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Himanta moves Centre, blasts ONGC for lack of urgency

Uncontrolled leakage of gas is continuing despite consistent efforts

SIVASAGAR, June 18: With gas continuing to leak from an ONGC crude oil well in Assam for the seventh straight day, Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma on Wednesday urged Union Petroleum Minister Hardeep S. Puri to direct the energy major to step up efforts to contain the blowout.

In a letter to Puri, Sarma said locals claimed that there has been "inadequate urgency and seriousness in ONGC's response" while trying to contain the leak.

"Conveyed our concerns regarding the Barichuk Gas Blowout incident to Hon'ble Union Minister Shri @HardeepSPuri ji. I have requested him to direct @ONGC to step up well control efforts in mission mode so that the situation doesn't aggravate further," the CM said in a post on X.

The state government is providing necessary relief to the affected



people at this hour, but a more proactive approach is needed from ONGC to mitigate this situation to restore normalcy, he added.

The blowout took place on June 12 at Well No RDS 147 of Rig No SKP 135 of Rudrasagar oil field of Oil and Natural Gas Corporation

(ONGC) at Barichuk of Bhatiapar.

A private firm, SK Petro Services, was operating the well on behalf of the state-run Maharatna company.

In the letter, which was shared by Sarma along with the post, the CM said, "Despite ONGC's ongoing

well control efforts such as water blanketing, high-volume mud pumping and junk shots, pressure continues to persist and the well remains active."

The prolonged nature of the incident is causing considerable distress in the surrounding villages, as already more than 330 families have been evacuated from their homes and are being supported by the state government with basic relief and safety measures, he added.

"While the District Administration and state agencies are fully engaged on the ground, I am constrained to convey that the local perception is one of inadequate urgency and seriousness in ONGC's response. Unlike previous incidents handled with a war-footing, the current approach appears procedural and lacking in visibility," Sarma said in the letter. Talking about his (CONTD. ON PAGE-2)

Seven persons arrested in connection with recovery of cow skulls near prayer hall in Assam

GUWAHATI, June 18: Seven persons have been arrested in connection with the alleged recovery of three cow skulls near a 'Namghar' (prayer hall) in Assam's Lakhimpur district on Wednesday, Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma said.

"In a swift and coordinated response, Lakhimpur Police have apprehended 7 individuals in connection with the recovery of 3 cattle skulls found approximately 30 meters from Siring Chuk Namghar, along the roadside", the Chief Minister posted on 'X'. The arrested persons are Monsur Ali, Md. Rejjak Ali, Saha Ali, Diluar Hussain, Dildar Hussain, Abu Kalam Ali and Jahidul Islam, he said.

"During a search at Monsur Ali's residence, 3 additional cattle skulls were recovered and seized. Investigation is ongoing, including technical analysis," Sarma added.

Lakhimpur Senior Superintendent of Police Gunendra Deka told reporters that a case had been registered at Panigaon police station under various sections of the Bharatiya Nyay Sanhita, read with relevant sections of the Assam Cattle Preservation Act, 2021.

He said evidence has been collected and sent for technical analysis. "Investigations are ongoing, and it is not possible to share all details now, but we will up-



Animal remains seized

HT Correspondent

JORHAT, June 18: A plastic packet containing suspected animal bones and small pieces of meat was recovered by police from Mukul Borthakur Path in the Digambarchhook residential area of Jorhat on Wednesday.

According to a police official, the package was seized following a tip-off. (CONTD. ON PAGE-2)

date as and when some progress has been made," he added. He appealed to all to maintain peace and harmony in the district. (CONTD. ON PAGE-2)

Himanta slams Rahul over 'cow slaughter' remarks

HT Bureau

GUWAHATI, June 18 : Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma on Wednesday launched a sharp attack on Congress leader Rahul Gandhi, condemning recent remarks allegedly linked to Gandhi and his close aides as "poisonous" and deeply insulting to Hindu sentiments.

Addressing reporters, CM Sarma accused Gandhi of harbouring a "biased mindset" and questioned the logic behind insinuations that Hindu groups might have been involved in desecrating a temple with cow remains. "If Hindus were to dispose of meat, it would be pork, not beef. These kinds of (CONTD. ON PAGE-2)

State to have 29 med colleges by 2030: CM

400 medical and health officers receive appointment letters

HT Bureau

GUWAHATI, June 18: Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma on Wednesday distributed appointment letters to 400 Medical and Health Officers at a programme held at the GMCH auditorium in Guwahati.

With these new appointments, the total number of government jobs provided under the current administration has reached 1,20,359.

The information was provided in an official statement, which mentioned that the appointments are part of the state government's larger commitment to creating over 1.5 lakh govern-

ment jobs.

Addressing the gathering, chief minister Sarma said the state government has been working diligently to address the longstanding demand-supply mismatch of doctors in Assam.

In this context, he noted that the number of medical colleges in the state has been increasing steadily. Currently, 13 medical colleges are functional, producing around 1,600 doctors annually.

Sarma stated that the government has outlined a roadmap to establish 29 medical colleges across the state by 2030, a move aimed at strengthening health-

care infrastructure and ensuring availability of doctors in rural and remote areas.

Highlighting the government's progress in the health sector, the chief minister said that 4,962 Ayushman Arogya Mandirs have been made functional to bolster primary healthcare services.

He also noted that Assam currently has 13 Medical Colleges and Hospitals, 22 District Hospitals, 17 Sub-Divisional Hospitals, 221 Community Health Centres, 1,017 Primary Health Centres, and 4,875 Sub-Centres staffed with doctors and paramedics. (CONTD. ON PAGE-2)

Amrit Udyan-cum-Yoga Park inaugurated in Diphu ahead of International Yoga Day

HT Bureau

DIPHU, June 18: As part of the celebrations for International Yoga Day, Chief Executive Member (CEM) of the Karbi Anglong Autonomous Council (KAAC), Tuliram Ronghang, formally inaugurated the Amrit Udyan-cum-Yoga Park in front of the Diphu Circuit House on Wednesday.

The event commenced with the lighting of the ceremonial lamp, followed by a welcome address delivered by Karbi Anglong Deputy Commissioner Nirola Phangchopi. In her speech, Phangchopi noted that Karbi Anglong and Chirang are the only two districts in Assam selected by the state government this year for the establishment of dedicated yoga parks.

Delivering the keynote address, Dr Pranab Jyoti Baishya, Principal of Government Ayurvedic College, highlighted the increasing significance of yoga in contemporary life and its relevance in achieving physical and mental well-being.

CEM Tuliram Ronghang, while addressing the gathering, underscored the importance of integrating yoga into daily routines to promote health and harmony in society. "We have to develop yoga in Karbi Anglong and appeal to everyone to assist and propagate the benefits of doing yoga to every individual," Ronghang said.

A yoga demonstration was also held during the event with enthusiastic participation from (CONTD. ON PAGE-2)

Key bridge collapses in Silchar

SILCHAR, June 18: A newly-repaired bridge in Assam's Cachar district collapsed on Wednesday with two overloaded trucks plunging into the Harang river, injuring the drivers, officials said.

The decades-old bridge on the Silchar-Kalain Road, connecting Assam to Meghalaya, was reopened last month after nearly two years of repair works, they said.

District Commissioner Mridul Yadav said that an inquiry has been ordered into the incident.

"There were restrictions in place, and four checkpoints were set up to monitor overloaded vehicles," he said. Senior Superintendent of Police Numa Mahatta said the drivers (CONTD. ON PAGE-2)



Government of Assam

1 Lakh⁺ Jobs



Sustained Endeavour of Transparent and Merit-based Appointments



Ceremonial Distribution of Appointment Letters

Department-wise appointments		
Department	Posts	No. of candidates
Animal Husbandry & Veterinary	Veterinary Field Assistant	443
Tourism	Tourism Development Officer	12
Education	Lecturer, District Institute of Education and Training	23
	Assistant Director in the rank of Assistant Professor, State Council of Educational Research and Training	3
 Total 481		

Chief Guest

Dr Himanta Biswa Sarma
Chief Minister, Assam

In august presence of

Dr Ranaj Pegu
Minister, Education etc., Assam

Shri Ranjeet Kumar Dass
Minister, Tourism etc., Assam

Shri Krishnendu Paul
Minister, Animal Husbandry & Veterinary etc., Assam

📅 19 June 2025 | ⌚ 11:00 AM

📍 Srimanta Sankaradeva International Auditorium, Panjabari, Guwahati

Recruitment details

Till 18 June 2025	1,20,359
19 June 2025	481

Total recruitment
1,20,840

DIPR /D/HLT/37/19-Jun-25

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Govt to roll out ₹ 3,000 FASTag annual pass for private cars from Aug 15

NEW DELHI, June 18: In a bid to ease toll payments on National Highways, the government will from August 15 bring a ₹ 3,000 FASTag-based annual pass that would allow up to 200 trips on the highways in one year on a single charge.

The annual pass will be applicable only for non-commercial private vehicles such as cars, jeeps, and vans. It will allow seamless travel across National Highways without the need for repeated recharging of FASTag cards or toll payments, Road Transport and Highways Minister Nitin Gadkari said, announcing the move through a post on X.

In closed tolling highways such as Delhi-Mumbai Expressway - where toll collection occurs exclusively at exit points - a single trip includes both entry and exit points. On the other hand, on open tolling routes like Delhi-Chandigarh, each toll plaza crossing would constitute a separate trip.

The pass can be recharged multiple times once the 200-trip limit in a year is crossed.

The Ministry of Road Transport and Highways (MoRTH) clarified that those who already have a FASTag will not need to purchase a new FASTag.

"The annual pass can be activated on your existing FASTag, provided it meets the eligibility criteria (i.e., it is properly affixed on the vehicle's windshield, linked to a valid Vehicle Registration Number, not blacklisted etc)," it said. The annual pass will be valid only at National Highway (NH) and National Expressway (NE) fee plazas.

At fee plazas on Expressways,



State Highways (SH), etc., managed by State Governments or local bodies, the FASTag will operate as a regular FASTag, and applicable user fee charges may apply.

FASTag - the electronic toll collection system - uses Radio Frequency Identification (RFID) technology to automatically deduct toll charges from a prepaid account linked to the vehicle. Over 10.1 crore FASTags were issued till December 1, 2024, according to the road transport ministry's 2024 year-end review.

"In a transformative step towards hassle-free highway travel, we are introducing a FASTag-based annual pass priced at ₹ 3,000, effective from 15th August 2025," Gadkari said.

Valid for one year from the date of activation or up to 200 trips, whichever comes first, this pass is designed exclusively for non-commercial private vehicles such as cars, jeeps, and vans, he said. "The annual pass will enable seamless and cost-effective travel across na-

tional highways throughout the country."

A dedicated link for activation and renewal will soon be made available on the Rajmarg Yatra app as well as on the official websites of National Highways Authority of India (NHAI) and Ministry of Road Transport and Highways (MoRTH).

According to Gadkari, the move will address long-standing concerns regarding toll plazas located within a 60 km range and simplify toll payments through a single, affordable transaction.

"By reducing wait times, easing congestion, and minimising disputes at toll plazas, the annual pass aims to deliver a faster and smoother travel experience for millions of private vehicle owners," he said. The government has made it compulsory for all 'M' and 'N' category vehicles to be fitted with FASTag. 'M' category includes vehicles with at least four wheels used for carrying passengers, while category 'N' comprises vehicles with at least four wheels

for carrying goods in addition to passengers.

Presently, monthly passes are available for those vehicles that frequently pass through a specific toll plaza. These passes, which cost ₹ 340 a month and ₹ 4,080 annually, can be availed by submitting address verification and other relevant documents.

Average daily toll collection through FASTag on National Highway fee plaza is less than ₹ 200 crore. Private cars account for 53 per cent of total passages but generate just 21 per cent of the revenue.

The annual pass will be applicable only for private non-commercial Car/Jeep/Van. Use in any commercial vehicle will result in immediate deactivation without notice, the highways ministry said.

It will be activated only when FASTags is properly affixed to the windshield of the registered vehicle. Each crossing of the fee plaza counts as one trip. A round trip (to and fro) counts as two trips. According to the ministry, for closed tolling fee plazas, one pair of entry and exit counts as one trip.

The ministry also clarified that the annual pass is not mandatory and that the existing FASTag ecosystem will continue to function as usual.

"Users who do not opt for the annual pass can continue to use their FASTag for regular transactions as per applicable user fee rates at fee plazas," it said.

The ministry said highway users may re-purchase the annual pass once the 200-trip limit is exhausted, even if the one-year validity period has not yet ended. (PTI)

ICAI to complete review of fin statements of IndusInd Bank, Gensol in 6 months

NEW DELHI, June 18: Chartered accountants' apex body ICAI on Wednesday said it will take at least six months to complete the review of the financial statements of fraud-hit IndusInd Bank and Gensol Engineering and ascertain whether there were audit lapses at the two entities.

ICAI's Financial Reporting Review Board (FRRB) has started reviewing the financial statements of the two entities and depending on the findings, disciplinary action will be initiated against the auditors concerned. "(FRRB) will take at least six months or more to come to a conclusion on what is happening. It is a long drawn process..." ICAI President Charanjot Singh Nanda said while responding to a query on IndusInd Bank and Gensol.

FRRB is reviewing the IndusInd

Bank's financial statements for 2023-24 and 2024-25 and that of Gensol Engineering and BluSmart Mobility for 2023-24.

If the FRRB finds that the books of the entities were not true and fair, the matter will be referred to ICAI's disciplinary committee for further action. Starting with a March 10 disclosure about a potential hit to the net worth because of incorrect recognition of derivative trades over the last two years, the last two months have been tumultuous for IndusInd Bank.

In March, the bank reported a ₹ 1,979 crore accounting lapse in its derivative portfolio, followed by its internal audit review finding that ₹ 674 crore was incorrectly recorded as interest from microfinance business, besides a ₹ 595 crore "unsubstantiated balances"

in "other assets" of balance sheet.

Gensol Engineering has come under the regulatory scanner for alleged fund diversions and governance lapses, with regulator Sebi barring the company's promoters Anmol Singh Jaggi and Puneet Singh Jaggi from the securities market for various violations. BluSmart Mobility, which offers ride-hailing services, is promoted by Anmol Singh Jaggi.

Nanda also informed that ICAI will host the GCC Summit Series on the theme "From Ledger to Global Leadership: Chartered Accountants Shaping Global Capability Centres". In this series, the first summit will be held in New Delhi on June 27-28, 2025, with regional editions to follow in Ahmedabad (GIFT City), Mumbai and Hyderabad. (PTI)

Contd. from Page 1...

Himanta moves Centre, blasts

visit to the affected site on Monday evening, the CM said he had assured the people of taking up their concerns at the highest level. "I urge you to kindly direct ONGC to reinforce its technical and leadership presence on-site, adopt a more mission-mode approach, and step up engagement with the affected communities to restore confidence and bring the situation under control at the earliest," Sarma told Puri.

The Assam government on Tuesday announced a financial aid of ₹ 25,000 each to about 350 families affected by the blowout. Puri also reviewed and took an update on well control activities being carried out by ONGC, which informed him that competent personnel have been brought from other work centres of the company to control the fire.

Meanwhile, a company official told PTI that uncontrolled leakage of gas is continuing from the well despite consistent efforts to control it. "The well killing process is going on. The gas pressure has not increased in the last few days, and we hope for some good news soon," he added. Later in the day, ONGC issued a statement and said its in-house well control experts are working around the clock and are in constant consultation with an international well control agency.

"The process to mobilise their team at the site has already been initiated to further strengthen efforts on the ground," it added. ONGC has successfully connected the well to a nearby production facility, thereby diverting a portion of the gas in a controlled manner. As an additional safety measure, water blanketing of the well is being continuously maintained.

According to the Assam Pollution Control Board (APCB), the air quality parameters are within the permissible limit as per the National Ambient Air Quality Standard (NAAQ) standards by Central Pollution Control Board (CPCB). "A thorough analysis of the released gas has been carried out through sample collection, confirming that the gas is non-toxic in nature. Being lighter than air, the gas is dispersing upwards into higher altitudes, minimising risk to nearby habitations," the company said.

The noise levels are also being continuously monitored and are within acceptable limits beyond 500 metres, it added. "Safety of the community and the environment remains ONGC's foremost priority, and all actions are being taken in accordance with regulatory guidelines and industry best practices," the statement said. An official of ONGC had earlier said that it was an old crude well without production, and a perforation job was going on for zone transfer at the time of the blowout.

