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Central panel complains of SC order violation

Illegal mining at Parkup Pahar area 'continued and intensified': Report

NEW DELHI, June 4: The Central Empowered Committee (CEC) has told the Supreme Court that illegal mining has continued and intensified in Assam's Parkup Pahar area near the Kaziranga National Park, despite a 2019 top court order banning all mining and related activities in and around the park's eco-sensitive zone.

Kaziranga, a UNESCO World Heritage Site, is home to around 65 per cent of the endangered one-horned rhino population in the world. It forms part of an important wildlife corridor between the Brahmaputra floodplains and the Karbi Anglong hills.

The Supreme Court, acting on earlier findings by the CEC, had prohibited all mining and related activities in this region to prevent degradation of critical wildlife habitats and forested landscapes.

Based on a complaint from an anonymous government employee in Assam and field-level verifica-

tion, the CEC submitted a fresh report dated May 30 to the SC, saying that mining activities in the region have "continued and intensified" despite the apex court's ban ordered on April 4, 2019.

Rampant mining continues, particularly in the Parkup Pahar Range, a declared wildlife sanctuary forming the southern boundary of the Kaziranga National Park, the report said.

The complaint received from the government employee in December 2024 contained Google Earth imagery from 2018 to 2024 and site-specific data.

The images reportedly showed that mining, which had stopped following the SC's 2019 ban order, resumed and intensified after 2021.

The CEO forwarded the complaint to the Assam forest and police departments, requesting a factual report.

The principal chief conservator of forests, Assam, submitted a de-



tailed report on February 5, outlining the actions taken, including the suspension of mining leases.

The report confirmed that stone mining was occurring close to the Borjuri Waterfall and its surrounding streams, which flow towards Kaziranga.

of mines in the forest areas and in the proposed eco-sensitive zones, violating the SC ban and without the required approval from the standing committee of the National Board for Wildlife and the Central government under the Forest (Conservation) Act, 1980.

The panel said KAAC had no authority to issue such permissions. The committee recommended that all mining and related activities in the Parkup Pahar area and the forested catchments be immediately stopped and no new leases be granted.

It also asked KAAC to submit a detailed watershed drainage analysis report to delineate the catchment area and the eco-sensitive streams flowing into Kaziranga.

The CEC also said the Assam government may approach the Gauhati High Court to seek a review of its recent orders allowing mining in some cases, as the court had not (CONTD. ON PAGE-2)

2026 polls will be between 'India and Britain': Himanta

GUWAHATI, June 4: Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma on Wednesday said that the Assembly elections in 2026 will be fought between "India and Britain".

The comment, made a day after Gaurav Gogoi took charge as the state Congress president, was apparently an oblique reference to the Lok Sabha MP's British wife whom Sarma and the BJP have been attacking for her alleged connection with Pakistani spy agency ISI.

Addressing a press conference here, Sarma also said that around 2,000 Facebook accounts are commenting on the Assam Assembly elections, half of which have originated in Bangladesh and Pakistan.

Referring to the citizenship of Gogoi's wife and children, the CM said, "In the family, there is one Indian and three foreigners. The fight (for the assembly election) will be between India and Britain. It will be about who is bigger -- India or

Britain."

No immediate comment could be obtained from Gogoi.

Assuming charge as the state unit chief, Gogoi on Tuesday launched his innings with the slogan 'Juz Hobo' (there will be a battle) as he urged party workers to prepare themselves for next year's assembly polls.

"Had Bhupen Kumar Borah (previous Assam Congress president) remained, there would have been a contest, but now there will be no fight at all. A lot more will come out on September 10," Sarma who heads a BJP-led government in the state, claimed.

The Assam CM earlier claimed that Gogoi's British wife Elizabeth Colburn had travelled 19 times between India and Pakistan.

Sarma has been claiming that the Assam government has documentary evidence to back up the allegation about Gogoi and his wife's close (CONTD. ON PAGE-2)

Indian delegation in US to push anti-terror message, discuss Op Sindoor

WASHINGTON, June 4: An all-party parliamentary delegation led by Congress leader Shashi Tharoor will meet members of the US Congress, American officials, think tanks and policy experts to brief them on Operation Sindoor, terrorism faced by India and regional security.

The delegation arrived in the US capital Tuesday and will have packed days of engagements till Thursday.

The multi-party group will be engaging with members of the US Congress, American think tanks and media professionals.

