearless dedication and PM Modi's res-

olute leadership for the mission's success. Along the route, Sonowal also interacted with rickshaw pullers and labourers to thank them for their service to the society.

"Shramiks are one of the key driving forces of our great nation. Meeting these hardworking individuals is always a source of joy and inspiration for me. I thank them for their hard work towards the service of the society. After interacting with them, I felt encouraged and grateful (CONTD. ON PAGE-2)

Bangladesh's two 'chicken necks' more vulnerable than Siliguri corridor: Himanta

GUWAHATI, May 25: Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma on Sunday said that those who 'habitually threaten' India on the 'chicken neck corridor', should note that Bangladesh has two such narrow strips of land which are "far more vulnerable".

India's chicken's neck, known as the Siliguri corridor, is a narrow strip of land, measuring around 22 km-35 km in width, that connects the northeast region with the rest of India.

Sarma in a post on X said, "To those who habitually threaten India on the 'Chicken Neck Corridor', should note these facts as well: Bangladesh has two of its own 'chicken necks'. Both are far more vulnerable. First is the 80 km North Bangladesh Corridor- from Dakshin Dinajpur to South West Garo Hills. Any disruption here, can completely isolate the entire Rangpur division from rest of Bangladesh."

"Second is the 28 km Chittagong Corridor, from South Tripura till the Bay of Bengal. This corridor, smaller than India's chicken neck, is the only link between Bangladesh's economic capital and political capital," he also posted on X.

For the neighbouring country, disruption in one of these 'chicken necks' will cut off the link between its economic and political capitals, and disruption in the other will isolate the entire Rangpur division from the rest of the country, Sarma claimed.

"I am only presenting geographical facts that some may tend to forget. Just like India's Siliguri Corridor, our neighbouring country is also embedded with two narrow corridors of theirs," the chief minister added. (PTI)

Drugs worth ₹11.5 crore seized in Assam, 4 arrested

GUWAHATI, May 25: Narcotic substances worth ₹11.5 crore have been seized from two districts of Assam and four drug peddlers were arrested, Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma said.

In a post on X, Sarma said on Saturday night that the Assam Police dealt a major blow to the drug trade through two operations in Karbi Anglong and Cachar districts.

"@karbianglongpol intercepted a vehicle at Khatkhathi checkpoint and seized: 4.899 kg Morphine worth ₹ 5 Crore; 1 peddler arrested," he said.

In the second operation in Cachar, the district police and Special Task Force (STF) seized over 1.2 kg of heroin worth more than ₹ 6 crore, Sarma said.

"@cacharpolice & @STF intercepted a vehicle at Sonabarighat and seized: 1.239 kg Heroin worth ₹ 6.5 Crore; 3 persons arrested," the chief minister added. (PTI)

India, Maldives to review implementation of economic, maritime security partnership today

NEW DELHI, May 25: External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar and his Maldivian counterpart Abdulla Khaleel will on Monday take stock of the implementation of the India-Maldives comprehensive economic and maritime security partnership.

Khaleel, accompanied by a high-level delegation, is paying a three-day visit to India beginning Sunday evening. It is his third trip to India this year.

The India-Maldives vision document on comprehensive economic and maritime security partnership was adopted by Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Maldivian President Mohamed Muizzu in October last year.

Foreign Minister Khaleel's visit is in continuation of "intensified high-level political exchanges" between India and Maldives, the Ministry of External Affairs (MEA) said announcing his trip.

It said Khaleel will lead Maldives at the



second High Level Core Group (HLCC) meeting to oversee progress in the implementation of the India-Maldives vision document on comprehensive economic and maritime security partnership.

Foreign Minister Khaleel will also hold bilateral discussions with external affairs minister S Jaishankar, it said.

"Maldives is India's key maritime neighbour and an important partner in India's 'Neighbourhood First' policy and vision MAHASAGAR that is Mutual and Holistic Advancement for Security and Growth Across Regions," the MEA said in a statement. "The visit is aimed at strengthening the comprehensive economic and maritime security partnership between the two countries," it added.

The ties between India and the Maldives came under severe strain after Muizzu, known for his pro-China leanings, took charge of the top office in November 2023. Within hours of his oath, he had demanded the withdrawal of Indian military personnel from his country. Subsequently, the Indian military personnel were replaced by civilians.

There was a thaw in the relations as Muizzu vowed to boost the bilateral ties with India during his visit to Delhi in October. (PTI)

'Excess sugar consumption leads to childhood obesity'

CBSE Sugar Boards to help students, parents make informed choices on sugar intake: Experts

NEW DELHI, May 25: With the Central Board of Secondary Education (CBSE) directing schools to set up dedicated 'Sugar Boards' to underline the importance of limiting sugar consumption, experts feel the move will encourage both students and parents to make informed choices on sugar intake.

The initiative targets a growing public health concern: the silent but significant rise in childhood obesity, Type-2 diabetes, and metabolic disorders.

As part of the move, which has stirred up enthusiasm among health experts, educators and nutritionists, schools across India have been directed to prominently display sugar awareness boards on their campuses to encourage both

students and parents to recognise the "hidden" sugars in their daily diets.

Dr R Goswami, professor of endocrinology at AIIMS Delhi, called the move a good initiative.

"Carbohydrates, especially those with excess of free sugar such as cold drinks and maida-rich food, are relatively cheaper sources of energy and calories when compared to protein-rich foods.

"So, one gets more quantity of carbohydrate-rich food as compared to protein-rich food in the same amount of money spent," Goswami said.

"As a result, when a person starts consuming more of such carbohydrate-rich food, coupled with



lack of exercise, obesity develops. However, there is no data that show taking sweets in moderation when the Body Mass Index (BMI)

is maintained leads to diabetes. So one can take sweets, but in moderation. "Excess sugar consumption leads to childhood obesity, which

can lead to Type 2 diabetes at a later stage. Children should also avoid refined carbohydrates such as maida, which increases calorie intake and can later lead to obesity. Taking sugar in limitation is very important as it directly affects the BMI." With over 250 million school-aged children in India, the potential impact of this initiative can be significant.

According to data, Indian children consume far above the World Health Organization's (WHO) recommended limit of 5 per cent of daily calories from added sugars - a trend that is deeply concerning to health professionals. Dr Ritika Samadhar, regional head of dietetics at Max Healthcare, Delhi, said, (CONTD. ON PAGE-2)

Assam minister calls on Pahalgam attack victim's family in Karnataka to hand over financial aid

GUWAHATI, May 25: The Assam government continued to hand over financial assistance to the next of kin of the victims of the Pahalgam terror attack, with a cabinet minister on Sunday calling on the bereaved family of Manjunath in Karnataka.

The state cabinet had earlier announced providing ex gratia of Rs 5 lakh each to families of all 26 victims of the April 22 attack.

"As the family of Manjunath ji comes to terms with the irreparable loss, we express our collective solidarity to the family in these tough times. My colleague Shri @BimalBorah19 has extended a token of support from the people of Assam to the family to help them in this hour," chief minister Himanta Biswa Sarma posted on X.

Borah, also in a post on social media, said, "Hon'ble CM Dr @himantribiswara dangoriya-led Govt of Assam stands resolute with all the victims of the dastardly #PahalgamTerroristAttack during these trying times. Reiterating the same, visited the residence of Late Manjunath Rao in Shivamogga, as per the directions of our HCM, and handed over financial assistance of ₹ 5 lakh on behalf of our govt to his wife Smt Pallavi R on the occasion." "Also, interacted with the bereaved family members and conveyed my sincere condolences to them," he added.

Cabinet ministers of Assam have been visiting the bereaved families since Friday in different parts of the country to hand over the financial aid. (PTI)

India's renewable energy capacity grows 3-fold to 232GW in last decade

NEW DELHI, May 25: India has logged threefold growth in its renewable power capacity in the last decade, with the installed green energy capacity reaching 232GW, including large hydro power plants, currently compared to 75.52GW capacity in March 2014, official sources said.

India has emerged as a global front runner in renewable energy space as the traiff of the grid-connected solar power plants has gone down by 80 per cent to ₹ 10.95 per unit (for 170MW at Neemuch), sources said.

In March 2014, India's installed solar energy capacity was 2.82 GW, which has crossed 108GW now, recording multifold growth. Wind energy capacity has more than doubled to 51GW presently from 21GW in 2014.

Sources mentioned that during the UPA regime, India was almost absent in the solar manufacturing scene, with a meagre 2GW of solar module production in 2014.

In 2024, India has transformed into a global leader, with solar module manufacturing skyrocket-



ing to 90GW and by 2030, the nation will reach an impressive 150GW, they said.

In 2014, India had almost zero domestic production of solar cells and wafers, which was a stark failure of the previous government's policy, official sources said.

Today, India has built a strong foundation with 25GW of solar cell production and 2GW of wafer production. India has planned solar cells and wafer capacity of 100GW and 40GW respectively by 2030,

which is aimed at reducing dependence on imports and becoming a self-sustaining power house.

Even in fully integrated production, the country has reached 3.2GW in 2024, with a target of 24GW by 2030.

Similarly, the biopower generation capacity has increased by 42 per cent from 8.1GW to 11.5GW over the last 10 years.

Compressed Biogas (CBG) sector expanded from a single project with 8 tonnes per day (TPD) CBG

generation capacity in 2014 to 150 projects with a cumulative capacity of 1,211 TPD in 2024.

The PM-Surya Ghar Muft Bijli Yojana, has gained significant traction, benefitting almost 13.3 lakh households, with nearly 12 lakh installations in the past 10 months, sources stated.

India has added a record 25GW of renewable energy capacity in 2024, which is 34.63 per cent higher than 18.57 GW achieved in the previous year.

India has set an ambitious target of having 500GW of renewable energy capacity by 2030, which requires the addition of about 50GW of green capacity per annum in the next five to six years, they stated.

Four renewable energy implementing agency (REIA), SECI, NTPC, NHPC and SJVN, have collectively issued RE power procurement tenders of around 44GW in fiscal year 2024-25.

Earlier in April, India became the world's third-largest producer of electricity from wind and solar energy in 2024, overtaking Germany. (PTI)

Jute industry pins hope on June 3 ECJ meet amid supply crunch, soaring prices

KOLKATA, May 25: The Centre's Expert Committee on Jute (ECJ) will meet in Kolkata on June 3 to review the raw jute and mesta supply situation, even as the industry struggles with high prices, delayed crop arrivals, and low availability.

The committee, under the Ministry of Textiles, will assess the 2024-25 supply-demand scenario and discuss the outlook for the 2025-26 crop of the golden fibre. Officials from the Jute division, National Jute Board, Agriculture Ministry and other stakeholders will attend the meeting.

Though official estimates suggest sufficient availability with 73 lakh bales of production, 5 lakh bales of imports, and 23 lakh bales of carryover stock, actual supplies remain tight due to hoarding, jute mill officials said. Consumption stands at around 70 to 72 lakh bales. "A delayed monsoon in key jute-growing areas like Murshidabad, Nadia, and Goalpara has

pushed back sowing, and fresh arrivals may not come before September. This could cause a supply gap in July and August. Prices have already shot up to ₹ 6,800-7,200 per quintal, much higher than the MSP of ₹ 5,650," former Indian Jute Mills Association chairman Sanjay Kajaria said.

Despite this, the Jute Commissioner's Office (JCO) has failed to activate any buffer release mechanism or take action against hoarding and speculative withholding, jute mills complained. Mills, particularly in North Bengal, are running only 4 to 5 days a week due to rising input costs and procurement challenges, Kajaria said. A mill owner said that they are struggling to pay wages and meet statutory dues.

The industry is looking to the ECJ meeting for urgent steps such as buffer stock release, action against hoarding, and strict MSP enforcement to stabilise the market. (PTI)

Reliance General Insurance net profit rises 12.5% to ₹ 315 cr in FY25

NEW DELHI, May 25: Reliance General Insurance, an arm of Reliance Capital recently acquired by IndusInd International Holdings Ltd (IIHL), reported 12.5 per cent growth in net profit to ₹ 315 crore for the financial year ended in March 2025.

Gross Direct Premium (GDP) of the company rose to ₹ 12,548 crore, an increase of 7.4 per cent over the last financial year, outpacing general insurance industry growth of 5.2 per cent.

Net worth of the company also witnessed 10.2 per cent improvement to ₹ 3,429 crore in FY25. Reliance General Insurance said in a statement. IIHL, which acquired Reliance Capital through the insolvency process in March this year, infused ₹ 100 crore in May 2025 in the general insurance company reinforcing its financial strength and growth momentum.

The company, which faced strong headwinds being under the Insolvency and Bankruptcy Code (IBC) for nearly three years, has been acquired by Hinduja-backed IIHL. To resurrect the position of the company, the new promoter infused capital amounting to ₹ 300 crore during the insolvency process.

Solvency margin stood at 159 per cent as against regulatory requirement of 150 per cent at the end of March 2025, it said.

Commenting on the company's performance, Reliance General Insurance CEO Rakesh Jain said the financial year 2024-25 marked a year of disciplined execution, strategic investments, and resilient growth, even in a dynamic and challenging market environment.

"We remain steadfast in our commitment to protecting the aspirations of millions of Indians through innovative and trusted insurance solutions," he said.

The successful conclusion of the CIRP of Reliance Capital Limited in March 2025 has opened a transformative new chapter under the stewardship of IIHL, he said. "With IIHL's strong financial backing and proven expertise in financial services, we are confident in our ability to accelerate our growth journey and lead the next wave of innovation in India's general insurance sector," he added. (PTI)

Contd. from Page 1...

India overtakes Japan as 4th largest

"It will have all the attributes of a developed country with a per capita income that is comparable to the high-income countries of the world today," the paper said.

According to the paper, in order to achieve the goal of a Viksit Bharat by 2047, an overall framework for strategic interventions and reforms based on six key building blocks, with a total of 26 themes covered across all the building blocks have been identified.

The six key building blocks are: Macro-Economic Goals and Strategy; Empowered Citizens; A Thriving and Sustainable Economy; Technology and Innovation Leadership; A Global Leader, Vishwa Bandhu; Enabling factors -- Governance, Security and Justice delivery. (PTI)

Scores of 'doubtful citizens'

the Foreigners Tribunals but had been evading arrest. "The declared foreigners will be sent to the detention centre, now called a transit camp, in Goalpara after verification of their documents. The process is on," an official said. (PTI)

PM asks NDA govts in states

state, sources said. The sources said Modi noted that his government has worked for those left behind, be it geographic regions like the North East and backward districts or women as a gender, in every sector.

Haryana CM Nayab Singh Saini proposed the resolution, which was seconded by Andhra Pradesh Deputy CM Pawan Kalyan, both leaders from backward classes. The resolution on Operation Sindoor was read out by Rajasthan CM Bhajpal Sharma and seconded by Maharashtra deputy CM Eknath Shinde.

The resolution said Operation Sindoor has boosted the self-confidence of Indians, sources said.

Praising Modi's leadership, it said he has always supported the armed forces and that Operation Sindoor has given a befitting reply to terrorists and their sponsors. PM Modi, and Union ministers Amit Shah, Rajnath Singh and J P Nadda, who is BJP president too, attended the one-day conclave, where the programmes to commemorate the first anniversary of the Modi government in its third term, the 50th anniversary of Emergency and a decade of International Yoga Day were discussed too.

A significant part of deliberations at this conclave was devoted to best practices by different NDA state governments. Home Minister Amit Shah spelt out the government's drive to stamp out axialism amid the killings of a large number of ultras by security forces.

Presentations on Bastar Olympics in the once citadel of Maoists in Chhattisgarh, a campaign against child marriage in Assam, Bihar's Jal Jeevan Haryali Abhiyaan, Gujarat's solar electricity drive and Meghalaya's scheme for accountable governance were made.

Dhami spoke about the rolling out of the Uniform Civil Code in his state, and how his government worked to remove bottlenecks in its implementation.

The meeting also paid tributes to the people killed in the April 22 Pahalgam terror attack. Nadda said the prime minister underscored that water conservation programmes like building 'Amrit Sarovar' and the cleanliness campaign should be adopted as a continuous drive and not a one-off step. (PTI)

Sonowal congratulates citizens

to this wonderful country where everyone is working towards building a better tomorrow under the dynamic and inspiring leadership of PM Narendra Modi," he added. Later in the day, Sonowal unveiled a full-sized statue of the revered Matak monarch, Swargadeo Sarbananda Singha Dev, at Koilabari in Sadiya.

The Union Minister was accompanied by the Assam government ministers, Ranaj Pegu and Prashanta Phukan Ponakam Baruah, MLA, Chabua; Binod Hazarika, MLA, Lahowal along with the chairman of Assam Tourism Development Corporation (ATDC), Rituparna Baruah, chairman,, the Assam State Women's Commission (ASWC), chairperson, Hemprabha Barthakur, the chief executive member (CEM) of Sonowal Kachari Autonomous Council (SKAC), Tankeswar Sonowal, Dibrugarh District BJP Mahila Morcha president, Mamun Gogoi Mitra, the CEM of Matak Autonomous Council (MAC), David Chetia, and several leaders and members of Matak community organisations, along with local citizens and party workers.

CBSE Sugar Boards to help students

"It's a great initiative by the CBSE to establish Sugar Boards and educate students about the informed choices on sugar intake and the hidden sources of it. "Excess sugar and sweetened beverage intake is just empty calories and in children, it poses a significant public health concern. Increased intake can cause obesity, metabolic syndrome, dental cavities, behaviour and cognitive effects.

"The WHO recommends children should consume less than 10 per cent of daily calories from added sugars' -- ideally under 5 per cent for added health benefits." The Sugar Board initiative is not just about cutting back on sweets, 'it's about raising awareness on the hidden sugars lurking in processed foods, flavoured yogurts, packaged juices, and in the even so-called "healthy" breakfast cereals.

The sugar boards will serve as real-time nutrition educators, displaying sugar content in common snacks, drinks, and meals consumed by children on a daily basis, Samadhar said. Isha Vashisht, a wellness expert and founder of the Forever Healthy India campaign, praised the CBSE's vision, calling it a "national movement in the making".

"As a nutritionist dedicated to preventive healthcare and addressing the root causes of lifestyle diseases, I strongly endorse CBSE's visionary move to introduce sugar boards in schools. "This initiative is both timely and essential in combating the alarming rise in childhood obesity, early-onset of Type 2 diabetes, and metabolic disorders," Vashisht said.

Data reveals that children aged 4-10 consume about 13 per cent and those aged 11-18 nearly 15 per cent of their daily calories from added sugars -- nearly three times the WHO's recommended limit of 5 per cent. The initiative marks more than just a symbolic gesture, it signifies the integration of health literacy into school culture, Vashisht said.

The boards are expected to include simple infographics, comparison charts, and weekly updates that show how sugar is hiding in foods kids regularly consume. Workshops and interactive activities will reinforce these lessons, making them both fun and memorable. With over 27,000 CBSE-affiliated schools across India, the move has the power to shift the dietary habits of millions of children and families, Vashisht said. (PTI)

HC Dismisses RVUNL Appeal on Compensation Cess

JAIPUR, May 25: The Rajasthan High Court has dismissed an appeal by the Rajasthan Rajya Vidyut Utpadan Nigam Limited (RVUNL) in connection with a dispute with Adani Enterprises Limited on the issue of compensation cess.

A bench of Justices Avneesh Jhingana and Bhuwan Goyal held that RVUNL is liable to reimburse the amount paid by Adani-owned joint venture company AEL under Clean Energy Cess for coal mining.

Coal blocks were allotted by the Centre to RRVUNL which invited tenders to enter into a joint venture arrangement for the development and operation of coal blocks, transportation and delivery of coal to the thermal power stations of the Nigam.

Adani Enterprises Limited (AEL) being the successful bidder formed a joint venture company and executed a Coal Mining and Development Agreement (CMDA) for 30 years with RVUNL.

In 2010, the central government levied Clean Energy Cess (CEC) on the goods mentioned in the Tenth Schedule of the Finance Act, 2010 in which coal was also one of the levied products.

The RVUNL, in accordance with the CMDA, was paying the CEC, but in 2017, the Goods & Services Tax Acts (GST) were implemented.

The Goods & Services Tax (Compensation to States) Act, 2017 was also enacted to compensate states for the loss of revenue arising from the implementation of the GST.

The CEC imposed by the Finance Act, 2010, was repealed by the Taxation Amendment Act of 2017. Thereafter, a dispute arose between the two companies on the issue of reimbursement of cess paid under the 2017 Act known as the 'compensation cess'.

The matter was referred for arbitration. While upholding the contention of the Adani company that RRVUNL is liable to reimburse compensation cess to them on the entire coal mined, the claim was allowed by the arbitrator.

The objections filed by the RVUNL under Section 34 of the Arbitration and Conciliation Act were rejected by the commercial court which held that the view taken by the arbitrator was a plausible one. Following this, the RVUNL approached the high court.

While dismissing RVUNL's appeal, the high court bench held, "The argument that reimbursable shall include only those taxes for which the Nigam has a statutory liability to pay has lacuna. (PTI)

Geopolitical tensions to slow FY25 semiconductor design GCCs hiring: Report

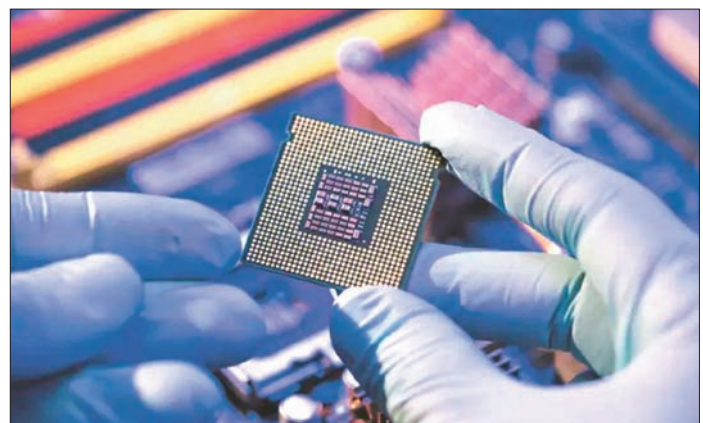
NEW DELHI, May 25: India's semiconductor design Global Capability Centers (GCCs) witnessed a 15 per cent decline in job openings in 2024-25, mainly due to ongoing geopolitical uncertainties and global supply chain disruptions, according to a report.

The report by talent solutions provider CareerNet revealed open positions peaked in May 2024 with 3,760 jobs before gradually tapering off to 3,040 by January 2025 and closing the year at 3,181 in March 2025.

This reflects a measured slowdown of nearly 15 per cent year-on-year decline in active roles across India's top 50 semiconductor design GCCs.

Despite this moderation, the overall demand for niche skills in VLSI (Very Large Scale Integration), embedded systems, and RF/analog design remained resilient, with mid-sized GCCs demonstrating greater hiring agility, it added.

Semiconductor design is a niche area with inherently less headcount compared to other tech functions, so fluctuations in hiring sentiment - especially from two or three major industry players - can significantly influence the overall semiconductor design job market.



"The semiconductor design GCCs in India have experienced a relatively sluggish trend in new job openings over the past few quarters. This cautious hiring environment is largely driven by ongoing geopolitical uncertainties, global supply chain disruptions, and volatility in valuations within key technology areas, such as artificial intelligence and advanced computing," CareerNet CBO Neelabh Shukla told PTI.

The report is based on an analysis of job openings in India's top 50 semiconductor design GCCs in 2023-24 and 2024-25.

Meanwhile, the report revealed that the intellectual property (IP)

design sub-sector focusing on developing specialised chip components and reusable design blocks continued to demonstrate strong demand, with a significant number of open positions.

"Despite these short-term fluctuations, we remain optimistic about the medium to long-term outlook. Increased global focus on semiconductor supply chain resilience, combined with strategic Indian government initiatives to boost domestic semiconductor manufacturing and design capabilities in India, is expected to catalyse a more robust growth trajectory for semiconductor design jobs in the coming years," Shukla added. (PTI)

PNB targets ₹16k-cr recovery, aims to keep slippages below 1% in FY26: MD

NEW DELHI, May 25: Punjab National Bank (PNB) is targeting a significant recovery of ₹ 16,000 crore and aims to keep slippages below 1 per cent in the current fiscal year to sustain profitability, the top official of the country's second biggest state-owned lender said.

The total recovery of the bank stood at ₹ 4,733 crore for the fourth quarter and ₹ 14,336 crore for FY25 while overall slippages ratio was 0.73 per cent during the last financial year.

"Going forward, maximization of recovery and preventing fresh slippages are going to be priority areas. We are targeting a higher total recovery of ₹ 16,000 crore as against of recovery of about ₹ 14,000 crore in FY25...we are expecting that the quarterly our slippages will be in the range of around ₹ 1,500 crore to ₹ 1,700 crore," PNB MD and CEO Ashok Chandra told PTI in an interview.

The bank is going to focus on re-

covery through the technical write off accounts, he said, adding, "I am expecting that ₹ 6,000 crore of recovery will happen in the technical right off book. So, we have set up a target of ₹ 1,500 crore of minimum recovery every quarter."

The technical write off book of the bank stands around ₹ 91,000 crore with the provision coverage ratio of more than 96 per cent and recoveries from such accounts are added to the bottomline directly.