"It is a kind of servicing of the well. Production was supposed to start from a new zone after the perforation job. At the time of the incident, the logging perforation operation was going on. Suddenly, gas started coming out in an uncontrolled manner immediately after the perforation, leading to the blowout," he had added. (PTI)

Seven persons arrested in

and a meeting of the peace committee will be held on Thursday. Talking to reporters on the sidelines of a programme here, Sarma said the allegations made by Congress leaders that it is the BJP-RSS and the Hindus who are throwing the cow skulls and blaming it on the Muslims reflect the 'poisonous mindset of Rahul Gandhi'.

"If the BJP-RSS or Hindus were to throw any kind of meat, they would do it with pork, and it would have been at the mosque. Why would they throw a cow's skull at temples, and what will they do with the remaining part of the cow? Is the Congress suggesting that the Hindus consume beef, and is this what Rahul Gandhi is trying to imply indirectly?", Sarma asked. All those accused and arrested for throwing the cows' skulls at a 'Namghar' belong to a particular community, but in Assam, 'Rahul Gandhi's' puppets are claiming that it is the Hindus, who sever the head of cows and throw it at religious places. "This is one of the reasons why the Hindus hate the Congress and Rahul Gandhi," he added.

The Chief Minister said that such incidents have been happening recently in some places, but "we will deal with it firmly." Recently, shoot-at-sight orders during night hours were issued in Dhubri district after a cow's head was found in front of a Hanuman temple the day after Bakrid.

The following day, another cattle skull was discovered at the same spot, accompanied by incidents of stone pelting. On June 8, Sarma had said several cattle were allegedly slaughtered illegally at several places during Bakrid festival, and parts of the meat were thrown at multiple locations across Assam. Police have so far arrested over 60 people, with over 50 in Dhubri alone, in connection with the illegal slaughter of cows to create communal disturbances in the state. (PTI)

Himanta slams Rahul over 'cow

statements expose a deeply rooted prejudice," he said.

The Chief Minister was reacting to a controversy surrounding a Congress functionary, considered close to Gandhi, who reportedly suggested that the cow parts found at a temple site in Assam may have been planted by Hindu groups themselves.

Refuting the allegation with strong words, Sarma said, "If a cow's head was found at a temple, where is the rest of the carcass? Are we to believe that Hindu groups would slaughter a cow, leave the head, and consume the rest of the meat? What is Rahul Gandhi trying to imply? This is not just absurd—it is inflammatory."

Sarma went on to assert that all individuals arrested in the case belonged to a specific community, yet Gandhi's camp was, according to him, attempting to shift the blame onto Hindus. "It is a vile distortion of facts, clearly aimed at creating communal rifts," he said. The Chief Minister concluded by stating that such provocative rhetoric is a key reason why many Hindus feel alienated from the Congress party.

He accused the Opposition of consistently targeting Hindu beliefs under the cover of political narratives.

State to have 29 med colleges

Sarma emphasised the government's efforts to make the health sector both patient- and technology-friendly, acknowledging the evolving nature of healthcare delivery systems. The chief minister said that the newly appointed doctors will significantly improve access to quality healthcare, especially for vulnerable sections of society, including the poor in rural areas.

He added that the placement of these doctors in need-based areas will contribute to enhanced maternal and child health outcomes. Of the 400 newly appointed doctors, 36 are specialists in fields such as Obstetrics and Gynaecology, Anaesthesia, Medicine, Dermatology, and Orthopaedics. These specialists will serve in district hospitals, civil hospitals, and First Referral Units (FRUs) to meet growing healthcare demands. Since 2021, the state government has appointed 1,283 doctors. With the addition of the latest batch, the total number has risen to 1,683. Congratulating the newly appointed doctors, chief minister Sarma urged them to serve patients with dedication, compassion, and empathy, and to uphold the government's commitment to accessible and quality healthcare for all.

Health and Family Welfare Minister Ashok Singhal also addressed the gathering. Among others present at the event were MP Bijuli Kalita Medhi, Commissioner and Secretary of Health and Family Welfare P Ashok Babu, Commissioner and Secretary Barnali Sarma, and Vice Chancellor of Srimanta Sankardeva University of Health Sciences Dr Dhruva Jyoti Bora. (PTI)

Amrit Udyan-cum-Yoga Park

Karbi Anglong MP Amarsing Tisso, MLAs Bidyasing Englang and Darsing Ronghang, Executive Members and Members of KAAC, Superintendent of Police Sanjib Kumar Saikia, and noted comedian Rajiv Kro, among others.

It was noted during the programme that yoga was officially recognised by the United Nations in 2014, and since 2015, June 21 has been celebrated globally as International Yoga Day. The 2025 edition will mark ten years of worldwide observance of the ancient Indian practice that seeks to unify the body, mind, and spirit.

According to an official statement, the newly inaugurated Amrit Udyan-cum-Yoga Park will serve as a central hub for wellness activities, public engagement, and the promotion of a healthy lifestyle for the people of Diphu and surrounding areas.

Key bridge collapses in Silchar

of the two trucks sustained injuries and are undergoing treatment. The lapses are being investigated, he said. "Schoolchildren and residents on either side of the river are facing serious problems because of the bridge collapse. We have deployed boats to help them cross the river," he added. Meanwhile, locals alleged that poor-quality materials were used in the repair work, which caused the bridge to collapse. Refuting the allegations, Zilla Parishad member Farida Parvin Laskar claimed, "The weight limit of the bridge was 40 ton, but these trucks were carrying around 120-130 ton of stones." (PTI)

Animal remains seized

The contents were then examined by the local Food Inspector, who subsequently forwarded the packet to the Forensic Laboratory in Guwahati for testing to determine whether the meat was beef or of another origin. Authorities have stated that further action will be taken based on the forensic findings.

ICRA forecasts small dip in GDP growth at 6.2 per cent in 2025-26



KOLKATA, June 18: Leading rating agency ICRA, in its latest outlook, said India's real GDP growth for 2025-26 will be 6.2 per cent, down from 6.5 per cent in the preceding financial year.

Real Gross Value Added (GVA) growth is also expected to ease to 6 per cent from 6.4 per cent.

Regarding inflation, the Consumer Price Index (CPI) is expected to be above 3.5 per cent, while the Wholesale Price Index (WPI) will be over 1.8 per cent for the current fiscal, the report added.

ICRA has forecast the fiscal deficit to be 4.4 per cent of GDP for 2025-26, with the current account deficit projected at 1.2 per cent to 1.3 per cent during the same period.

According to ICRA, rural demand is likely to remain upbeat, aided by Rabi cash flows and above-normal reservoir levels.

It also said that the combination of the sizeable income tax relief in the Union budget for 2025-26, rate cuts leading to lower EMIs and moderation in food inflation is expected to boost household disposable incomes.

The report added that the tepidness in India's merchandise exports is expected to continue in the near term.

Services exports are likely to outpace merchandise export growth, according to the ICRA outlook.

The Centre's capital expenditure is budgeted to rise by 10.1 per cent in 2025-26, which will boost investment activities, it added.

However, private capital expenditure may gain some traction on the face of a muted outlook for exports and uncertainty around trade policies, the report said. (PTI)

Stock markets fall for 2nd day amid soaring Middle East tensions

MUMBAI, June 18: Benchmark indices Sensex and Nifty closed lower on Wednesday as soaring tensions in the Middle East and caution ahead of the US Fed interest rate decision hit investor sentiment.

Surrendering its early gains, the 30-share BSE Sensex declined by 138.64 points or 0.17 per cent to close at 81,444.66. After a weak opening, the index hit a high of 81,858.97 in morning deals but failed to hold onto gains later. The barometer dipped 346.29 points or 0.42 per cent to hit a low of 81,237.01. The 50-share NSE Nifty edged lower by 41.35 points or 0.17 per cent to settle at 24,812.05, marking its second day of losses.

Among Sensex firms, Tata Consultancy Services was the biggest loser dropping by 1.79 per cent. Adani Ports fell by 1.55 per cent, Hindustan Unilever by 1.35 per cent, Bajaj Finserv by 1.16 per cent, and Nestle by 0.95 per cent. Losses in ICICI Bank, Larsen & Toubro, Infosys, NTPC and HCL Tech also dragged the index down. On the other hand, IndusInd Bank surged by 5.12 per cent after a report expressed optimism over its performance in the coming 12 months.

Titan rose by 1.99 per cent, Mahindra & Mahindra by 1.24 per cent and Maruti by 1.12 per cent. "The domestic market failed to maintain the opening gains as the continuing tensions in the Middle East & volatility in oil prices dragged the overall sentiment. However, auto and consumer discretionary gained in expectations of a demand revival," Vinod Nair, Head of Re-

search, Geojit Investments Limited, said. Israeli warplanes pounded Iran's capital overnight and into Wednesday as Iran launched a small barrage of missiles at Israel with no reports of casualties. Ajit Mishra - SVP, Research, Religare Broking Ltd said that the Nifty edged higher initially but failed to sustain the momentum, primarily due to pressure from heavyweight stocks. "Markets will react to the outcome of the US Fed policy meeting during early trades on Thursday. While most expect no change in interest rates, the Fed's commentary - especially in light of the prevailing global uncertainty caused by geopolitical tensions and trade tariff concerns—will be more crucial," Mishra said. The BSE midcap and smallcap indices ended 0.34 per cent lower each. Among BSE sectoral indices, IT dropped 0.76 per cent, BSE Focused IT declined 0.75 per cent, utilities (0.75 per cent), power (0.67 per cent), commodities (0.66 per cent) and metal (0.67 per cent).

However, consumer durables index climbed 0.75 per cent, consumer discretionary (0.38 per cent), auto (0.37 per cent) and bankex (0.03 per cent). As many as 2,447 stocks declined while 1,531 advanced and 137 remained unchanged on the BSE. Foreign Institutional Investors (FIIs) bought equities worth ₹ 1,482.77 crore on Tuesday, according to exchange data. Domestic Institutional Investors (DIIs) also bought equities worth ₹ 8,207.19 crore in the previous trade. (PTI)

Ather Energy to double retail network with plans for 700 experience centres by FY26

HT Bureau

GUWAHATI, June 18: Ather Energy Limited, one of India's leading electric two-wheeler manufacturers, has announced plans to expand its retail network to 700 Experience Centres (ECs) across India by the end of the financial year 2025-26.

This expansion will nearly double its current footprint, aimed at enhancing accessibility for customers nationwide. According to an official statement, the move is driven by robust demand for the company's family scooter, Rizta, which has surpassed one lakh unit sales within a year of its launch.

The model has helped Ather extend its reach beyond its core performance segment and make deeper inroads into key states like Gujarat, Rajasthan, Maharashtra,

Delhi, Madhya Pradesh, Odisha, and Chhattisgarh.

Rizta now accounts for nearly 60% of Ather's total sales and has helped the company tap into a broader base of family scooter buyers, thereby strengthening its position in markets where it previously had limited presence.

As of March 31, 2025, Ather operated 351 Experience Centres in India and 24 additional centres in Nepal and Sri Lanka. Approximately 46% of these centres are located in South India, where the brand first established itself.

In view of growing demand in other parts of the country, Ather now plans to triple its retail footprint in North India and expand further in the East and West by FY26.

Ravneet Singh Phokela, Chief Business Officer at Ather Energy,

stated, "Rizta's phenomenal success has opened up new markets and brought a much larger set of family buyers into the Ather ecosystem. Expanding to 700 Experience Centres is about staying ahead of this demand curve and ensuring that wherever our customers are, they have easy access to the full Ather experience."

Alongside retail expansion, the company is also scaling its operational ecosystem.

As of March 31, 2025, Ather operated over 3,578 fast-charging points across India through Ather Grid—the country's largest two-wheeler fast-charging network.

The company is also expanding its service infrastructure, including Gold Service Centres in key cities and an Express Care service that enables periodic maintenance in under 60 minutes.

Silver rallies to hit fresh peak, gold gains ₹ 540 as Israel-Iran conflict intensifies

NEW DELHI, June 18: Silver prices rallied ₹ 1,000 to hit a record high of ₹ 1,08,200 per kilogram while gold gained ₹ 540 to stay above ₹ 1 lakh per 10 grams in the national capital on Wednesday as the Israel-Iran conflict intensified on its sixth day, driving investors to safe-haven assets.

According to the All India Sarafa Association, the white metal had closed at ₹ 1,07,200 per kg in the preceding session on Tuesday.

On Friday, silver had revisited its previous all-time high of ₹ 1,08,100 per kg.

"Silver prices extended gains and crossed USD 37 per ounce level in the international markets for the first time since February



2012. Weakness in the rupee is supporting bullion prices in the domestic markets," Rahul Kalantri, Vice-President - Commodities, Mehta Equities, said.

As per the Sarafa Association, the precious metal of 99.9 per cent purity climbed by ₹ 540 to ₹ 1,00,710 per 10 grams (inclusive of all taxes) on Wednesday.

Gold of 99.5 per cent purity appreciated by ₹ 500 to ₹ 99,950 per 10 grams (inclusive of all taxes).

On the Multi Commodity Exchange, the most traded August contract for gold futures was trading at ₹ 99,411 per 10 grams, lower by ₹ 130 per 10 grams.

Additionally, silver futures for July contract jumped by ₹ 753 to hit a lifetime high of ₹ 1,09,748 per kg. Spot gold fell 0.23 per cent to USD 3,380.97 in the global markets.

According to Kotak Securities, gold prices are holding below USD 3,400 per ounce, as dollar strengthened with traders focussing on escalating Middle East tensions. The brokerage firm said US

President Donald Trump's call for Iran's unconditional surrender and discussions of potential strikes against Iranian leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei have "heightened fears of direct US involvement in the conflict", fuelling safe-haven demand among investors.

In the international markets, spot silver rose 0.15 per cent to USD 37.18 per ounce.

"Market participants stay cautiously bullish in near term awaiting more cues from US FOMC (Federal Open Market Committee) meeting with interest rate decision due later tonight," Maneesh Sharma, AVP - Commodities & Currencies at Anand Rathi Shares and Stock Brokers, said. (PTI)

ONGC well blowout

Sixth day on: ONGC yet to cap gas well at Bhatiapar

HT Correspondent
SIVASAGAR, June 18: The Oil and Natural Gas Corporation (ONGC) has yet to contain the uncontrolled gas outflow from the wellhead of RDS 147 A at Barichuk Bhatiapar, even as the crisis entered its sixth day on Wednesday.

Despite continuous efforts by the 20-member ONGC Crisis Management Team (CMT), attempts to plug the leak through conventional Heavy Mud Injection and Junk Shot methods have so far failed.

The ONGC is reportedly considering the engagement of foreign experts, similar to those deployed during the Baghjan gas well disaster in 2020, to deal with the escalating situation.

Public anger continues to intensify in Sivasagar district.

The Joutha Samgrami Mancha (JSM), a joint platform comprising several youth organisations including Sangrami Yuva Chatra Parishad, Jatiya Samgrami Mancha, and SC Students' Union, staged a protest outside the ONGC Colony gate demanding safety for residents living near ONGC's operational areas, adequate compensation for each affected family and ₹1 crore for the family of the deceased due to the explosion.

Chaliha warned of intensified agitation against the private rig operator.

Residents near the site continue to suffer due to the deafening noise of the high-pressure gas flow and suspected chemical



gheraoed the SK Petro office at Phukan Nagar.

The organisation demanded ₹1 lakh compensation for each affected family and ₹1 crore for the family of the deceased due to the explosion.

Chaliha warned of intensified agitation against the private rig operator.

Residents near the site continue to suffer due to the deafening noise of the high-pressure gas flow and suspected chemical

emissions.

Many have reported health issues such as headaches and irritation, according to medical teams deployed in the area.

An ONGC official, speaking on condition of anonymity, attributed the blowout to the failure of a geological study team.

The gas is reportedly flowing at over 5,000 pounds per square inch (PSI), rendering the Blowout Preventer ineffective.

Allegations have also emerged

that certain ONGC personnel may be deliberately undermining the operations of the Assam Asset to portray it as an unviable field, potentially paving the way for privatisation.

Vikram Saxena, Director (Technical and Field Services), is personally overseeing the blowout control operation, which involves the use of multiple water jets drawing water from the nearby Dikhow river.

At the Bongaon High School relief camp, where many affected families have taken shelter, complaints have arisen over irregularities in aid distribution.

Some teachers reported that individuals outside the affected area have received the ₹25,000 compensation announced by the chief minister, while some genuinely affected residents have been overlooked.

Protesters 'gheraoed' the Block Development Office in Gaurisagar over the issue.

The Water Resources Department has deployed staff to ensure uninterrupted lifting of water from the Dikhow river.

Local residents expressed fear over a possible disaster if the gas ignites.

Dhan Chutia and his wife said they are forced to leave their home after 4 pm and stay with relatives due to safety concerns. Their livestock and poultry are also facing severe distress.