Chairperson of the Standing Committee on External Affairs Tharoor is leading the delegation, which comprises Sarfaraz Ahmad (JMM), Ganti Harish Madhur Balayogi (TDP), Shashank Mani Tripathi (BJP), Bhuvaneshwar Kalita (BJP), Milind Deora (Shiv Sena), Tejasvi Surya (BJP) and India's former Ambassador to the US Taranjit Sandhu.

"An all party delegation led by Dr. @ShashiTharoor arrives in Washington D.C. Over the next two days the delegation will be meeting members of the US Congress and administration, think tanks, media and policymakers to brief them on Operation Sindoor and India's strong stand against terrorism," the Indian Embassy said in a post on X.

The delegation, which had reached New York from India on May 24, travelled to Guyana, Panama, Colombia and Brazil before arriving in Washington for the last leg of its tour.

In its interactions in the US, the delegation will convey India's resolve against terrorism and emphasise Pakistan's links to terrorism.

Speaking to PTI, delegation member Deora said that the group in the US, as well as those visiting other regions and countries, is telling the world that "India has had enough."

He said that every country they visited so far "issued very unequivocal, I would almost say, unconditional, statements in favour of India." He asserted that just as countries like the US have every right to protect themselves and eliminate terrorists—whether state-sponsored or non-state actors—"India has that same right. And for India to grow, for India's economy to thrive, for American investments to continue to perform in India, India needs peace. India needs strong borders. India needs security."

"We want to live in peace. We would prefer it if we have a stable neighbour. Nobody wants an unstable lunatic living next to you," he said. Another delegation member Surya told PTI that there is absolutely no sympathy towards Pakistani-originated terrorism. (CONTD. ON PAGE-2)

Assam flood toll rises to 19; nearly 6.8 lakh people affected



GUWAHATI, June 4: The flood situation in Assam worsened on Wednesday with the death toll increasing by two, while the number of affected people went up to nearly 6.8 lakh in 21 districts, an official bulletin said.

Nine major rivers, including the Brahmaputra, were flowing above the danger level across the state, with the Regional Meteorological Centre (RMC) in Guwahati predicting heavy to very heavy rainfall at isolated places in the state.

Dhubri, South Salmara-Mankachar, Goalpara and Kokrajhar are likely to witness thunderstorms with lightning and gusty wind with a speed of 30-40 kmph, the RMC said.

Road, train and ferry services continued to be affected in several parts of the state.

An Assam State Disaster Management Authority (ASDMA) bulletin said that the two deaths were reported from Nagaon and Cachar districts. One person was reported missing in Cachar. With the latest casualties, the death toll in this year's floods and landslides has reached 19.

Altogether 6,79,423 people in 66 revenue circles and 1,494 villages of 21 districts remained affected by the deluge. The number of affected people was over 6.5 lakh in 21 districts on Tuesday.

Sribhumi remained the worst hit with 2,59,601 people affected, followed by Hailakandi (1,72,439) and Nagaon (1,02,716). More than 41,000 displaced people were taking shelter in 190 relief camps, while another 215 relief distribution centres (CONTD. ON PAGE-2)

Madhya Pradesh tourist may have been killed with machete in Meghalaya: Police

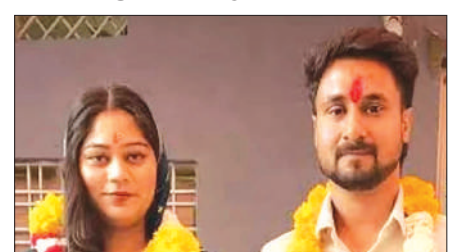
SHILLONG, June 4: Police have recovered a bloodstained machete, which they believe was used in the murder of Raja Raghuvanshi, who went missing along with his wife while honeymooning in Meghalaya, an official said on Wednesday.

A raincoat, also believed to belong to the couple from Madhya Pradesh, was recovered from Mawkma village, a few kilometres away from the gorge where Raja's body was found on Monday, he said. "We have recovered a bloodstained weapon, a relatively unused machete (dao), during the search of the area yesterday. The search and rescue teams have also recovered a raincoat from Mawkma today," SP of East Khasi Hills Vivek Syiem told PTI.

Mawkma is located between the spot where Raja's decomposed body was found and Soharim, where the scooter used by the couple was found abandoned. The search for Raja's wife, Sonam, was continuing, with the NDRF leading the efforts, officials said. Police said the raincoat they recovered could provide more clues about what had happened.