Chunky assets are no longer there but there are a lot of NPA accounts in the range of ₹ 25 crore to ₹ 50 crore where recoveries are expected, he added.

The bank also plans to expand its RAM (retail, agriculture and MSMEs) sector lending to 58 per cent of its loan book in the current financial year with the help of various initiatives taken, including loan outreach.

The bank closed FY25 with loan outstanding under RAM segment

at ₹ 6,02,682 crore, 56 per cent of the loan book.

"We are planning to increase RAM from 56 per cent to 58 per cent in this financial year because that will give me the cushion against loss which is happening due to reduction in the interest rate in the corporate and the RLLR (repo-linked lending rate) loan book," he said.

The volume increase in the RAM segment will help compensate for a loss due to further rate cuts, he said.

For the financial year ended March 2025, PNB has emerged as the top bank in terms of profit growth among 12 public sector banks (PSBs) with a 102 per cent rise. The bank's net profit doubled to ₹ 16,630 crore compared to ₹ 8,245 crore in the previous fiscal.

The bank has reported a 14 per cent rise in total business at ₹ 26.83 lakh crore in FY25, one of the highest in the banking system. (PTI)

HFCL expects 25-30 pc revenue growth in current fiscal Company MD

NEW DELHI, May 25: Domestic telecom gear HFCL expects 25-30 per cent growth in revenue during the current fiscal on account of increase in order book and pick-up in demand, a top official of the company said.

During the earnings call, HFCL's managing director Mahendra Nahata said that the company's order book as of March 31, 2025, has increased to ₹ 9,967 crore from ₹ 7,685 crore as on March 31, 2024.

"With strong order book, demand pick-up and full capacity utilization, the company expects growth of 25-30 per cent in revenue of the current financial year on an overall basis with major growth starting from the second quarter," Nahata said.

He said that HFCL has become the first Indian company to develop and commercially launch 5G Fixed Wireless Access customer premises equipment - a modem for providing wireless 5G connectivity for home broadband services.

"In its very first year of launch, we have successfully despatched over 4 lakh units of this equipment, demonstrating strong market acceptance. With growing demand from telecom operators and ISPs, we ex-

pect to have continuous demand for such products. I am happy to inform you that in the last week we have received another order of ₹ 174 crores for this product," Nahata said.

During the March 31, 2025 quarter, HFCL recorded about 39 per cent decline in revenue to ₹ 800.72 crore mainly on account of poor demand for optical fibre. Nahata said that after experiencing subdued demand for optical fibre cable over the past 6-7 quarters leading to lower capacity utilization, the company's optical fibre manufacturing has now begun operating at full capacity starting June 2026 quarter as against 45 per cent capacity utilisation during FY25.

"Our Optical Fiber Cable manufacturing capacity utilization was also 40 per cent during last financial year. This will also start operating at full capacity by July 2025. With market conditions showing clear signs of recovery and new growth drivers such as 5G rollouts, data centre expansion, BharatNet Phase III execution, and rising export demand, our revenue from optic fibre cable during FY'26 is expected to improve significantly," Nahata said. (PTI)

NAME CHANGE
I have Changed my name from MOHAMMED CHAHAR UDDIN to CHAHAR UDDIN by swearing a notarial affidavit at Srimanta Sankardevnagar Hojai(Assam)

NAME CHANGE
I have Changed my name from MOHAMMED MOBARAK ALI to MOBARAK ALI by swearing a notarial affidavit at Srimanta Sankardevnagar Hojai(Assam)

NAME CHANGE
I have Changed my name from Mohammod Ala Uddin to Ala Uddin by swearing a notarial affidavit at Srimanta Sankardevnagar Hojai(Assam)

Devabrat Sharma felicitated for doctorate achievement

HT Correspondent

DEMOW, May 25: In a proud moment for the community, Devabrat Sharma, a resident of Raichai Gaon, Demow, was felicitated by the Central Committee of the All Assam Sanmilit Brahmin Parishad on Saturday following the successful completion of his Doctorate Degree.

Sharma, son of Dipen Sharma and Mamoni Sharma, earned his Ph.D. from the Guwahati Institute of Advanced Study in Science and Technology, under the Academy of Scientific and Innovative Research (AcSIR), Ghaziabad. His research focused on "Long-Lead Prediction and Predictability of the Indian Summer Monsoon Rainfall Using Deep Learning Techniques", a subject of significant importance in the field of climate science and artificial intelligence.

At a special ceremony held at Sharma's residence, the Parishad honoured him with a phulam gamosa, cheleng, a citation, and a religious book. Prominent dignitaries from the organization, including Pramud Goswami (Working President), Rajani Kanta Goswami (Central Spokesperson), Gopal Pandey (Secretary General), Jugul Sarma (Assistant Secretary), and other key office-bearers, were present at the felicitation.

The Greater Brahmin Samaj, Demow also extended their heartfelt congratulations to Sharma with a phulam gamosa. Representing the Samaj, President Arun Sarma was present during the ceremony.

The honouring of Sharma stands as a testament to his academic excellence and the community's commitment to celebrating scholarly achievements. His research contribution is expected to aid advancements in monsoon forecasting using cutting-edge AI techniques, a field vital to agriculture and disaster preparedness in India.

Ninth phase of Vivekananda Kendra Yogasana Certificate course begins June 1

HT Bureau

GUWAHATI, May 25: The ninth edition of the Vivekananda Kendra Yogasana Certificate Course is set to commence on June 1, at Vivekananda Kendra, Panbazar, Guwahati. This six-month training programme is being organized by Vivekananda Kendra, Kanyakumari, and has already produced over 100 certified yoga practitioners, many of whom are now successfully working as yoga instructors across government and private institutions.

The course is open to all individuals who have passed the Higher Secondary Examination (Class 12) and fall within the age group of 18 to 55 years. The program aims to promote the holistic benefits of yoga while creating skilled professionals in yogasana practice and instruction.

Enrollment is now open. Interested candidates may collect application forms and detailed information by contacting: 97060-67132, 94350-87062 and 99038-17551. Or by visiting Vivekananda Kendra Institute of Culture (VKIC), Uzan Bazaar, or the Vivekananda Kendra Office, Panbazar, located opposite Sukreswar Temple.

This initiative not only contributes to individual well-being but also supports the broader mission of building a healthier society rooted in traditional Indian practices and values.

Minister Keshab Mahanta chairs high-level review meeting on flood preparedness in Sonitpur

Took stock of status of Mission Basundhara



HT Correspondent

TEZPUR, May 25: In a proactive move towards strengthening disaster management and administrative efficiency, Minister of Revenue and Disaster Management, Keshab Mahanta, chaired a high-level review meeting on Flood Preparedness and Mission Basundhara 3.0 at the District Commissioner's Office Conference Hall in Sonitpur on Saturday.

The meeting was attended by key stakeholders including MLAs Padma Hazarika (Naduar),

Prithiraj Rava (Tezpur), Ganesh Kumar Limbu (Barchalla), and Krishna Kamal Tanti (Rangapara), as well as Gyandendra Dev Tripathi, Principal Secretary to the Government of Assam (Revenue and Disaster Management), DC Ankur Bharali, SP Barun Purkayastha, CDC Naduar cum CEO DDMA Manash Kumar Saikia, CDC Dheki-ajuli Dyotiva Bora, Circle Officers, and other senior officials.

Representatives from the Army, NDRF, SDRF, Civil Defence, and various line departments also

participated, sharing inputs and action plans to fortify the district's flood management and emergency response mechanisms.

Key Discussion Points: Flood Preparedness: Emphasis was placed on creating detailed flood maps using historical data, water body proximity, and embankment status to enable precise, localized mitigation strategies.

Sectoral Coordination: Officials reviewed implementation of State Disaster Response Fund (SDRF) norms, roles of departments, and training of emergency teams.

Livelihood and Agriculture: The Agriculture Department was tasked with promoting flood-resistant and late-sowing paddy varieties. Provisions for fodder supply for livestock were also discussed.

Vulnerable Infrastructure: The status of schools, embankments, and public structures in flood-prone zones was reviewed for early risk mitigation.

Public Awareness and Welfare: The Minister stressed the importance of community engagement, availability of essential medicines, medical personnel deployment, and the establishment of child-friendly spaces in relief camps.

Speaking to the media after the meeting, Minister Mahanta announced an allocation of Rs 1.75 crore for early flood preparedness in Sonitpur district, with Rs 50 lakh each earmarked for Dheki-ajuli and Naduar Co-Districts.

He also reviewed the progress of Mission Basundhara 3.0, urging officials to ensure timely execution of land-related and citizen-centric services under the initiative.

Blood Component Separation Unit at Kanaklata Civil Hospital inaugurated

HT Correspondent

TEZPUR, May 25: A significant advancement in public healthcare for Sonitpur district was marked on Friday with the inauguration of the Blood Component Separation Unit at the Blood Centre of Kanaklata Civil Hospital, Tezpur. District Commissioner Ankur Bharali formally inaugurated the facility in the presence of Dr Hiranjan Saikia, Superintendent of the hospital, and Dr J Bezbaruah, In-Charge of the Blood Centre.

Senior officials from the Health and Family Welfare Department, NHM's District Programme Management Unit, DIPRO, and representatives of various social organizations graced the occasion.

The newly established unit will enable the hospital to separate and prepare vital blood components such as Packed Red Blood Cells (PRBC), Fresh Frozen Plasma (FFP), Platelets, and Cryoprecipitate — a crucial boost for emergency and specialized medical care in the region.

The event witnessed active participation from social and voluntary groups including the Indian Red Cross Society, IMA Tezpur branch, Operation Rakt, Terapanth Yubak Parishad, Tezpur Ramakrishna Sewashram, Tezpur Bengali Aboitoni Natya Samaj, and SSB, Saloniabari. Volunteers from SSB, under Operation Rakt, also conducted a blood donation camp, underscoring the spirit of service and community welfare.

This development is expected to greatly enhance blood management, transfusion capabilities, and healthcare delivery across Sonitpur.

₹ 1.75 Crore Sanctioned for Early Flood Preparedness

In a related development, Health and Family Welfare Minister Keshab Mahanta announced that ₹ 1.75 crore has been allocated to Sonitpur district for early flood preparedness measures. Out of this, ₹ 50 lakh each has been earmarked for Dheki-ajuli and Naduar Co-Districts.

The minister also reviewed the progress of Mission Basundhara 3.0 implementation in Sonitpur during his visit, emphasizing timely and effective execution of the initiative.

State executive meeting of Asom Kabi Sanmilen held in Nagaon

HT Correspondent

NAGAON, May 25: The state executive meeting of Asom Kabi Sanmilen (2025-27) was held with much enthusiasm and literary spirit at the auditorium of Nagaon Lions Club on Saturday. The event was hosted by the Nagaon Zila Kabi Sanmilen, drawing participation from eminent poets across Assam.

All attending poets were warmly felicitated with jute files, phulam Gamosas, and steel water bottles, leaving them deeply appreciative of the generous hospitality extended by the host organization.

Prominent figures honored at the gathering included the newly elected president Dinesh Das, former president Geeta Dutta, editor-in-chief Neel Kamal Bora, advisor Nava Kumar Mahanta, vice-chair-

men Dimbeswar Bharali, Dimbeswar Pathak, and Kumud Rajan Hazarika, chief coordinator Rajan Jyoti Sarma, and social worker Sanjay Agrawal.

During the meeting, Principal Secretary Neel Kamal Bora outlined the objectives and future prospects of the organization, while also presenting the minutes of the previous executive meeting, which were officially approved by the house. Shruti Mala Gayan, Chairperson of Nagaon Zila Kabi Sanmilen and District Education Officer, addressed the gathering, stressing the importance of organizational strengthening for the literary body.

Invited guests Sanjay Agrawal, Manoj Das, and Ajay Mahato shared profound insights on poetry

from a spiritual perspective, enriching the deliberations of the session.

In a visionary address, President Dinesh Das announced that the Asom Kabi Sanmilen would soon begin translation projects into all Indian languages, aiming to foster intercultural coordination and national literary unity.

A notable highlight of the event was the ceremonial release of a new poetry collection, "Krishna Churur Heujia Hanhi", penned by Nijara Deka, adding a creative milestone to the day's proceedings.

Several important resolutions concerning the Sanmilen's future activities and outreach initiatives were also adopted during the meeting, marking a significant step forward for the literary community of Assam.

Rita Chowdhury conferred 'Rangamuwa Bir' Title at Dikhowmukh



HT Correspondent

SIVASAGAR, May 25: Renowned litterateur and Sahitya Akademi Award-winning novelist Rita Chowdhury was honoured with the prestigious 'Rangamuwa Bir' title at a special ceremony organized by socio-cultural group Amguri Bandhoi at Dikhowmukh College on Saturday.

The function began with an inaugural address by Ranjit Baruah, Principal of Dikhowmukh College, and was presided over by noted social worker and writer Jiwan Krishna Goswami, President of Amguri Bandhoi.

Amajit Saikia, Principal of Bir Raghav Moran College and Secretary of the organization, highlighted the aim of recognizing distinguished individuals from diverse fields. Dr. Chowdhury is the fourth recipient of this title. Paying tribute to poet Binanda Chandra Baruah, creator of the

legendary character in O Rangamuwa Bir, Dr. Chowdhury reflected on how the poem had inspired her deep love for Assam and its people since her school days. She commended Amguri Bandhoi for upholding Assamese nationalism through its cultural initiatives, especially in an era marked by fragmentation and declining unity since the Assam Agitation.

Dr. Ranjit Baruah of Dikhowmukh College recited Baruah's iconic poem during the event. The Robin Gogoi Memorial Award was presented to Dikhyati Lahon for achieving the highest marks in the 2025 HSLC Examination from Amguri. The ceremonial lamp was lit by Sivasagar Jila Sahitya Sabha President Jogesh Kishore Phukan and educationist Tosheswar Borthakur. The event also featured a traditional Khol Badan performance by Subhrajit Goswami.

Woman alleges dowry harassment and assault by in-laws in West KA

HT Correspondent

KHERONI, May 25: In a distressing case of domestic violence and dowry harassment, 27-year-old Dibya Singh, a resident of Mailoo village in West Karbi Anglong, has filed a First Information Report (FIR) at the Kheroni Police Station against her husband and his family members for allegedly assaulting her and demanding additional dowry.

Dibya Singh, who is currently undergoing treatment at HAMM Hospital in Hojai, sustained serious head injuries after allegedly being beaten with sticks by members of her husband's family.

According to the FIR, the assault was carried out by her mother-in-law Girija Devi, sister-in-law Anisa Singh, and another family member, Munni Devi.

Dibya was married to Sushil Singh, a TET-qualified teacher, in 2022. She claims that at the time of marriage, a two-wheeler and ₹4 lakh in cash were given as dowry.

However, her in-laws later allegedly demanded an additional ₹1.5 lakh, leading to ongoing tensions and abuse.

Seventh Anti-Tobacco Awareness Programme by 'Pathik'



HT Bureau

GUWAHATI, May 25: Pathik, one of Assam's leading NGOs committed to health awareness and cancer prevention, organized its Seventh Anti-Tobacco and Live Green Awareness Campaign today with a Cyclathon, under the banner of the Fit India Mission.

The rally was flagged off at 6:30 am by Sushmita Goswami, President of the Guwahati Press Club, in front of the Sports Authority of India Stadium. Held in collaboration with the Sports Authority of India, the event aims to promote a tobacco-free and healthier lifestyle across all age groups.

For the past 21 years, Pathik has been actively working to raise awareness about cancer and other non-communicable diseases, focusing primarily on the harmful effects of tobacco. The rising use of gutkha, pan masala, cigarettes, and other tobacco products among the youth has led to a concerning spike in cancer cases. In response, Pathik has employed creative outreach strategies to educate the masses — from children to the elderly — about the dangers of tobacco use.

The Cyclathon, now a popular part of the campaign, saw 150 enthusiastic participants from diverse age groups who were awarded certificates and medals for their commitment to the cause. Other key awareness activities planned as part of this year's anti-tobacco campaign include: Street plays and mime performances, wall and footbridge painting, walkathons, corporate sensitization programs and a state-level drawing competition on Sunday, June 1 at Kalakshetra Grounds, which includes four participation categories with prize money awards.

Interested individuals can contact 99579-15082 for participation details.

Speaking on the occasion, a Pathik spokesperson reiterated the NGO's mission:

"Our only aim is a tobacco-free, cancer-free world. Together, we can achieve it through awareness and action."

Through sustained grassroots efforts, community events, and creative campaigns, Pathik continues to play a vital role in advocating for public health and a tobacco-free society in Assam.

Minister Keshab Mahanta reviews flood preparedness in Biswanath



HT Correspondent

BISWANATH CHARIALI, May 25: Assam Revenue, Disaster Management, Science & Technology, and Information Technology Minister Keshab Mahanta chaired a high-level review meeting today with senior officials of Biswanath district administration to assess disaster preparedness ahead of the monsoon season.

Held at the District Commissioner's Office Conference Hall, the meeting focused on evaluating flood readiness across the district, with special attention to Gohpur, a flood-prone region. The Minister directed the district administration to take proactive and comprehensive measures to mitigate the potential impact of floods, stressing full preparedness and inter-departmental coordination.

Separate Review of Mission Basundhara 3.0

In a subsequent session, Minister Mahanta also reviewed the progress of the Mission Basundhara 3.0 land reform initiative in Biswanath district. He discussed the pace

and challenges of implementation with key officials and instructed the administration to expedite the delivery of services under the scheme, which aims to resolve land-related issues through streamlined governance and digital tools.

Key Attendees: The meetings were attended by several key dignitaries and officials, including: Ranjit Dutta, MP, Sonitpur Lok Sabha constituency, Pramod Borthakur, MLA, Biswanath, Upal Bora, MLA, Gohpur and Diganta Ghatowal, MLA, Behali among others.

Also present were officials from departments including PWD (Roads and Housing), Water Resources, NDRF, SDRF, Assam State Disaster Management Authority (ASDMA), Health, Public Health Engineering, Fisheries, and Agriculture.

The review underscored the importance of multi-agency coordination, community participation, and robust infrastructural and logistical support to tackle disaster risks and improve service delivery under Mission Basundhara.

Cachar ADC Yubraj Borthakur passes away at 44: A promising officer lost too soon

HT Bureau

GUWAHATI, May 25: In a heart-breaking development, Yubraj Borthakur, Additional District Commissioner (ADC) of Cachar, passed away this afternoon at around 4:30 pm at AIG Hospital, Hyderabad, after battling Inflammatory Bowel Disease (IBD). He was 44.

A 2015 batch officer of the Assam Civil Service (ACS), Borthakur had been undergoing intensive medical treatment since May 15. His condition deteriorated rapidly due to severe complications, including high fever, extremely low blood pressure, and a weakened immune system, rendering him unfit for the urgent surgery advised by attending gastroenterologist Dr Aniruddha Pratap Singh. Despite every possible medical effort, he succumbed to the illness today, leaving behind a legacy of dedication and public service.

His mortal remains will be flown to his native place in Dibrugarh on Monday, where his last rites will be performed with full state honors. He is survived by his father, Dulen

Kumar Borthakur, his brother, Debaj Borthakur, and his wife, Akansha Sharma Borthakur.

Borthakur began his distinguished administrative career in 2017 as an Assistant Commissioner in South Salmara. Over the years, he held several key positions across Assam, including Circle Officer of Nagaon and Dolgaon, and Sub-Divisional Officer in Hailakandi district. Since 2022, he had been serving as Additional District Commissioner of Cachar, and also held the critical role of Chief Executive Officer of the District Disaster Management Authority (DDMA), where he was instrumental in disaster preparedness and relief operations. Known for his integrity, efficiency, and humility, Borthakur earned immense respect from his colleagues and the public alike. His calm demeanor, coupled with his proactive approach to administration, made him a beloved figure in every district he served.

Outside of his administrative responsibilities, Borthakur was an avid music lover and gifted singer, often performing at cultural events.

His melodious voice and artistic sensibilities added warmth to his professional persona, endearing him to all who knew him.

The untimely demise of Borthakur has left the Cachar district administration in deep mourning. District Commissioner Mrinal Yadav, IAS, expressed his condolences, stating "The untimely passing of ADC Yubraj Borthakur is a tremendous loss not just for the administration, but for the people of Cachar whom he served with dedication and humility. His commitment to public service, his professionalism, and his calm demeanor will always be remembered. We have lost a brilliant officer and a compassionate human being."

Yubraj Borthakur's passing is not only a loss to the administrative machinery of Assam, but to the broader civil service fraternity. His work ethic, warmth, and vision will continue to inspire generations of officers to come. In his short but impactful life, he touched countless lives—leaving behind a void that will not be easily filled.

'Fit India: Sundays on Cycle' Campaign promotes healthy living in Kokrajhar

Flagged off from the SAI Training Centre in Kanthalguri, followed a scenic route through JD Road to the BTC Secretariat at Bodofa Nwgrw

HT Correspondent

KOKRAJHAR, May 25: In a vibrant display of community spirit and health awareness, the Sports Authority of India (SAI), STC Kokrajhar, in collaboration with the Kokrajhar Press Club, successfully organized the "Fit India: Sundays on Cycle" campaign this morning.

Held under the umbrella of the Fit India Mission, the initiative saw enthusiastic participation from media professionals, sports enthusiasts, local citizens, and cycling advocates. The event aimed to encourage physical fitness, combat sedentary lifestyles, and foster a culture of regular exercise across all age groups.

The rally, flagged off from the SAI Training Centre in Kanthalguri, followed a scenic route



through JD Road to the BTC Secretariat at Bodofa Nwgrw before looping back to the starting point.

Centre In-Charge Babul Kumar Basumatary and former national badminton player Bibari Ba-

sumatary jointly inaugurated the event by flagging off the cyclists.

Speaking on the occasion, organizers emphasized the importance of integrating fitness into daily routines, particularly in light of rising health concerns such as obesity and lifestyle-related ailments. The rally also aimed to inspire the youth and promote environmentally friendly commuting options like cycling.

The event was held as per the directive of the Deputy Director General of SAI and was supported by the Newspaper Association of India as a special partner.

Participants appreciated the initiative and expressed their hope for such activities to be held regularly to instill a lasting culture of fitness and well-being in Kokrajhar.

QUOTE OF THE DAY

Either move or be moved - Ezra Pound

Possibility of 4-day work week?

In recent times, there are talks in public domain and media in general that India will have a 4-day work week as and when the new labour codes, particularly Code on Wages 2019, come into operation in the very near future. The Ministry of Labour & Employment in India is exploring the feasibility of a 4-day workweek, with the possibility of longer daily shifts to maintain the 48-hour weekly limit. The contention here is that the Code on Wages 2019 allows for this flexibility, but employees must consent to the reduced work week and longer days, according to a statement from Apurva Chandra, Labour and Employment Ministry Secretary. This means that employees could potentially work 12-hour days, four days a week, to meet the 48-hour weekly requirement. The Labour Secretary, however, clarified that having a reduced number of working days does not mean a cut in paid holidays. Therefore, when the new rules will provide flexibility of four working days, it would imply three paid holidays. However, legal provisions as postulated in existing and proposed labour laws do not entertain the possibility of a 4-day work week. Daily work-hour is something that is stipulated in the Code on Wages 2019 and that is an 8 work-hour. Still a perception is being created in public domain that this 8 work-hour would become 12-hour and technically speaking 4-day week becomes feasible given the fact that weekly work hour is restricted to 48 hours.

But this does not stand legal scrutiny. Even though the union labour secretary was quoted widely in the media, Code on Wages 2019 read with the draft Code on Wages (Central) Rules 2020 provisions as available on Ministry's website, do not entail a 12-hour working day. The 12-hour spread-over includes rest hour and overtime. No worker is allowed to work more than five hours without a break of at least half an hour as per the Factories Act 1948. That means that the permissible maximum 12 hour spread over will definitely include at least half an hour rest period. The contention of 4-day week emerges on the premise that daily working hours would be 12 hours and total working period in 4 days would be, in that case, 48 hours. The Factories Act stipulates 48 hours of working in a week. If 48 work-hour can be reached in 4 days, the remaining three days can be given as paid holiday. However, setting a daily 12-hour work day is not legally feasible under the Code on Wages and draft Rules framed thereunder. Daily working hours are stipulated at 8-hours only. Spread-over can extend to 12-hours.

In fact, the daily work-hour and weekly work-hour in the Code on Wages remain as they are in existing laws like Minimum Wages Act, 1948 and the Factories Act. The only change is regarding the spread-over limit. The existing spread over is maximum 10 and ½ hours which is now extended to 12 hours under the new Code. It seems that is what is creating confusion and giving rise to the misperception of a 4-day work week.

Citizens pay, officials delay, and democracy looks away

By: Marjing Mayanglambam

I believe that criticism of the government should not only be tolerated but genuinely welcomed—after all, it offers a rare and unfiltered reflection of its services as perceived by us, the citizens. As someone who contributes to the system through hefty taxes, I expect not just adequate service but also sincere respect from those entrusted with public duty. Though my views may often manifest as complaints or expressions of dissatisfaction, I see no virtue in sugar-coating the harsh realities I encounter. It is not my responsibility to soften the hearts of those who routinely disregard my fundamental needs. My perspectives may come mostly as complaints or grievances but how can I overlook these menaces and speak with a sugar-coated mouth? I am not in the position to soften the hearts of those who deprive me of my needs.