Anjumoni Phukan, wife of Dayananda Chutia, broke down while expressing her fear of a repeat of the Baghjan tragedy.

Governor attends 7th convocation of NIPER Guwahati, urges graduates to lead India's pharma innovation

HT Bureau

GUWAHATI, June 18: Governor Lakshman Prasad Acharya on Wednesday attended the 7th Convocation Ceremony of the National Institute of Pharmaceutical Education and Research (NIPER), Guwahati, held at the institute's campus.

The Governor congratulated the graduating students and urged them to lead the country towards a healthier, innovative, and self-reliant future through ethical and compassionate scientific pursuits.

In his address, Governor Acharya described the convocation as not only a culmination of years of academic effort but also the beginning of a journey marked by responsibility and service.

He praised the faculty, researchers, and students for their contributions to health science, innovation, and public service.

Describing the Northeast as a treasure trove of biodiversity and traditional knowledge, the Governor said institutions like NIPER Guwahati could play a crucial role in integrating traditional medicinal systems with modern scientific research.

He urged the institute to serve as a bridge between ancient practices and cutting-edge science by fostering collaborations with national and international bodies such as the World Health Organization.

Referring to the state's emergence as a new hub for pharmaceutical innovation and entrepreneurship, Governor Acharya highlighted initiatives like 'Advantage Assam 2.0' and the 'Rising Northeast Summit',



which have attracted significant investments into the region's health and pharma sectors.

The Governor also lauded NIPER Guwahati for securing the 12th position in the latest National Institutional Ranking Framework (NIRF), terming it a reflection of the institute's growing academic and research excellence.

Quoting the ancient maxim "Arogyam Paramam Bhagyam, Swasthyam Sarvarthasadhanam," Acharya emphasised the importance of holistic health in the modern world. He spoke of India's rich medical heritage and the global recognition that Ayurveda and traditional systems have received under the leadership of Prime Minister Narendra Modi.

The Governor highlighted India's pharmaceutical capacity, noting that the country meets 20 percent of global demand for generic medicines and manufactures over 60,000 brands across more than 60 therapeutic categories.

He also commended NIPER Guwahati for its active role during the COVID-19 pandemic, for which the institute was conferred

the COVID Warrior Award.

Calling upon the graduates to contribute to flagship national initiatives such as Aatmanirbhar Bharat, Digital Health, and Startup India, the Governor stressed the need to validate and elevate traditional medicinal knowledge from the Northeast.

"Your scientific work must always be guided by compassion and ethics. The true worth of an invention lies in its service to society," he said.

A total of 366 students were awarded degrees at the ceremony, including 10 Ph.D. scholars, 144 postgraduate students from the 2022-24 batch, and 212 from the 2023-25 batch.

According to an official statement issued by the institute, Amit Agrawal, Secretary, Department of Pharmaceuticals, Ministry of Chemicals and Fertilizers; Dr U S N Murty, Director of NIPER Guwahati; Prof Sanjay K Bannerjee, Associate Dean; members of the Governing Board, Senate, Academic Planning and Development Committee; faculty members and other dignitaries were present on the occasion.

Two Bodo writers bag Sahitya Akademi Awards

HT Correspondent

KOKRAJHAR, June 18: Two Bodo writers have been selected for the prestigious Sahitya Akademi Awards this year, drawing widespread appreciation and congratulations from across Assam.

Bodo poet Amar Khungur Boro has been named for the Sahitya Akademi Yuva Puraskar for his poetry collection 'অঁ অঁশুর' (Ang Oshur). He hails from Udalguri district.



Noted author Binay Kumar Brahma, from Dotma in Kokrajhar district, has been selected for the Sahitya Akademi Award for Children's Literature for his short story collection 'খান্দি বসনি অঁ অঁশুর' (Khandi Bwsni arw Akhu Danai).

The recognition has been warmly welcomed by various literary bodies, including the Bodo Sahitya Sabha and the All Bodo Students Union, who extended their

heartfelt congratulations to the awardees for their contributions to Bodo literature.

Pramod Boro, Chief Executive Member of the Bodoland Territorial Region, also congratulated the writers, stating, "I'm delighted to extend hearty congratulations to the award winners in Bodo. These awards will inspire the younger generation to pursue literary creativity."

Woman's body found in pond at Gohain Gaon

HT Correspondent

KHERONI, June 18: The body of a woman was found floating in a pond at Gohain Gaon village under Hawaipur in West Karbi Anglong district on Wednesday morning.

A local resident discovered the body and immediately alerted the police. Law enforcement officials arrived at the scene and have launched an investigation into the incident. The body was later sent to Diphu for post-mortem examination.

According to sources, the woman was last seen around 9 pm on Tuesday night and had prepared dinner before her disappearance.

Her husband, a daily wage labourer, informed police that his wife had been mentally unstable.

Dhubri district mandates CCTV installation across key establishments

HT Correspondent

DHUBRI, June 18: In a bid to enhance law and order following recent disturbances during Eid-Uz-Zuha celebrations, the Dhubri District Administration has issued a directive mandating the installation of Closed Circuit Television (CCTV) systems in public, commercial, and certain residential establishments. The directive, issued by District Magistrate Dibakar Nath, IAS, under the Assam Public Safety (Measures) Enforcement Act, 2023, applies to all public and commercial establishments, as well as residential buildings employing five or more individuals within the Dhubri district.

According to the official order dated June 16, 2025, all concerned establishments must install CCTV systems to ensure full coverage of entry and exit points, common areas, and approach roads.

Karbi singer Malini Tissopi passes away at 39

HT Bureau

DIPHU, June 18: Renowned Karbi singer and actor Malini Tissopi passed away at Diphu Medical College and Hospital (DMC&H) on Wednesday while undergoing treatment after a prolonged illness. She was 39.

Her mortal remains will be laid to rest at her native village, Sarthe Engti Silputa in Volongkom-aji, on Thursday.

She is survived by her husband and two children.

Tissopi rose to fame with her widely appreciated songs and earned recognition in Karbi modern music. In 2011, she was conferred the Best Singer (Female) Award during the 66th Karbi Anglong Autonomous Council (KAAC)

Foundation Day in honour of her contribution to indigenous music.

Madhuram Lekthe, Member of the Autonomous Council from Langphier and Executive Member of KAAC, extended his condolences via social media.

"Saddened to hear about the sudden demise of Smt. Malini Tissopi, a renowned Karbi singer whose melodious voice and contributions to Karbi music will always be remembered. Her untimely passing is a great loss to the Karbi society and to the world of indigenous art and culture. My heartfelt condolences to the bereaved family. May her soul rest in eternal peace," he wrote on his official Facebook page.

Purandar Baruah conferred with 'Yoga Ratna' Award at Yogutsav 2025

Celebrating holistic wellness, educationist Purandar Baruah honoured for his contribution to yoga

HT Correspondent

NAGAON, June 18: The Yogutsav 2025, organised on the occasion of International Day of Yoga by the Department of Yogic Science and Naturopathy of Mahapurusha Srimanta Sankaradeva Viswavidyalaya, concluded successfully in Nagaon on Wednesday.

The event was held in collaboration with the Morarji Desai National Institute of Yoga and the Ministry of Ayush, Government of India.

The programme commenced on Tuesday with a mass yoga session held at the Nagaon Police Reserve auditorium.

The session was attended by over 200 students from Nagaon town and conducted by Barasha Maske, Assistant Professor in the Department of Yogic Science and Naturopathy.

Among the dignitaries present were newly appointed Nagaon



Deputy Commissioner Devashish Sarma, University Registrar Dr Sarat Hazarika, Srimanta Sankaradeva Sangha General Secretary and University Coordinator Kushal Thakuria, Professor Boli Narayan

Phukan, the founding Head of the department, Deputy Registrar (Academic) Dr Bichitra Bikash, faculty members, staff, and students.

Addressing the gathering,

Daswani Institution achieves 100% success in NEET 2025

HT Correspondent

NAGAON, June 18: Daswani Institution, a leading educational centre in Nagaon, has recorded a cent percent success rate in the National Eligibility cum Entrance Test (NEET) 2025, with all 100 students who appeared for the exam qualifying.

According to the institution, 24 of these students have secured seats in government medical colleges.

The top 15 performers include Riyan All Islam (528, General), Nasir Hussain (519, General), Partha Pratim Bora (508, OBC-NCL), Nabarun Bordoloi (501, General), Katrina Kuhish Khan (487, General), Kushika Agarwal (487, General), Kankana Saikia

(477, General), Nasif Ahmed (464, General), Ankur Kalita (460, OBC-NCL), Kalyan Jyoti Dutta (437, OBC-NCL), Archan Hazarika (431, General), Rumi Das (429, SC), Jyoti Rekha Patir (377, ST), Anamika Boro (345, ST), and Sanyukta Rongpi (327, ST).

Dr Pranjal Kumar Borah, director of Daswani Institution, attributed the success to the dedicated efforts of the faculty, a structured academic environment, and consistent weekly assessments. He announced that the new academic session is scheduled to commence on June 30.

The achievement has brought pride to the district and immense joy to students, parents, and faculty members.

Minister Kaushik Rai attends awareness meet on subsidised ration distribution in Jorhat

HT Correspondent

JORHAT, June 18: State minister for food, public distribution and consumer affairs, mines and minerals and Barak Valley development, Kaushik Rai on Wednesday attended an awareness conference held at the Assam Agricultural University (AAU) campus here.

The conference focused on the government's proposed initiative to distribute subsidised sugar, masoor dal (red lentil), and salt to ration card holders under the National Food Security Act (NFSA).

Addressing the gathering as the chief guest, Rai highlighted the ongoing free foodgrain distribution programme initiated by Prime Minister Narendra Modi, which benefits over 80 crore people.

He announced that the government plans to expand this initiative by introducing subsidised distribution of essential food items to NFSA beneficiaries from October this year.

Rai called for cooperation from fair price shop dealers, Gaon Panchayat cooperative societies, and

other stakeholders for effective implementation of the scheme.

He stated that under the leadership of Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma, the government is committed to launching several welfare schemes for the people through the public distribution system.

The event was attended by fair price shop owners, representatives from Gaon Panchayat cooperative societies, Assam State Warehousing Corporation (ASWC), and officials of the district administration.

Also present were Mariani MLA Rupjyoti Kurmi, Titabar MLA Bhaskarjyoti Baruah, and Assam Industrial Infrastructure Development Corporation (AIIDC) Chairman Santanu Puzari, who is also the Jorhat district BJP president.

Following the programme, Minister Rai chaired a review meeting at the Jorhat Circuit House Conference Hall with officials of the Food and Civil Supplies and Consumer Affairs Department to assess the progress of ongoing schemes in the district.

QUOTE OF THE DAY

Many a trip continues long after movement in time and space have ceased - John Steinbeck

United States and China pact

“We made a great deal with China. We're very happy with it.” So declared President Donald Trump in his familiar tone of triumphant ambiguity on June 11, fresh off what was touted as a breakthrough agreement to restore a trade truce between the United States and China. But if history has taught us anything, it is that “done deals” in the Trumpian lexicon tend to be either dangerously fragile or conveniently fungible. The latest accord, emerging from two days of intense talks in London, follows an alarming spiral in trade tensions that had once again threatened to upend global markets and rekindle the tit-for-tat tariff warfare that haunted the latter years of Trump's first term. According to Trump, China has committed to lifting its restrictions on the export of rare earths - materials critical to the global technology and defense sectors - while the U.S. has agreed to a calibrated rollback of punitive measures, including the threatened revocation of visas for Chinese students. As ever, the devil is not just in the details, but in their implementation. Much like the May Geneva agreement that this deal purports to reinforce, the London framework is conditional, tentative, and, crucially, subject to “final approval” by both President Trump and President Xi Jinping. That qualifier alone renders the euphoria premature. Still, to be charitable, the very fact that Washington and Beijing are speaking the language of dialogue rather than confrontation is an encouraging sign.

Yet, Trump's boastful framing - that the U.S. walks away with a 55% tariff shield while China gets 10% - betrays a zero-sum worldview that continues to inform his trade doctrine. The truth, however, is far less tidy. Tariffs have proved to be a double-edged sword, inflicting damage on American consumers, industries, and allies as much as they have squeezed Chinese exports. The World Bank's recent downward revision of global growth forecasts points to tariffs and unpredictability as “significant headwinds,” underlining the global costs of such brinkmanship. Beijing, for its part, has projected a more measured tone. Chinese Vice Premier He Lifeng, in remarks following the London consultations, emphasized mutual benefit, calling on the U.S. to “honour their words with actions.” The Chinese side welcomed the “principled consensus” as a foundation for predictability and stability in bilateral economic relations. While Beijing's rhetoric may be couched in diplomatic platitudes, it signals a strategic patience that stands in stark contrast to Trump's performative deal-making. Indeed, despite facing considerable pressure - both domestic and international - China has remained consistent in its emphasis on dialogue, reciprocity, and multilateralism. It is no secret that Beijing is playing a longer game. From its support for a multilateral trading system to its efforts in promoting South-South cooperation, China has positioned itself as a steady hand amid a turbulent global order. In this light, the reestablishment of a U.S.-China economic and trade consultation mechanism should be viewed as more than a temporary fix. It offers a framework through which recurring disputes can be ironed out, interests aligned, and trust slowly rebuilt. Importantly, it provides a venue for strategic communication - something sorely missing during the height of tariff wars in 2018-19.

Why global agencies investigate Indian plane crashes

When Air India Flight 171 plunged from the skies over Ahmedabad on Thursday, claiming the lives of all 241 passengers and crew on board, the immediate response unfolded with grim predictability. Emergency services scrambled to the crash site. Heartbroken families gathered at airports, desperate for information. News media camped outside terminals, beaming images of wreckage and anguish to television screens across the country. But by Sunday, a development less visible to the grieving public - and perhaps puzzling to many - was quietly taking place. Teams from international aviation bodies began arriving in Ahmedabad to join the investigation into the catastrophic crash.

Among the foreign experts who landed were officials from the United States' National Transportation Safety Board (NTSB), the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA), and the United Kingdom's Civil Aviation Authority (CAA). The question naturally arises: why are agencies from the United States and the United Kingdom, neither of which operated the flight or hosted the airline, involved in investigating a disaster that occurred on Indian soil?

The answer lies not in diplomatic courtesy or informal cooperation, but in a binding international framework known as the Chicago Convention - a global agreement that has quietly governed the complex world of civil aviation since 1944.

The Chicago Convention: A Global Compact for Aviation Safety

Signed in the waning months of World War II, the Convention on International Civil Aviation - commonly referred to as the Chicago Convention - was born of a shared vision among its framers: that avi-

ation would become a critical conduit for global connectivity, and that its safety would require robust, collective oversight. Today, 193 countries, including India, the United States, and the United Kingdom, are signatories to this treaty. The convention established the International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO), a United Nations agency based in Montreal, which oversees technical standards and operational rules governing global air travel.

Among its numerous annexes, Annex 13 is of particular relevance to tragedies like AI 171. Annex 13 sets out the international protocols for investigating aircraft accidents and serious incidents. Crucially, its stated objective is not to assign legal blame or liability but to promote aviation safety by uncovering root causes, learning from errors, and preventing future mishaps.

Annex 13 and the Role of Involved States

According to Chapter 5 of Annex 13, the primary responsibility for investigating an aircraft accident rests with the ‘State of Occurrence’ - the nation where the incident took place. In the case of Air India Flight 171, which crashed in Ahmedabad, that responsibility falls squarely on India. Accordingly, the investigation is being led by the Aircraft Accident Investigation Bureau (AAIB), India's official body under the Ministry of Civil Aviation that is mandated to probe all civil aviation accidents and serious incidents.

But the protocol goes further. It extends participation rights to other countries that have a formal connection to the aircraft in question. These include the ‘State of Registry’, where the aircraft is registered; the ‘State of the Operator’,

which operated the aircraft; the ‘State of Design’, where the aircraft was conceptualised; and the ‘State of Manufacture’, where it was built.

In the case of Flight 171, India is both the State of Registry and the State of the Operator, since the aircraft bore Indian registration (notably beginning with the prefix ‘VT’) and was operated by Air India, India's national carrier. However, the State of Design and State of Manufacture are both the United States, because the aircraft was built by Boeing, and its engines manufactured by General Electric, two American aerospace giants. This makes the participation of the NTSB and FAA not just appropriate, but formally required under Annex 13.

DEGREE OF THOUGHT

By: Dipak Kurmi

Moreover, the United Kingdom's involvement is justified by yet another dimension of the protocol. Though not directly connected to the aircraft's operation or design, 53 British nationals were among the dead. ICAO allows the state of nationality of passengers, especially when fatalities are involved, to join the investigation in a limited capacity. Thus, the UK's Civil Aviation Authority is participating with the intent of ensuring transparency and justice for the bereaved British families.

Not an Intrusion, But a Necessity

This multinational investigative presence is not a violation of India's sovereignty, nor is it an example of foreign overreach. It is, rather, a practical necessity born of the deeply interconnected nature of modern aviation. Aircraft today are designed in Seattle, assembled in Chicago, fitted with parts from Germany or Japan, and flown by airlines from Dubai to Delhi. A sin-

gle aircraft type, like the Boeing 737 or Airbus A320, might be operated by dozens of airlines spanning six continents. In such a world, isolating crash investigations within national borders would be counterproductive and, frankly, dangerous.

Take, for instance, the global grounding of the Boeing 737 MAX in 2019, after two catastrophic crashes in Indonesia and Ethiopia. The investigations that followed involved experts from numerous countries, revealing a software flaw in the aircraft's MCAS system that was critical to understanding the problem and implementing corrective measures. The lessons learned in Jakarta and Addis Ababa quite literally helped safeguard air travel in every part of the world. It is this principle of shared learning that underpins the international participation in the Air India Flight 171 investigation.

Indeed, this is not the first time India has activated such protocols. After the crash of Air India Express Flight 812 in Mangalore in 2010, which killed 158 people, India sought and received technical assistance from the NTSB in decoding the aircraft's Flight Data Recorder and Cockpit Voice Recorder. The precedent is well established and respected, both domestically and internationally.

The Investigation Process and the Path Ahead

The investigative process governed by ICAO rules is both technical and collaborative. All participating states and manufacturers are allowed to visit the crash site, inspect the wreckage, review maintenance records, interview crew and air traffic controllers, and submit technical inputs. They may also recommend safety advisories and are entitled to receive copies of the final report.

While India's AAIB retains final

authority, the presence of global experts helps ensure that findings are rigorous, unbiased, and comprehensive. Often, the manufacturers themselves - such as Boeing in this case - send their own engineers as part of the accredited team working with the NTSB. While this may raise concerns about conflicts of interest, ICAO protocols enforce transparency, and all evidence and conclusions are subject to independent verification.

A Global System for Global Crashes

In an era where aviation technology advances faster than regulatory regimes can catch up, and where one flawed bolt or software line can have continent-spanning consequences, no country can afford to investigate in isolation. International participation isn't just a legal formality under Annex 13 - it is a strategic imperative. The inclusion of US and UK agencies in the AI 171 crash probe reflects a matured, rules-based international order in aviation safety - an order India has long supported and benefited from.

To the grieving families of those who perished on Flight 171, this may offer little immediate solace. But it ensures that every data point, every piece of wreckage, and every technical anomaly is examined with the utmost scrutiny - by the world's most experienced aviation experts. In doing so, the tragedy in Ahmedabad might help prevent a future disaster somewhere else.

Air crashes, devastating as they are, become turning points in the evolution of flight safety. If the global aviation system is to be trusted, its responses to such tragedies must be collaborative, transparent, and above all, humane. That is what the Chicago Convention envisioned. And that is what is now unfolding in India. (The writer can be reached at dipakkurmipltd@gmail.com)

For 800 million Indians struggling with basic nutrition, healthcare, GDP rankings are irrelevant

By: P. Sudhir

The CEO of NITI Aayog has asserted that India has emerged as the fourth-largest economy. He was at least truthful enough to concede that this was based on the International Monetary Fund's (IMF) projections for 2025-26 in its World Economic Outlook. Through further elaborations, we precisely come to know that India's nominal GDP is projected to increase to USD 4,187.017 billion ahead of Japan's USD 4,186.431 billion by a whisker. It is altogether a different proposition that India's per capita income happens to be a mere one-thirteenth of Japan's in nominal dollar terms.

Therefore, the current excitement among the apologists of the Modi government's economic think tank which is further amplified by sycophants of the Godi media, sounds bizarre. Actually, this near-obsession with the overall GDP figures is not accidental. It is characteristic of the finance-driven neoliberal economic paradigm. It helps to conceal more about the condition of the people and their livelihood than it reveals. While part of a global trend, this distortion is particularly pronounced in India, now counted among the most unequal economies in the world.

According to the World Inequality Report 2022, the top 1 per cent of India's population holds more than 40 per cent of the nation's wealth, while the bottom 50 per cent holds just 3 per cent. Income inequality is equally stark - the top 10 per cent earn over 57 per cent of the national income. In this context, the obsession with overall GDP and even per capita GDP is not merely a misleading metric; it is a deliberate construct designed to distract public discourse from the cruelty being pursued by the corporate-communal nexus.

The underpinning is loud and clear. As Alfredo Saad-Filho, the noted Brazilian economist, observed in 2006, under the finance-driven neoliberal regime, there is “exploitation and social domination based on the systematic use of state power to impose, under the ideological

veil of non-intervention, a hegemonic project in all areas of social life.” Under the dictates of financial markets and the global interests of US capital, the production of goods and services has ceased to be the principal function of capital. Instead, capital is now deployed primarily to generate short-term super-profits through speculative financial activities.

Mediated by finance, the control over three main sources of capital in the economy - state finance, the domestic savings pool, and the linkages between domestic and foreign capital - has grown increasingly unregulated and concentrated. This dynamic is reflected in the desperation with which the Trump administration pursued a tariff war in an attempt to revive domestic manufacturing jobs. Ironically, it was under the aegis of US-led imperialism that the global dominance of finance was first established.

At the turn of the century, in 2000, global foreign institutional investment (FII) soared to USD 400 trillion, compared to global foreign direct investment (FDI) of just USD 65 trillion - for every dollar of direct investment, there were seven dollars channeled into speculative instruments such as stocks and derivatives. Nearly a quarter-century later, the dominance of finance is even more pronounced. Clearly, the IMF's projected GDP figures do little to explain the inner workings of contemporary capitalism or its devastating consequences for the working class.

In India, the top 1 per cent of the population controls 40 per cent of the total GDP. This means that nearly 1.4 billion people are left with a per capita income of just around USD 1,670. If we remove the top 5 per cent, who control 62 per cent of the nation's wealth, the average drops further to approximately USD 1,100 - less than Rs1 lakh annually. This reflects the grim reality faced by the overwhelming majority of the population.

Compounding this inequality is the sector-wise asymmetry in GDP contribution. The bulk of the GDP is generated by capital-intensive service sectors and large corporate enterprises. Meanwhile,

those engaged in the unorganised informal sectors and agriculture - who constitute a significant portion of the workforce - contribute only a minuscule share to the total GDP. As a result, growing unemployment is accompanied by a deepening crisis in sustainable incomes and livelihoods.

Globally, policy capture by the wealthy has shaped tax policies, regulatory frameworks, and public investment decisions to their advantage. In India, this capture is even more acute. The increasing stranglehold of corporate interests, coupled with the rise of crony capitalism, has led to a systematic transfer of public assets - including natural resources - into private hands. While corporate profits have soared, the share of labour in national income has sharply declined.

The situation in India is particularly dire. Demonetisation dealt a severe blow to the informal economy, which bore the brunt of the disruption. The aftermath of the COVID-19 pandemic only worsened the condition. In such an environment, there is no scope for generating additional employment or ensuring sustainable incomes.

Even the nominal increase in total GDP offers no evidence of shared prosperity. Beyond the working poor and the unemployed, even the middle classes are increasingly vulnerable - not just being left behind, but at risk of sliding downwards.

In the absence of redistributive policies, the elite can afford to opt out of public services - relying on exclusive private schools, corporate hospitals, and gated communities. This erodes the political will to invest in universal public systems. For the 800 million Indians struggling with basic nutrition, housing, education, and healthcare, GDP rankings are irrelevant.

The rise of a corporate-communal nexus is not accidental; it serves to divide people along identity lines, ensuring the regime's continued dominance. In this context, united and collective struggles by the people remain the only viable path forward. (IPA Service)

The black box: Decoding flight mysteries

By: Satyabrata Borah

A black box, commonly referred to in aviation as a flight data recorder (FDR) and cockpit voice recorder (CVR), is a critical device installed on aircraft to record essential information during flight. Despite its name, the black box is painted bright orange to make it easier to locate amid wreckage after an accident. This sophisticated piece of equipment plays a pivotal role in investigating aviation incidents, helping experts piece together the sequence of events leading to a crash. By storing technical data and audio recordings, it provides invaluable insights into mechanical performance, pilot actions, and external factors. When an aircraft is destroyed, recovering and analyzing data from the black box, though challenging, is often feasible due to its robust design and advanced technology. Understanding its function and the process of data retrieval sheds light on its significance in enhancing aviation safety.

The black box consists of two main components: the FDR and the CVR. The FDR captures a wide range of operational parameters, such as altitude, airspeed, heading, engine performance, and control inputs. Modern FDRs can record thousands of parameters, providing a comprehensive snapshot of the aircraft's behavior. The CVR, on the other hand, records audio from the cockpit, including conversations between pilots, communications with air traffic control, and ambient sounds like alarms or mechanical noises. Together, these devices offer a detailed account of the flight, enabling investigators to reconstruct events with remarkable accuracy. The data is stored in crash-survivable memory units designed to withstand extreme conditions, ensuring that information remains intact even after catastrophic accidents.

The construction of a black box is a marvel of engineering. It is built to endure intense heat, high-impact forces, and deep-sea pressures. The outer casing is typically made of stainless steel or titanium, with layers of insulation to protect the internal memory core from fire and impact. The device is strategically placed in the tail section of the aircraft, as this area is less likely to suffer severe damage during a crash. To aid recovery in underwater scenarios, black boxes are equipped with an

underwater locator beacon (ULB). This beacon emits an ultrasonic signal, or “ping,” detectable by sonar equipment, which can operate for up to 30 days after submersion. The bright orange color, combined with reflective tape, further enhances visibility in debris fields.

When an aircraft is destroyed, locating and retrieving the black box is the first priority for investigators. The process varies depending on the crash site. On land, search teams comb through wreckage, often using visual cues to spot the device. In oceanic crashes, the task becomes more complex. Specialized vessels equipped with sonar and remotely operated vehicles (ROVs) are deployed to scan the seafloor. The ULB's signal guides searchers to the approximate location, though strong currents or deep waters can complicate efforts. For instance, in cases like the Air France Flight 447 crash in 2009, it took nearly two years to recover the black box from the Atlantic Ocean. Once found, the device is carefully transported to a laboratory for analysis.

In the lab, experts use specialized equipment to extract data from the black box. The process begins with a thorough inspection to assess damage. If the unit is intact, technicians connect it to systems that decode the stored information. The FDR's data is translated into graphical representations, showing parameters like speed and altitude over time. The CVR's audio is transcribed and analyzed to understand crew interactions and environmental factors. If the black box is damaged, recovery becomes more intricate. Water exposure, fire, or impact can corrupt memory units, requiring delicate procedures to salvage data. Advanced techniques, such as chip-off recovery, allow technicians to remove memory chips and extract information directly. In extreme cases, damaged components may be rebuilt to access the data.

The information retrieved from a black box is critical to determining the cause of a crash. FDR data can reveal mechanical failures, such as engine malfunctions or control system issues. For example, if an aircraft experienced a sudden loss of power, the FDR would show corresponding changes in engine parameters. The CVR complements this by providing context, such as whether pilots were aware of the issue or how they responded. Human factors, like miscommu-

nication or incorrect decisions, can also be identified through cockpit audio. External factors, such as weather or air traffic control instructions, may further emerge as contributing elements. By combining these insights, investigators can pinpoint the root cause, whether it's a technical fault, human error, or an external event.

The findings from black box analysis have far-reaching implications for aviation safety. Each investigation contributes to a global knowledge base, informing improvements in aircraft design, pilot training, and operational procedures. For instance, if a crash is linked to a specific component failure, manufacturers may issue recalls or redesign parts. If pilot error is identified, training programs may be revised to address gaps in skills or decision-making. Regulatory bodies, like the International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO), use these insights to update standards, ensuring safer skies. The black box, therefore, serves as a silent guardian, turning tragedies into opportunities for progress.

Recovering data from a black box is not without challenges. In remote or hostile environments, such as dense jungles or war zones, accessing crash sites can be dangerous or impossible. Deep-sea recoveries are costly and time-consuming, often requiring international cooperation. If the ULB's battery expires before the device is found, locating it becomes exponentially harder. Severe damage to the memory core can also render data irretrievable, though this is rare due to the device's durability. To address these issues, the aviation industry is exploring innovations. One proposal is real-time data streaming, where flight information is transmitted to ground stations via satellite, reducing reliance on physical recovery. However, concerns about cost, cybersecurity, and data privacy have slowed adoption.

Another area of advancement is extending the ULB's battery life. Current beacons last 30 days, but newer models with 90-day capabilities are being introduced. Ejectable black boxes, which detach from the aircraft before impact, are also under consideration. These could float on water or transmit signals from land, simplifying recovery. While these technologies promise to enhance data retrieval, the traditional black box remains the gold standard due to its proven resilience and reliability.

POST BAG

Why career counselling is provided only over phone?

Sir/Ma'am

Since 2005, I have been offering free career counselling over the phone (09435188630) every Saturday from 6 PM to 9 PM for students and parents across different parts of Assam. This service has been publicized widely through newspapers, magazines, radio, television, Facebook, WhatsApp, Twitter, E-mail, YouTube, LinkedIn, Instagram, and other platforms.

Despite this widespread awareness, many people still call at random days and times out-

side the scheduled counselling hours. However, it is practically not possible for me to respond beyond the dedicated time slot. As part of my social responsibility, I offer this free service for only three hours a week, and I sincerely request everyone to contact within this time frame.

Many students and parents often prefer to seek counselling via email, WhatsApp, or Facebook. Some even ask: “Why is career counselling provided only over the phone?” Through this open letter, I wish to explain the reasoning behind it.

Phone conversations enable direct, real-time interaction between the counsellor and the student. This allows for immediate clarification of doubts through interactive question-and-answer sessions. During these calls, I encourage the use of the loudspeaker so that other family members can also listen in, understand the available career options, and actively participate in the de-

cision-making process.

Such conversations help foster better mutual understanding within families, often resulting in more thoughtful and well-informed decisions. Importantly, I never impose a specific career path on any student. I simply present various available options. For example, just as there are multiple ways to travel from Guwahati to Delhi—by bus, train, flight, or private vehicle—similarly, there are multiple pathways to reach a specific career goal. These alternatives can be more effectively explained through real-time dialogue over the phone. Once students receive this information, they are advised to consult with their parents, teachers, or mentors before making a final decision.

Furthermore, phone counselling allows for immediate responses, unlike email or text-based messages which may involve delays. This helps save the valuable time of students. For all these reasons, I provide career coun-

selling only through phone conversations.

Dr. Buljit Buragohain
Career Counsellor and Assistant Professor,
Department of Mechanical Engineering,
Assam Don Bosco University,
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LSHP delay

Sir/Ma'am

A few units of the 2000 megawatt Lower Subansiri Hydroelectric Project (LSHP) were slated for commissioning in May, but are now in a pickle as the various local bodies have raised serious concerns about the impact these units would have on the downstream areas, notably, the vulnerable Majuli river island. The project is already facing time constraints, as it was expected to be completed several years ago. Due to

protests and agitations, the project was stalled for several years without even a rod being bent.

Now, when the project is near completion and waiting to churn out electricity, these local bodies have magically risen and started protesting without thinking about giving out alternatives that would have a comparatively less impact on the downstream areas to the authorities. Assam is in dire need of electricity, and it cannot afford any delay in this project. Regarding the impact these few units would have on the downstream areas, we can suggest that one of these units would run continuously, which would sufficiently lower the impact during the peak discharge. Another suggestion would be building a temporary haven for the people and animals living downstream where they can shift to during the flood season. I urge the local bodies to cooperate and think about alternatives rather than just shouting out slogans.

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Responsible travel is crucial in the Himalayas: Civic education and sanitation

By: Himani Usha Tripathi

The Himalayas are a spectacular but highly fragile ecosystem, with steep slopes, thin soils and sensitive watersheds. Climate change and human activity exacerbate this fragility. Experts note that the Indian Himalayas face "unique challenges due to fragile ecosystems and the effects of climate change, such as melting glaciers, erratic weather patterns, and increased natural disasters".

Inadequate waste management and unplanned development have already degraded high-altitude watersheds and habitats. For example, tourism has brought 58,000 visitors a year to Everest by 2019, and pilgrimage and trekking traffic are growing rapidly (estimated 7.9% annual growth in Himalayan tourism through 2023).

These pressures make even small amounts of litter and wastewater profoundly damaging. As one study warned, mismanaged waste "scars picturesque mountain landscapes" and can trigger land degradation and polluted rivers.