I do not intend to offend anyone personally, but allow me to illustrate a few situations that any one of us could realistically experience. And if articulating such scenarios is seen as inappropriate or subversive, one must question the very meaning of Indian citizenship and the much-celebrated constitutional rights that accompany it. While I frequently criticize the government, I am equally capable of acknowledging and applauding its commendable efforts—I am not blind to progress when I see it. Take, for instance, the scenario of reporting an inactive police officer—someone who either delays his duty or avoids it entirely. One day, you might find yourself on the receiving end of an unexpected and troubling act of retaliation, either by the officer in question or his associates—details of which I dare not elaborate on, for my own safety. We live in a country where, disturbingly, many feel hesitant or even afraid to approach the police for assistance, owing to their detached, often hostile demeanor. Consider the ordeal of seeking assistance from an administrative officer—a Sub Divisional Collector, District Magistrate, or even an IAS officer—for a personal or private matter that is fully lawful under Indian regulations. You may spend weeks, even months, completing repetitive bureaucratic procedures, only to find your application lost amid chaotic and disorganized office records. Timely approval is a rare luxury.

Try obtaining essential academic or professional information from a state or central university—an institution that should ideally champion transparency and access to knowledge.

In such moments, filing an RTI seems impractical or even intimidating. How is a student expected to draw inspiration from an educator who, rather than nurturing trust, acts with arrogance and indifference? Govt. Bank employees working with the most neglecting and uninterested attitude which causes you to lose your patience and had to shift to a private bank who provides you way service and help. Banks receive money from us which also helps in the governance and the employees must not prioritize their famed lunch breaks and minimize their bossy attitudes. Step into a government hospital, and you may witness appalling behaviour from healthcare workers—mocking, dismissive responses to questions about a loved one's health, often with no effort to provide proper guidance. And that's if you manage to overlook the grim, unhygienic surroundings that in themselves pose severe health risks. These are just a few helpless problems which are occurring in our Democracy's departments, and I am among the lakhs who face such issues, which makes me slowly lose trust and hope in the government.

Eventually, I am starting to understand why Indians are leaving this land for other countries that value human beings more than their salaries and side incomes. Even though the heads of a Govt. may announce their determinations and goals in service us wholeheartedly dedicatedly, the lower ranks and staffs are the ones who are staining the images of their superiors. They act more powerful with the worst behaviour one can ask for when citizens seek help or the designated service the staffs are supposed to provide without any questions if all the required mammoth of complex documents are produced. We can negotiate easily with Gods but not with most government workers. If you do not have the "connections" then be aware of the hurdles you are about to face. Go with the least expectations, with some money for support, and if nothing works leading to agitations or disputes, be prepared for vulgar remarks, stern eye-looks, or threatens sometimes accompanied by physical harms.

Skilling the Indian workforce: Progress so far

In 2015, Prime Minister, Narendra Modi launched the Skill India Mission, which was in accordance with his vision to help India become 'Aatmanirbhar' (self-reliant). This initiative was aimed to create and implement comprehensive skill development training programmes that would help bridge the gap between industry demands and skill requirements and therefore, develop the country at large.

The Skill India programmes comprised implementing curriculum-based skill training courses, wherein trainees would gain certifications and endorsements from industry-recognised learning centres. The mission also involved incorporating skill-based learning in the school curriculum, creating opportunities for both long- and short-term skill training and employment. With India being a 'young' country due to its 75% working-age population, the development of a skilled and educated workforce will play a significant role in enhancing its overall economy.

According to the International Labour Organisation (ILO), India is likely to face a shortage of 29 million skilled personnel by 2030. Following this, Accenture in 2019 predicted that if India does not take timely actions—such as investing in new technologies or building industry-required skills—the skill deficit could cost the country US\$ 1.97 trillion in terms of gross domestic product (GDP) over the next decade. With the 'Skill India Mission', the Indian government aims to develop those practical skills, which are required by the industry and therefore, improve the employment rate in the country. Since implementation, the mission has helped boost employment. According to data from the Centre for Monitoring Indian Economy (CMIE), the unemployment rate dropped to 6.5% in January 2021 from 9.1% in December 2020, while the employment rate increased to 37.9% in January 2021 from 36.9% in December 2020.

The Necessity of the Skill India Initiative :

- India's 54% of the population is below 25 years of age. With a high working-age population, the development of skilled and educated manpower will play a major role in enhancing the country's economy.
- More than 50% of the population depends on agriculture for

livelihood, though the returns are very minimal. Therefore, the younger generation is shifting towards the secondary and tertiary sectors for employment. Hence, the need to improve the skills of the youth to make them employable in these sectors arises.

- According to the International Labour Organisation (ILO), India is expected to face a shortage of around 29 million skilled personnel by 2030. Following this, it has been predicted that, if India does not take timely actions like investing in new technologies or building industry-demanding skills, the skill deficit could cost the country around 1.97 trillion USD. Thus, through the Skill India Mission, the government aims to develop practical skills, required by the industry to improve the employment rate.

- According to the Centre for Monitoring Indian Economy (CMIE), the unemployment rate fell to 6.5% in January 2021 from 9.1% in December 2020, whereas the employment rate rose to 37.9% in January 2021 from 36.9% in December 2020.

Objectives of the Skill India Mission:

The main objectives of the initiative are listed below. 1. Bridging the gap between the industry demands and the individual skill requirements for employment generation. 2. Creating employment opportunities for the development of young talents. 3. Strengthening the Indian youth as a workforce for world markets. 4. Building up the competitiveness of Indian businesses. 5. Building up true marketplace capabilities rather than mere qualifications. 6. Diversifying the skill development program to meet the demands of a dynamic market. 7. Training people in areas like real estate, construction, transportation, textile, gem industry, banking and tourism where the skill development is inadequate. 8. Identifying and developing the new sectors that require skill enhancement. India, with an average age of 28.7 years, stands as one of the youngest countries in the world, presenting a significant opportunity for economic growth and global leadership. The government has articulated a vision of India becoming the 'Skill Capital' of the world by harnessing the potential of this vast youth population. Since its establishment in 2014, the Ministry of Skill Development and Entrepreneurship (MSDE) has

made significant progress in reshaping the skill development landscape in India. To harness the potential of India's youth and to transform the skilling and entrepreneurship ecosystem of the country, the Ministry has taken several steps that may be categorised across key thematic areas. These include Enabling Education to Work Transition, where employability is enhanced through skill development programmes, hands-on work-based apprenticeship training, etc. MSDE also fosters Entrepreneurship and Self-reliance by supporting young people in becoming self-reliant. The Ministry emphasizes on leveraging technology and innovation to equip youth with skills for emerging industries, so opportunities are accessible to all. Additionally, strengthening industry collaboration plays a crucial role, aligning training programs with industry needs to create a skilled workforce ready for employment.

Enabling Education to Work Transition :

- Pradhan Mantri Kaushal Vikas Yojana (PMKVY) :** Substantial skill training delivery in short-term training indicating improved skill outcomes and

DEGREE OF THOUGHT
By: Diganta Barooah

employability with 1.56 Crore candidates trained since the launch of PMKVY Scheme in 2015 till 8th October, 2024. Around 54% of these candidates are in the age group of 15 to 29 years.

Pradhan Mantri YUVA Yojana (PM YUVA Yojana) :

- This scheme focuses on creating an enabling environment through entrepreneurship education and training and thus, provides easy access to the entrepreneur network.

- The scheme is applicable to ten Indian states (including Uttar Pradesh, Uttarakhand, Bihar, West Bengal, Tamil Nadu, Telangana, Kerala, Assam, Meghalaya and Maharashtra) and two union territories (Delhi and Puducherry).

National Apprenticeship Promotion Scheme (NAPS) :

A total of 36.81 lakh apprentices have been engaged in the country from FY 2016-17 to September 30, 2024. Since the inception of the scheme, the number of apprentices has grown from 1.11 lakh in 2016-17 to 9.31 lakh in

2023-24. Around 86% of the apprentices engaged under NAPS are in the age group of 15 to 29 years.

Craftsmen Training Scheme (CTS) :

The scheme, implemented by the Directorate General of Training (DGT), ensures a steady flow for skilled workers in different trades for the industry and aims to reduce unemployment among the educated youth by providing them technical employable skills through the Industrial Training Institutes (ITIs). Around 10 to 12 lakh students are enrolled in ITIs annually. The average age of students enrolled in ITIs in India typically ranges from 16 to 24 years.

Dual System of Training (DST) :

Under the DST mode of DGT, youth are trained in actual industry or workplace environments apart from the classroom based training at the educational institutions. This enhances the industry connect and relevance of the training institutes and enables the trainees to gain hands-on industry exposure and experience. Since 2017, a total 1,56,917 candidates have been trained under the DST. During the 2023 session, 46,476 candidates have been trained under DST.

Initiatives under SANKALP:

SANKALP - Skill Acquisition and Knowledge Awareness for Livelihood Promotions - a World Bank loan assisted Centrally Sponsored Scheme (CSS) of the Ministry of Skill Development and Entrepreneurship (MSDE). Out of the 1.8 lakh (52% female) trained across all the projects and initiatives under SANKALP, around 60% are under 30 years of age.

AMBER (Accelerated Mission for Better Employment and Retention) Project :

The project aims to improve employment and retention outcomes for 30,000 trainees using Generation's 7-step methodology, with a target of 50% women participation.

AMBER follows a blended financing model, combining funding from the government and the private or philanthropic sector, establishing a unique public-private partnership. As of September, 2024, a total of 26,374 candidates have completed their training, and 19,323 have been certified.

- Strengthening Entrepreneurial Climate through Capacity Building Incubation Support,

Mentoring and Handholding Initiative under SANKALP :

Under this initiative, NIESBUD (National Institute for Entrepreneurship and Small Business Development) launched a project that aims to promote entrepreneurship through capacity building, incubation support, mentoring and Handholding to 63,600 candidates across three projects. Till September, 2024, 48,822 candidates have been trained under these.

Enabling Micro-Entrepreneurs at Gram Panchayat Level under SANKALP:

The project is being implemented in six states of Andhra Pradesh, Assam, Madhya Pradesh, Maharashtra, Odisha and Uttar Pradesh, with the goal to enhance service delivery by skilling the workforce at the Gram Panchayat (GP) level. As of September, 2024, 22,902 candidates have completed their training and 10,907 candidates have been certified.

Entrepreneurship and Self-reliance:**Entrepreneurship Awareness and Development Programs :**

Under STRIVE (Skills Strengthening for Industrial Value Enhancement), a World Bank-supported program, National Institute for Entrepreneurship and Small Business Development (NIESBUD) has trained a total of 45,339 youth and Indian Institute of Entrepreneurship (IIE) has trained a total of 11,000 youth through Entrepreneurship Awareness Programs (EAP). Under the more comprehensive Entrepreneurship Development Programs (EDP), NIESBUD has trained a total of 32,091 youth and IIE has trained a total of 8,342 youth. • Jan Shikshan Sansthan (JSS) Scheme :

A total of 26.38 lakh beneficiaries have been trained under the JSS Scheme since FY 2018-19 to 16th October, 2024. Above 80% of these beneficiaries are women. More importantly, out of the total 26.38 lakh trained, around 66% (17.41 lakh) are in the age group of 15 to 29 years of age.

The Scheme focuses on equipping individuals with skills that lead to gainful employment or entrepreneurship, fostering self-reliance. Training courses are tailored to the needs of local industries and the job market, ensuring that learners acquire relevant, in-demand skills for sustainable livelihoods. (... to be continued)

Political crisis in Bangladesh intensifies with Army backing BNP for December election

By: Nitva Chakraborty

The political crisis in Bangladesh has reached its flashpoint in the last 48 hours with two opposing groups getting ready for a major confrontation on the issue of holding elections in the country. One side is led by the newly floated party of the students - National Citizens Party (NCP) backed by the chief adviser Dr. Muhammad Yunus and the other group is the main opposition party Bangladesh Nationalist Party (BNP) supported by the Army Chief Waker Uz Zaman. The Jamaat-e-Islami is a divided house but most of them have distanced from their one time ally BNP and now supporting Dr. Yunus.

On Thursday, May 22, in the wake of the BNP demand that the chief adviser has to drop a few of his key advisers allied to the NCP, Dr. Yunus felt isolated as he was already under fire for the lapses in administration during a meeting early this week with the Army Chief. Reports said that he decided to submit his resignation as the chief adviser and indicated that to his close NCP advisers. They immediately intervened and persuaded him not to take any precipitate step at this crucial time of the country's politics.

Nahid Islam, NCP general secretary and a close aide of Dr. Yunus said after talking to him on Thursday evening that

the chief adviser was weighing resignation. He said he went to Jamuna, the state guest house as they had been hearing about Yunus's possible resignation since morning. According to him, the chief adviser expressed concerns about whether he would be able to continue working under the current circumstances under which he was being pressurized from opposing directions.

Dr. Yunus said he felt "held hostage" by the countless demonstrations, "I cannot work like this if you, all the political parties, cannot reach a common ground," the NCP chief quoted Yunus as saying. The NCP general secretary urged the Chief Adviser to continue in his present position and guide the country to tide over the present political turmoil to which Dr. Yunus reportedly agreed.

Lately, political tensions have been rising, fuelled by protests from various parties and increasingly toxic rhetoric on social media and at political gatherings. The BNP has long been pressing for the election by December. Also, on Thursday, BNP demanded a smaller advisory council, with immediate removal of Mahfuj, Asif and National Security Adviser Khalilur Rahman.

According to Dhaka media reports, leaders of the NCP demonstrated on Wednesday, saying they would not take part in any polls under the current Elec-

tion Commission. Accusing the EC of bias and terming it a "party office" of the BNP, they demanded its reconstitution. They also demanded the resignation of Finance Adviser Salehuddin Ahmed, Law Adviser Asif Nazrul, and Planning Adviser Wahiduddin Mahmud. They, along with Jamaat-e-Islami, want the election only after reforms are carried out and trial of the banned Awami League leaders.

The tensions between the BNP and the NCP have been escalating since the founding of the NCP by the student leaders in February this year. Dr. Yunus is under the influence of the NCP and he was forced to take the decision on the banning of Awami League and denying the Party participation in the coming elections. This decision was not acceptable to both the BNP and the Army Chief. BNP favours the view that the Awami League in a truncated form can be allowed to take part in elections, since any election with the earlier ruling party being kept out, will create doubts about the legitimacy of the polls to the foreign nations.

BNP now finds that on such a major issue, the party's views were sidelined and the NCP's young leaders precipitated the decision through their pressure on the Chief Adviser. BNP leaders also believe that the NCP will delay the holding of elections as they are demanding that the

current election commission can not be trusted by them for holding fair polls. This means that they are not ready for any road map for holding elections even early next year.

Right now, BNP is in a comfortable position with the return of the BNP chairperson Khaleda Zia following medical treatment in London. Though the BNP supreme is not allowed to do running for campaign in favour of BNP, she is meeting leaders and giving instructions. Khaleda Zia has influence among the army officers. That is helping the BNP compared to the contender NCP. BNP leaders are organizing meetings and making preparations for booth committees at the lower level.

The NCP, on the other hand, is setting up its core committees for the stakeholders like the workers, peasants, women, young educationists, lawyers apart from the core base of students. The NCP thinks BNP as the establishment party like Awami League. The NCP leadership is determined to challenge the BNP on policy issues and corner the party which is hoping to emerge as the winner in the coming elections. The battles lines are already drawn up. Come June and July, the streets of Dhaka and the districts might witness massive demonstrations by both the parties focusing on their respective demands. (IPA Service)

Outrage grows over Trump's wild allegation against South African President

By: Roger McKenzie

Outrage has continued to mount after United States President Donald Trump falsely accused South African President Cyril Ramaphosa of the systematic killing of white farmers. President Trump dimmed the lights of the Oval Office to play a video of left-wing politician Julius Malema chanting an old anti-apartheid song that includes the lyrics "kill the farmer".

Trump then proceeded to display news articles and photos to highlight his accusation that white farmers have faced "death, death, death, horrible death" at the hands of Ramaphosa's government.

One of the photos was later revealed to be a screenshot from a video taken in the Democratic Republic of Congo in February 2025, showing Red Cross workers responding after women were raped and burned alive during a

mass jailbreak in the Congolese city of Goma. Trump had already cut all US assistance to South Africa and welcomed several dozen white South African farmers to the US as refugees as he pressed the case that a "genocide" is underway in the country.

Since returning to office, Trump has launched a series of accusations against the ANC-led government, claiming it is seizing land from white farmers, enforcing anti-white policies and pursuing an anti-US foreign policy. The executive order breaking off support for South Africa made it clear that one reason for the attack was "accusing Israel, not Hamas, of genocide" in the International Court of Justice. Experts in South Africa say there is no evidence of white people being targeted for their race, although farmers of all races are victims of violent home invasions in a country with a high crime rate. At one point Zingiswa Losi, president of the Confederation of South African Trade

Unions, told President Trump: "The problem in South Africa, it is not necessarily about race, but it's about crime." President Ramaphosa insisted after the meeting that "there is no genocide in South Africa," and that "you wanted to see drama and something big happening. I'm sorry that we disappointed you somewhat." Some South Africans praised President Ramaphosa's calm during the Oval Office meeting.

"What else could Cyril have done?" said Milton Nkosi, a senior research fellow at the Africa Asia Dialogues think tank. "You're damned if you do, damned if you don't. I think they were caught completely unawares. How on Earth could you have planned for that?"

But Johannesburg student Dumisani Mnisi said: "I honestly don't understand why Ramaphosa is actually in the US when President Trump has made it very clear how he feels about South Africa." (IPA Service)

Are allergies permanent?

By: Hannah Nichols

Allergies are common, particularly in children. Some allergies tend to disappear as a person ages, but many are lifelong.

In the United States, allergies are the sixth leading reason for chronic illness, with more than 50 million people experiencing various allergies each year.

Symptoms of allergies may interfere with a person's daily tasks and reduce their quality of life.

In this article, we examine whether people can get rid of allergies. We also look at prevention strategies and possible ways to manage allergies.

Can you get rid of allergies forever?

There is currently no cure for allergies. However, researchers continue to investigate potential therapies.

People can treat their allergy symptoms with medications and take steps to reduce their exposure to the allergen causing the reaction.

Immunotherapy

Immunotherapy is not a cure for allergies but a disease-modifying treatment. It may help reduce a person's sensitivity or allergic response to allergens.

A doctor may recommend immunotherapy if:

- Medications are not controlling allergy symptoms

- A person is unable to avoid allergens

- Allergy medicines are interacting with a person's other medications

- A patient does not like taking medications

Some people no longer have significant allergic reactions to allergens following years of immunotherapy. Others may require ongoing immunotherapy to manage their symptoms.

Immunotherapy is available as allergy shots (SCIT: subcutaneous immunotherapy) or sublingual immunotherapy (SLIT). Oral immunotherapy (OIT) is also available for peanut allergies.

Allergy shots

Allergy shots involve having exposure to increasing doses of an al-

lergen by injection over several years. Over this time a person becomes less sensitive to the allergen and reacts to it less severely.

Allergy shots help control symptoms of allergies to:

- Pollen

- Dust mites

- Pet dander

- Molds

- Bees

- Other stinging insects

SLIT

SLIT involves small doses of an allergen that a person takes in tablet or drop form under the tongue to improve tolerance to an allergen and reduce symptoms. It is commercially available for allergies to dust mites, grass pollen, and ragweed.

OIT

Peanut allergen powder (Palforzia) is currently the only OIT with approval from the Food and Drug Administration (FDA). Palforzia may reduce severe allergic reactions, including anaphylaxis, occurring with accidental exposure to peanuts in children ages 4–17.

Do allergies go away?

Some people may outgrow allergies, especially allergies developed during early childhood. Whether someone's allergy will disappear as they get older depends on what they are allergic to and the severity of the allergy.

Several studies suggest some food allergies may go away.

Around 85% of children outgrow allergies to:

- Milk

- Eggs

- Wheat

- Soy

However, only 15–20% of children may eventually tolerate allergies to:

- Peanuts

- Tree nuts

- Shellfish

- Fish

One study also indicates that most children with an allergy to insect stings may not have allergic reactions into adulthood.

Some people report that other allergies, such as pollen and pet dander allergies, become less severe as they age.

Experts suggest that, with exposure to small amounts of an aller-

gen over time, a person may develop tolerance. This is similar to the way vaccines or allergy shots work.

Although most allergies begin in childhood, they can develop at any time of life. Adults may also develop an allergy to something that did not previously affect them.

Causes of allergies

Allergies occur when the immune system mistakes a harmless substance, such as pollen, for an invader.

The immune system overreacts to the substance, which is also known as an allergen, by producing antibodies. The antibodies then travel to cells that release the chemical histamine when triggered, which causes an allergic reaction.

The process in the body is complex, and it results in the allergy symptoms a person experiences as allergies.

How to reduce symptoms

People with allergies experience many nasal passage, lung, and skin symptoms. Treatments for allergy symptoms include:

Antihistamines

Antihistamines block the effects of histamine in the body. Examples of oral antihistamines include:

- Loratadine (Claritin)

- Cetirizine (Zyrtec)

- Fexofenadine (Allegra)

- Levocetirizine (Xyzal)

Antihistamines can help alleviate allergy symptoms, such as:

- Itchy, watery eyes

- Runny or stuffy nose

- Sneezing

- Hives

Antihistamines may also prevent these symptoms from occurring if people take them before coming into contact with an allergen.

Most oral antihistamines are now available over the counter (OTC). Nasal antihistamine sprays are available by prescription.

Nasal corticosteroids

Steroid nasal sprays, also known as nasal corticosteroids, are nose sprays that reduce swelling in the nasal passages.

Examples of OTC nasal corticosteroids include:

- Fluticasone nasal (Flonase)

- Triamcinolone nasal (Nasacort)

Allergy 24HR

- Budesonide nasal (Rhinocort Allergy)

Nasal corticosteroids relieve symptoms such as:

- Sneezing

- Runny nose

- Stuffy nose

- Itchy, watery eyes

Doctors can also prescribe other corticosteroid nasal sprays, such as beclomethasone (Beconase).

Decongestants

Decongestants are medications that provide short-term relief from a stuffy nose. They reduce inflammation in the nose's blood vessels, which helps the airways open and relieve congestion.

Common OTC oral decongestants include oxymetazoline nasal (Vicks Sinex) and phenylephrine (Sudafed PE). Pseudoephedrine (Sudafed) may be available behind the pharmacy counter or by prescription.

Mast cell stabilizers

Mast cell stabilizers, such as cromolyn sodium (NasalCrom), prevent the release of chemicals that cause inflammation, including histamine and leukotrienes.

This prevents allergy symptoms from occurring, such as sneezing,

runny nose, and itchy eyes.

Oral corticosteroids

A doctor may prescribe an oral corticosteroid, such as prednisone, for severe allergy symptoms. Oral corticosteroids reduce inflammation and prevent severe allergic reactions.

A doctor will monitor a person taking oral corticosteroids because the medication may cause severe side effects.

Topical corticosteroids

Topical corticosteroids, such as hydrocortisone, reduce skin inflammation and irritation. They are available OTC and with a prescription as creams, gels, and lotions.

Epinephrine

Anaphylaxis is a severe, life-threatening allergic reaction. During anaphylaxis, a person may experience constriction of the airways and swelling of the throat. Blood vessels may also expand, which can cause a severe drop in blood pressure.

Doctors prescribe an injection-based medication called epinephrine to prevent anaphylaxis from becoming life-threatening in people with potentially severe allergies. Epinephrine is more commonly known as adrenaline.

Epinephrine improves breathing and contracts blood vessels to continue supplying the heart and brain with blood.

Prevention

The most important step a person can take to prevent an allergic reaction is to avoid the allergen that triggers their allergy.

Avoiding allergens is not always practical or possible — for example, if a person is allergic to their pet's dander or is a gardener with a pollen allergy.

In these cases, a doctor can help prepare an allergy management plan to reduce allergen contact and manage symptoms with medicines.

If someone is unclear on the cause of an allergy, they may find it helpful to keep a diary. Keeping track of their whereabouts, actions, and diet can help a person identify what triggers or worsens their symptoms.

When to contact a doctor

A person should consult their doctor or an allergist if they experience persistent allergy symptoms that do not ease with OTC treatments or that interfere with carrying out their daily tasks.

Signs and symptoms of ana-

phylaxis include:

- Difficulty breathing, such as fast or shallow breath

- Wheezing

- Rapid heartbeat

- Anxiety or confusion

- Low blood pressure

- Feeling lightheaded or faint

- Losing consciousness

If a person has previously had a severe allergic reaction, they should wear a medical alert bracelet or necklace. These can let other people know how to help if they have a severe allergic reaction and cannot communicate.

Summary

There is currently no cure for allergies. However, there are OTC and prescription medications that may relieve symptoms.

Avoiding allergy triggers or reducing contact with them can help prevent allergic reactions. Over time, immunotherapy may reduce the severity of allergic reactions.

Some people may outgrow an allergy, or it may become less severe as a person ages.