Impacts of Irresponsible Tourism

Irresponsible tourism is already burying the Himalayas in garbage. Each Everest climber spends weeks on the mountain and typically generates 8 kg of trash. Most of this waste (oxygen bottles, food cans, tents, plastic and even human waste) is left behind on the slopes. Scientists have found microplastics even in summit snow, linked to discarded jackets and gear.

In Sagarmatha (Everest) National Park – a World Heritage site – up to 700 visitors per day during peak season strain the fragile trails. Climate change is now thawing long-buried trash, exposing old dumps to the elements. In total, Himalayan lodges (e.g. Everest lodges) generate hundreds of tons of refuse each year, most of which is still burned or buried in primitive pits.

Tourism's toll spreads downhill: Recent reports estimate the Indian Himalayan Region generates 5–8 million tons of solid waste per year, with Uttarakhand and Himachal Pradesh (which saw 400 million visitors since 2010) among the worst performers in waste management. Over 60% of waste in these states is dumped, burned or washed into rivers. Waste dumping threatens wildlife and public health – it may impact "over 30,000 species of local flora and fauna" in these mountains.

Studies of Himalayan villages show that tourism spikes directly drive more trash: for example, a remote village in Uttarkashi saw seasonal waste generation jump dramatically as trekking groups arrived. Photos from India show cows foraging through roadside plastic waste on Himalayan trails, and burning dumps on hillsides



contaminating forests and rivers. In short, litter and garbage from trekking and pilgrimage not only spoil scenic views but erode soil, pollute water and harm wildlife.

Sanitation and Public Health Challenges

The lack of sanitation infrastructure compounds the problem. Above base camp on Everest, there are no toilets; climbers must relieve themselves on the open slopes, leaving human excrement mixed with trash. Even at Base Camp, toilets collect waste in barrels that are only sporadically flown out.

Below the high camps, many Himalayan villages still lack sewage treatment: untreated grey water and sewage are dumped in open pits or onto the soil, later washing into streams during monsoon. This contaminates the watershed for thousands of people downstream and poses severe health risks.

In fact, experts warn that fecal contamination from high camps and villages can spread cholera, hepatitis A and other diseases among local communities and trekkers'. On pilgrimage routes (e.g. the Char Dham Yatra in India), authorities have had to construct dozens of permanent toilets – 40 new 4-seat restrooms were built along the 2019 route – in order to become open-defecation free.

Taken together, overflowing garbage and untreated waste make sanitation a critical concern. For example, Sagarmatha Park's watershed supplies water to Sherpa communities; yet there is virtually no organised waste management in many Himalayan valleys.

A recent photo-essay notes claimed: "There are no waste management or sanitation facilities in the area, so garbage and sewage are

emptied into big pits... wash into waterways during the monsoon." This situation underscores why every traveler's "civic sense" matters: left unaddressed, tourism waste not only defiles the scenery but infects the ecosystem and people who live there.

Cultivating Civic Sense Among Travellers

Building civic awareness in visitors is key to preserving Himalayan heritage. Guides, NGOs and communities are increasingly emphasising "leave no trace" principles. Travelers are urged to "know before you go" – learn local rules and the fragility of the region. For instance, trekkers often assume that trash bins in tea houses mean waste will be carted away, but in reality most "trash" is burned or dumped nearby.

Recognising this, conscientious hikers now carry out their own waste: one advice column notes that climbers keep soda bottles and cans in their packs to dispose of back in Kathmandu. Eating freshly cooked local meals instead of pre-packaged foods (e.g. dal-bhat in Nepal) can greatly reduce packaging waste.

Public education campaigns also promote civic duty. For example, the Nature Interpretation and Learning Centre at Surya-Kunj (Uttarakhand) offers workshops and trekking camps to teach both residents and visitors about Himalayan biodiversity and sustainable practices. The "People for Himalaya" movement explicitly calls for building "consciousness on production and management of waste... for tourists" in mountain areas.

Volunteer clean-up drives (such as the annual Himalayan Cleanup campaign) engage trekkers and local youth; one recent campaign mobilised about 15,000 volunteers across Himalayan states

to collect plastic waste and audit litter sources. By spreading these messages – through signboards, guide briefings and social media – tourists can internalise the idea that preserving the Himalayas' natural and cultural heritage is everyone's responsibility.

Government and NGO Initiatives

Many government and non-profit programs are tackling sanitation in the mountains. At the community level, local NGOs operate recycling facilities and collection networks.

For example, the NGO Waste Warriors runs MRFs where collected waste from town and trail is segregated and compressed for recycling. Waste Warriors itself notes that good waste management means "turning waste into a resource through practices like... recycling," thereby reducing landfills.

The decentralised "Paryavaran Sakhi" model is another success: local women were trained as environmental leaders to collect waste, run composting centres and educate villagers, showing how grassroots action can improve sanitation in remote areas. In Uttarakhand's Darma Valley, Goonj's "Clean the Himalaya" campaign mobilised over 800 families in 15 villages to gather plastic litter from fields and streams for recycling.

At the policy level, authorities have launched campaigns linked to national programs. In 2019 Uttarakhand's "Swachh Bharat Swachh Garhwal" campaign enlisted over 100,000 pilgrims during the Char Dham Yatra to volunteer in daily clean-up drives.

To reduce open defecation, the state's tourism department installed dozens of permanent toilets along the Yatra routes. In Himachal Pradesh, strict bans on plastics (e.g. non-biodegradable packaging banned since 2013) have helped curb litter. Similarly, in Nepal the government enforces an Everest waste-deposit rule: every climber must pay a refundable US\$4,000 deposit and bring back at least 8 kg of trash (the typical expedition waste) to reclaim their money.

The Nepali army and NGOs routinely mount clean-up expeditions: in 2023 a campaign recovered 35 tons of garbage from peaks like Everest and Annapurna.

Other initiatives include the Sagarmatha Pollution Control Committee (est. 1991), which builds waste infrastructure and educates Sherpa communities on recycling and reuse.

Innovative projects like the Everest Biogas facility are converting human waste into fuel in high camps. Civil society networks – such as the Integrated Mountain Initiative – coordinate large-scale cleanups. For example, the "Himalayan Cleanup 2024" (May 25–June 5) led by Ramesh Negi is urging local governments, schools and

NGOs across mountain states to join a coordinated waste-collection drive.

Academics and the World Bank are also studying these issues: one regional waste study found that open dumping and burning are common in Himalayan towns, and advocates a phased upgrade of solid waste services. Overall, these programs highlight how policy, community participation and regulation must work together to improve sanitation.

Best Practices for Travellers

Every traveller can make a difference by following "leave no trace" habits:

- **Educate Yourself Beforehand:** Learn about waste facilities and rules on your route. Don't assume on-trail trash bins mean offloading – often garbage is still buried or burned if not properly managed. Know if local deposits or cleanup rules exist (Everest or pilgrimage regulations, for example).

- **Minimise and Pack Out Waste:** Bring reusable water bottles, bags and gear. Eat local, minimally packaged foods (e.g. hot meals at lodges rather than instant noodles) to cut down plastic. If you generate non-biodegradable trash, carry it back to the nearest town or a recycling point – don't dump it. For example, in Nepal many treks are now cargo-only for trash (trekkers carry a "carry me back" bag); on Everest, climbers are encouraged to descend with 1 kg of trash each.

- **Use Sanitary Facilities:** Use toilets where available (and always hygiene kits for high-altitude toilets). Never defecate near water sources or trails. Respect new facilities: on the Char Dham Yatra route, for instance, 40 permanent toilets were installed so pilgrims could be open-defecation free.

- **Volunteer and Advocate:** Join clean-up drives if possible. Many Himalayan circuits have organised garbage pickups; even informal cleanup among your trek group sets an example. Share your knowledge and ethos – educate fellow travellers and local guides about proper waste disposal. Small acts add up: as one Nepal trekker realised, educating oneself and others about waste "is probably the most important" step.

By traveling responsibly – reducing waste, respecting sanitation norms, and helping spread awareness – visitors help preserve the Himalayas' natural beauty and cultural heritage. Each trekker or pilgrim who carries out their trash, skips single-use plastics, and respects local rules contributes to cleaner rivers, safer wildlife, and healthier mountain communities. As local leaders emphasize, treating the Himalayas with civic sense and care today ensures these sacred landscapes endure for generations. (Courtesy: Youth ki Awaaz)

Why is land in South Africa rising? Droughts may have a role to play



By: Swati Bhatia

Land in South Africa has been rising at the rate of 2 millimetres per year, according to a recent report. Between 2012 and 2020, the land rose by about 6mm, showed data published in the Journal of Geophysical Research: Solid Earth in March 2025.

The general understanding that the rise is due to hot magma rising from the Earth's mantle at the Quathlamba hotspot (a geological feature located in South Africa) or a seismic activity, may not be the driving force this time, the authors of the report indicated.

Instead, loss of water during droughts may have caused the earth's surface to bounce up as an elastic response when excess water (groundwater, soil moisture, surface water) was removed. The mass of water pressing down the Earth's crust is reduced, resulting in upward lift of the crust, the authors explained.

Christian Mielke, researcher at the University of Bonn and lead author of the study, told Down To Earth (DTE) that the initial objective of the study was to ascertain whether the decline in surface water levels during the severe Cape Town drought from the year 2015 to year 2018 could be quantified by inverting the land lift.

The rise is measured by the South African Global Navigation Satellite System (GNSS)-Trignet base stations, which are fitted with receivers and antennas. Data is continuously transmitted from each base station to a control centre that processes the real-time data for users, in relation to the loss of water mass.

Applying the methodology to the entire country revealed that GNSS-observed vertical land motion in nearly all regions of South Africa are closely corre-

lated with water mass changes observed by models and satellite data.

They analysed GPS data from 2000-2021 to track the vertical land movements which were then translated to equivalent water loss using various geophysical models.

The decrease in Total Water Storage (TWS) findings were validated using satellite gravity data from GRACE and other hydrological models. GNSS findings of land lift also coincided with the periods of drought in the Cape Town.

Mielke told DTE that the land lift observed by GNSS was affected by the total water storage, including groundwater, soil moisture and surface water.

But DTE reports have also shown that over extraction of groundwater has led to land subsidence. So what was different in this case? Also, are there other factors contributing to each of the two cases (land subsidence and upliftment)?

In a correspondence with DTE, Mielke explained the distinction between the two effects. In the loading effect, variations in surface mass load (load from water mass in this case) deform the Earth's crust. If the water on the crust disappears, the crust bulges out at this position, the researcher said. In the poro-elastic effect, the land sinks when water-filled pores or aquifer dry out and collapse, he noted.

Which effect is more dominant depends on whether more surface water or groundwater is lost, and what the local poro-elastic properties are, Mielke told DTE. Effects of mantle flow, dynamic topography, poro-elastic effects might be in the observed signal as well, he added.

An uplift over South Africa during the drought years and

some stations also showed subsidence in this time period, the author said.

On an average, South Africans use 237 litres of water per person per day, which is higher than the global average of the 173 litres of water per person per day, the findings in the report showed. Gauteng and Western Cape provinces, for instance, are home to famous cities like Pretoria and Cape Town with very high consumption of water.

Cape Town has been witnessing Day Zero since 2015, where it often lands into conditions where the taps are on the verge of drying up.

Even areas that typically receive rain throughout the year also suffered levels below the extractable limit. A DTE research also recently reported that Johannesburg, the richest city of South Africa, was in a similar situation.

The crisis is made worse by inequality. A survey in Cape Town revealed that the richest 13.7 per cent of people used more than 51 per cent of the water consumed by the entire city, where elite households were found consuming upto 2,161 litres of water per day and the upper-middle-income households reached about 988.78 litres per day. Informal dwellers and lower-income households, which together constitute about 61.5 per cent of Cape Town's population, consumed 27.3 per cent of the city's water, the data showed. Lower-income families used only 178 litres per day and informal households consumed 41 litres a day, the survey revealed.

The findings of the study highlight how urbanisation is causing a continuous damage and nature is providing subtle evidences for societies to rethink and redesign our cities. (Courtesy : Down to Earth)

Global warming and heatwave: A growing crisis

By: Himangshu Ranjan Bhuyan

The phenomenon of global warming has become one of the most pressing challenges facing humanity today. It is an urgent environmental issue that affects every aspect of our planet's climate system. Among the many consequences of global warming, heatwaves stand out as an increasingly frequent and intense hazard, causing profound impacts on ecosystems, human health, economies, and societies worldwide.

Global warming refers to the long-term rise in average global temperatures caused primarily by human activities, especially the burning of fossil fuels such as coal, oil, and natural gas. These activities release large amounts of greenhouse gases—carbon dioxide, methane, and nitrous oxide—into the atmosphere, creating a heat-trapping blanket that prevents the Earth's heat from escaping into space. Over decades, this accumulation of greenhouse gases has led to a steady increase in the planet's surface temperature, disrupting natural climate patterns.

One of the most visible and dangerous manifestations of global warming is the increased frequency, duration, and severity of heatwaves. Heatwaves are prolonged periods of excessively high temperatures, often accompanied by high humidity, which can lead to heat stress, dehydration, and heat-related illnesses. What once might have been rare and exceptional weather events are now becoming alarmingly common across many parts of the world. Regions that traditionally experienced moderate climates are now facing scorching temperatures with devastating consequences.

The science behind heatwaves is closely tied to the broader effects of global warming. As the Earth warms, the atmosphere holds more moisture, creating conditions for extreme weather. High-pressure systems tend to stagnate longer, trapping hot air in certain regions. Urban areas exacerbate the heat effect through the urban heat island phenomenon, where concrete and asphalt absorb and re-radiate heat, raising temperatures even higher. This combination of global and local factors contributes to heatwaves becoming more intense and prolonged.

The impacts of heatwaves are far-reaching. From a public health perspective, heatwaves pose serious risks. Vulnerable populations such as the elderly, children, people with pre-existing health conditions, and outdoor workers face heightened danger. Heat stress can lead to heat exhaustion, heatstroke, and even death if adequate measures are not taken. Hospitals often see a surge in admissions during heatwave periods, straining healthcare systems already burdened by other challenges. The World Health Organization estimates that tens of thousands of deaths worldwide are attributable to heatwaves each year, a figure expected to rise as climate change accelerates.

Beyond health, heatwaves have significant economic repercussions. Agricultural productivity is particularly sensitive to extreme heat, as crops can wither under intense temperatures and drought conditions

As global citizens, understanding the link between global warming and heatwaves is fundamental to driving change. It calls for a collective commitment to sustainable living, policy reforms, innovation, and empathy for those most affected

worsen. This threatens food security and livelihoods, especially in regions dependent on farming. Energy demands spike as people rely more on air conditioning, often pushing electricity grids to their limits and leading to power outages. Industries such as construction and transportation face disruptions, reducing productivity and increasing costs. In some cases, heatwaves have triggered wildfires that destroy property, disrupt ecosystems, and cause further economic losses.

Environmental consequences are equally concerning. Heatwaves stress natural ecosystems, endangering plant and animal

portation, and protecting forests are essential steps to slow the pace of warming and reduce the frequency of extreme heat events. International cooperation and adherence to agreements such as the Paris Accord are critical to achieving these goals.

Adaptation, on the other hand, involves preparing societies to cope with the unavoidable impacts of heatwaves. This includes developing early warning systems, improving urban planning to increase green spaces and shade, enhancing healthcare preparedness, and raising public awareness about heat risks and protective measures. Building climate-resilient infrastructure and ensuring equitable access to cooling technologies are vital to safeguarding vulnerable communities. Governments, businesses, and individuals all have roles to play in fostering resilience.

The increasing occurrence of heatwaves is a wake-up call highlighting the urgency of tackling global warming. It reveals the interconnectedness of climate systems, human health, economic stability, and environmental sustainability. Ignoring the warning signs or delaying action will only deepen the crisis, making future heatwaves more deadly and destructive.

As global citizens, understanding the link between global warming and heatwaves is fundamental to driving change. It calls for a collective commitment to sustainable living, policy reforms, innovation, and empathy for



species unable to cope with rapid temperature rises. Freshwater resources dwindle as evaporation rates increase, intensifying water scarcity issues. Coral reefs, vital to marine biodiversity, suffer bleaching events under prolonged heat stress. The cumulative effect is a deterioration of the natural systems on which humanity depends, creating a feedback loop that further exacerbates climate change.

Addressing the challenge of heatwaves in the context of global warming requires a two-pronged approach: mitigation and adaptation. Mitigation focuses on reducing the root causes of global warming by cutting greenhouse gas emissions. Transitioning to renewable energy sources, improving energy efficiency, promoting sustainable trans-

those most affected. The battle against heatwaves is part of the larger fight against climate change, a struggle that will define the legacy we leave for generations to come.

In conclusion, global warming is not a distant threat but a present reality reshaping the world's climate in dangerous ways. Heatwaves serve as one of the clearest indicators of this transformation, exposing vulnerabilities and demanding immediate attention. Through concerted global efforts, it is possible to mitigate the causes, adapt to the changes, and build a future where extreme heat no longer poses an existential threat to life on Earth. The time to act is now. (The author can be reached at himangshur1989@gmail.com or 9954812261, 9864000260)

Munir-Trump lunch 'huge setback'

PM must take nation into confidence on talks with US Prez: Cong

NEW DELHI, June 18: The Congress on Wednesday demanded that Prime Minister Narendra Modi must immediately chair an all-party meeting upon his return from his three-nation tour to brief leaders on what he has told US President Donald Trump in a telephonic conversation and take the nation into confidence.

The opposition party also termed as a "huge setback" Pakistan Army Chief Gen Asim Munir's scheduled lunch with Trump, and said the PM should have conveyed India's displeasure on it to the US president during their telephonic conversation. Congress general secretary in-charge communications Jairam Ramesh asserted that if Indira Gandhi would have been the prime minister she would definitely have conveyed her displeasure to whoever the US President would have been.

Speaking with PTI, Ramesh also urged the government to form a "Pahalgam Review Committee" on the lines of the Kargil Review Committee that was set up three days after the Kargil War and was chaired by K Subrahmanyam, father of External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar.

He said the prime minister must rebut in Parliament Trump's claims of using trade as an instrument for mediating a ceasefire between India and Pakistan.

The Congress leader said the Modi government's diplomacy



must depend less on optics and more on substance.

Ramesh's remarks came after Modi spoke with President Trump and set the record straight that India had paused strikes on Pakistan during Operation Sindoor following a request from Islamabad and not due to mediation or offer of a trade deal by the US.

In his 35-minute phone call with Trump on Tuesday, Modi briefed the US President on Operation Sindoor, launched by India against terror sites in Pakistan, and made it clear that it has never accepted any third-party mediation and will never accept it in the future, according to Foreign Secretary Vikram Misri.

On Trump's scheduled lunch with Munir, Ramesh said, "This is a triple jhatka for Indian diplo-

macy. Today Field Marshal Munir, whose incendiary, inflammatory, provocative and unacceptable remarks formed the background to the Pahalgam terror attack, is set to have lunch with President Trump. The same military man who is not the head of government is being invited for a special one-on-one lunch with President Trump. This is a huge setback."

"The second huge setback came when US General Michael Kurilla, the US Central Command Chief, had declared Pakistan to be a 'phenomenal partner' in counter terror operations. Same Pakistan that gave sanctuary to Osama Bin Laden who was killed in May 2, 2011 in Abbottabad. How does Pakistan become a phenomenal partner? Pakistan is a phenomenal perpetrator. To call a perpetrator

partner is a setback for Indian diplomacy," Ramesh told PTI.

He said the third setback was President Trump 14 times claiming credit for pausing Operation Sindoor and having a ceasefire between India and Pakistan.

"He (Trump) says he used trade as an instrument, equating India and Pakistan. He said this 14 times and the PM has not said anything since May 10. So this is a triple setback," the Congress leader said.

On the Modi-Trump telephonic conversation, Ramesh said the PM is said to have told Trump that trade was not discussed in relation to Operation Sindoor and there is no room for mediation.

"Why doesn't he say this to the all-party meeting? That is why we have been demanding a special Parliament session so that the PM takes the nation into confidence and say all the things he has supposed to have told President Trump," Ramesh said.

"When he comes back, let him immediately call an all-party meeting and say this is what my 35-minute conversation with President Trump was all about," he said.

It has taken 37 days for the PM to break his silence on Trump's claims made 14 times, Ramesh said, reiterating that Modi must take the nation into confidence.

"I feel that Asim Munir's lunch and Kurilla's statements are huge setbacks for PM's diplomacy. Diplomacy has been high on optics

under the Modi government. These are unexpected setbacks. We must depend less on optics and more on substance," Ramesh said.

"There is no substitute for taking the nation into confidence and building a collective will and resolve," he said. Ramesh alleged that Modi was "divider-in-chief" and asked why he doesn't take opposition leaders into confidence.

"Whatever he has supposed to have told Trump - which the Foreign Secretary has released, let him talk to the opposition parties, let him say all this from his mouth. He must rebut Trump's claims on the floor of the House. He must rebut it and not get other ministers to do so," Ramesh said. Ramesh also said that during his conversation with Trump, Modi should have conveyed India's displeasure over the scheduled lunch with Munir.

"I would have expected that India would have conveyed its extreme displeasure - If Indira Gandhi would have been PM she would definitely would have conveyed her displeasure to whoever the US President would be whether (Richard) Nixon or (Ronald) Reagan," he said.

Earlier, in a post on X before the news broke about the Modi-Trump conversation, Ramesh said President Trump himself has "trumpeted" 14 times that he brought about a ceasefire between India and Pakistan, meaning he ended Operation Sindoor. (PTI)

BJP rips into Congress after Modi tells Trump India won't accept mediation over Kashmir



NEW DELHI, June 18: The BJP said on Wednesday that Prime Minister Narendra Modi's conversation with US President Donald Trump on Operation Sindoor has "busted" every lie of the Congress, stating that if the opposition party does not believe in this, then it should be considered a "partner" of Pakistan.

BJP IT department head Amit Malviya said, "The Congress and its troll army simply can't digest the fact that Prime Minister Modi told President Trump in clear terms — India neither needs nor accepts any third-party mediation."

"Congress must stop maligning India's firm and principled foreign policy just to feed its petty narratives," he said in a post on X.

"Every Congress lie has been busted," said BJP's Shehzad Poonawalla, lambasting the main opposition party.

The attack on the Congress from a number of BJP leaders came after Modi, earlier, set the record straight in a telephonic conversation with Trump, saying Operation Sindoor was "paused" following a request from Pakistan and not due to mediation or offer of a trade deal by the US.

In a 35-minute phone call with Trump on Tuesday, Modi briefed the US President on Operation Sindoor, launched by India against terror sites in Pakistan, and made it clear that countries that support terrorism must face the consequences.

The opposition party has constantly targeted the government over Trump's claim of mediating between India and Pakistan with his offer of trade deals to the two countries.

Following Foreign Secretary Vikram Misri's statement on the phone call between the two lead-

ers, Congress general secretary in-charge communications Jairam Ramesh continued with his swipe at Modi. He demanded that the PM must immediately chair an all-party meeting on his return from his three-nation tour to brief leaders on what transpired in the telephonic conversation and take the nation into confidence.

The opposition party also termed the scheduled lunch between Pakistan Army Chief Gen Asim Munir and Trump a "huge setback" and said the PM should have conveyed India's displeasure on it to the US president during their telephonic conversation.

Hitting back, BJP spokesperson Pradeep Bhandari said Modi made it clear to Trump that no third country mediated and that India gave a befitting reply to Pakistan.

"If Pakistan fires bullets, India will respond with bombs. Even after that, if Congress does not believe in India's stand, then it should be believed that Pakistan and Congress are team partners," he alleged.

Malviya alleged that under the Congress, India was seen as a "weak, third-world country". "Today, India is a rising power - a bright star in the global order. No amount of lies can dim that truth."

He also accused Ramesh of being a "congenital liar, much like Rahul Gandhi" after the Congress leader cited a January 2025 read-out from the White House as the US statement on Modi's latest conversation with Trump.

Ramesh, however, acknowledged later that he made an "inadvertent error" and immediately rectified it.

Poonawalla said in a swipe at the Congress, "Shame on Congress. They are not INC but PNC: Pakistani National Congress." (PTI)

ED raids 37 locations in ₹ 2,000 crore AAP era Delhi classroom construction 'scam'

NEW DELHI, June 18: The Enforcement Directorate on Wednesday searched multiple premises in the national capital as part of a money laundering investigation into an alleged ₹ 2,000 crore classroom construction scam which took place during the previous AAP government, official sources said.

The federal probe agency carried out the raids after it recently registered a criminal case under the Prevention of Money Laundering Act (PMLA) taking cognisance of a Delhi Anti-Corruption Branch (ACB) FIR into the said allegations. At least 37 premises of contractors and private entities linked to the case have been covered by the ED officials, the sources said.

The ACB had booked Manish Sisodia and Satyendar Jain, Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) leaders and former ministers in the Arvind Kejriwal-led Delhi government, in its FIR filed on April 30. The FIR alleged that financial irregularities to the tune of ₹ 2,000 crore were done in the construction of over 12,000 classrooms or semi-permanent structures in Delhi government schools between 2015-16 and 2022-23. The accused in the ED case are the same, sources told PTI.

The AAP, after filing of the Delhi ACB case, had charged that the ruling BJP was using the probe agency (ACB) as a "tool" to target its leaders and claimed there was no corruption in the construction of classrooms. (PTI)

No oppn to Badgujar's induction into BJP: Fadnavis

PUNE, June 18: Maharashtra Chief Minister Devendra Fadnavis on Wednesday defended the induction of former Shiv Sena (UBT) leader Sudhakar Badgujar into the BJP, saying there was no opposition to his entry into the ruling party.

Fadnavis also said Maharashtra BJP chief Chandrashekar Bawankule was not against Badgujar's entry into the BJP.

Badgujar, once considered close to Shiv Sena (UBT) MP Sanjay Raut, was targeted by the BJP last year after a video purportedly showed him dancing with Saleem 'Kutta', an accused in the 1993 Mumbai serial blasts case.

He joined the BJP on Tuesday, even as party MLA Seema Hiray strongly opposed his entry.

Badgujar, who had been jailed for a brief period, recently expressed discomfort with the Sena (UBT), and met Fadnavis. He was expelled from the opposition party soon after.

On Tuesday, there was initially a confusion over his induction into the BJP as Bawankule said he was not aware of the development, but later he himself inducted Badgujar and another

former Sena (UBT) leader Babanrao Gholap at the party office in Mumbai.

Asked about Badgujar's induction, Fadnavis told reporters it is true that Badgujar was criticised by BJP leader Nitesh Rane (over alleged ties with an aide of Dawood Ibrahim), but no action was taken against him in the police case that was registered. "This happened when he was in that party (Sena-UBT), before the state assembly elections (held in November last year). Now, he has expressed his desire to join the BJP. If someone wants to join the BJP, they are welcome. The only expectation is that once they join, they must adhere to the BJP's rules and regulations," he said.

The CM said when Badgujar's induction was confirmed on Tuesday, the responsibility for it was given to minister Girish Mahajan.

"BJP state president Chandrashekar Bawankule was initially not aware about his induction. In fact, later, Bawankule saheb himself clarified the matter," he said.

"He (Bawankule) was not opposed to Badgu-

jar's induction and was present during the joining event. What I can say is that there may have been a communication gap, but no one opposed Badgujar's entry into the BJP," Fadnavis said.

Asked about NCP (SP) chief Sharad Pawar's recent remarks that his party would not align with those who join hands with the BJP, Fadnavis refused to comment on a matter that does not concern him.

Notably, Prime Minister Narendra Modi has told President Donald Trump that India and Pakistan halted their military actions last month following direct talks between their militaries without any mediation by the US, calling out the American leader's narrative that he brokered the ceasefire. Asked about it, Fadnavis said it has been India's consistent stand that there is no need for any mediation on the conflict with the neighbouring country.

The CM was at Dehu in Pune to participate in the departure of Sant Tukaram Maharaj 'palkhi' (palanquin) for Pandharpur as a part of annual wari procession. (PTI)

Corporate sector key pillar of nation's economic growth, development: Prez Murmu

NEW DELHI, June 18: President Droupadi Murmu on Wednesday said that the corporate sector is a key pillar of the nation's economic growth and development.

While addressing officer trainees of the Indian Corporate Law Service, she noted that their decisions would influence not only policies and regulations but also the trust that citizens and investors have in the country's institutions. As officers entrusted with the implementation and enforcement of corporate laws, "your role will be central in nurturing a business environment that is

transparent, accountable, and conducive" to innovation and entrepreneurship, the President said. "The corporate sector is a key pillar of our nation's economic growth and development," Murmu told the trainees, who had called on her at the Rashtrapati Bhavan here. Referring to the Companies Act of 2013, she highlighted their responsibility to ensure that the law is not only enforced but also understood, respected, and applied in a way that promotes justice, fairness, and opportunity for all. The officer trainees of the Defence Aeronautical Quality

Assurance Service and Central Labour Service also met the President. Addressing the trainees, she asserted that quality in military aviation is not just about meeting technical specifications—it is about ensuring operational safety, mission preparedness, reliability, and strategic superiority. "You have a prime responsibility to ensure that all military aviation stores, whether indigenously produced or imported, meet the stringent quality and airworthiness requirements at par with the highest global standards," Murmu said. The president further emphasised that augmenting defence capabilities requires not only strengthening public sector undertakings but also actively handholding and enabling the private sector. "By integrating private enterprises into the defence ecosystem through supportive policies and technology transfers, India can accelerate indigenous efforts and position itself as a global defence manufacturing hub," she added. (PTI)

Speed trial conducted successfully GM inspects Araria-Galgolia new broad gauge line project

HT Bureau GUWAHATI, June 18: The General Manager of Northeast Frontier Railway (Construction), Arun Kumar Chaudhary, carried out an extensive inspection of the Araria-Galgolia New Broad Gauge Line railway project on June 16.

The inspection was conducted along the newly laid railway line between Araria and Thakurganj in Bihar's Katihar Division.

According to an official statement, the inspection was accompanied by a high-speed trial run at 120 kmph, demonstrating the operational readiness and quality of the newly constructed track.

Member of Parliament from Araria, Pradeep Kumar Singh, along with other senior officials of NFR, was present during the inspection.

The Araria-Galgolia project spans 110.75 km from Araria

Court to Thakurganj and is a key infrastructure initiative aimed at improving railway connectivity in Bihar and adjoining areas.

The project is scheduled for completion within 2025.

During the window trailing inspection, the General Manager reviewed progress across the project, including infrastructure and track works.

Two sections—Araria-Araria Court-Rahamatpur (8.24 km) and Pawakhali-Thakurganj (23.24 km)—were commissioned earlier in April and November 2024, respectively.

The remaining 79.27 km section between Rahamatpur and Pawakhali is now pending commissioning and will complete the entire route once operational.

The project features the construction of 64 major bridges, 264 minor bridges, and 15 railway sta-

tions, highlighting the scale and complexity of the engineering work.

These structural components are crucial to ensuring seamless connectivity and maintaining high standards of operational safety.

Once fully operational, the new broad gauge line is expected to serve as a vital transport corridor connecting remote and underserved regions of Bihar to the national railway grid.

The line will facilitate improved passenger and freight movement, promote regional tourism, enhance trade activities, and bolster cross-border connectivity with Nepal.

The Northeast Frontier Railway has reaffirmed its commitment to completing the project within the stipulated timeline, maintaining stringent quality and safety standards throughout.

India a 'bright spot' amid global uncertainty, says Chief Economic Advisor

THIRUVANANTHAPURAM, June 18: India remains a rare "bright spot" in a world facing growing uncertainty, said Chief Economic Advisor (CEA) V Anantha Nageswaran, pointing to the country's steady economic performance despite ongoing global challenges.

Talking to PTI, the CEA said that while conflicts and disruptions have been part of the global scene since 2022, they have become more intense and unpredictable, making the overall environment—whether political, economic or security-related—far more difficult for growth across the world.

"You could say that downside risks are higher than the potential for upside surprises," Nageswaran said, when asked for his views on the impact on the Indian economy due to rising global uncertainties caused by military conflicts in West Asia, between Ukraine and Russia, and also between India and Pakistan, as well as tariff wars.

He said this is not just a problem for India -- it's affecting many countries.

"To some extent, one can say that the global environment today—whether political, economic or related to security—has become considerably more complicated and more challenging for growth, not just for India but for several countries, almost for the entire world economy," the CEA said.



But under these circumstances, Nageswaran said he believes that India does indeed stand out as a relatively "bright spot."

Noting that India's economy has shown resilience since the COVID-19 pandemic, achieving strong growth while also improving its fiscal health, he said, "We have reduced the fiscal deficit and brought down government debt levels."

According to him, this has helped build confidence among investors, as reflected in the narrowing gap between Indian and US 10-year government bond yields-- "something we've never seen at this level before."

The CEA said India's current growth of around 6.5 per cent is a significant achievement under the circumstances.

Given how tough the global climate has become since the 2008 financial crisis, maintaining this rate is no small feat, he said.

While the government continues efforts to raise the growth rate to 7 per cent and beyond, Nageswaran cautioned that the world is no longer operating under the same favourable conditions it once did.