If a person experiences a severe allergic reaction, they should get help from a healthcare professional immediately. (Courtesy: Medical News Today)



A wake-upcall as Cancer hits the under 40 generation

By: Dr Raghav Kesri

Cancer is no longer a disease confined to older adults. In recent years, India has seen a concerning rise in cancer cases among individuals under the age of 40. According to the Indian Council of Medical Research (ICMR), cancers among the youth, particularly breast, colorectal, blood, and thyroid cancers have seen a significant spike, especially in urban areas like Delhi, Bengaluru, and Mumbai. This shift in demographics is a wake-up call for early detection, timely intervention, and lifestyle awareness.

Young Adults and Unexpected Cancer Diagnoses

Traditionally, cancer screening programs and public awareness campaigns have focused on middle-aged and older adults. However, doctors across India are now reporting more cases in younger individuals who often present with aggressive forms of the disease. Breast cancer is being diagnosed in women in their 20s and 30s, while young men are increasingly facing colorectal and testicular cancers. Unlike older adults, the disease in younger pa-

tients often progresses faster and can go undetected longer due to lack of screening.

Factors such as sedentary lifestyles, poor dietary habits, increased exposure to environmental toxins, obesity, smoking, and delayed medical checkups are contributing to this surge. Additionally, hereditary factors and genetic mutations play a more prominent role, especially in families with a history of cancer.

Why Awareness and Timely Action Matter

One of the biggest challenges in treating cancer among the youth is the delay in diagnosis. Many young people dismiss early warning signs like unexplained weight loss, fatigue, changes in bowel habits, or lumps, assuming they are too young to have cancer. This leads to late-stage detection, when treatment becomes more complex and outcomes less favorable.

Awareness campaigns must now evolve to speak directly to young adults, stressing the importance of not ignoring symptoms and undergoing regular health checkups, especially in high-risk groups.

Rethinking Prevention and Screening

While national cancer screening programs are being expanded, there is an urgent need to tailor these initiatives for younger populations. High-risk individuals, those with family history, lifestyle risks, or early symptomsshould be prioritized for screening and early evaluation.

Hospitals and cancer care centers across India are beginning to introduce more youth-focused outreach and genetic counseling, particularly in states like Maharashtra, Karnataka, and Tamil Nadu, where young-onset cancer incidence is rising rapidly.

The rise of cancer among young Indians is not just a medical concern, it is a social and generational issue. Early detection, timely intervention, and greater awareness can significantly improve outcomes. As India grapples with this evolving challenge, it's essential to educate, empower, and equip younger generations with the tools to act early. Detection at the right time can save lives, even in the prime of youth. (The author is a Senior Consultant and Head of Department, Medical Oncology, Yatharth Hospital, Greater Noida)

Alternate SOGI Community and Mental Health in India How to keep your blood pressure in check

By: Amarpal Singh Verma

Mental health continues to be a neglected and stigmatized subject in India. Openness about it is rare even in general society, but this silence takes on a more horrifying form when we talk about individuals who differ from conventional sexual and gender identities such as transgender, gay, lesbian, bisexual, queer and non-binary people. All of these together are called the Alternate SOGI (Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity) community. This community is not only a victim of social rejection, but is also deprived of mental health services. Members of the SOGI community often face discrimination, scorn and violence from childhood—sometimes in the form of being made fun of in schools, sometimes being thrown out of the house, sometimes being rejected at workplaces. This exclusion gradually leads to mental suffering, loneliness and self-doubt. Several studies show that people from the LGBTQ+ community are at a much higher risk of depression, anxiety, and suicidal ideation than the general population. The risk of suicide within the transgender community is extremely worrying. According to a report, about 31 percent of transgender people in India have attempted suicide. The major reasons behind this are social stigma, lack of employment, violence, and neglect by the healthcare system.

India's health infrastructure is already very weak for mental health. According to the 2024 report, there are an average of 0.3 psychiatrists per one lakh population in the country. When services are not reaching the general public, the situation of the SOGI community becomes even worse. Many doctors, especially in rural areas, consider LGBTQ+ identity as a 'disease' or try to 'fix' it. This leads to more mental harassment instead of treatment. In addition, the SOGI community faces discrimination, ridicule, and insensitive behavior in health institutions. There is no provision of separate toilets or wards for transgender persons, forcing them to run away from health services. While some NGOs and counselling services are becoming LGBTQ+ friendly in urban areas of India like Delhi, Mumbai, Bengaluru, the situation is quite worrying in states like Bihar, Uttar Pradesh, Madhya Pradesh, Odisha. There are neither sensitive doctors here nor any special mental health policy or scheme for the LGBTQ+ community. In recent years, India has taken some important legal steps like abolition of Section 377, Transgender Persons (Protection of Rights) Act, etc. but organizations advocating the rights of the SOGI community say that there is a lack of mental health reforms at the ground level.

Organizations advocating the rights of the SOGI community say that training should be mandatory to sensitise doctors and mental health experts towards the LGBTQ+ community. The number of counselling centres and toll-free helplines working in regional languages should be increased. Sexual diversity and mental health must be made part of the curriculum from school level so that the next generation develops an inclusive attitude. There should be partnerships between LGBTQ+ organisations and state governments to provide support and counselling services at the local level. The government should collect state-wise data on the mental health status of the LGBTQ+ community so that policies can be made based on ground needs. The mental health of the SOGI community in India remains a serious but invisible crisis. Organizations advocating the rights of the SOGI community say that until society breaks this silence and the government does not improve its policy framework, this community will continue to be lonely in the fight for its identity and existence. Mental health is not just a fight for treatment, but also for dignity, acceptance and self-respect. (The author is an independent journalist)

By: Dr. Balbir Singh

With rising cases of hypertension across India, taking proactive steps to control blood pressure has become more crucial than ever. Here are key daily habits to keep high blood pressure in check and lead a healthier life.

1. Cut Down on Salt

"Salt is one of the major contributors to high blood pressure," says Dr. Singh. He recommends limiting salt intake to less than two grams per day. This can be achieved by using less salt in cooking, avoiding sprinkling extra salt on food, and steering clear of pickles, ketchup, fast food, and processed items—many of which are loaded with hidden sodium.

2. Make Exercise a Daily Routine

Moderate-intensity exercise such as brisk walking or using a treadmill for at least 30 minutes daily can significantly reduce hypertension. "Regular aerobic activity helps not only with weight loss but also with controlling blood pressure," explains Dr. Singh.

3. Follow the DASH Diet

The DASH (Dietary Approaches to Stop Hypertension) diet, recommended by American and European guidelines, is rich in fruits, vegetables, nuts, and seeds, and low in salt and saturated fats. A Mediterranean-style diet with plenty of whole grains, fresh produce, and healthy fats also offers proven cardiovascular benefits.

4. Watch Your Weight

Even a small reduction in weight can lead to marked improvement in blood pressure levels. "Being disciplined about your eating habits and exercise regime can help shed excess kilos and improve overall health, including blood sugar and cholesterol," adds Dr. Singh.

5. Manage Stress Effectively

Stress is a known trigger for high blood pressure. Dr. Singh advises incorporating stress-busting activities such as yoga, watching movies, spending quality time with family, and taking breaks from work to help keep stress—and in turn, blood pressure—under control.

6. Avoid Alcohol and Quit Smoking

"Giving up alcohol and quitting smoking not only reduces the risk of hypertension but also lowers the chances of developing cancer," warns Dr. Singh. Both substances are harmful and have long-term health consequences beyond just heart health.

With these practical lifestyle modifications, Dr. Balbir Singh emphasizes that high blood pressure can be managed effectively, reducing the risk of heart attacks, strokes, and other life-threatening complications. (The author is the Group Chairman – Cardiac Sciences, Pan Max & Chief of Interventional Cardiology and Electrophysiology, Max Super Speciality Hospital, Saket)

MENTAL HEALTH -C'mon! Let's Talk about it!



By: Zena Singh

Just because you/I don't show it, doesn't mean it isn't there – Loneliness, fears, things invisible outwardly, emotions unexpressed, things not immediately apparent. These are mostly hidden – considered taboo –all for the sake of saving image and face of an individual or the family nameall because we are uncomfortable in society- over this 'mark of disgrace'. It is therefore hushed.

The question to ask ourselves is this : does it pay to keep it all muffled instead of reaching out for help?

Society is almost always wording it (mental Health) to be imaginary,so we avoid it. We avoid it intentionally as we could be judged. We avoid noticing changes in behavior,we avoid choosing to ignore clear signs of depression, we avoid looking the problem in the eye, hardly does anybody want to deal with it let alone talk about it.

This stigma against Mental Illness has led to the loss of one too many lives – turning our backs to this problem is resulting in many out there who appear to be alive and yet are not living.

In this Mental Health Awareness Month let us be aware that just as we pay attention to our Physical Health willingly going that extra mile to getting our bodies well and whole let us make it equally important, if not more crucial, to be attentive and make all effort to seriously attend to our mental problems and of those of our loved ones.

Today, there is a need to acknowledge the fact that there is a rise , a significant increase in poor Mental Health, more so among many young people,however also affecting all ages irrespective of backgrounds, though not spoken too much about.

How can we help with this rising rate and what can we do to prevent some of the toughest social challenges .

There comes the deep need to raise Awareness, particularly for health & happiness for ourselves and of the future .These may be brought about by addressing societal factors, Community support systematic changes....healthy lifestyles.....access to care& professional help ,provision of information ,most importantly beginning with a change in the way we think.

Yet, starting with individual mindsets,to help ourselves, predominantly stands out urgently,the need to talk. Talk about our feelings and emotions equally the good as also the more difficult ones. It is so important to share – share your feelings, your thoughts, your fears, your ideas- it's all about expressing yourself – in the best way you know how –through music, art, photography, poetry, dance, journaling,sports – through those things that make you feel good about yourself, to be the very best version of ourselves because in confronting our fears & insecurities leads to a deeper understanding of ourselves, thereby knowing what we stand for- which brings out the best version of ourselves.

The idea is not to isolate yourself, instead it is to find someone to talk to, someone who would be willing to hear you through without any form of judgement.

You are allowed to be vulnerable , by that it means that in permitting yourself to express difficult emotions like grief, fear, even shame would provide a kind of freedom leading to an even healthier emotional wellbeing. It greatly helps us accept ourselves and in the bargain makes us stronger individuals. Vulnerability is not a weakness, as it may be believed, in fact it acts as being the most powerful key, the path to an all truly human connection.

There's no disgrace in working toward a healthy Mind. I work on it daily and I've come a long way. (The author can be reached at Zena_zsingh@yahoo.com)

Russia hits Ukraine with largest drone-and-missile attack of war so far, killing at least 12

KYIV, May 25: A massive Russian drone-and-missile attack targeted the Ukrainian capital, Kyiv, and other regions in the country for a second consecutive night, killing at least 12 people and injuring dozens, officials said early Sunday.

The scale of the onslaught was stunning — Russia hit Ukraine with 367 drones and missiles, making this the largest single attack of the more than three-years-long war, according to Yuriy Ihnat, a spokesperson for Ukraine's Air Force.

In all, Russia used 69 missiles of various types and 298 drones, including Iranian-designed Shahed drones, he told The Associated Press.

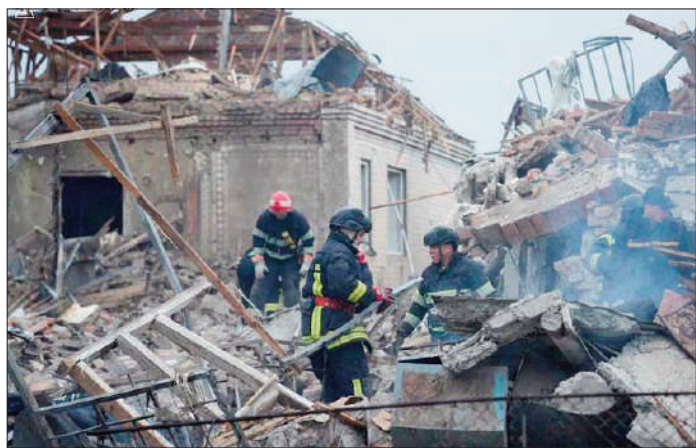
It was "the most massive strike in terms of the number of air attack weapons on the territory of Ukraine since the beginning of the full-scale invasion in 2022," Ihnat said.

There was no immediate comment from Moscow.

For Kyiv, the day was particularly sombre as the city observes Kyiv Day, a national holiday that falls on the last Sunday of May commemorating its founding in the 5th century.

'Deliberate strikes on ordinary cities'

Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy said that Russian missiles and drones hit more than 30



cities and villages across Ukraine and urged Western partners to ramp up sanctions on Russia.

That has been a long-standing demand of the Ukrainian leader but one that — despite warnings to Moscow by the United States and Europe — have not materialised in ways to deter Russia.

Zelenskyy wrote on X that Sunday's targets included Kyiv, Zhytomyr, Khmelnytskyi, Ternopil, Chernihiv, Sumy, Odesa, Poltava, Dnipro, Mykolaiv, Kharkiv and Cherkasy regions.

"These were deliberate strikes on ordinary cities. Ordinary residential buildings were destroyed and damaged," he said.

"Without truly strong pressure on the Russian leadership, this brutality cannot be stopped. San-

ctions will certainly help," Zelenskyy said. "Determination matters now — the determination of the United States, of European countries, and of all those around the world who seek peace."

The attack came on the third day of a planned prisoner swap between Russia and Ukraine, the only tangible outcome from peace talks in Istanbul earlier this month that have so far failed to produce a ceasefire. The exchange amounted to a rare moment of cooperation between the warring sides.

Meanwhile, Russia's Defence Ministry said its air defences shot down 110 Ukrainian drones overnight.

'The most massive Russian air attack'
Sounds of explosions boomed

throughout the night in Kyiv and the surrounding area as Ukrainian air defence forces persisted for hours in efforts to shoot down enemy drones and missiles. At least four people were killed and 16 were injured in the capital itself, according to Ukraine's security service.

"A difficult Sunday morning in Ukraine after a sleepless night. The most massive Russian air attack in many weeks lasted all night," Ukrainian Foreign Minister Andrii Sybiha said on X.

Fires broke out in homes and businesses, set off by falling drone debris.

In the region of Zhytomyr, west of Kyiv, three children were killed, aged 8, 12 and 17, according to the emergency service. Twelve were injured in the attacks, the service said. At least four people were killed in the Khmelnytskyi region, in western Ukraine. One man was killed in Mykolaiv region, in southern Ukraine.

Kyiv Mayor Vitali Klitschko said a student dormitory in Holosivskyi district was hit by a drone and one of the building's walls was on fire. In Dniprovskyi district, a private house was destroyed and in Shevchenkivskyi district, windows in a residential building were smashed.

The scale of Russia's use of aerial weapons, the attacks over the past 48 hours have been among the

most intense strikes on Ukraine since the February 2022 full-scale war. The last in a three-day prisoner swap was expected to take place later on Sunday.

A village engulfed in smoke and rubble

In the village of Markhalivka, just outside Kyiv, where several homes were burned down in the overnight strikes, the Fedorenkos watched their ruined home in tears.

"The street looks like Bakhmut, like Mariupol, it's just terrible," says 76-year-old Liubov Fedorenko, comparing their village to some of Ukraine's most devastated cities in the war. She told the AP how grateful she was her daughter had not joined them for the weekend with her family.

"I was trying to persuade my daughter to come to us," Fedorenko said, adding she told her daughter, "After all, you live on the eighth floor in Kyiv, and here it's the ground floor."

"She said, 'No, mum, I'm not coming.' And thank God she didn't come, because the rocket hit (the house) on the side where the children's rooms were," Fedorenko said.

Ivan Fedorenko, 80, said he regrets letting their two dogs into the house after the air raid siren went off. "They burned to death," he said. "I want to bury them, but I'm not allowed yet." (AP)

Indonesian president, Chinese premier meet to discuss expanding trade during US trade war

JAKARTA (INDONESIA), May 25: Chinese Premier Li Qiang met with Indonesia's President Prabowo Subianto on Sunday to discuss ways to expand trade and investment during the US global trade war and as economic globalization faces headwinds.

Li arrived in Indonesia's capital, Jakarta, on Saturday afternoon for a three-day visit to Southeast Asia's largest economy. It was the first stop of his first overseas visit this year.

Indonesia and China are member states of the Group of 20 major developing countries and emerging economies and of BRICS.

Li brought 60 prominent Chinese businesspeople for his address to the Indonesia-China Business Reception on Saturday evening. He emphasised in his remarks that China's economy has achieved rapid growth this year despite increasing external challenges.

"The current international situation is a stalemate," Li said at the event, which was also attended by Subianto, "Unilateralism and protectionism are on the rise, bullying behaviour is increasing."

Li noted this year marks the 70th anniversary of the conception of the Non-Aligned Movement by Asian and African countries in Indonesia's Bandung city when the world was at a historical crossroads.

The Bandung spirit of solidarity, friendship and cooperation has played a pivotal role in the unity and cooperation of the Global South countries, Li said.

"More than seven decades later, the world is once again at an important crossroads," Li said.

He called on all countries to seek common ground while resolving differences through dialogue and peaceful coexistence.

Subianto expressed gratitude to the Chinese government and its companies "that have participated in our economy, created jobs, transferred technology and built trust among all businesses, especially in our homeland." He also invited Chinese businesspeople to invest more in Indonesia. Two-way trade exceeded USD 147.8 billion last year, growing by 6.1 per cent.

Li said for nine consecutive years, China has been Indonesia's largest trading partner, and its Belt and Road cooperation program has seen substantive progress, including nickel smelting plants and Whoosh, the commercial service of Southeast Asia's first high-speed railway which has been operating since October 2023, carrying nearly 10 million passengers.

Indonesia wants a larger role in supplying nickel and other raw ma-

terials to China's fast-growing electric car makers.

On Sunday, Subianto hosted Li in a ceremony at Merdeka Palace in Jakarta before the two leaders held a bilateral meeting behind closed doors.

"The current international situation is facing a huge upheaval, and peaceful development is facing many uncertain and unstable factors," Li said in his opening remarks.

China wants to strengthen its traditional friendship and Belt and Road Initiative partnership with Indonesia, especially in five key pillars: politics, economy, maritime affairs, security and cultural and people-to-people exchanges," Li said.

Li's visit to Jakarta in September 2023 came with USD 21.7 billion in new Chinese investment, following a previous USD 44.89 billion investment commitment made when former President Joko Widodo met Chinese President Xi Jinping in July the same year.

The two leaders oversaw the signing of a dozen agreements including cooperation to encourage bilateral transactions in local currencies, trade, investment, tourism, health and agricultural exports.

Subianto emphasized the close historical relationship between Indonesia and China and said the two countries are at an important moment in the history of bilateral relations.

"I reiterate our commitment to strengthening our comprehensive strategic partnership with the people and the government of China," Subianto said. "We see this will bring goodness not only to the two countries, but also to the entire Asian region."

Indonesia's Minister of Investment and Downstream, Rosan Roeslani, who is also the head of the Investment Coordinating Board, said that Li's visit brought prospects for concrete cooperation, including the implementation of USD 10 billion in investment that was previously agreed upon by the two countries.

"The investment has started and covers a number of strategic sectors," Roeslani told reporters, adding that the visit will also open opportunities for several new collaborations in the fields of transportation, industrial cluster development, mineral downstream and the chemical sector.

Li is scheduled to meet with Indonesian parliament members Sunday. On Monday, he will head to Malaysia, where he and Prime Minister Anwar Ibrahim are scheduled to address the ASEAN-GCC-China Economic Summit, attended by leaders from Southeast Asian countries and the Gulf Cooperation Council. (AP)

Venezuelans vote for lawmakers and governors as opposition calls for election boycott

CARACAS (VENEZUELA), May 25: Voters in Venezuela are choosing lawmakers, governors and other officials Sunday in polling being held against a backdrop of heightened government repression and opposition calls to boycott the election.

The election is the first to allow broad voter participation since last year's presidential contest, which President Nicolás Maduro claimed to have won despite credible evidence to the contrary. It is taking place two days after the government detained dozens of people, including a prominent opposition leader, and linked them to an alleged plot to hinder the vote.

About an hour after polls opened, around a dozen voters were outside the country's largest voting centre, located in the capital — a stark contrast with the hundreds who were already in line around the same time for the July 28 presidential election. An increased police presence was noticeable across Caracas, where squad cars with lights on dotted quiet neighbourhoods.

Voter participation, in the eyes of the opposition, legitimises Maduro's claim to power and

his government's repressive apparatus, which after the July presidential election detained more than 2,000 people, including protesters, poll workers, political activists and minors, to quash dissent. Meanwhile, the ruling party is already touting overwhelming victory across the country, just as it has done in previous regional elections regardless of opposition participation.

A nationwide poll conducted between April 29 and May 4 by the Venezuela-based research firm Delphos showed that only 15.9% of voters expressed a high probability of voting Sunday. Of those, 74.2% said they would vote for the candidates of the ruling United Socialist Party of Venezuela and its allies, while 13.8% said they would vote for contenders associated with two opposition leaders who are not boycotting the elections.

"I think it's absolutely despicable," opposition operative Humberto Villalobos said Saturday, referring to the election participation of some opposition members. "We're facing the most brutal repression in recent years in the country. (The vote) is a comedy, a parody."

Villalobos was elections division chief for opposition leader Maria Corina Machado when he and five other government opponents sought refuge in March 2024 at a diplomatic compound in Venezuela's capital to avoid arrest. He spent more than a year there, and on Saturday, along with four of the others, spoke publicly for the first time since they left the compound and arrived in the United States earlier this month.

US Secretary of State Marco Rubio, who met with the group Friday, has described their departure from the compound as an international rescue operation. That assertion has been challenged by Venezuelan Interior Minister Diosdado Cabello, who has said it was the result of a negotiation with the government.

The ruling party-loyal National Electoral Council is overseeing Sunday's election for state legislators, 285 members of the unicameral National Assembly and all 24 governors, including the newly created governorship purportedly established to administer Essequibo, a region long under dispute between Venezuela and neighboring Guyana. (AP)

20 die in Pakistan's Punjab as storms, heavy rains batter province



LAHORE, May 25: At least 20 people were killed and over 150 injured in Pakistan's Punjab as powerful windstorms and heavy rains battered the province on Saturday evening.

The storm was so powerful that it paralysed road and air traffic, damaged infrastructure and caused widespread power outages.

According to the Punjab government, most deaths in the province of over 13 crore occurred due to the collapse of dilapidated houses or getting trapped under fallen billboards.

"At least 20 people, including children, were killed and over 150 injured in various parts of Punjab in incidents related to powerful windstorms and heavy rains," the provincial government said on Sunday.

The gusty winds and hail also hit the capital, Islamabad, and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa province, causing extensive damage to crops and power lines. However, no casualty was reported there.

Storms accompanied by heavy rainfall led to water accumulation in several low-lying areas and trees falling at multiple spots.

A private airline flight FL-842 from Karachi to Lahore also narrowly escaped a disaster when it was caught in severe turbulence while landing at Lahore airport.

Videos of passengers aboard the plane reciting Quran verses went viral on social media. They were seen crying and praying for a safe landing. As the plane couldn't land at the airport because of the turbulent weather, the air traffic control advised the pilot to take the plane back to Karachi.

According to the Provincial Disaster Management Authority (PDMA) of Punjab, three people died each in Lahore and Jhelum, two each in Sialkot and Muzaffargarh and one person each in Sheikhupura, Nankana Sahib, Attock, Multan, Rajanpur, Hafizabad, Mianwali, Jhang Gujranwala and Layyah as the walls and roofs of the houses collapsed and trees fell on them.

Over two dozen incidents of the fall of solar panels and billboards were also reported.

Motorway Police closed several motorways due to safety concerns. (PTI)

Bangladeshi tribunal frames charges against 8 persons for atrocities during 2024 uprising

DHAKA/NEW DELHI, May 25: Bangladesh's International Crimes Tribunal on Sunday framed charges against a former police commissioner and seven other officers for their alleged atrocities during last year's anti-government protests. The protests had led to the ouster of then prime minister Sheikh Hasina's regime.

The tribunal for the first time took cognizance of a case filed over mass killings and atrocities committed during the July 2024 uprising.

A three-member bench of the tribunal, headed by Justice M Golam Mortuza, accepted the charges submitted by the prosecution against Dhaka's ex-police commissioner Habibur Rahman Habib and seven other policemen and set June 3 as the date for starting hearing in the case.

"There are grounds to take into cognizance the formal allegations," Prothom Alo newspaper quoted the bench as saying. According to the

charges, the then Dhaka Metropolitan Police Commissioner Habib, now at large, allegedly ordered subordinates to open fire on protesting crowds at the Chankharpul area in old Dhaka.

Apart from Habib three other accused are on the run while four are in jail. The four were present as the tribunal accepted the charge.

Hasina, who is now in India, and several of her cabinet and party colleagues are accused of identical crimes. The tribunal's move came as government employees for a second consecutive day staged protests inside the Bangladesh Secretariat on Sunday against the proposed Government Service (Amendment) Ordinance, 2025. The protesters have been demanding its withdrawal, calling it a black law that made it easy for authorities to take punitive actions and terminate the government employees.

Chief Adviser Muhammad Yunus's interim Cabinet approved the law last

week and now awaits presidential assent. National Board of Revenue (NBR) officials also abstained from work for the second consecutive day demanding scrap of a separate new ordinance.

The protest began after the NBR Reform Unity Council rejected the finance ministry's decision to amend the Revenue Policy and Revenue Management Ordinance which seeks to dissolve the NBR and form two existing divisions, separating tax policy-making from administration.

Yunus's government in the past two days faced several challenges.

There have been reports of discord between the military and the interim government over the possible timeline for holding the parliamentary elections and other policy issues related to Bangladesh's security affairs, particularly involving a proposed humanitarian corridor of aid channel to Myanmar's rebel-held Rakhine state.

Army chief General Waker-Uz-Zaman along with the Navy and Air Force chiefs met Yunus last week and reportedly reiterated their call for election by December this year to allow an elected government to take charge. They also conveyed their reservation about the corridor issue.

The next day, Zaman held a senior officers meeting at Dhaka Cantonment and said he was unaware of the government's several strategic decisions despite the military's active role. The military also decided to be tough against rampant incidents of "mob justice". Troops were called out for their barracks with magistracy power to maintain law and order.

Yunus on Saturday held an unscheduled closed-door meeting of the advisory council which later said in a statement that they discussed in detail the "three primary responsibilities entrusted to the interim government — elections, reforms, and justice". (PTI)

Informal talks between Indian, Pakistani officials in third-party countries may help de-escalate tensions: UK experts

LONDON, May 25: Leading UK strategic experts believe an attempt to coordinate informal talks between Indian and Pakistani officials in third-party countries may offer a possible prospect to restore stability following the recent military escalation in the region.

The International Institute for Strategic Studies (IISS), a London-based think-tank, last week held a session entitled "The India-Pakistan military conflict and prospects for regional stability and security" to weigh up the political and security considerations of the conflict in the region.

It came ahead of an all-party delegation led by BJP leader Ravi Shankar Prasad bound for Europe, arriving in the French capital of Paris on Sunday to present India's counter-terrorism stance and Operation Sindoor in the wake of the Pahalgam terror attack on April 22 that claimed 26 lives.

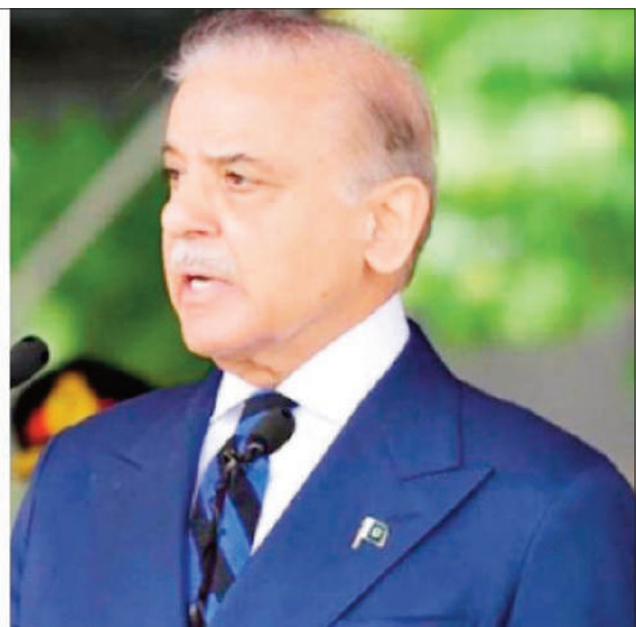
"India and Pakistan have emerged from their 100-hour military conflict with strongly differing and disputed narratives," said Rahul Roy-Chaudhury, IISS Senior Fellow and Head of the South and Central Asian Programme.

"India has refused to talk or trade with Pakistan until all terror attacks against India



end," he said. When, or if, that happens, India has stated that it will focus only on terrorism and Pakistan-occupied Kashmir (PoK) in any future talks with Pakistan, he noted.

"Pakistan is likely to challenge these pre-conditions for talks and is currently seeking international intervention towards this end," he said.



"In this context, the regeneration of private and informal 'track 1.5' dialogues between Indian and Pakistani senior officials and influential experts held in third-party countries

provide the best immediate prospect of a return to regional stability," he added.

India has made it clear that it will only have a dialogue with Pakistan on the return of Pakistan-occupied Kashmir and the issue of terrorism.

India has always maintained that the Kashmir issue is a bilateral matter and there is no space for any third party.

With reference to the all-party delegation, set to arrive in the UK next week following talks in other capitals of Europe, Roy-Chaudhury believes the focus will be on showcasing an all-India consensus and sensitising the international community over India's counter-terrorism doctrine.

"I think the focus of these delegations will be really on sensitising the international community on how to counter terrorism emanating from Pakistan," he said.

Desmond Bowen, IISS Associate Fellow for South and Central Asia, pointed to the wider global interest in this regional conflict.

"The world is interested in this because the world is interested in the possibility, and indeed the avoidance of a nuclear war... in that context, the risk has clearly shot up, deterrence failed on both sides and the chance of misreading across the India-Pakistan divide

is a lot higher now than it's been for many years," said Bowen.

Antoine Levesques, IISS Senior Fellow for South and Central Asia, focussed on the military technology aspects of the conflict earlier this month.

"India has made a very big narrative of the Make in India implications of what it sees as its successful use of military equipment during that campaign, and this will have an impact on India's ability to market itself as a defence supplier," he said.

Viraj Solanki, IISS Research Fellow for South and Central Asia, highlighted the implications of the "disputed and differing" narratives between the US, India and Pakistan on the May 10 ceasefire.

India and Pakistan reached an understanding on May 10 to end the conflict after four days of intense cross-border drone and missile strikes.

"Three differing narratives raise many questions on the sustainability of the ceasefire over the medium to long term. And I think this is fundamentally because there is no joint statement between India and Pakistan on the ceasefire, as there was for the 2021 ceasefire which held for four years," said Solanki. (PTI)

Union Minister Kiren Rijiju launches first phase of land compensation for frontier highway project in Seppa

Handed over compensation cheques to ten families whose land falls within the Right of Way (ROW) of the Frontier Highway alignment



HT Bureau
NAMSAL, May 25: A significant milestone was achieved in the ambitious Frontier Highway Project from Lada to Sarli as Union Minister for Parliamentary Affairs and Minority Affairs, Kiren Rijiju, officially launched the first phase of

land compensation disbursement to Project Affected Families (PAFs) in East Kameng district on Saturday. The compensation distribution programme was held at Seppa, in the presence of Home, PHED, ISBA, and DOIA Minister Mama Natung, Chayangtajo MLA

Hayeng Mangfi, Bameng MLA Kumar Wai, senior government officials, community leaders, and local citizens.

Union Minister Rijiju handed over compensation cheques to ten families whose land falls within the Right of Way (ROW) of the Fron-

tier Highway alignment. This event marks the formal initiation of the compensation process, with village-wise disbursement scheduled to commence from May 26, 2025.

Speaking at the public gathering, Minister Rijiju highlighted the strategic and developmental impor-

tance of the Frontier Highway, stating that with an investment of ₹ 42,000 crore, it is one of the largest infrastructure projects undertaken in the country.

"This project will bring transformative development to the remote and border areas of Arunachal Pradesh. It is not only vital for national security and connectivity, but will also spur economic opportunities for the people living along the border," Rijiju emphasized.

He also urged the people of East Kameng and surrounding areas to extend full cooperation to ensure the smooth and timely execution of the project.

Rijiju expressed hope that the land compensation would enhance the economic condition of affected families, enabling them to invest in alternative livelihoods or small businesses. "This is my dream project," he said, "and it will transform the rural and border landscape of Arunachal Pradesh."

He also stressed the need for transparency and efficiency in the land acquisition process and called on local stakeholders and officials to ensure quality work and community support throughout the implementation phase.

The Frontier Highway, once completed, is expected to be a strategic lifeline for Arunachal Pradesh, strengthening infrastructure, connectivity, and development in the frontier state while reinforcing India's border security.

High-level central team visits FTI Arunachal amid student strike

Assures full government support

HT Bureau

NAMSAL, May 25: A high-level delegation from the Ministry of Information & Broadcasting, led by Joint Secretary (Films), Shri Ajay Nagabhushan MN, visited the Film and Television Institute (FTI), Arunachal Pradesh, on Saturday amidst an ongoing student strike that has persisted for over a week.

The visit marks a significant step towards resolving the issues that have prompted the students' protest. The Joint Secretary held a series of in-depth meetings with all stakeholders — including students, faculty members, institute officers, and administrative staff — in an effort to address grievances and expedite institutional development.

Focus on Resolution and Institutional Growth

Speaking to media during his visit, Shri Ajay Nagabhushan emphasized the national significance of the institute.

"FTI Arunachal Pradesh is the third premier film institute in the country after FTII Pune and SRFTI Kolkata. It represents the future of filmmaking and technological advancement in India. We are committed to building it into a centre of excellence," he stated.

He assured that the Government of India is actively working to upgrade the infrastructure and academic ecosystem of the institute.

"Just like FTII and SRFTI, we are exploring the possibility of granting FTI Arunachal more autonomy, which would allow for academic innovation and excellence. The project is being monitored at the Director General and Ministry level to ensure timely completion," the Joint

Secretary added.

Interaction with Students

The Joint Secretary engaged directly with the students over two days, listening to their concerns and discussing academic and infrastructural challenges.

"The students have shown remarkable discipline and sincerity. They are eager to resume classes, and we are equally committed to creating an environment conducive to quality education and creative growth," he said.

Headlines for Key Infrastructure

In a major development, the CRT building, which will house classrooms, theatres, and performance labs, is scheduled to be handed over by May 31, 2025. The Girls' Hostel is expected to be completed and ready for use by June 15, 2025.

Appreciation for State Support
Shri Nagabhushan extended his gratitude to various departments of the State Government, including the Department of IPR, Papum Pare District Administration, Power Department, PHED, and other agencies for their coordinated efforts in supporting the development of the institute.

"This project's success depends on collaboration, and I appreciate the state's proactive role in ensuring FTI Arunachal emerges as one of the country's best institutions," he concluded.

Way Forward

Directions have been issued to all stakeholders to commence preparations for the upcoming semester immediately. The central ministry has assured continued monitoring and support to ensure that academic activities resume without further delay.

24-year-old youth dies in solo road accident near Mani, Doimukh

HT Bureau

NAMSAL, May 25: In a tragic incident, a 24-year-old youth lost his life in a road accident near Mani Nallah, close to Government Secondary School, Mani, under Doimukh Circle in Papum Pare district on Thursday evening.

The deceased has been identified as Lt Dibang Nungnu, son of Tarae Nungnu, a resident of Nungnu village under Taliha Police Station in Upper Subansiri district.

According to SP Papum Pare, Taru Gusar, the accident occurred around 5:00 pm, and preliminary investigation suggests it was a self-involved road traffic accident. The youth was reportedly riding a silver Royal Enfield motorcycle bearing registration number AR01J-7904 when the accident took place. No other individuals were injured, indicating it was a solo accident.

A case has been registered at the Doimukh Police Station under DMK PS Case No. 70/25 U/S 281/106(1) of the Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita (BNS). The investigation is being carried out by SI Ravindra Singh.

Following legal formalities, the body was handed over to the bereaved family members for conducting the last rites.

SP Gusar expressed condolences to the family and urged motorists to exercise caution on hilly terrain and narrow roads, particularly during the monsoon season.

Late Nabam Atum remembered

HT Bureau

NAMSAL, May 25: The Indigenous Faith and Cultural Society of Arunachal Pradesh (IFCSAP) on Thursday observed the first death anniversary of its former President and former APPSC Chairman Late Nabam Atum, at a solemn ceremony held at his residence in Rono, Doimukh.

Led by IFCSAP President Emi Rumi and General Secretary Maya Murtem, members of the organization paid heartfelt tributes to the late leader, offering prayers and floral homage in his memory. The gathering reflected the continued respect and admiration for Nabam Atum's lifelong contributions to the promotion and preservation of indigenous faith, culture, and public service in the state.

Prominent leaders, including Rajya Sabha Member of Parliament Nabam Rebba, former Chief Minister Nabam Tuki, and Doimukh MLA Nabam Vivek, attended the ceremony, joining community members in remembering the legacy of the respected leader.

Speaking on the occasion, the IFCSAP leadership expressed their commitment to carrying forward Atum's vision for cultural preservation and community development. "Late Nabam Atum was not only a guiding figure for IFCSAP but also a voice of strength for Arunachal's indigenous identity. His ideals continue to inspire our path forward," said Rumi.

AAPAWA team flagged off for 47th National Arm Wrestling Championship in Bhopal



HT Bureau
NAMSAL, May 25: In a moment of pride and encouragement for the state's sporting community, the official flag-off ceremony for the All Arunachal Pradesh Arm Wrestling Association (AAPAWA) team was held at the Sports Authority of Arunachal (SAA) Conference Hall, Chimpu. The event was graced by Boni Liruk, Administrative Officer of the SAA, who extended his best wishes to the contingent.

To bolster the morale of the participants and express institutional support, the Sports Authority of Arunachal provided official track suits to the AAPAWA team. The team will represent Arunachal Pradesh at the 47th National Arm Wrestling Championship, scheduled to be held from May 25 to May 28, in Bhopal, Madhya Pradesh.

The prestigious national cham-

pionship will witness top arm wrestlers from across the country battling it out for glory, and Arunachal's team is aiming to make a strong impression.

The AAPAWA delegation, comprising 52 members — including 49 arm wrestlers and 3 officials — departed from Naharlagun Railway Station on May 22, and is expected to arrive in Bhopal by the afternoon of May 25.

Speaking at the ceremony, Boni Liruk expressed confidence in the team's potential and lauded their dedication and hard work. He also emphasized the importance of such platforms in promoting lesser-known sports and encouraging young athletes in the state.

The event concluded with words of encouragement, group photographs, and a rousing send-off to the athletes who will carry the hopes of Arunachal Pradesh onto the national stage.

Truck carrying food grains plunges into gorge in Kra Daadi district

HT Bureau

NAMSAL, May 25: In a tragic accident, a truck loaded with food grains plunged into a deep gorge at Pagu near Old Palin in Kra Daadi district on Saturday, leaving all six occupants injured, with several reported to be in critical condition.

Kra Daadi SP In-charge Bomken Basar confirmed that the incident was reported to the Palin Police Station at around 11:00 AM. Acting swiftly, a police team along with emergency medical services rushed to the accident site for rescue operations.

"Upon arrival, it was observed that all six occupants of the vehicle were in urgent need of medical assistance," said SP Basar. The injured were immediately evacuated and transported to the District Hospital, Palin, for preliminary treatment.

Due to the severity of injuries, all victims were later referred to the Tomato Riba Institute of Health and Medical Sciences (TRIIMS), Naharlagun, for advanced medical care.

Preliminary investigations suggest that the cause of the accident was brake failure, SP Basar added. The truck was reportedly en route to Koloring from Harmutti, carrying rice stocks of the Food Corporation of India (FCI) when the accident occurred.

Further inquiry is underway, and officials are monitoring the condition of the critically injured patients.

Guardian Minister Pasang Dorjee Sona reviews developmental projects in Namsai



HT Bureau

NAMSAL, May 25: A comprehensive review meeting on the progress of various developmental works under central and state-sponsored schemes was held today at the DC's Conference Hall, Namsai. The meeting was chaired by Minister for RWD, Education, Tourism, Parliamentary Affairs, and Libraries, Pasang Dorjee Sona, who also serves as the Guardian Minister of Namsai District.

The meeting was attended by MLA of Namsai, Chau Zingnu Namchoom, Sonal Swaroop, IAS (Secretary, RD & PR) and Mentor Secretary of Namsai, along with the Deputy Commissioner, Super-

intendent of Police, and Heads of Departments (HoDs).

During the review, Minister Sona took note of the key challenges faced by the district in implementing developmental schemes and assured that the concerns will be forwarded to the relevant ministries for prompt resolution.

In his capacity as the Education Minister, Sona emphasized the foundational issues in the education system, which he identified as a major reason for poor academic performance in Class X and XII board examinations. He shared that the Education Department is working on the rationalization of

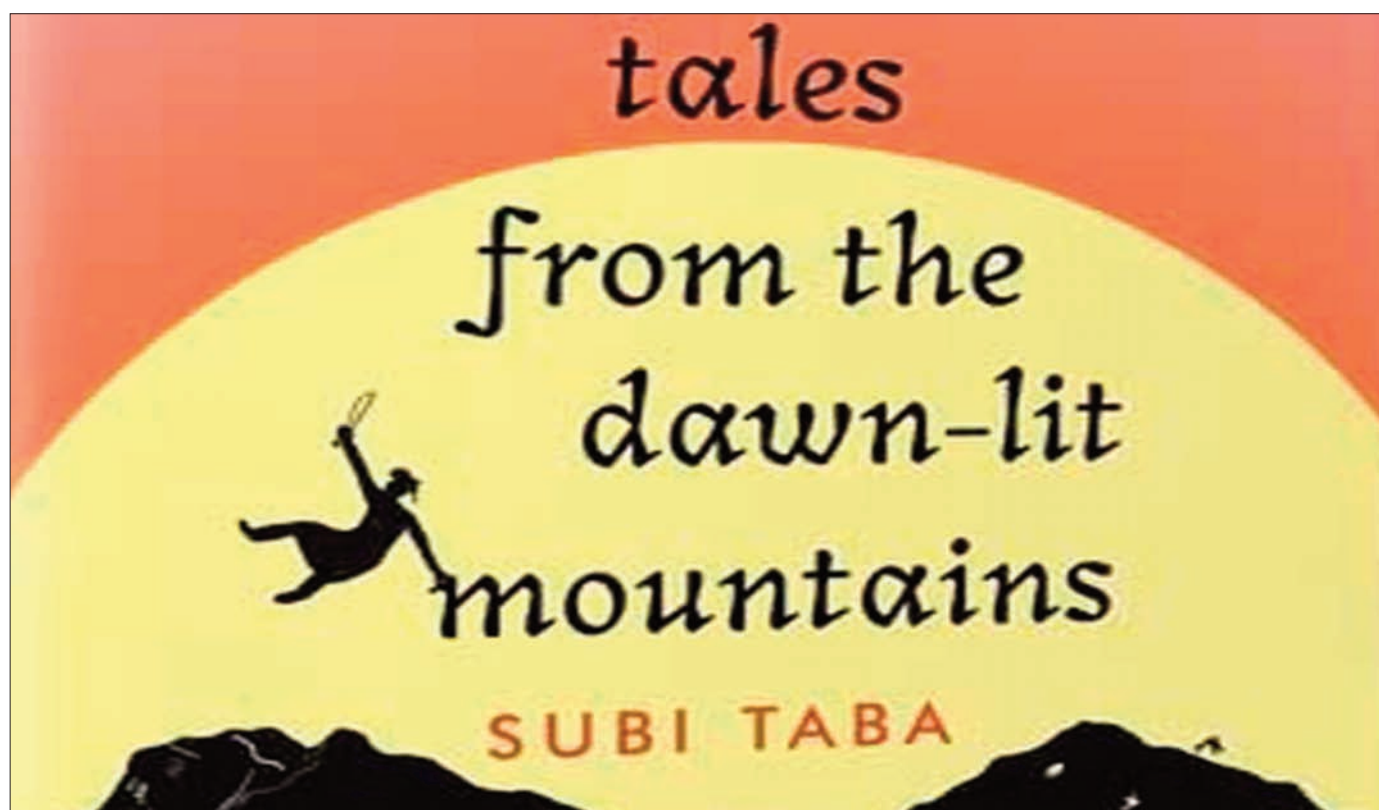
teacher deployment and other reforms aimed at improving the overall academic environment in the state.

MLA Chau Zingnu Namchoom underlined the need for targeted initiatives to address youth unemployment in the district. He urged for enhanced skill development and employment generation programs tailored to the local context.

Sonal Swaroop, Mentor Secretary of Namsai, assured that all issues raised during the meeting will be diligently communicated to the government for appropriate action and follow-up. He reaffirmed her commitment to supporting the district's development agenda.

'Tales from the Dawn-Lit Mountains': Alluring escape to land of Arunachal Pradesh

Feel delighted to have liberated these stories dwelling inside me



NEW DELHI, May 25: Poet-writer Subi Taba says her debut book "Tales from the Dawn-Lit Mountains" is a souvenir of her life in the hills of Arunachal Pradesh and she feels delighted to have liberated these stories dwelling inside her.

The stories in this collection are shaped by the hilly terrains of Arunachal Pradesh, stirred by the mountain rivers, flavoured by the harvests of the soil and tempered by the tribal people living in the isolated hinterlands under the shadows of magic and realism, she says.

"Each story is a glimpse into the heart of life. A peek inside the dark corridors of a bamboo house in the hills. A look at the wild outcry rising amid a fire lit up in the distant mountain villages," Taba adds.

She says she has taken "creative liberty to fictionalise glimpses and layers of cultural history, familial ties, ethnographic identity, symbolism of animals, geopolitical transition, life's mundanity, nature and supernatural beliefs existing within the ethnic

tribes of Arunachal Pradesh".

"I feel delighted to have liberated these stories dwelling inside me, which have now been set forth on to their journeys, expanding like white smoke rising above the roof of a village hut," Taba, an agriculture development officer, says.

"Tales from the Dawn-Lit Mountains", published by Penguin Random House imprint Vintage, features stories that are products of visceral observation and a delicate understanding of the ethnic communities living under intervening shadows of magic and realism in the isolated hinterlands of the state.

The subjects of the stories are varied: A village haunted by an insidious spirit tiger, a bee sting reminding a Nocte boy of his brother's beheading and transforms him into a deadly headhunter, a Donyi-Polo priest practising his animistic rituals to preserve the fading vestiges of his indigenous religion, and the curse of a high priest following a thief who stole forbidden sacred ornaments. (PTI)

Operation Sindoor not just military mission, but reflection of changing India: PM Modi

NEW DELHI, May 25: Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Sunday said that Operation Sindoor was not just a military mission, but "the face of a changing India" that reflects the country's resolve, courage, and growing strength on the global stage.

Addressing his monthly radio programme Mann Ki Baat, the Prime Minister termed Operation Sindoor as a turning point in the global fight against terror and a symbol of India's growing strength and clarity of purpose.

Leaders of the ruling National Democratic Alliance, who had gathered here for a meeting, listened to the Prime Minister's Mann Ki Baat address together.

Operation Sindoor was launched on the intervening night of May 6-7 to avenge the April 22 Pahalgam terrorist attack.

In retaliation, the Indian armed forces struck terror sites, including the headquarters of Lashkar-e-Taiba, Jaish-e-Muhammad, and Hizbul Mujahideen.

The Prime Minister said Operation Sindoor has infused the entire nation with a sense of patriotism with people declaring to prefer Made in India goods over imported ones.

"Today the entire country is united against terrorism, filled with anger and



determination," Modi said.

"This itself is the real strength of India. I urge all of you too. Come, let us take a pledge on this occasion, wherever possible in our lives, we will accord priority to products made in the country," he said.

"This is not just a matter of economic self-reliance — it is a feeling of participation in nation building. One step of ours can become a huge contribution to the progress of India," he said.

The Prime Minister said the precision with which Indian forces attacked the terrorist infrastructure across the border was "extraordinary."

Modi emphasised that the operation was not a one-off military action, but a reflection of a changing and resolute India.

"Operation Sindoor is the picture of our resolve, courage, and the face of a changing India," he said.

The operation's success was followed by a series of gestures in tribute to the armed forces, ranging from patriotic poems on social media to paintings by children and massive Tiranga Yatras.

"In many cities, youth volunteered for civil defence, wrote poems, sang songs of resolve, and children made paintings carrying powerful messages," Modi said.

He talked about a recent visit to Bikaner where he was gifted paintings made by children.

"In cities like Katihar and Kushinagar, families named their newborns 'Sindoor' in honour of the operation," he said.

The Prime Minister credited India's home-grown defence capabilities for the mission's success, following the spirit of 'Atma Nirbhar Bharat'.

"This was the ultimate bravery of our soldiers, backed by the power of weapons, equipment, and technology made in India," he said.

Modi noted a renewed energy across the country towards the 'Vocal for Local' campaign post-Operation Sindoor, saying the mission had not just inspired patriotism but also strengthened the spirit of self-reliance.

"This victory carries the sweat of our engineers, technicians, and every citizen who contributed," he said. (PTI)

Heavy rains, strong winds continue to lash Kerala, causing widespread destruction



THIRUVANANTHAPURAM, May 25: A Huge number of trees got uprooted, houses were damaged, rivers are in spate, and shutters of some dams were raised in Kerala on Sunday with heavy rains overnight and strong winds continuing to lash across the state.

Almost all districts of the state received widespread rains throughout the night and in the morning, causing intense waterlogging in low-lying areas and traffic snarls.

In landslide-battered Chooralmala in Wayanad, incessant heavy rains caused concerns among local people the previous night.

Water flow in the Punnappuzha River, crisscrossing through the Chooralmala-Mundakkai region, heavily increased due to continuing downpour, they said.