The CEA said that the government is doing the hard work to grow faster, but even maintaining a 6.5 per cent growth rate was a solid outcome in today's world.

Nageswaran said India's strategic edge in its ongoing tensions with Pakistan, along with its steady economic reforms, is reinforcing the country's image as a stable and secure investment destination.

India has not only asserted clear dominance in the recent standoff with Pakistan but also demonstrated maturity and confidence in global diplomatic forums. This has contributed to the perception of India as a reliable and strong economy, Nageswaran said in response to a query.

He added that India's status as a reliable investment destination is also supported by the fact that the country has recovered from the COVID-19 pandemic shock far better than many other nations -- in terms of growth rate, job creation, and fiscal management. (PTI)

**WALK IN INTERVIEW
FOR SELECTION OF CANDIDATES TO
UNDERGO UPSC/APSC COACHING FREE OF COST AT
DIPHU, DONKA AND GUWAHATI CENTRES
FOR THE SESSION 2025-26
SPONSORED BY KAAC
IN COLLABORATION WITH
UNIFIED FOUNDATION**

INTERESTED CANDIDATES MAY PLEASE ATTEND THE WALK IN INTERVIEW TO BE HELD ON 21/06/2025 (SATURDAY) FROM 9:00 AM ONWARDS AT THE KAAC SECRETARIAT NEW BUILDING (1ST FLOOR).

ALL INTERESTED CANDIDATES MAY PLEASE BRING THEIR CERTIFICATES/MARKSHEETS AND OTHER RELEVANT DOCUMENTS AND 2 (TWO) PASSPORT SIZE PHOTOGRAPH.

MINIMUM QUALIFICATION SHALL BE GRADUATE IN ANY STREAM.

THE FOLLOWING PERSONS MAY BE CONTACTED FOR ANY CLARIFICATION:-

1. HEBOL DOLEY – 8800319784
2. RICHARD TERANG – 9365308883

Sd/-
Secretary
Cum Nodal Officer
UPSC/APSC Coaching Centre
Karbi Anglong Autonomous Council
Diphu

BJP chief assures support, urges vigilance amid rising monsoon-triggered disasters in Arunachal

Moyung visits landslide victims' families in Bichom



HT Bureau

NAMSAL, June 18: Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) Arunachal Pradesh unit president Kaling Moyung on Wednesday visited Bichom district and met with the families of those who lost their lives in the recent landslide incident that claimed seven lives from two families.

Moyung was accompanied by MLAs Hayeng Mangfi and Ealing

Tallang, BJP General Secretary Tadar Niglar, Secretary Ashok Sangchoju, Biodiversity Board Chairman Hava Bagang, senior leaders Kame Yangfo, Shambo Siangju, Retemso Manyu, Dolang Tako, East Kameng District President Moik Bagang, Mandal President and several other party leaders and social workers.

Terming the incident heartbreaking, Moyung said that among the

deceased were two women who were reportedly pregnant.

He informed that monsoon arrived early in the state this year, causing widespread destruction, with 13 deaths reported due to landslides, floods, and flash floods in various districts as per disaster management data.

He said that all district administrations have been put on alert and the state government is taking all

necessary steps to deal with the situation.

A preparedness meeting was also held under the chairmanship of the Chief Minister, and necessary instructions have been issued.

Simultaneously, BJP has activated helplines and directed all district and mandal units to remain vigilant and extend timely support to affected people.

Moyung appealed to citizens to stay alert and avoid vulnerable areas such as overflowing rivers and landslide-prone zones.

He also urged district administrations to regulate earth-cutting activities—both legal and illegal—so as to prevent disasters arising from such causes.

A condolence prayer was held at Bana, attended by local leaders and the public, where prayers were offered for the departed souls.

Earlier, the team led by Moyung also participated in a plantation drive at the residence of the district BJP president in Seppa, East Kameng district headquarters.

Kuki women stage rally to protest 'arbitrary arrest'



CHURACHANDPUR/IMPHAL, June 18: Thousands of women from the Kuki Zo community on Wednesday staged a rally in Manipur's Churachandpur to protest the "arbitrary arrest" of persons belonging to their community allegedly by security agencies.

The protest, organised by the Kuki Women Organisation for Human Rights (KWOHR), began at 11 am from Koite Ground and concluded at Peace Ground in Tuiuong.

Participants held placards and raised slogans such as "Respect Human Rights," "We Don't Want Selective Justice," "Justice for the Kuki Zo Community," and "Stop Arbitrary Arrests."

The KWOHR later submitted a memorandum addressed to the home minister through the district magistrate, claiming two more Kukis have been arrested and termed it as unjust.

The organisation has been demanding the immediate release of the "arbitrarily arrested" Kuki Zo

persons, judicial inquiry into the arrests and alleged ethnic profiling, action against armed militias, seizure of looted arms, and investigation into possible collusion with state actors.

In May and early June, the National Investigation Agency (NIA) arrested three insurgents in a case related to a deadly attack on security forces that killed two police commandos and injured several others last year.

The three men, along with their associates, planned, conspired and executed the attack on an Indian Reserve Battalion (IRB) post and security forces at Moreh in Tengenoual district on January 17, 2024, they said.

Among the arrested was Thangminlen Mate, a resident of Tengenoual district and member of the Kuki Inpi Tengenoual (KIT).

The other accused, Kamgingthang Gange, a member of the Kuki National Army (KNA), and Henthinhang Kipgen alias Thangneo Kipgen, associated with the village volunteers' group in Churachandpur district, were arrested in Imphal on June 6. (PTI)

3 militants arrested in Manipur

IMPHAL, June 18: Three militants were arrested from various parts of Manipur on charges of extortion, police said on Wednesday.

Two members of the Kangleipak Communist Party (PWG) were arrested from Ningthoukhong Kha Khunou in Bishnupur district.

They were identified as Khom-dram Joy Singh (51) and Maibam Memcha Devi (49). They were involved in extorting local businesses, police said.

A .32 pistol with an empty magazine was seized from them. An active member of KCP (MFL) was arrested from Chingmeirong in Imphal East district. Identified as Yumnam Jenica (22), she was also accused of extorting small businesses in the area.

Meanwhile, a man was arrested from Lairkyengbam Makha Leikai in Imphal East district for possession of illegal arms. A 9 mm loaded pistol was recovered from the accused, identified as Haobam Sitaljit (55). Another person was arrested in the Bishnupur district for allegedly spreading misinformation on social media.

Rabikanta Konjengbam (34) was arrested from Ward No. 3 in Bishnupur town for posting false information about an incident of firing at Phubala on Facebook, police said. All the arrests were made on Tuesday, they said. (PTI)

Jitendra Singh reviews northeast science institutions, pushes tech-driven development in Wokha

KOHIMA, June 18: Union Minister of State (Independent Charge) for Science and Technology and Earth Sciences, Dr Jitendra Singh, convened a high-level review meeting with prominent scientific institutions from across Northeast India at the deputy Commissioner's conference hall in Wokha district in Nagaland on Tuesday. Advisor to Chief Minister of Nagaland, Dr Chumben Murry was also present during the review meeting.

The meeting was organized to strengthen technological integration in key developmental sectors such as agriculture, horticulture, educational research.

Six leading institutions participated in the deliberations included Institute of Advanced Study in Science and Technology (IASST) based in Guwahati, North East Centre for Technology Application and Reach (NECTAR) based in Shillong, Institute of Bio resources and Sustainable Development (IBSD) based in Imphal, CSIR-North East Institute of Science and Technology (NEIST) based in Jorhat, the office of the Additional Surveyor General, Eastern Zone, Survey of India based in Kolkata, and the Directorate of Geo-Spatial Data.

Each institute delivered a Power-point presentation outlining their current outreach initiatives, technological research, and collaborative programs. The presentations focused on advancing scientific applications in rural development, refining farming practices to boost household economies, and promoting the district's traditional food and beverage culture through innovation and value addition.



tion.

Special emphasis was placed on biore-source utilization and the emerging bioeconomy, with particular attention to banana fibre extraction in Wokha district. As banana has been recognized as the official "One District One Product" (ODOP) of Wokha, the discussion centered on strategies to scale production, promote agribusiness, and integrate sustainable value chains.

The Union minister interacted with scientists from the participating institutions and encouraged them to establish active collaboration with line departments in Wokha to translate research into real-world outcomes. He underscored the importance of harnessing science and technology for the holistic development of remote and resource-rich districts like Wokha.

The review meeting marks a significant step in fostering research-to-ground linkages and reaffirming the central government's commitment to bridging regional development gaps through science-led governance and inclusive innovation. (NNN)

Mock drill on earthquake preparedness conducted in Pasighat

HT Bureau

NAMSAL, June 18: A mock exercise on earthquake preparedness was conducted at Gandhi Chowk in Pasighat by the State Disaster Response Force (SDRF) in collaboration with the District Police to raise awareness on disaster response and emergency management.

The programme specifically targeted the market area and shopkeepers to enhance local readiness in the event of natural calamities.

According to an official statement, the drill aimed at equipping citizens with basic knowledge of emergency response during disasters such as earthquakes, building collapses, and fire incidents.

A total of 25 volunteers from among the participants were selected during the drill and were presented with certificates of appreciation for their proactive involvement.

The event also saw the participation of the Pasighat Fire and Emergency Services Department, with a demonstration led by Officer-in-Charge Babul Pangging.

The team conducted a live fire response

simulation and educated the public on the essential dos and don'ts during a fire emergency, underlining the importance of quick and informed action.

Speaking on the occasion, SP Fire and Emergency Services cum Nodal Officer Jhon Pada highlighted the importance of such exercises in cultivating a volunteer force that can act as first responders during times of crisis.

He stressed that community preparedness is key to mitigating disaster impacts. In a symbolic gesture of community safety, ten fire extinguishers were distributed among shopkeepers in the area.

The awareness programme also witnessed the presence of Deputy Superintendent of Police Ayup Boko, Officer-in-Charge A Taki, and volunteers from the Aapda Mitra scheme, who actively participated in the preparedness activities.

Officials added that similar mock drills and training sessions will be conducted across various districts in Arunachal Pradesh to enhance grassroots-level preparedness and promote a culture of safety and resilience among the public.

Concern over teacher recruitment exams

AGARTALA, June 18: Tripura Chief Minister Manik Saha on Wednesday voiced concern over the "very low" pass percentage in the Teacher Eligibility Tests (TET) conducted by the state teachers' recruitment board.

According to results announced on Tuesday, only 458 candidates out of 8,240 (5.56 per cent) cleared TET-I, while 1,589 of 32,286 candidates (4.92 per cent) passed TET-II — raising alarm among job aspirants and education authorities alike.

While TET-I qualified candidates are eligible for teachers' jobs from classes I to V, TET-II qualifiers can teach from classes 6 to 8.

"This year, the pass percentage in TET-I and II is very low. I have asked the authorities why the success rate was so low. A number of reasons came to my notice. If we aren't able to produce quality teachers, how will teachers impart quality education in government-run schools? We will explore solutions," he told the reporters. (PTI)

JSU seeks internet ban during exams to curb cheating in M'laya

SHILLONG, June 18: The Jaintia Students' Union (JSU) has urged the Meghalaya government to adopt stringent measures, including temporary internet shutdowns, to ensure the fair conduct of government job examinations.

The union cited multiple complaints alleging incidents of cheating through mobile phones during exams in certain areas.

In a letter to Deputy Chief Minister in charge of Home, Prestone Tynsong, the JSU stated, "Implementing an internet shut down for a limited period during examination hours can curb at least 50-60 per cent of cheating activities that rely on online communication."

The union expressed concern over the misuse of advanced Artificial Intelligence tools, noting that smartphones, smartwatches, and hidden devices can be used to access AI-based apps or chatbots that instantly provide accurate answers. "These tools give an unfair advantage and undermine the credibility of the examination process," the letter said.

The JSU also emphasized the need for strict frisking and monitoring at exam centres. It called for rigorous search procedures at entry points and within exam halls to prevent the use of unauthorized materials or devices. (NNN)

Nagaland CM urges education reform to equip youth with skills and global competence

KOHIMA, June 18: Nagaland chief minister Neiphiu Rio said today that "we must re-orient our education system not only to promote academic excellence but also equip our students with life skills, critical thinking, adaptability, and creativity to enable them to become competent, productive, and responsible global citizens".

He was speaking at the Chief Minister's Meritorious Students Fellowship event for the top 50 students in the HSLC Examination 2025, conducted by the Nagaland Board of School Education held at the State Banquet Hall Chief Minister's Residential Complex in Kohima.

Rio advised the students to be prepared to face tougher challenges and urged them

to instil a strong sense of discipline and cultivate sound moral values that will guide throughout their life. Perseverance and determination are keys to achieving your goals, he added.

Rio noted that, while "we are producing a growing number of educated youths, many are still unemployable". He added that the government sector has reached saturation point and cannot absorb all the educated unemployed therefore, "this calls for a shift in our mindset and priorities to adapt to the changing landscape".

He also mentioned that as top achievers, they hold the potential to be competent not just at the state or national level, but globally and urged them to remain focused,

committed, and industrious. He also encouraged the students to consider entrepreneurship as a viable and rewarding career path as entrepreneurial skills are essential for the youth. To address the challenges of unemployment, education integrated with skill development is the need of the hour, Rio also said. He stated that the Government of India has launched various initiatives under its mission to skill the youth and mentioned that the Department of School Education in Nagaland has introduced 9 skill/vocational subjects at the secondary level and 8 at the higher secondary level and encouraged our Naga boys and girls to make full use of these opportunities. (NNN)

Manipur pays tribute to 18 martyrs on 24th Great June Uprising Day



IMPHAL, June 18: The 24th anniversary of the Great June Uprising Day was observed with solemnity at Kerkupat, Imphal, on Tuesday. The day commemorates the protest of June 18, 2001, when 18 civilians were killed in police firing during a massive protest against the extension of the ceasefire agreement "without territorial limits" between the Government of India and the NSCN (IM).

A large number of people, including civil society members, student leaders, political representatives, and the general

public, gathered at the memorial complex to offer floral tributes to the 18 people who laid down their lives to uphold Manipur's territorial integrity.

The annual event, observed as "Great June Uprising Unity Day," was jointly organised by the United Committee Manipur (UCM) and the All Manipur United Clubs' Organisation (AMUCO), with support from various civil society groups and families of the deceased.

The day began with a candlelight tribute in the early morning, followed by a

public meeting that reflected on the historical and current significance of the 2001 uprising. Speakers highlighted the need for communal harmony and collective vigilance against any threats to Manipur's territorial unity.

Addressing the media, Nando Luwang, chairman of the Organising Committee, stressed the importance of unity. "Manipur is a small state, and since time immemorial, its communities have lived together in peace. We must not allow divisive forces to create rifts. Instead of blaming one another, we should focus on peaceful coexistence," he said.

Luwang also accused the Central Government of playing a "divisive game" by allegedly favouring certain communities and underground groups. "If the Government of India truly cares for Manipur, it must stop such tactics," he stated.

Nando then questioned the Centre's inconsistent response to violence. "When terror strikes other parts of the country, swift action follows. Why is that urgency missing in Manipur?" he asked, while calling for a uniform national response to issues. (NNN)

CONSTRUCTION WORK AT TINSUKIA DIVISION

E-Tender Notice No.: TSK/Engg/31 of 2025 Dated: 17-06-2025. E-Tenders are invited by the undersigned for the following works:
Item No. 1. Brief Description of Item: At Tinsukia Division- Construction of Approach road, circulating area, Platform, Rest room, Shed and other miscellaneous works in connection with Provision of Machine siding at Boginadi, Bordoloni, Sripatri, Silapathar, Simenchapari, Laimakuri & Murkongselek stations. **Tender Value:** ₹17,54,01,673.69, **Earnest Money:** ₹10,27,000/-. **Date & Time of closing of Tender:** 15.00 hrs. of 09-07-2025. The complete information with the tender documents of above e-tender will be available upto 15.00 hrs. of 09-07-2025 in the website www.reps.gov.in

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

No.TDB/15th FC/106/2024-25/ Date 16/06/2025

CORRIGENDUM

Refer this Office NIT No. TDB/15th FC/106/2024-25/1725 dated 17/03/2025
The Bid Submission start and end date and time in respect of above Office NIT have been extended as below.

Bid submission start date:	17-06-2025 from 10.00AM
Bid submission end date	23-06-2025 upto 2.00 PM
Bid Opening date	23-06-2025 at 3.00 PM

Other terms and conditions of the NIT remain same.