"We are yet to recover from the shock of last year's landslide. We have not slept properly at night, as we were scared of seeing heavy rains. We feared something worse," an elderly local man told a TV channel.

In Pathanamthitta district, a family had a narrow escape as huge trees uprooted and fell upon their tile-roof house near Ezhamkulam, as strong winds accompanied by a downpour lashed the area on the previous evening.

"My daughter had a narrow escape as she just came out of the house when the trees fell upon the house," a family member said, pointing towards the broken roof of his old tiny house.

Five shutters of the Malankara dam in Idukki district were raised on Sunday morning to release the excess water, according to an official statement.

Those who live on the banks of the Thodupuzha and Moovattupuzha rivers

should exercise caution in view of the raising of dam shutters, it said.

Uprooting of trees was reported in northern Kozhikode and Kasaragod districts, where strong winds caused damage in many places.

Tragedy was averted in the heart of Kollam city as a huge flex board, erected on the side of a road, fell, local people said.

A house and vehicles were damaged as uprooted trees fell upon them in Kunthunad and Munambam Harbour, respectively, in Ernakulam district.

Meanwhile, the Indian Meteorological Department (IMD) on Sunday predicted thunderstorms with moderate rainfall (5-15mm/ hour) with surface wind speed likely to be 50 Kmph (in Gusts) at a few places in Ernakulam, Thrissur, Malappuram and Kozhikkode.

Moderate rainfall (5-15mm/ hour) with surface wind speed likely to be 40 Kmph (in Gusts) at a few places in Alappuzha, Pathanamthitta, Kottayam, Palakkad, Kozhikode, Wayanad, Kannur and Kasaragode, it said.

The Indian National Centre for Ocean Information Services (INCOIS) warned of high tidal waves from 3.1 metres to 4.2 metres and rough seas in the coastal area of the state till Monday night.

The IMD on Saturday announced the early onset of monsoons in the state. It said that the state is witnessing the early arrival of monsoon after a gap of 16 years.

According to the IMD, the monsoon arrived eight days earlier than usual, and the last time this happened was on May 23, 2009.

Prior to that, an early onset of the monsoon was seen on May 19, 1990, after 1975, it said. (PTI)

Liberian ship sinks off Kerala coast, 24 crew rescued

KOCHI/NEW DELHI, May 25:

A Liberian vessel carrying 640 containers, including 13 with hazardous cargo, sank off the Kochi coast on Sunday, sparking fears of a possible oil spill. All 24 crew members were rescued after the ship developed a critical tilt on Saturday, according to officials.

So far, no oil spill has been reported, the Ministry of Defence said on Sunday as full pollution response preparedness was activated by the Indian Coast Guard which was monitoring the situation along with the Indian Navy.

"Liberian container vessel MSC ELSA 3 (IMO NO. 9123221) sank off the Kochi coast at around 0750 hrs today on May 25, 2025, due to flooding..."

"The vessel went down with 640 containers, including 13 with hazardous cargo and 12 containing calcium carbide. It was also loaded with 84.44 MT of diesel and 367.1 MT of furnace oil," the ministry said in a statement.

Of the 24 crew members, 21 had been rescued by the Indian Coast Guard on Saturday, and the remaining three were later rescued by INS Sujata, which joined the rescue operation launched by the ICG.

Given the sensitive marine ecosystem along Kerala's coast, the ICG has activated "full pollution response preparedness" and ICG aircraft equipped with advanced oil spill detection systems are conducting aerial surveillance, officials said.

"ICG ship Saksham, carrying pollution response equipment, remains deployed at the site. So far, no oil spill has been reported," the defence ministry said.

The Kerala State Disaster Management Authority (KSDMA) has cautioned the general public against touching any cargo containers or oil spills that may wash ashore.

The coast guard has confirmed that the vessel was carrying Marine Gas Oil (MGO) and Very Low Sulphur Fuel Oil (VLSFO).

Deploying its ships and aircraft, the Indian Coast Guard had launched a rescue operation on Saturday following a distress call from the Liberian container vessel that developed a critical 26-degree list nearly 38 nautical miles southwest of Kochi.

The emergency began on May 24, when MSC ELSA 3, en route from Vizhinjam to Kochi, developed a 26-degree "starboard list" approximately 38 nautical miles southwest of Kochi, the officials said.

The vessel lost stability, prompting a distress call. ICG's Maritime Rescue Sub-Centre (MRSC) in Kochi immediately launched a coordinated response, they said.

"An ICG Dornier aircraft was deployed for aerial surveillance, spotting two life rafts with survivors. ICG patrol ships and merchant vessels MV Han Yi and MSC Silver 2 were also diverted to assist, in line with global search and rescue protocols," the defence ministry said.

By late evening of Saturday, 21 of the 24 crew, including nationals from Russia, Ukraine, Georgia, and the Philippines, had been rescued. Three senior crew members remained onboard to assist with salvage arrangements, it said. (PTI)

TMC deplores comments by BJP MP that tourists should have put up fight in Pahalgam

KOLKATA, May 25: The Trinamool Congress on Sunday deplored the comments by BJP Rajya Sabha MP Ram Chander Jangra that women, who lost their husbands in the Pahalgam terror attack, lacked the spirit of warrior women.

Addressing a gathering in Bhiwani in an event to mark the 300th birth anniversary of Ahilyabai Holkar, the BJP's Rajya Sabha MP from Haryana said that the tourists, who lost their lives in Pahalgam should have put up a fight against the terrorists and the women, who lost their husbands in the attack, should have acted like 'veerangna' (warrior women).

"Wahan par jo hamari veerangnay behane thee, jinki maang ka sindoor chheen liya gaya, Veerangna ka bhaav nahin tha, josh nahin tha, jazba nahin tha, dil nahin tha, is-

liye haath jod ke goli ka shikar ho gaye' (Women, who lost their husbands, did not have the spirit and vigour. Therefore, they became victims of the attack)," Jangra said.

"Lekin haath jodne se koi chhodta nahin. Hamare aadmi vahan par haath jodkar maare gaye. (Terrorists do not leave one with requests. Our people died with folded hands)," he added.

Expressing outrage over Jangra's comments, TMC said in a post on X handle, "How dare BJP MP @rcjangrabjp say the women in Pahalgam lacked bravery? 26 people lost their lives, and he blames the women? This isn't just insensitive, it's vile and inhuman."

Accusing the saffron party of being misogynist, TMC said in the post, "@BJP4India has mastered the art of de-

grading women. Misogyny isn't a bug in their ideology, it's the core."

In a jibe at the Prime Minister, the TMC said "And PM @narendramodi dares to talk about Naari Samman? Spare us the hypocrisy. Women are not your vote bank slogans." Senior TMC leader and minister Sashi Panja told reporters "The comments by the BJP MP has insulted women, outraged every woman, caused their anguish and show the true colour of the party."

"We are waiting to see which action BJP will initiate against such a person who has shown disrespect to the victims of the Pahalgam terror attack and their families," Panja added.

Twenty-six people were killed in the terror attack in Pahalgam in south Kashmir's Anantnag district on April 22. (PTI)

Caste census not divisive, it will strengthen social justice: Scheduled Caste rights panel chief

NEW DELHI, May 25: Nixing insinuations that caste enumeration would create chasms in society, National Commission for Scheduled Castes (NCSC) Chairperson Kishor Makwana said the data gathered would serve as a foundation for policy decisions and strengthen social justice. It will help uplift the marginalised backward communities, he told PTI in an interview.

With the BJP-led NDA government deciding to include caste enumeration in the next census, Makwana welcomed the move, saying that unlike in 2011, "definite figures would be available" that would ensure proportionate access to welfare schemes.

The UPA government conducted the Socio-Economic and Caste Census in 2011, which was the first attempt since 1931 to collect caste data nationwide. However, the caste data from SECC-2011 was never fully released or utilised.

Rejecting concerns that the caste census could lead to sectarian divisions, Makwana said, "This will not create any division based on caste. Rather, it will strengthen social justice."

"It will uplift backward castes and strengthen all three aspects -- social, political, and economic -- of

Babasaheb Ambedkar's dream for the Scheduled Caste community."

The caste census will provide accurate numbers that will serve as a foundation for policy decisions and target beneficiaries of schemes such as the Mudra Yojana in a much better manner, the NCSC chairperson said. "It will ensure that those who have remained deprived, finally get their due." Makwana clarified the NCSC would play a critical role in post-census policy framing.

"We don't have a role in the data collection itself. But after the data is out, the commission will have a role in ensuring the Scheduled Castes get their due share based on proportion. In that sense, this is a major step toward social justice," he said. Lauding the central Cabinet's decision, the NCSC chairperson said the caste census aligns with Prime Minister Narendra Modi's vision to uplift the last person in society, both socially and economically.

"This decision takes that vision forward. Those who have been left behind will now be empowered," he said, adding that accurate data would ensure proportionate access to welfare schemes. "With definite

population data, communities will get what they deserve in proportion. Right now, benefits are being given based on estimates. Once we have numbers, proper policy interventions can be made," he said.

Noting that the last caste census was held in 1931 and updated data has been lacking, Makwana said, "We've been working on the assumption that SCs form 7 per cent of the population. But without verified data, many deprived sections remain unaccounted for."

"The new census will bring detailed data, not just for the SCs, but also for sub-castes within Muslim and Christian communities," he said. Makwana also criticised political parties that previously opposed the caste census, saying they didn't include caste data in the seven censuses conducted since 1951 because their intentions were not right.

On the commission's broader activities, the chairperson said the NCSC has begun conducting state-level hearings, which weren't done earlier. "We held hearings in Punjab and Rajasthan. We are going among the people. Legal provisions alone won't solve caste-based issues; there has to be a sense of empathy and emotional connection in society as well," he said. (PTI)

BJP slams CM Siddaramaiah for skipping NITI Aayog meeting, says Karnataka deserves better

BENGALURU, May 25: Slamming Chief Minister Siddaramaiah for not attending the 10th meeting of the NITI Aayog Governing Council in New Delhi, chaired by Prime Minister Narendra Modi, the BJP on Sunday said Karnataka deserves better.

State BJP President B Y Vijayendra termed the CM's absence a deliberate withdrawal from opportunities that could shape Karnataka's future.

He accused Siddaramaiah of desperately clinging to a slipping chair and focusing more on appeasing the Congress high command.

Sources close to the Chief Minister cited a "prior engagement" in the state as the reason for Siddaramaiah skipping the meeting in New Delhi on Saturday and said he had sent his speech to be read out at the council. They clarified that the Chief Minister did not "boycott" the meeting. "The Congress government in Karnataka, unable to hide its complete lack of development work, keeps harping about what the Centre owes, as if blaming Delhi will somehow cover up its failures. But governance is not a blame game or a chorus of complaints; it is a shared responsibility built on cooperation and commitment to the people," Vijayendra posted on 'X'.

Noting that when Narendra Modi invites every Chief Minister for the 10th NITI Aayog Governing Council to shape the shared vision of Viksit Bharat by 2047, CM Siddaramaiah chooses to skip, he said, "This isn't just one leader missing one meeting—it's a deliberate withdrawal from opportunities that could shape Karnataka's future." "A Chief Minister desperate to cling to a slipping chair, more focused on appeasing his high command than uplifting his people, continues to place politics over progress. But can true governance ever succeed when politics is prioritised above the people?" he asked, adding that Karnataka deserves better.

Later, speaking to reporters in Mysuru, Vijayendra urged Siddaramaiah to tell the people of the state why he did not attend the NITI Aayog meeting.

"Chief Ministers of Congress-ruled states like Telangana, Himachal Pradesh, and DMK-ruled Tamil Nadu's Chief Minister M.K. Stalin attended the meeting, but, unfortunately, our CM Siddaramaiah did not. He should tell the people why he did not attend or whether he boycotted it," he said.

"This Chief Minister and government, along with its ministers and MLAs, can stage protests in Delhi against the central government, but cannot attend such an important meeting. It seems doing politics is more important to this CM than the development of the state," the state BJP chief added.

"This is an injustice to the state. Since becoming Chief Minister, Siddaramaiah has chosen a path of confrontation with the central government, which will do no good for Karnataka," he said.

Pointing out that the CM Siddaramaiah and Deputy CM D K Shivakumar have time to hold the government's two-year celebration in Hosapete, attend the IPL match at Chinnaswamy Stadium, and go to Delhi to knock on the high command's door when their chair is in trouble, BJP leader and Leader of Opposition in Assembly R Ashoka said they don't have time or interest to attend the NITI Aayog meeting, which was attended by the PM and CMs of all states.

He also noted that the CM and Deputy CM did not attend the World Economic Forum meeting held in Davos. "Why do people like you need politics and public life? For the Congress party, politics is just about having fun and enjoying power; it has no interest or commitment to public welfare or development," Ashoka added. (PTI)

India land of opportunities despite prevailing competitive world scenario: LS Speaker

RANCHI/JAMSHEDPUR (JHARKHAND), May 25: Lok Sabha Speaker Om Birla on Sunday asserted that India is a land of opportunities despite the prevailing competitive world scenario.

Birla was addressing a gathering during the Platinum Jubilee celebration of the Singhbhum Chamber of Commerce and Industry in Jamshedpur.

He said the country, with its intellectual prowess and innovative ideas, technology and young and skilled human resources, has enough potential to lead the world.

Big industries of the world were looking at India, Birla said.

The Union government has been making efforts to suitably bring in reforms and implement industry-friendly policies, he said.

The socio-economic development of the country will gain pace if we continue to frame industry-friendly policies considering the fast-changing scenario to ensure their smooth functioning, he said.



Apart from Birla, Union Minister of State for Defence Sanjay Seth, former Union minister and ex-Jharkhand chief minister Arjun Munda and BJP MP Bidyut Baran Mahato were also present on the occasion.

Earlier in the day, Birla arrived in Ranchi on a two-day visit to Jharkhand and paid floral tributes at the 25-foot-tall statue of tribal icon Birsa Munda at the Birsa Munda Memorial

Park cum Freedom Fighter Museum situated in the Old Central Jail, where he breathed his last on June 9, 1900.

"Bhagwan Birsa Munda Smriti Udyaan and Museum has been built in the same old Central Jail of Ranchi where Bhagwan Birsa Munda sacrificed his life. This museum displays the struggle of the tribals to protect water, forest, land rights and their culture."

"It shows the sacrifice of Bhagwan Birsa for the nation. The life of Dharti Aaba Bhagwan Birsa, the pioneer of Uplagaan, is a source of continuous inspiration," Birla posted on X.

Jharkhand Assembly Speaker Rabindra Nath Mahato and Seth welcomed Birla upon his arrival at Ranchi's Birsa Munda Airport.

"I salute the land of Birsa Munda. This is the land of valour, tribal culture, values and traditions. Jharkhand is progressing on the path of modern development while preserving the culture of its tribal communities. This land is an inspiration for all of us," Birla told reporters at the airport.

"Later in the day, the Lok Sabha speaker is scheduled to participate in the Nagrik Abhinandan Samaroh, organised by various societies at Swarna Bhoomi, Dangratoli, at 5 pm. Nearly 156 organisations, including social and religious groups, will welcome him," Seth said.

Birla is scheduled to return to New Delhi on Monday. (PTI)

Andhra CM seeks Defence Minister's support to transform state into aerospace, defence industries hub

AMARAVATI/NEW DELHI, May 25:

Andhra Pradesh Chief Minister N Chandrababu Naidu sought Defence Minister Rajnath Singh's support to transform the state into an aerospace, defence industries hub. Naidu, during his recent meeting with Rajnath Singh, gave a wish list of half a dozen projects, requesting him to mobilise defence public sector undertakings (DPSU) investments and set up an air force station.

Similar to Uttar Pradesh and Tamil Nadu defence corridors, the Chief Minister also requested Singh to notify five hubs with the potential to develop into aerospace and defence industries.

"Request formal recognition for the hubs by the Central government to promote investments," a press release issued on Sunday, quotes the CM as saying.

The five hubs proposed by him include Jaggaiahpet — Donakonda Hub (6,000 acres), Lepakshi — Madakasira Hub (10,000 acres), Visakhapatnam — Anakapalli Hub (3,000 acres), Kurnool — Orvakal Hub (4,000 acres) and Tirupati as

the fifth hub.

According to Naidu, Jaggaiahpet — Donakonda hub is suited for missile and ammunition production, Lepakshi — Madakasira Hub for civil and military aircraft and electronics manufacturing, Visakhapatnam — Anakapalli Hub for naval equipment production and weapons testing.

Likewise, he noted that Kurnool Orvakal Hub is well suited for military drones, robotics and advanced defence component manufacturing, while Tirupati Hub is apt for research and development (R&D) in advance defence innovations. Naidu also requested the establishment of a DRDO Industry-Academia Centre of Excellence at IIT Tirupati.

Similarly, he sought the Defence Ministry's intervention to develop a common storage policy for ammunition. As the current defence manufacturing regulations require large land banks, at least 1,000 acres per project, the TDP supreme called for a structured common storage area framework for enabling efficient land usage. (PTI)

It is also known as 'Kurma Pitha' as the temple premises resemble 'Kurma' or turtle Tripura's rare Bostami turtles facing extinction, govt launches study

AGARTALA, May 25: The soft-shell Bostami turtles, an endangered species found in a lake surrounding the Tripureswari Temple in Tripura's Gomati district, are facing extinction, officials said.

The International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN) had classified the specimen as extinct in the wild, they said.

The 15th-century temple, constructed by King Dhanyamanikya in Udaipur, around 55 km from Agartala, is considered to be one of the holiest Hindu shrines in the country, and it is among the 51 'Shakti Peeths'.

It is also known as 'Kurma Pitha' as the temple premises resemble 'Kurma' or turtle.

The state government has sanctioned funds for a year-long study on Bostami turtles to be conducted by the Turtle Survival Alliance Foundation.

Gomati District Magistrate Tarit Kanti Chakma said the study is a priority for both the forest department and the district administration.

District Forest Officer (DFO) H Vignesh said a meeting in this connection was held recently between the DM and forest officials.

"A comprehensive study will be undertaken by the Turtle Survival Alliance Foundation, an Uttar Pradesh-based organisation, to determine the current population and its problems. Hatching generally occurs with the onset of monsoon. Accurate population data is lacking due to the absence of scientific studies," Vignesh told PTI.

These turtles are considered a living relic of biodiversity and have symbolic significance in religious traditions, he said.



gious traditions, he said.

Spread over 6.4 acres, the Kalyan Sagar Lake had been a natural habitat of the turtles. However, around two decades ago, the temple committee cemented the banks of the lake, which led to the death of several turtles, officials of the state fisheries department said.

According to experts, the construction of the embankments increased the mortality of the turtles, disrupting their natural habitat and places for laying eggs.

"As an amphibian, it is extremely essential for the turtle to have sandy exposure, which is not available in the lake after the construction of walls around the waterbody," said Mrinal Kanti Dutta, a former professor of Central Fisheries College in Lembucherra.

Jyoti Prakash Roy Chowdhury, an environmentalist and former member of the state's Wildlife Board, said the turtles faced problems basking on the banks, as the embankments were cemented.

"One side of the embankment needs to be dismantled and land

near the lake acquired so that the turtles could comfortably lay eggs," Roy Chowdhury told PTI.

Sources in the fisheries department said shifting of the animals from the pond is impossible due to the religious beliefs of the locals.

A population of these turtles was identified in the 'kachapukur' (pond) on Nilachal hill, next to the Kamakhya temple in Guwahati, Roy Chowdhury said.

These turtles were traditionally believed to be nearly extinct and only available in a pond of the shrine of Hazrat Bayezid Bostami in Chittagong, where there are around 150 of them.

"It has been found that at least one wild population still exists in the Jia Bhoroli River, a tributary of the Brahmaputra in Assam," Roy Chowdhury said. He also said that there may be some genetic problems, as breeding is taking place within a small community in lakes or ponds. "Therefore, exchange of population and breeding among the new communities is needed to avoid any genetic issues," he added. (PTI)

Nagaland seeks policy reforms in PMMSY guidelines

HT Correspondent

DIMAPUR, May 25: The Nagaland government has sought policy reforms in Pradhan Mantri Matsya Sampada Yojana (PMMSY) guidelines, saying the current funding of ₹ 8.40 lakh per hectare under PMMSY is outdated and insufficient compared to the latest Nagaland public works department schedule of rates pegged at ₹ 25 lakh per hectare.

Attending the fisheries secretaries conference 2025 and national workshop on harnessing technology and innovation in aquaculture in New Delhi on Friday, Nagaland commissioner and secretary for law & justice, fisheries & aquatic resources Y Kikheto Sema raised key concerns and recommendations to be addressed in the upcoming guidelines of the PMMSY, an official statement said on Saturday.

Speaking on issues specific to the north eastern region and Nagaland, he called for urgent revision of cost norms. Highlighting the region's vulnerability to natural disasters like landslides and floods, Sema advocated reintroduction of provisions for the renovation and reclamation of old ponds and water bodies, which were part of earlier schemes but are missing under the current PMMSY framework.

He urged the Union government to adopt an integrated cluster approach for agricultural and allied sectors to improve productivity, marketability, and promote agro-aqua-eco-tourism in rural areas. He also stressed the need to include administrative and contingency costs for effective monitoring, a feature common in other central flagship programmes but currently lacking in PMMSY.

A major point of contention raised was the funding pattern under the scheme. With the existing 60:40 ratio (central:state), many small and marginal fish farmers in the region are unable to contribute their share.

Sema proposed a more viable model of 90:10 or 80:20, as applied in other schemes for the Northeast and hilly states.

Calling attention to infrastructure, he requested setting up of a modern fish market in Dimapur, equipped with hygienic and state-of-the-art facilities, citing the current markets' unorganised and unhygienic conditions. Sema appealed to the Centre to direct banks and financial institutions to actively support farmers, entrepreneurs, and cooperatives under PMMSY, noting hesitation from banks to finance fishery-based initiatives.

Responding to the submissions, Union secretary for fisheries Abhilash Likhi assured that all concerns raised will be taken into consideration while finalising the new PMMSY guidelines.

RAI hosts 3rd North East Retail Summit in Guwahati to bolster regional retail growth

HT Bureau

GUWAHATI, May 25: The Retailers Association of India (RAI) on Sunday successfully hosted the 3rd North East Retail Summit (NERS) 2025 in Guwahati, reaffirming its focus on strengthening the retail ecosystem in India's North-Eastern states.

The event brought together retail professionals, industry leaders, and entrepreneurs from across the region to discuss challenges, explore opportunities, and foster collaboration within the sector.

According to an official statement, the summit served as a dynamic platform for strategic dialogue and innovation, aiming to unlock the vast retail potential of the seven North-Eastern states—Arunachal Pradesh, Assam, Nagaland, Manipur, Meghalaya, Tripura, and Mizoram.

Kumar Rajagopalan, CEO of RAI, highlighted the unique retail landscape of the re-

gion, describing it as a promising yet logistically complex market.

"Consumers here are well-informed, multilingual, and open to global trends, making this a vibrant market. While infrastructure and political factors pose challenges, the region presents significant opportunities for employment generation and retail expansion," he said.

The summit featured a diverse line-up of expert speakers who addressed a range of topics, including "Marketing That Works: Tools, Tactics, and Trust," "Business Strategy to Drive Real Outcomes," and "Local and Thriving – What Retail in the Northeast Looks Like Today."

Prominent regional retail leaders in attendance included Vikram Bothra (Chandan Retail/Askaran Binjraj), Kunal Mordani (Tanishkaa Retails), Raja Gohain (MG Solutions/Times Square), Manish Jain (Gang-

Amid bus row, Meitei group COCOMI to meet Home Ministry officials tomorrow

Concerns raised over the use of 'force' by the security personnel on 'unarmed people' demonstrating over the incident in Imphal

IMPHAL, May 25: A seven-member delegation of COCOMI, an umbrella body of Meitei groups, will meet Union Home Ministry officials in New Delhi on Tuesday and discuss the present situation in Manipur, particularly the row over hiding the state's name on a government bus in Gwaltaibi, its convenor Khuraijam Athouba said.

He said the agenda for the meeting includes the demand for a public apology from Governor Ajay Kumar Bhalla over the Gwaltaibi incident, and the removal of the chief secretary, DGP, and security advisor.

"The central government and COCOMI have been communicating. The Ministry of Home Affairs has extended an invitation to COCOMI (Coordinating Committee on Manipur Integrity) for an exclusive meeting. The meeting is scheduled on Tuesday," Athouba said.

"Our aim is to push forward the pending political and security processes regarding the prolonged crisis. However, the agenda has now expanded in light of the recent Gwaltaibi incident and the resulting public unrest," he added.

Reiterating the demand for resignation or transfer of the top three officers, he claimed that they are "viewed as incompetent and responsible for making anti-state de-



cisions which have added to the deteriorating situation".

It was alleged that security forces had stopped a state-run bus, on which journalists were being taken by the government to cover the Shirui Lily festival in Ukhrul district on May 20, near the Gwaltaibichokpost and forced the Directorate of Information and Public Relations (DIPR) staffers to cover the state's name written on the windshield with a white

paper.

"The Gwaltaibi incident has been further aggravated by the continued inaction and ignorance of the governor and state administrators under the President's Rule," Athouba alleged.

He also raised concerns over the use of "force" by the security personnel on "unarmed people" demonstrating over the incident in Imphal.

"The deployment of such ag-

gressive crowd control measures against unarmed civilians, many of whom were elderly women, is deeply concerning and unbecoming of a democratic and sensitive administration... The injury of several women protesters is unacceptable," he said.

A scuffle broke out between protesters and security forces earlier in the day while they were on the way to gherao the Raj Bhavan over the Gwaltaibi incident. (PTI)

Tripura DGP stresses community policing to bolster Law and Order

HT Correspondent

AGARTALA, May 25: Tripura's newly appointed Director General of Police (DGP), Anurag, has reaffirmed the state police's commitment to strengthening law and order through active community participation. He also highlighted the significant strides being made in Tripura's ongoing campaign against drug abuse.

DGP Anurag made these remarks during his first official visit to Unakoti district after taking charge. During the visit, he chaired a high-level review meeting with senior police officials to evaluate the prevailing law and order situation and chalk out future strategies.

Present at the meeting were Sub-Divisional Police Officers (SDPOs), Officers-in-Charge (OCs) of various police stations, and senior officials from other security agencies. Also in attendance were DIG (Northern Range) Rati Ranjan Debnath and SP Avinash Rai, who supervises police operations in both North Tripura and Unakoti districts. "This is my first visit to Unakoti as DGP. I have been here before as ADG (Law and Order) and DG (Intelligence). The police here are performing well, and I am pleased to report that the crime rate in this region has decreased by 24% so far this year," Anurag noted.

He said the meeting included de-

tailed discussions on strengthening coordination and public engagement. "Our focus is on building closer ties with the community. Community policing is the way forward. We will direct more attention and resources to areas where challenges still persist," he added.

Emphasizing the need for public cooperation, the DGP said, "A peaceful environment can only be achieved through mutual trust and collaboration. We are committed to Chief Minister Manik Saha's vision of a drug-free Tripura. Our efforts are yielding results, and we will continue to strengthen our initiatives for the well-being of all citizens."

Protesters scuffle with security forces near Manipur Raj Bhavan

IMPHAL, May 25: A scuffle broke out between protesters and security forces on Sunday while they were on their way to gherao the Raj Bhavan here against the removal of the state's name from a government bus.

The protesters responding to a call by COCOMI (Coordinating Committee on Manipur Integrity) to stage mass agitation gathered at Khwairamband and took out a rally for some 500 metres before they were stopped by security forces. They were demanding an apology from Governor Ajay Kumar Bhalla over an alleged insult to Manipur's identity.

Security forces fired several rounds of tear gas shells to disperse the protesters in front of Kangla Gate, some 150 metres from Raj Bhavan gate.

Five protesters have been admitted to hospital with injuries, a hospital official said.

One protester told reporters, "The governor continues to disregard the sentiments of the people by his silence. He and his administration has completely humiliated the state's historical and cultural legacy all the while administering the state. The inquiry com-

mission set up by the government to probe the incident is not enough and does not mention anything about penalising those who were involved."

The protest follows outrage over a reported directive to remove "Manipur" from Manipur State Transport bus with journalists on board on May 20 en route to the Shirui Festival in Ukhrul district.

COCOMI has announced statewide agitation and demanded the resignation of the Chief Secretary, DGP, and Security Advisor.

The Manipur government on Wednesday ordered a probe into the allegations that security personnel forced to cover the state's name on a bus taking journalists to the Shirui Lily festival.

It was alleged that security forces had stopped the state-run bus, on which journalists were being taken by the government to cover the tourism festival in Ukhrul district on Tuesday, and forced the Directorate of Information and Public Relations (DIPR) staffers to cover the state's name written on the windshield with a white paper. (PTI)

RPF/NFR steps up crackdown on illegal cross-border infiltration

HT Bureau

GUWAHATI, May 25: The Railway Protection Force (RPF) of Northeast Frontier Railway (NFR) has intensified its vigilance against illegal cross-border infiltration through the railway network, apprehending several Bangladeshi nationals and their Indian handlers over the past two months.

According to an official statement, the RPF, in coordination with central and state security agencies, carried out a series of operations in April and May 2025 to prevent the railway system from being misused by illegal migrants and human traffickers.

Between May 1 and May 16, 2025, the RPF apprehended six Bangladeshi nationals along with six Indian agents in multiple operations. The most notable action occurred on May 16, when personnel from RPF/Agartala, along with the Subsidiary Intelligence Bureau (SIB)/Badarpur and the Border Security Force's Anti-Human Trafficking Unit (BSF/AHTU), detained two Bangladeshi nationals—one male and one female—along with four Indian agents at Agartala railway station.

Additional arrests were made at Radhikapur and Agartala stations on different dates, where four more Bangladeshi nationals and two Indian handlers were taken into custody. All individuals were handed over to the Government Railway Police (GRP) for legal action under relevant provisions of the Railway Act. In a series of earlier operations in April 2025, the RPF/NFR had apprehended 32 Bangladeshi nationals and one Indian agent at railway stations in Agartala, Bhangra, Dharmanagar, and Karimganj.

The RPF has reaffirmed its commitment to securing railway premises from being exploited as transit points for illegal activities.

It continues to work in close coordination with state police forces and central agencies, including the BSF, to prevent cross-border infiltration and trafficking. Officials stated that operations in vulnerable regions will be further intensified to uphold national security and ensure passenger safety.

MSF organises human chain extending solidarity to Manipur's unity

IMPHAL, May 25: The Manipuri Students' Federation (MSF) organized a 'human chain' protest along National Highway 150 (Tiddim Road) on Saturday under the banner "ManipurMuthatpaYaro!" (Do Not Obliterate Manipur).

The protest, aimed at demonstrating unity and resistance against perceived threats to Manipur's identity, saw participation from students of various educational institutions, local residents, and youths. The 'human chain' stretched approximately 3.5 kilometers, from ChangangeiUcheekon near Bir Tikendrajit International Airport to Kwakeithel, along NH-150 (Tiddim Road) in Imphal West district.

Organizers described the protest as a peaceful assertion of the people's commitment to safeguarding Manipur's cultural and political identity.

Speaking to media at the protest site, AMUCO general secretary PratabLeishangthem referred to a recent incident of the reported directive by security forces to a Manipur State Transport (MST) bus to remove the word "Manipur" from its signage while ferrying a media team to Ukhrul for the inauguration of the 5th Shirui Lily Festival on May 20 at Gwaltaibi.

"We should not solely blame the central forces involved in the Gwaltaibi incident. The real accountability lies with the higher authorities namely the Governor, the Chief Secretary, the Security Advisor, and the Director General of Police. Their resignations are essential to de-escalate the growing tension, and the Central government must recognize the gravity of the matter," Pratab asserted.

MSF president Hijam Roshan alleged that the cen-



tral government was attempting to implement divisive policies aimed at sowing discord among Manipur's communities. "The students of Manipur will take various initiatives to protect our state. The May 20 incident, where central forces allegedly ordered the removal of 'Manipur' from an MST bus signage, is an

example of this divisive policy aimed at obliterating Manipur," he said.

In response to the incident, the Coordinating Committee on Manipur Integrity (COCOMI), an apex civil society body, had called a 48-hour general strike that paralyzed normal life in Imphal East, Imphal West, Thoubal, and Kakching districts. The COCOMI demanded an official apology from the Governor and the resignation of the Security Advisor, the Chief Secretary, and the Director General of Police, holding them responsible for the controversy.

Pratab further noted that various civil and local bodies have since organized multiple forms of protest, including torch rallies and 'human chains'. He called on the central government to abandon divisive strategies that risk creating communal enmity. (NNN)



AGARTALA, May 25: The Tripura government has prepared a strategic roadmap to build a "future-ready" state, identifying key enablers to boost per capita income and support a robust growth rate over the next two decades, Chief Minister Manik Saha said.

Speaking at the 10th NITI Aayog Governing Council meeting in Delhi on Saturday, he said an elaborate planning exercise was carried out over the past year, including consultations with various stakeholders like the Ministry of DONER, academic institutions, industry leaders and government officials.

"We have identified nine key enablers that will support a robust 12 per cent growth per year over the next two decades. Tripura has a strong agriculture base, high literacy, rich tourism assets, abundant natural resources, a forest-based economy, improved infrastructure and is an energy-surplus state," Saha said.

Saha said the state aims to increase its per capita income from the current USD 2,300 to USD 23,000 by 2047 by focusing on sectors such as medical wellness, eco-tourism, IT, knowledge economy, resilient agriculture, cultural heritage and sports.

The CM also said the state government has been developing 20 industrial estates.

"We have the Tripura Industrial Investment Policy 2024 to promote manufacturing and services. We have implemented all the 387 business reforms as mandated under the Business Reforms Action Plan 2024," he said.

Tripura is receiving substantial investments in various sectors including rubber, bamboo processing, healthcare, education, data centers, hospitality, business, and commerce, Saha asserted.

Highlighting the growth in the MSME segment, he said the number of micro, small and medium enterprises in the state has touched 86,117.

"The state has a strong base of 60,318 Self-Help Groups with 5,49,559 members and 94,723 'Lakshpatidids'," the chief minister said.

Saha said the northeastern state is committed to a comprehensive strategy for harnessing the potential of green energy, with a target of achieving 90 per cent renewable energy by 2047.

"Our approach emphasises promotion of solar energy projects through streamlined land allotment processes, viability gap funding, and increased rooftop solar adoption across residential, government and commercial sectors," he added. (PTI)

ALIA BHATT WEARS GUCCI SAREE AT CLOSING CEREMONY OF CANNES FILM FESTIVAL

CANNES, May 25: Bollywood star Alia Bhatt turned heads at the 2025 Cannes Film Festival's red carpet, attending the movie gala's closing ceremony in a saree by global fashion brand Gucci.

The 2025 edition of the film festival came to a close on Saturday evening and saw the participation of several international celebrities, including Jane Fonda, Viola Davis, Elle Fanning, jury head Juliette Binoche and Cate Blanchett.

Alia, who made her second appearance at the Cannes red carpet, shared her photos on Instagram.

"Happy, sunny day at #Cannes2025 @lorealparis @gucci," the actor, who is Gucci's global brand ambassador, wrote in the caption.

The saree, touted to be the first-ever from the fashion label, was a modern, high-fashion take on traditional Indian attire. Made from sheer fabric, it features a reticulate pattern with silver se-

quins and Swarovski crystals throughout.

The blouse was a minimal bralette style, complementing the heavily embellished saree.

Earlier on Saturday, Alia wore another outfit by Gucci. She wore a bright yellow custom-made three-piece crepe wool skirt suit.

Alia made Cannes red carpet debut on Friday, wearing an off-shoulder fishtail gown from Schiaparelli haute couture.

The actor is also the global ambassador for beauty brand L'Oréal Paris, which is celebrated its 28th anniversary at the gala. (PTI)

SEASON THREE OF 'THE GREAT INDIAN KAPIL SHOW' TO RELEASE ON JUNE 21 ON NETFLIX



MUMBAI, May 25: The third season of comedian Kapil Sharma's celebrity chat show "The Great Indian Kapil Show" will premiere on June 21 on Netflix, the streaming platform announced on Saturday.

The show kickstarted with its first season in June 2024, and returned with its sophomore chapter in the same year in September.

"This time, the zany family and celebrity guests will be joined by some truly special additions - the superfans," the streamer said in a statement.

Sharma said he is thrilled about the new season of "The Great Indian Kapil Show" and teased that it will feature guests and something special for the fans. "Coming back for another season on Netflix truly feels like coming home to family — and this time, the family's only getting bigger! Every season, we've brought together an exciting mix of guests from all walks of life to keep the laughs rolling and the energy fresh. We have aimed at showcasing diverse conversations about careers, life choices, family, love, and used comedy as the medium to reach everyone," the comedian said. "As a thank you for the incredible love we've received, we're turning the spotlight on

our superfans. Their stories, their quirks, their talent — they never fail to amaze us. Toh is baar socha kyu na apne fans ko show ka ek bohot hi mazeddar hissa bana de," he added.

Tanya Bami, Series Head, Netflix India said "The Great Indian Kapil Show" is returning to capture the screen and hearts of audiences.

"We cannot wait to witness the excitement and the varied talent our audiences will bring on screen. So gear up every Saturday at 8:00PM Kapil and his delightful team are set to make your family time, the most fun time of the week," Bami said.

Season one of "The Great Indian Kapil Show" featured several celebrities including Aamir Khan, Ranbir Kapoor, Vicky Kaushal, Kartik Aaryan, Diljit Dosanjh, cricketer Rohit Sharma and international singer Ed Sheeran across episodes.

The second season saw guests such as Alia Bhatt, filmmaker Karan Johar, Jr NTR, Saif Ali Khan, Janhvi Kapoor, and members from the T20 World Cup-winning cricket team among others.

"The Great Indian Kapil Show" also features Sunil Grover, Krushna Abhishek, Kiku Sharda and Archana Puran Singh. (PTI)

Prime Video reality series 'The Traitors' to premiere on June 12



NEW DELHI, May 25: Prime Video on Friday announced that its original unscripted show "The Traitors", hosted by filmmaker Karan Johar, will premiere on the streamer on June 12.

The IDTV's BAFTA and Emmy award-winning global format, "The Traitors", a collaboration with All3Media International and produced by BBC Studios India Productions, features 20 celebrities from various spheres, who come together in this ultimate test of trust and betrayal, as they compete to win a significant cash prize and the coveted title.

After its premiere on June 12, new episodes of the show will release every Thursday.

"Prime Video has consistently been home to some of the biggest and most beloved scripted shows in the country. Now, we're making a bold leap as we scale our Unscripted content slate with our biggest reality series yet—The Traitors," said Nikhil Madhok, Head of Originals, Prime Video India.

"...We're thrilled to have Karan Johar as the host—who better to stoke the fire in this volatile mix of 20 celebrities, each vying for a massive cash prize and the title of ultimate winner! The Traitors promises immersive entertainment and next-level mind games that are sure to captivate our wide gamut of audiences." Sabrina Duguet, EVP APAC at All3Media International, said, "India is one of the most dynamic and exciting markets in the world, with an audience base that's highly receptive to reality shows. The Indian adaptation of The Traitors offers this audience high calibre celebrities and intense drama, all wrapped up in a thriller-esque gameplay."

Neha Khurana, Executive Producer for The Traitors, BBC Studios India Productions, said, "With an all-celebrity cast and jaw-dropping twists, The Traitors is an unmissable treat for fans of high-stakes reality entertainment." (PTI)

SALMAN KHAN PAYS TRIBUTE TO 'JAI HO' CO-STAR MUKUL DEV

NEW DELHI, May 25: Superstar Salman Khan has condoled the death of actor Mukul Dev, his co-star from the 2014 movie "Jai Ho".

Dev, known for his roles in films such as "Son of Sardaar", "Yamla Pagla Deewana" and "R... Rajkumar", passed away on Friday night in New Delhi due to ailing health, said his brother Rahul Dev. The actor's last rites were performed in the national capital on Saturday.

In a post on Instagram Stories, Salman shared a throwback photo of Dev from the sets of "Jai Ho" and captioned it, "Miss you my dear brother Mukul. Rest In Peace." Actors Farhan Akhtar and Varun Dhawan also paid tributes to Dev on their respective Instagram pages. "Saddened to hear about the untimely passing of Mukul Dev. Every

time our paths crossed over the last 2 decades, he'd meet with genuine warmth and a smile. Rest in peace brother. Deepest condolences to his family," Farhan wrote alongside an old Dhawan shared a video of the song "Jaadu Bhari Aankhein" from Dev's debut movie "Dastak". "Rip Mukul Dev. This one's for you," he wrote on his Instagram Stories. "Dastak", a psychological thriller film from filmmaker Mahesh Bhatt, featured Dev opposite another newcomer, 1994 Miss Universe crown winner Sushmita Sen.Dev was also known for co-writing filmmaker Hansal Mehta's critically-acclaimed 2017 movie "Omerta", starring Rajkumar Rao. (PTI)

FILMMAKER HANSAL MEHTA PAYS TRIBUTE TO ACTOR MUKUL DEV

MUMBAI, May 25: Filmmaker Hansal Mehta on Sunday posted an emotional tribute for his friend Mukul Dev, remembering him as a "devastatingly handsome" artist who gave him the story for the 2017 critical hit "Omerta". Dev, best known for his roles in films such as "Son of Sardaar", "Yamla Pagla Deewana" and "Jai Ho", passed away on Friday night in New Delhi due to ailing health, said his brother Rahul Dev. The actor's last rites were performed in the national capital on Saturday. In a heartfelt Instagram post, Mehta wrote, "As the weight of this loss settles in, I realise there's still so much more I want to say about my friend Mukul." "I will miss

Mukul deeply. His booming laughter at our inside jokes, his unmatched gift for storytelling, that unmistakable voice... He acted in two of my unreleased films and a TV show—somehow in the shadows of it all, we became very close. We bonded over booze, broken hearts, and the foolish hope that things would one day make sense. For years, we were gym buddies, pushing each other through reps and regrets," he added. Describing Dev as someone whose charm could "light up a stadium", Mehta said he had all the makings of a successful film star. A former model, Dev made his acting debut with the 1996 movie "Dastak" opposite another newcomer, 1994 Miss Universe crown winner Sushmita Sen. "He had what most people only dream of: a dream launch, big directors, prominent co-stars." (PTI)

When Manoj Kumar stepped in to save 'Lag Ja Gale' from rejection

NEW DELHI, May 25: "Lag Ja Gale", that plaintive ode to love sung by Lata Mangeshkar in the 1964 classic "Woh Kaun Thi", almost didn't see the light of day. Quite simply, director Raj Khosla didn't like the track and it took composer Madan Mohan to first convince the film's star Manoj Kumar who then persuaded the filmmaker that the song was finally included.

Once he heard the song again, Khosla picked up his shoe to hit himself, according to "Raj Khosla: The Authorized Biography", released on May 20 ahead of the filmmaker's 100th birth anniversary on May 31.

"I got a call from Madan Mohan one day. 'Raj Khosla has lost his mind,' Madan said. 'Ek gaana sunaya. Usko pasand nahi aaya. You come and handle this please,'" the book quotes Kumar as saying.

However, Kumar, who hadn't heard the song yet, was reluctant to intervene, reasoning that it was ultimately "Khosla's film", and opted to speak with producer N N Sippy about the matter.

"There were only a few days left for the shoot and the song was yet to be finalized. What was to be done? Sippy concurred with the music director. He, too, wanted Manoj Kumar to approach Raj Khosla and sort this out," recounts the book by author Ambarish Roy-

choudhury in association with Khosla's daughters Anita Khosla and Uma Khosla Kapur. Kumar agreed to intervene when the composer played the song for him.

Kumar, on whom the song was eventually pictured alongside actor Sadhana Shivdasani, described the piece of music as a "brilliant composition" and was amazed that Khosla who joined the film industry with the dream of becoming a playback singer and someone with keen appreciation of good music didn't like the song, the book reads.

Later, after persistent urging from Kumar, Khosla finally agreed albeit reluctantly to listen to the song, but only after telling him that it is "really bad".

However, upon hearing it again, the late filmmaker was left "astonished" and admitted it was one of the best tunes he had ever come across.

"And this was a song he was about to let go? 'How incredibly stupid of me', Khosla exclaimed. According to Kumar, Raj even picked up his own shoe to hit himself," reads the book.

Mangeshkar had listed "Lag Ja Gale" as one of her six favourites. It has over 277 million views on YouTube.

The soul-stirring melody, as noted in the book and explained by music composer Sanjeev Kohli, Mohan's son, was a particularly challenging piece to exe-



cute, even for the legendary Mangeshkar due to the intricate 'murkis' and nuanced variations incorporated by both Mohan and Lata herself, which demanded exceptional vocal finesse.

When she did it right, even Mohan got emotional and hugged the singer.

"When we recorded the song, everybody was happy with it. Raj Khosla loved it. All of us were satisfied. Once the recording was over, Madan bhaiyya aaye aur mujhe gale laga kar rone lage. The song... created history," Mangeshkar is quoted as saying in the book.

Six decades after its release, the song has been repurposed by filmmakers variously in their films, including AR Murugadoss in the recently out Salman Khan-Rashmika Mandanna starrer "Sikandar". Karan Johar in "Ae Dil Hai Mushkil" and "Bombay Talkies", and Tigraanshu Dhulia for the "Saheb, Biwi aur Gangster" franchise.

In a career spanning three decades and 27 films, Khosla directed several hits, including "CID", "Dostana", "Do Raaste", "Do Badan" and "Mera Saaya".

The filmmaker, who trained under legendary actor-director Guru Dutt, was also credited for shooting musical sequences with dexterity. These include greats such as "Lag jaa gale", "Mera saaya saath hoga", "Jaane kya baat hai", "Hai apna dil toh awara" and "Yeh hai Bombay meri jaan".

"Raj Khosla: The Authorised Biography", published by Hachette India and priced at ₹799, is available for purchase online and offline stores. (PTI)

Gukesh is confident of meeting expectations

STAVANGER (NORWAY), May 25: Star Indian chess player D Gukesh is embracing the "new level" of competition where he is confident of handling the challenges and "meeting the expectations". Gukesh became the youngest chess world champion when he defeated Ding Liren of China last year in Singapore at just 18 years of age.

Set to compete in the elite Norway Chess tournament beginning on Monday, the Chennai youngster said the only thing he needed to gain more success was to keep random thoughts at bay and just concentrate on the game.

"It is a new level (for me). But when I see it as a challenge to prove to myself that I can handle this, even though the expectations are high, I can meet them if I keep working hard and doing my best," said the Indian Grandmaster.

He said that playing five hours of classical chess can make one's mind wander, but the key to winning those tiring games is to not lose focus. "In a classical game, you end up playing five hours and those are the times you cannot fully be thinking about the game. I think there are random thoughts that come to our mind but the important thing is to stay in the game and come back to those thoughts later.

"This is the purpose of the note that you're making. And you can't afford to allow weak moments," said Gukesh, who along with Arjun Erigaisi will compete against the likes of world No.1 Magnus Carlsen and No.2 Hikaru Nakamura in the USD USD 1,62,681 tournament, once termed as "the Wimbledon of Chess" by the legendary Garry Kasparov.

The 12-day tournament, which concludes on June 6, will see Gukesh compete against Carlsen in his own backyard, which will be the highlight of the event given that the Indian is the world champion and the Norwegian is the world No. 1.

This will be the first time since being crowned world champion that the 18-year-old will face off against Carlsen in the classical format. (PTI)

10th Kamrup District Taekwondo C'ship Begins

HT Bureau GUWAHATI, May 25: The 10th Kamrup District Taekwondo Championship commenced on Sunday with a three-day programme at the Behalongni Baranagar playground in North Guwahati. More than 500 athletes from various parts of Kamrup district are participating in the event.

The opening ceremony was inaugurated by noted social workers Hiranya Bora and Niranjan Bora, while Pranjan Burhagohain, Secretary of the Kamrup District Taekwondo Association, presided over the event. Competitions will

THE TITANS ARE STILL ON TOP OF THE TABLE

Brevis, Conway fire CSK to 83-run win, dent GT's hopes of a top-2 finish



AHMEDABAD, May 25: Gujarat Titans' hopes of a top-two finish in the IPL suffered a massive dent when they went down by 83 runs to Chennai Super Kings, who were powered by fifty-makers Devon Conway and Dewald Brevis, here Sunday.

The Titans have 18 points after a full set of 14 league matches and are still on top of the table despite the Net Run Rate taking a nose dive after this big defeat.

To maintain their position inside the top two, GT now require Royal Challengers Bengaluru (17 points) to go down to Lucknow Super Giants in their final league match. It's important because either Mumbai Indians (16) or Punjab Kings (17 points) will overtake GT with a win from their face-off.

Cutting back to the match, once asked to chase a stiff 231, the Titans floundered badly losing in-form skipper Shubman Gill, Jos Buttler and Sherfane Rutherford in the Power Play passage itself with just 35 runs on the board.

The Gujarat side was bowled out for 147 in 18.3 overs.

Pacer Anshul Kamboj did the early damage, claiming the wickets of Gill and Rutherford.

Sai Sudharsan (41, 28b), the latest entrant into the India Test squad, and his Tamil Nadu teammate M Shahrul Khan (19) added 55 runs for the fourth wicket to infuse some interest into the chase.

But left-arm spinner Ravindra Jadeja returned for his second spell to dismiss both Sudharsan and Shahrul in the space of four balls in the 11th over, and the match effectively ended at that point. CSK finished their IPL 2025 engagements at the bottom of the pile with eight points from 14 matches, the five-time champions' worst ever finish in the 10-team league.

Earlier, seasoned Conway and promising Brevis produced fifties of contrasting character, laying the foundation for Chennai Super Kings' healthy 230 for five.

Once the Super Kings elected

to bat on a super hot afternoon, Conway and Brevis led the charge with a 52 off 35 balls, and a 23-ball 57 on a smooth pitch.

But Conway's knock was put to shade a bit by cameos by Ayush Mhatre (34, 17b) and Urvil Patel (37, 19b), who made runs at a respective strike rate of 200 and 194, ensured runs came at a fast clip for CSK.

The CSK raced out of the pad-dock, making 44 in just 3.4 overs, courtesy Mhatre's brutal assault on pacer Arshad Khan.