Sd/-
Block Development Officer,
Tamulpur Dev. Block, Tamulpur

IPR(BTC)/C/2025-26/910

No.DV/BTC/VETY/SP-2/2025-26/235

NOTICE INVITING FOR QUOTATION/TENDER

Separate sealed quotations/tenders affixing non-refundable Court fee of Rs. 8.25 (Rupees eight and twenty five paisa) only are invited from the interested Vendor/Supplier/Contractors etc. for the below mentioned work in respect of Director, A. H. & Vety. Deptt., BTC, Kokrajhar.

Group	Name of work	District	Quantity	Remarks
A	One day Sensitization programme for benefit of Artificial Insemination/Fodder Cultivation/ Different Animal Husbandry practices like Piggery/ Goatery/ Duckery/ Poultry Farming in Block Level Educational Institutions under BTR district for the financial year 2025-26.	Kokrajhar	8 Nos.	Rate should be quoted in figure & word
		Chirang	4 Nos.	
B		Baksa	14 Nos.	
		Udalguri	4 Nos.	

Bid Cost (Non-Refundable) of Rs. 1,000/- (Rupees One Thousand) only for each group in the form of Demand Draft duly pledge in favour of "The Principal Secretary, Bodoland Territorial Council, Kokrajhar" with quotation/tender. Bid Earnest Money (Refundable) @ 1% in case of ST/SC/OBC and 2% for General/Firm of quotation/tender amount in the form of Call Deposit/NSC/Demand Draft duly pledged in favour of "Director, A. H. & Vety. Deptt., BTC, Kokrajhar". The quotations/tenders will be received at the Office of the undersigned up to 1.00 P.M. of 24th June/2025 and will be opened at 1.30 P.M. of the same day. Details terms and conditions of the work/item may be seen in the office of the undersigned during office hour up-to 12 noon of 24th June/2025.

Sd/-
i/c Director, A.H. & Vety. Deptt.,
BTC, Kokrajhar

IPR(BTC)/C/2025-26/933

INDIA, ENGLAND 5-MATCH TEST SERIES FROM JUNE 20

Kohli will be missed more in England than Rohit: Boycott

LEEDS, June 18: India will miss Virat Kohli more than Rohit Sharma in the marquee Test series against England and the duo's recent retirement from the format will 'hurt' the transitioning team's chances in the rubber starting on Friday, reckons the legendary Geoffrey Boycott.

The two heavyweights of world cricket will engage in five matches over the next six weeks, beginning their campaigns in the new World Test Championship (WTC) cycle.

"The retirement of Virat Kohli and Rohit Sharma hurts the chances of India beating England. Kohli is the biggest loss as he has been their best batsman and talisman in all three formats," Boycott wrote in his column for the Daily Telegraph.

"With so much international cricket played by India, and so little rest, it takes its toll and the mind becomes fatigued."

The former England captain called Kohli's absence a bigger blow. "It does not matter how much talent or experience you have, if you are not mentally fresh and up for the challenge then it becomes draining."

"Rohit was a superb batsman. At his best, a beautiful stroke player,



but he won't be missed as much as Kohli because his Test record was good rather than exceptional. In the last couple of years his batting was a little inconsistent, which was not surprising in his late 30s.

"Rohit was never a natural athlete like Kohli and he knows that open-

ing the innings in England can be pretty tough because the new ball moves around more. You really have to be up for the challenge to have any chance of success."

"I just think that over time the wear and tear of opening the innings and being captain in all three for-

mats wore him down," observed Boycott. The two stalwarts of Indian cricket announced their retirement from the game's traditional format last month, after which, the BCCI appointed Shubman Gill as the team's captain in place of Rohit. India last won a Test series in

England in 2007, while the hosts came into the rubber after defeating Zimbabwe in a one-off Test at Trent Bridge last month.

Boycott has urged the Ben Stokes-led side to temper their Bazball style of batting and apply some common sense, as winning is more important than entertaining.

"England should beat India if they temper Bazball and use some common sense. At times their cricket has been thrilling and super enjoyable but also reckless batting has lost them Test matches."

"Their only thought should be winning because it is no use telling us how good you are when the last three World Test Championship finals have been played in our country but England have not qualified for any of them. They should be embarrassed. Their aim should be to make the next WTC final."

"The new cycle starts now and somebody needs to get through to the England players that being a winner is better than being known as an entertainer. If you can win and entertain, that is a bonus. At the moment England are like a one-trick pony." (PTI)

Not even Saudi Arabia or FIFA could get Ronaldo to the Club World Cup



MIAMI GARDENS (FLORIDA, USA), June 18: In the end, not even Saudi Arabia or Gianni Infantino could engineer a way to get Cristiano Ronaldo to the Club World Cup.

FIFA president Infantino certainly tried - last month making a public appeal ahead of the tournament.

"If any club is watching and is interested in hiring Ronaldo for the Club World Cup," he teased during an interview with YouTube iShowSpeed.

Ronaldo's contract with Saudi Arabian club Al-Nassr was due to expire and FIFA's decision to create a specially-made mini transfer window for its newest competition meant the path was clear for the Real Madrid great to sign a short-term deal with a new team just in time to take part.

Given his connection to Saudi Arabia, where he was the face of the oil-rich kingdom's spectacular drive to sign some of soccer's biggest stars in recent years, rumors began to circulate about a move to Al Hilal - the country's most successful team and its sole representative at the Club World Cup.

The problem was that Al Hilal and Al-Nassr are cross-city rivals in Riyadh. And even if Saudi Arabia's sovereign wealth fund majority owns both teams - along with others - that was a step too far.

"As much as I respect Ronaldo as a huge player, as we all recognize he is, it's certainly completely counter-intuitive that you bring the biggest player of your biggest opponent to play with you," Al Hilal

chief executive Esteve Calzada told the BBC. "Even more when it's only for three to four weeks."

Maybe so, but Saudi Arabia, with its vast wealth, has a made habit out of turning the improbable into the possible. And the very fact the prospect of a short-term move between clubs was even rumored, points to the boundaries it has been able to push while making its big play to become a force in global sport.

It has, after all, already changed the face of golf and virtually cornered the market for big time boxing. F1 racing is a fixed event and top class tennis has been lured, as well.

It's ambitions in soccer have been the most spectacular of all - winning the right to host the 2034 World Cup, buying one of the Premier League's most iconic teams in Newcastle and luring a slew of superstar players to a league that has nothing like the profile of those in Europe or Latin America.

Most recently it has played a role in helping to fund the Club World Cup - either directly or indirectly - with a reported \$1 billion investment in tournament broadcaster DAZN and a commercial partnership with FIFA, which has put up a \$1 billion prize pot for teams competing. The Club World Cup is the chance for Saudi Arabia to make a latest statement on the international stage in its first chance test one of its elite clubs against the best from around the globe - starting with 15-time European champion Real Madrid at Miami's Hard Rock Stadium on Wednesday. (AP)

Inter Milan held to 1-1 draw by Monterrey in Club WC opener

PASADENA (USA), June 18: Inter Milan was held to a 1-1 draw by Monterrey in the Club World Cup opener Tuesday night in the Italian power's first match since losing the Champions League final.

Veteran Spanish star Sergio Ramos scored on a stunning first-half header for Monterrey, delighting the decidedly pro-Mexico crowd in Southern California for Monterrey coach Domènec Torrent's own debut.

Lautaro Martínez evened it late in the first half for Inter, but the Champions League finalists couldn't generate a second goal despite having nearly 62% possession while Monterrey got only one shot on target.



Inter manager Cristian Chivu made his debut as the Nerazzurri returned to competition at the Rose Bowl just 17 days after taking that 5-0 thrashing from Paris Saint-Germain in Munich.

After the 39-year-old Ramos put Los Rayados ahead, Martínez answered in the 42nd

minute with a tap-in of Carlos Augusto's pass after a world-class sequence of ball movement from a setpiece.

Martínez thought he scored again in the 68th minute, but was offside. Both teams narrowly missed goals in the final minutes, and Martínez picked up a yellow card in second-half injury time.

Chivu started only seven of Simone Inzaghi's choices for the Champions League final. Ailing striker Marcus Thuram came on early in the second half to replace 22-year-old Sebastiano Esposito, who started his first game back from seven loan stints since his previous appearance for Inter in 2020.

Key moment Inter carried

play early, but Ramos capitalized on Monterrey's first corner kick by outjumping two defenders and converting an acrobatic header. The Real Madrid stalwart and World Cup winner joined Monterrey four months ago.

Takeaways Inter still hasn't shaken off the disappointment in Munich, but both teams now have a good chance to advance from a group also including River Plate and Urawa Red Diamonds.

Ramos can still summon greatness in the twilight of his career. The matchless center back will also throw out the first pitch at the Los Angeles Dodgers game on Wednesday. (AP)

24-DAY LONG TOURNAMENT

India to open Women's T20 WC 2026 campaign against Pak

DUBAI, June 18: India will take on arch-rivals Pakistan in their opening match of ICC Women's T20 World Cup 2026 at Edgbaston on June 14.

The ICC and hosts England and Wales Cricket Board (ECB) on Wednesday announced the full schedule of the tournament, featuring 12 teams. The 24-day long tournament will be held from June 12 to July 5 next year and will consist of a total of 33 matches to be played across seven venues in England. Arch-rivals India and Pakistan will kickstart their campaigns at Edgbaston, whereas the opening match of the tournament will be between hosts England and Sri Lanka at Edgbaston on June

12. Hampshire Bowl, Headingley, Old Trafford, The Oval, Bristol County Ground and Lord's are the other venues of the competition.

The two semifinals will be played at The Oval on June 30 and July 2, and the final will be at Lord's on July 5. The 12-team competition will have two groups of six teams each. The Group 1 consists of six-time winners Australia, last edition's runner-up South Africa, India, Pakistan and two qualifying teams. The Group 2 consists of defending champions New Zealand, West Indies, Sri Lanka, hosts England and two qualifying teams.

The top two teams from each group will advance to the semifinals.

After their opening clash against Pakistan, India will move to Headingley for their contest against a qualifying team on June 17, followed by contest against South Africa at the Old Trafford on June 21. While India will face the second qualifying team of Group 1 on June 25 at Old Trafford, their toughest game will be against Australia on June 28 at the 'Home of Cricket'. "At iconic venues across the country, we'll see incredible, world-class athletes battling it out in front of hundreds of thousands of fans, who with every ball bowled and run scored, will be contributing to lasting change," said tournament director Beth Barrett-Wild. (PTI)

Missing James Anderson: A constant in India-England rivalry since 2006

NEW DELHI, June 18: To say the least, a relatively inexperienced batting line up led by Shubman Gill would be relieved to see the name of James Anderson, once a constant in the multiple chapters of India-England rivalry over the past two decades, missing in the opposition roster.

From Anderson's first series against India in 2006 to the last one in 2024, the age defying fast bowler kept the celebrated Indian batting line-up on their toes - his battles with the great Sachin Tendulkar in late 2000s or the much more animated duels with Virat Kohli in the previous decade still fresh in one's mind. Fast forward to 2025, both India and England have moved on from Kohli and Anderson respectively but considering the injuries to the likes of Jofra Archer and Mark Wood, Ben Stokes may have indulged in wishful thinking, imagining the holder of a record 704 Test wickets opening the bowling at



Leeds.

If Anderson can return to county cricket to bail out a struggling Lancashire 12 months after his fitting farewell, trust him to do the same for a depleted England attack.

That is unlikely to happen but by sheer weight of his performances over his 21-year-old career, Anderson has immortalised himself in India-England cricket history with

the series trophy named after him and Tendulkar, whom he was able to dismiss nine times.

Anderson not only defied age to last as long as he did for a fast bowler, the hallmark of his career was relentless accuracy and exemplary control over his ability to swing the ball both ways.

Courtesy these special skills, Anderson was able to exploit Kohli's

weakness around the off-stump in the 2014 series before the latter overcame those mental demons four years later to 'dominate' the world's most prolific pacer in the longest format.

"I really exploited, he had a weakness outside off stump, really exploited that and then the next time I played against him (in 2018) he'd obviously gone away and worked on that and it was like bowling at a different player," Anderson told talkSport recently.

Come Friday, the likely opening combination of K L Rahul and Yashasvi Jaiswal will have one less challenge to deal with: no Anderson with a brand new Dukes ball. In the 39 Tests he played against India home and away, Anderson amassed 149 wickets at a very fine average of 25.47. The best of fast bowlers struggled in India but he reinvented his game to end with 44 wickets in 17 Tests in polar opposite conditions. (PTI)

Preparatory meet on U-15 Girls Inter-Dist Cricket Tournery held



HT Bureau GUWAHATI, June 18: The Assam Cricket Association (ACA) convened a joint meeting at the ACA Stadium office, ACA Stadium, Barsapara, here on Wednesday involving the Senior Tournament Committee, Tour, Fixture & Technical Committee,

and Members Coordination Committee.

The meeting was addressed by Chairman of the Tour, Fixture & Technical Committee, Sankar Dutta Lahkar in the presence of ACA Treasurer Chiranjit Langthasa and ACA CEO Pritam Mahanta, and Senior

Tournament Committee member, Dr Bishnu Ram Nunisa, among others. The session focused on ensuring systematic planning and smooth execution of upcoming tournaments under the ACA's purview.

A key highlight of the meeting was the finalisation of venues and fixtures for the U-15 Girls Inter District Cricket Tournament 2025. Several other important matters related to tournament coordination, scheduling, and technical oversight were also discussed.

The Assam Cricket Association reaffirmed its commitment to promoting grassroots cricket and delivering well-structured tournaments that support the growth and development of young athletes across the state.

Kingfisher Premium PDW announces regional sponsorship with Argentine Football Association

HT Bureau GUWAHATI, June 18: Kingfisher Premium Packaged Drinking Water from United Breweries Ltd, part of the HEINEKEN Company, is proud to announce its partnership with the Argentine Football Association (AFA) as the Regional Sponsor in India.

The official announcement was made at a grand event held at the River Plate Stadium, Buenos Aires. Representing United Breweries was Mohit Raina, Category Head, Kingfisher, while Leandro Petersen, Chief Commercial & Marketing Officer of AFA, represented the Argentine Football Association to announce the partnership.

This collaboration aims to expand Kingfisher's footprint across passionate football territories in the country, such as West Bengal, Kerala, Goa and entire Northeast region. It marks a strategic alignment with the rising influence of football and Kingfisher's brand ethos of to-

getherness, celebration and joy.

The campaign will feature an integrated mix of activations designed to engage fans both on-ground and digitally. Key initiatives include creating immersive experiences for fans and driving grassroots football programs that nurture talent and deepen community engagement.

Adding to the excitement, the Argentine National Team is set to play an international friendly match in Kerala in October 2025, a highly anticipated event expected to attract significant viewership and strong on-ground attendance.

"This partnership not only enhances our presence in one of the world's most vibrant football markets but also aligns perfectly with our vision to connect with fans globally through meaningful and engaging collaborations," said Chief Commercial & Marketing Officer of AFA, Leandro Petersen.

AITA EC meeting called after chief Anil Jain requests court to declare elections null and void

NEW DELHI, June 18: AITA President Anil Jain, against whom a no-confidence motion was proposed by state associations last year, has requested the Delhi High Court to declare null and void the federation elections conducted in September 2024, prompting irate Executive Committee members to call for a meeting on June 27.

One of the affiliated units of the All India Tennis Association (AITA) had alleged at that time Jain had used his position in the federation for personal gains. The no-confidence motion, though, was withdrawn ahead of the AGM that elected a new body.

But since the election results remained with the court in a sealed envelope due to a petition filed by Somdev Devvarman and Purav Raja challenging the validity of the polls, the newly-elected office bearers remained outside the system.

Responding to the same petition, Jain in his prayer, filed on May 26, said that the AITA elections should be declared null and void but requested the court not to appoint a Committee of Administrators (CoA), saying it would "invite objections and adverse reactions from the ITF (world governing body) as well as the ATF (Asian body) and would also hinder the functioning of AITA."

The prayer said the ultimate objective of amending the constitution and ensuring efficient functioning of AITA at the same time can be achieved by the present management under the supervision of the court.

However, the EC members claimed that Jain did not consult them before filing the reply on behalf of the Federation.

"Such a reply needed EC concurrence. He can't just go and file it in the court like this. EC has to pass a resolution, only then a petition or a reply can be filed. (PTI)

ATPA Shield: Jorhat Town Club enter semifinal

HT Correspondent JORHAT, June 18: Host team Jorhat Town Club has entered the semifinals of the 59th ATPA Shield Football Tournament by defeating NF Railway in a thrilling match on Wednesday.

The second quarterfinal match was held at Jorhat Stadium, where Jorhat Town Club secured a narrow 1-0 victory over NF Railway. The winning goal was scored by Mukesh Timung.

In Thursday's match, Oil India Ekadosh will face Laneru FC, Cachar.