Mhatre carved Arshad for 2, 6, 6, 4, 4, 6 in the second over to milk 28 runs and Chennai rarely let that momentum slip.

Mhatre, who was recently appointed as the India U19 skipper, soon fell to Prasad Krishna, sky-king him to Mohammed Siraj in the deep.

But Urvil continued the aggressive ways, while adding 63 runs for the second wicket with Conway.

The highlight of his innings was a pick-up shot he played

against veteran spinner Rashid Khan that sailed over his head for a six.

It's one thing to play that shot against pacers, but to impart timing and power to it against a spinner is totally another thing.

However, Urvil perished to left-arm spinner Sai Kishore immediately after hammering him for a six. On the other hand, Conway showed a rare moment of aggression, launching Rashid for a six over long-on but was clean bowled in the very next ball.

But Brevis, who smashed India pacer Siraj for 6, 6, 4, justified his 'ABD' tag to perfection, smashing GT bowlers all around the park. The South African played a belligerent knock of his own to raise 74 runs for the entertaining fifth wicket alliance with Jadeja in which the latter contributed just 21 off 18 balls.

It was the CSK's young batters' final innings of this IPL, and it might have given a note of optimism for the management too for the next season. (PTI)

It will be a challenge for Gill to lead India in England, says Pujara



NEW DELHI, May 25: Test veteran Cheteshwar Pujara on Sunday said it will be a challenge for a youngster like Shubman Gill to captain India in tough conditions in England but a big opportunity and confidence booster for him if he achieves success as a leader in the marquee series.

Gill was named new Test captain on Saturday, succeeding Rohit Sharma. The move officially began a new era in the Indian red-ball set-up after the shock retirements of Rohit and Virat Kohli.

Rohit and Kohli announced their Test retirements within a span of one week this month.

"When you go abroad as a captain, whether you are young or matured, it will be challenging. To start off in England, it won't be easy for Shubman but it's a great opportunity for a young player. If he leads well in England it will boost his confidence.

"The reason he has been given the responsibility ahead of Jasprit Bumrah is because we are hearing that Bumrah will not be able to play all five Test matches," Pujara said on Sunday during an online interaction organised by Sony Sports network, the official broadcaster of India's tour of England.

"So if Shubman has been given the responsibility, the team management and selectors are thinking that he could lead the team for a long time."

The 37-year-old Pujara, who is yet to announce Test retirement after last playing for India in June 2023, advised Gill to keep captaincy and his batting separate.

"There is also a lot of responsibility on him as a batter but I'm sure the kind of talent he has he will be successful in England. It will definitely motivate him to perform well. I don't know whether being a captain it will bring the best out of him but as a batter he has always tried to perform well for the team.

"When you are playing as a batter at the highest level you never think about whether you are a captain or a player, you always want to do well for the team."

"You need to keep it separate, when you are batting in the middle, you need to think as batter rather than thinking about captaincy," Pujara said.

Pujara, who has scored 7195 runs from 103 Tests after making India debut in 2010, feels the captaincy responsibility won't affect Gill's batting approach, which is aggressive.

"I don't think his batting approach will change, he has to bat the way he bats. He is an aggressive player, he likes to play his shots and he has to continue playing his shots but at the same time he needs to understand the English conditions and figure out who is the right bowler to take on," he said.

Pujara also justified the reason behind naming Rishabh Pant as vice-captain for the England tour despite the wicketkeeper-batter's poor form of late.

"Bumrah is out of contention for captain or vice-captain's role and that's the reason Pant has been given the vice-captaincy. (PTI)

Rohit, Virat and Ashwin have given us blueprint to win Tests away from home: Gill

MUMBAI, May 25: Rohit Sharma and Virat Kohli had "very contrasting styles" of leadership but the two iconic players along with spinner Ravichandran Ashwin have given the Indian team the "blueprint to win" Test series away from home, says new skipper Shubman Gill.

Gill was on Saturday appointed India's captain in Tests. The first assignment for the 25-year-old is a five-Test series England where he won't have stalwarts like Kohli and Rohit in the line-up.

"(The) guys like Rohit bhai, Virat bhai and Ashwin bhai... they have given us a blueprint on how to tour away from home and win matches and series," Gill said in a video released by the BCCI on Sunday. "Yes, it's one thing to be able to deliver and execute, but because we have that blueprint, we know how to tour away from home and win matches and series," he added.

Gill said while Kohli and Rohit

had contrasting styles of leadership, they were also quite similar in style. "When I was a kid, I was always inspired by the great and the legends of Indian cricket and (I've) been very fortunate to be able to play with so many of them, be it Virat bhai or Rohit bhai," he said.

"Both were very contrasting in terms of their style, but it was very inspiring to see both of them working towards a common goal. You want to be able to win as a captain and your styles can be different, but they both were very different, but they both were very aggressive, always wanting to lead from the front with hunger and passion whereas Rohit bhai was also aggressive. You might not see that in his reaction or expression, but he was also someone who was always very attacking on the field," Gill said. The Indian Test skipper added, "Rohit bhai was someone



was very calm and tactically always very present, and he was very communicative to the players, what he wants from the players, and so these are the qualities that I learnt from."

Often the burden captaincy affects the batting, but Gill said his approach would be to keep both segregated.

"One thing that I learnt was

(that) if I am a batsman and batting out there, I want to be able to make decisions as a batsman and not as a captain," he said.

"If I start thinking about other things, it just puts more pressure on me which is not required because when you are batting out there, you want to be able to take those risks, you want to be able to make decisions that you would

make when you are playing just as a batsman."

He added, "Because that gives you the freedom (and) that is one of the things that I learnt that whenever I am getting out there, I just want to be able to make decisions as a batsman and not really want to think that 'oh I am the captain.'" Gill said it was "overwhelming" to be appointed the Test captain as well as a "big responsibility".

"Definitely (it is) a bit overwhelming," he said.

"As a young kid when anyone starts playing cricket, they want to play for India and not just play cricket for India, but play Test cricket for India for a very long time."

"To be able to get this opportunity is a great honour and like you said, it's a big responsibility. I'm looking forward for this exciting opportunity and I think the upcoming series in England is going to be very exciting one," he said. (PTI)

Shubman Gill joins Team Oakley to rewrite the Rules of Sport Style and Eyewear

HT Bureau GUWAHATI, May 25: Oakley announced Star Indian cricketer Shubman Gill as its next brand ambassador and face of the "Artifacts from the future" campaign in India.

Shubman Gill has rapidly made a name for himself as one of the most promising young talents in world cricket. With his impressive consistency, elegant stroke play, and exceptional composure under pressure, Gill has captivated fans across the globe and established himself as a rising star in all formats of the game. His remarkable journey and

achievements have made him a source of inspiration for India's youth, showcasing the power of determination and excellence.

Expressing his enthusiasm for the partnership, Shubman Gill shared, "I'm very excited to join Oakley, a brand that stands for performance, progression and passion – values that resonate strongly with mine. Oakley has been an integral part of my cricketing journey every time I took to the field. The innovative lens and frames technologies in every Oakley help enhance performance, and I love how unapologetically stylish they are!"

Phanibhushan Chakraborty defies age at 67 in Assam powerlifting showdown

HT Correspondent KHERONI, May 25: At 67, Phanibhushan Chakraborty, a powerlifting icon from the railway town of Lumding, continues to defy age with his unwavering determination and passion for the sport. Having already earned gold, silver, and bronze medals at district, state, national, and international levels, Chakraborty is set to inspire once again at the upcoming 52nd All Assam Inter-District Equipped Powerlifting and 13th All Assam Inter-District Masters Men & Women Competition.

The event, was scheduled for May 18 at the Bhupen Hazarika Auditorium of Mirza College, is being organized by the Kamrup Rural

Powerlifting Association, which is finalizing preparations to ensure a seamless championship. Chakraborty, representing Hojai district's Lumding, will not only compete as an athlete in the men's masters category but also serve as a referee, showcasing his deep commitment to the sport.

Joining him from Hojai district in the men's masters category are Sanjit Chatterjee and Arup Dey. In the women's masters category, Baby Saha, Rita Dey, Majni Begum Dey, and Loni Dutta will proudly represent the district, aiming to make their mark. Chakraborty's journey is a testament to the power of willpower, proving that age is no barrier to achieving greatness.

KOLKATA, May 25: Talismanic India striker Sunil Chhetri on Sunday said that his side cannot wait to make amends of the mistakes they had committed in the goal-less draw against Bangladesh in the 2027 Asian Cup qualifying round contest in March. India were held to a 0-0 draw by lower-ranked Bangladesh in their opening Group C match of the Asian Cup qualifying third round match on March 25 in Shillong, which left head coach Manolo Marquez fuming.

India are up against Hong Kong in their second match – an away game – on June 10 in Kowloon. Chhetri said the match against Hong Kong will be a chance for the team to redeem itself. "The initial feeling after the Bangladesh game was that we let ourselves down, let the country down. After I saw the replays, I



thought we, as a team, could have done so much more. It was a huge opportunity to take the lead in the table, playing Bangladesh at home. We should have done so many things better," Chhetri said.

"Ending up with just a point, I think we players have no one else but ourselves to blame. We didn't turn up the way we should have.

We've talked about it, we've seen the videos, and we can't wait to rectify it," the 40-year-old said in a release from the All India Football Federation (AIFF).

The Indian team is currently training here and will depart for Pathum Thani on May 28 for an away friendly international match against Thailand on June 4.

Angry and disappointed at the result against Bangladesh, Marquez had made it clear that his team needs a lot of improvement if they are to qualify for the continental showpiece.

"We need to improve a lot because I felt that the team was going forward in every FIFA window except the last," Marquez said, alluding to the match against Bangladesh.

"It's true that for the game against Bangladesh, we lost very important starting players. But it's not an excuse for our poor performance in that game," he said.

"We need to be aware that we have a difficult game in Hong Kong. We have to be competitive and try to win and get the three points." India are placed in Group C of the 2027 Asian Cup qualifying third round along with Bangladesh, Hong Kong and Singapore, and only the top team

after six home and away matches qualifies for the continental showpiece. The national camp here began on May 19 and Chhetri, who had come out of international retirement to help India qualify for 2027 Asian Cup, said the head coach has got a bit of time to formulate a plan.

"We players have to make sure that we are in sync as to what the plan is, and go and try and execute it to the best of our ability. But more importantly, the mistake we made against Bangladesh was that we didn't turn up. And all the preparation, the technical aspect put aside, you have to go and show up. "We saw some clips of Hong Kong. We will watch more of them. But I think, right now in the stage that we are, we are thinking more about ourselves and slowly we'll progress into what the opponent is and how they play," Chhetri said. (PTI)

MUMBAI INDIANS FACE PUNJAB KINGS IN BATTLE OF TOP-TWO FINISH AHEAD OF IPL PLAYOFFS

JAIPUR, May 25: Mumbai Indians and Punjab Kings will be determined to give their all in the battle of top-two finish when they face each other in their final league stage fixture of the Indian Premier League here on Monday.

As the four teams -- Gujarat Titans, Royal Challengers Bengaluru, MI and PBKS -- have sealed the IPL playoff spots much earlier than ever before, the remaining league matches will determine the final standings.

With 17 points, PBKS are currently placed second but a defeat to MI will push them to the third or the fourth spot, setting them up for the Eliminator on May 30.

Finishing in top-two seems tougher for PBKS as they not only need a win against a formidable MI outfit but also hope GT (18 points) and RCB (17 points) lose their respective final matches.

Thus, PBKS, who lost their previous game to Delhi Capitals, are in a must-win situation against MI in their push for a top-two finish.

For MI, their superior Net Run Rate among all the four qualifying teams can be beneficial if they beat Punjab Kings and GT and



RCB lose their matches.

Nevertheless, Punjab Kings will look to iron out the flaws particularly in their bowling after they failed to defend a total in excess of 200 against Delhi Capitals on Saturday here.

The venue's short boundaries and batting-friendly wicket could

ensure a high-scoring clash which would test the bowling attacks of both sides, but on this front, the Jasprit Bumrah-led MI have the edge. Bumrah has taken only nine matches to take 16 wickets in this IPL, signalling his return to top form and fitness after a three-month injury layoff, but

others in MI's bowling line-up have also shared the burden equally. The new-ball pair of Trent Boult -- third highest with 19 wickets -- and Deepak Chahar (11) has done extremely well to help keep Bumrah for later stages of a match.

Hardik Pandya has floated well

with spinners Mitchell Santner and Will Jacks, which makes MI's bowling line-up more lethal when compared to Punjab Kings'.

Arshdeep Singh (16), Yuzvendra Chahal (14), who did not play the last game due to a niggle, and Marco Jansen (14) will thus have their task cut out against Mumbai Indians. Suryakumar Yadav (583 runs) and Shreyas Iyer (488) have been the bedrock of their respective batting line-ups and their roles carry greater significance as the IPL approaches its business end. Punjab will also hope their explosive opening pair of Prabhsimran Singh (486) and Priyansh Arya (362) finds a way and sets up a strong platform against a strong MI bowling line-up which has by far been their biggest strength. Rohit Sharma has blown hot and cold and MI will hope that the senior batter finds consistency given he is set to have a new opening partner after this game. South African Ryan Rickelton, Corbin Bosch and England's Jacks are set to join their respective national teams.

MI will also be a little concerned with Tilak Varma's dip in form. He had a high of hitting two consecutive fifties when the team

begin its turnaround but Tilak has three outings of single-digit scores, two did-not-bats and two knocks in 20s in the last seven matches.

The Teams (from):

Mumbai Indians: Hardik Pandya (c), Rohit Sharma, Suryakumar Yadav, Robin Minz (wk), Ryan Rickelton (wk), Shri-jith Krishnan (wk), Bevon Jacobs, Tilak Varma, Naman Dhir, Will Jacks, Mitchell Santner, Raj Angad Bawa, Raghu Sharma, Corbin Bosch, Trent Boult, Karn Sharma, Deepak Chahar, Ashwani Kumar, Reece Topley, VS Penmetsa, Arjun Tendulkar, Mujeeb Ur Rahman, Jasprit Bumrah.

Punjab Kings: Shreyas Iyer (c), Nehal Wadhwa, Vishnu Vinod (wk), Josh Inglis (wk), Harnoor Pannu, Pyla Avinash, Prabhsimran Singh (wk), Shashank Singh, Marcus Stoinis, Harpreet Brar, Marco Jansen, Azmatullah Omarzai, Priyansh Arya, Aaron Hardie, Musheer Khan, Suryansh Shedge, Mitch Owen, Arshdeep Singh, Vysakh Vijaykumar, Yash Thakur, Kuldeep Sen, Xavier Bartlett, Pravin Dubey, Kyle Jamieson.

Match starts at 7:30pm IST. (PTI)

Hazlewood rejoins Royal Challengers Bengaluru ahead of IPL playoffs

LUCKNOW, May 25: Royal Challengers Bengaluru have got a massive boost ahead of the Indian Premier League playoffs with Australia fast bowler Josh Hazlewood re-joining the side two days before their final league match here on Tuesday.

Hazlewood had returned home during the one-week break due to the suspension of the IPL in the wake of India-Pakistan military conflict and was also dealing with a shoulder niggle from which the right-arm pacer has recovered. "It's obviously great to be back. A couple of weeks at home, (I) made the most of the last (as I) went up to Brisbane and bowled quite a few overs," Hazlewood said in a video posted by RCB on Sunday.

"Everything has been good. Hopefully to get the ball rolling again and, yeah, look forward to tomorrow and start the practice," he added.

The 34-year-old was training in Brisbane as a part of Australia's preparations for the World Test Championship final against South Africa next month and was being monitored by Cricket Australia's medical team.

The RCB camp was closely monitoring Hazlewood's progress. He has been RCB's best bowler in this IPL with 18 wickets in 10 matches and is currently fourth-highest wicket-taker in the competition.

Already qualified for the play-offs, RCB face Lucknow Super Giants in their last IPL league match here on Tuesday.

RCB will depend on other results for a top-two finish after losing their last match against Sunrisers Hyderabad by 42 runs.

In fact, a win by a narrow margin for PBKS over Mumbai Indians on Monday would keep RCB ahead but in case of a defeat to LSG, the Rajat Patidar-led side would have to go through the Eliminator again. (PTI)

Winning or losing not in our hands, everyone gave their best: DC batter Sameer Rizvi



JAIPUR, May 25: Delhi Capitals batter Sameer Rizvi, who struck a high quality half-century against Punjab Kings, feels that everyone in his side gave their best performance in the IPL even though they couldn't make it to the playoffs.

The 21-year-old Rizvi struck 58 not out off 25 balls, which included five sixes and three fours, for his maiden half-century as DC chased down the target of 207 with three balls to spare and by six wickets on Saturday. "Winning or losing isn't in our hands. What is in our hands is playing good cricket. Everyone gave their best throughout the tournament. We couldn't make it to the playoffs, but overall, the team put in a strong effort," Rizvi said in the post-match press conference.

DC will end at fifth place with seven wins, six losses and one no result. They had begun the season brightly with four wins on the trot only to fizzle out in the later stages. Asked about his maiden IPL fifty, Rizvi said, "I felt very relaxed. The things I used to think about -- what I need to do, how I need to play -- I was finally able to execute them in this match."

"I feel really good about how I played, because this is exactly what I aspire to do," Rizvi said he took some time to settle down before playing his shots.

"When I came in to bat, the required rate was high. My approach was to take three or four balls to settle in and then start attacking. Karun

Nair, on the other hand, smashed four boundaries in an over, which eased the pressure on me and allowed me to take my time."

Nair, who on Saturday made a return to the Indian Test team after eight long years, made 44 off 27 balls. "We have to maintain a winning mindset in the IPL. Last year, even 260 was chaseable, so on a flat wicket, 200 or 220 is definitely chaseable. You have to stay positive when you're chasing. I was confident because it was a good wicket and I backed myself to play my shots," Rizvi added.

Punjab Kings have already made it to the IPL play-offs but their spin bowling coach Sunil Joshi felt his side needs consistency in the middle overs. "Overall, we were a bit inconsistent in the middle overs. That is something which we need to go back to the drawing room (board) and address that we have been bowling really well in the middle overs, with high dot-ball percentage," he said. "That is something which we have done well. And, again, (Harpreet) Brar has come back very well." PBKS face Mumbai Indians in Jaipur on Monday in their last league match before the play-offs, and Joshi said they need to play well in all 40 overs of the match.

"I'm sure there will be an opportunity for most of the players. We had injured players. It's finally off now and we have a full squad now so definitely there will be an opportunity for them," he said. (PTI)

Srikanth's inspired Malaysia run ends with defeat in final

KUALA LUMPUR, May 25: His long title drought did not end but shuttler Kidambi Srikanth capped a remarkable campaign with a runner-up finish at the Malaysia Masters Super here on Sunday, going down in straight games to China's world No. 4 Li Shi Feng in the men's singles final.

The 32-year-old, who charted a long road back from injuries and missed opportunities, made his first BWF World Tour final in six years, starting from the qualifiers and riding a resurgent wave all the way to the title clash of the BWF 500 tournament.

The former world No. 1 was erratic and struggled to break through the second-seeded Li's solid defence and was unable to convert openings, eventually losing in 11-21 9-21 in 36 minutes.

"It has been pretty good week. It's my third tournament, played decently well in the first two as well but couldn't really win those matches. But pretty happy with the way how it went so far. Not exactly the way I wanted to be today but still I think he played really well," Srikanth said.

"I'm just very happy to be back playing again. I just want to keep myself happy. There was a point in my career where I was pretty used to being standing there and then it's been a while. So to be back again on the podium really feels special."

Despite the loss, it was an inspirational show from Srikanth, who, after slipping to world No. 82 earlier this month, showed grit and class to remind the world of his calibre.

Srikanth was error-prone in the

early exchanges, gifting away points that allowed Li Shi Feng to pull ahead 6-3.

A straight smash to the Indian's backhand took Li to 8-5, and although Srikanth replied with a 402kph thunderbolt, a netted smash gave the Chinese a five-point cushion going into the mid-game interval.

Unforced errors continued to hurt Srikanth. Two loose shots went long, and Li responded with a precise crosscourt winner to make it 14-8.

Srikanth showed glimpses of brilliance with a net kill and a swift forehand cross to trail 10-16, but couldn't string together momentum. A 22-shot rally at 10-17 ended with Srikanth pushing the shuttle long, and Li closed out the opening game in just 16 minutes with con-

secutive down-the-line smashes.

In the second game, Srikanth played better but his inconsistency persisted. Despite engaging in tight rallies, he often went wide or long, while Li dictated the tempo, hitting anything that his opponent lifted in his arc.

A powerful crosscourt smash helped Li go into the interval leading 11-5, leaving the Indian a mountain to climb.

Srikanth did craft a beautiful reverse drop after a grueling 46-shot rally at 5-12, and produced an elegant crosscourt winner at 8-18. But such moments were few.

Li stepped on the gas, scoring on both flanks to reach 18-7. A sharp net interception brought the Chinese within two points, and back-to-back smashes sealed his victory and the title. (PTI)

Was eagerly awaiting the call, says Karun Nair after India comeback

JAIPUR, MAY 25: Senior batter Karun Nair feels "proud and fortunate" at his return to the Indian Test team after a long gap of eight years and says he was "awaiting this call" having done well in the last 12-16 months in domestic circuit.

The 33-year-old Nair was on Saturday named in the 18-member Indian squad for the five-match Test tour of England beginning June 20 after scoring big runs in the 2004-05 season. He last played for India in 2017.

"Really happy and proud. Have been batting well in the last 12-16 months. It's about keeping my processes the same and do the same things that have worked for me," Nair said after his side Delhi Capitals beat Punjab Kings by six wickets in an IPL match here Saturday night. Nair was dropped from the national team in 2017 soon after becoming India's second triple centurion in Tests.

"Grateful to get back, happy and proud and fortunate. Found out like all of you found out (about his selection). Was eagerly awaiting the call, got a lot of messages from close ones," the right-handed batter said.

His performances were instrumental in Vidarbha winning the Ranji Trophy in the 2024-25 season. In the Ranji Trophy, he plundered 863 runs in nine matches with four centuries, while in the Vijay Hazare Trophy, he amassed 779 runs in just eight innings, including five centuries, performances that paved the way for his return to the Indian team.

Speaking about Saturday's victory which helped Delhi Capitals finish the season on a high note after failing to qualify for the play-offs, Nair said the result showed that they were a good team. "Feels amazing, we truly deserve this. Haven't been at our best. But tonight shows we're a good team that had bad games," he said. While young Sameer Rizvi won the Man-of-the-Match award for his maiden IPL fifty, Nair chipped in with an invaluable 44-run knock off 27 balls to keep DC in the game in the middle overs. "I've been hitting the ball really well, came into the tournament with a lot of runs. Confidence was high. I was playing too many shots too early, coaches told me to take my time and then go big," Nair said. (PTI)

Srikanth's Malaysia run shows he belongs at the top

NEW DELHI, May 25: There's a strange serenity in watching Kidambi Srikanth play when he's in the zone. For much of the last few years, that version of Srikanth felt like a thing of the past. In Malaysia, it made a compelling return.

The former world number one might not have won the title but his march to the final of the Malaysia Masters -- a BWF World Tour event -- his first such final in six years is not just personal redemption but a reminder to what persistence and discipline can deliver.

"Srikanth is a player who should be in the top," said coach RMV Gurusaidutt. "As soon as possible, he should be in this circuit. That will be our primary target as a team. Be back in the top 20 and play in the big

events." Srikanth's racquet skills were never in doubt. His 2017 run of four Superseries titles in a year was historic. He added a World Championship silver in 2021 and led India to their maiden Thomas Cup triumph in 2022, winning all six matches. But consistency deserted him. His style had become predictable -- explosive at the start, but often rushed and unsustainable over longer rallies as he failed to close out matches from winning positions.

His struggles saw him slip in rankings -- he went as low as world number 82 early this month. "When we started in late 2023, I felt he was at a very bad fitness level. It's quite surprising. And I just told him, point blank that, you focus

on getting better with your fitness," recalls coach Parupalli Kashyap.

In recent years, chronic injuries -- shoulder, knee, adductor, Achilles -- hampered his training. At one point, he could only manage shadow practice and underarm strokes. "The shoulder issue has been there for a very long time. It is very on and off," Gurusaidutt, adding that there were also knee and achilles concerns due to load management.

Still, Srikanth didn't shut down. "He has not sat down for 3-4 or 5 weeks this year. He was able to play and train, though he wasn't getting entries into the bigger events."

But the real change came in his mindset. Over the past four months, Srikanth showed up every day --

tired or not.

"Morning sessions, evening gym, cardio -- he was there. That's the improvement we wanted," Gurusaidutt said.

"And imagine -- in the third week of back-to-back tournaments, he delivers this kind of performance. That speaks of the fitness and the discipline. What stood out in Malaysia was the subtle transformation in his playing style. The outright attack-heavy game has evolved into an all-round, balanced approach."

"This tournament, he was actually playing an all-round game. It was not just attack -- it was about constructive rallies and holding on. That kind of game creates pressure on the opponent," said the 2014 Commonwealth Games bronze medalist. (PTI)

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