The search teams are using drones, sniffer dogs, and mountaineers in the search operation.

The couple arrived in Mawlakhat village on May 22 on a rented scooter. They trekked over 3,000 steps down the gorge to visit the famous living root bridges in Nongriat village, where



they stayed the night, according to police.

They left the homestay the following morning. On May 24, their scooter was found abandoned outside a cafe along the road from Shillong to Sohra. "Raja's family identified the body with the help of a distinctive tattoo on his right hand, reading 'Raja'. A woman's white shirt, a strip of tablets, part of a smartphone's screen, and a smartwatch were seized from the spot," the SP said. Raja's brother Govind Raghuvanshi told PTI, "Since my brother's gold rings, a gold chain and his wallet are missing, we suspect it is a murder. We urge the authorities to let the CBI conduct an inquiry into this."

The post-mortem examination was being conducted at the North Eastern Indira Gandhi Regional Institute of Health and Medical Sciences near Shillong. Syiem said the murder case was being probed by a Special Investigation Team (SIT), headed by (CONTD. ON PAGE-2)

Core committee for year-long birth centenary celebration of Bhupen Hazarika holds meeting

GUWAHATI, June 4: The first meeting of the core committee for the celebration of birth centenary of musical maestro Bhupen Hazarika was held here on Wednesday with family members and people closely associated with him offering their suggestions for the year-long event.

Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma, who chaired the meeting, said nearly 40 people attended the meeting and offered their suggestions.

"Bhupen Hazarika's family members and people who had been associated with him and knew him from close quarters were present in the meeting. They offered valuable suggestions, besides the government programmes already lined up. We will look into those and incorporate all practical suggestions in the year-long calendar," Sarma said.



On the biography of the Bharat Ratna awardee, the chief minister said author and editor Anuradha Sarma Pujari is working on it. "It will be 'peer reviewed' by people who knew Dr Hazarika. It will be translated into 23 Indian languages and made available in four lakh educational institutions, libraries, government offices, etc. In Assam, (CONTD. ON PAGE-2)

India vehemently opposed ADB's loan Pak as it could be misused: Govt sources

NEW DELHI, June 4: India had vehemently opposed ADB's decision to grant USD 800 million loan to Pakistan saying the fund could be misused for increasing expenditure on its military, government sources said.

"India shared deep concerns regarding the potential misuse of ADB resources, particularly in light of Pakistan's increasing defence expenditure, its declining tax-to-GDP ratio, and the lack of demonstrable progress on key macroeconomic reforms," they said. Asian Development Bank (ADB) on Tuesday approved USD 800 million programme to strengthen fiscal sustainability and improve public financial management in Pakistan.

Earlier in the day, the Congress in a post on X quipped that Prime Minister Narendra Modi met ADB President Masato Kanda on June 1 and three days later ADB cleared the USD 800-million loan to Pakistan. Modi government's influence did not work on the IMF earlier and Pakistan got loan last month, the post said, adding that this happened even when the conflict between India and Pakistan was going on.

Government sources said India expects the ADB management to adequately ring-fence the ADB financing, to prevent any such misuse. Pakistan's poor track record of implementation stems from the military's deeply entrenched interference in (CONTD. ON PAGE-2)

The state government will invest ₹ 400 crore in the project

Assam cabinet clears ₹ 400-crore Swahid Kanaklata Barua University in Gohpur

HT Bureau

GUWAHATI, June 4: In a major push towards higher education and industrial innovation, the Assam Cabinet has approved the establishment of the Swahid Kanaklata Barua University at the Bholaguri Tea Estate in Gohpur, chief minister Himanta Biswa Sarma announced on Wednesday.

The state government will invest ₹ 400 crore in the project. After the cabinet meeting, Sarma told reporters here that the project would involve acquisition of portions of the tea estate, necessitating the temporary relocation of some residents. However, he assured

that comprehensive rehabilitation plans are in place. "To facilitate the university's development, certain sections of tea garden land will be acquired. Some residents will have to be temporarily relocated. The government will provide them with alternate land nearby and support their livelihood by offering third and fourth-grade jobs," the chief minister added.

He further noted that those affected would also be eligible for benefits under the Voluntary Retirement Scheme (VRS). "I have personally discussed the plan with the tea garden community, and



they have extended their full support," the CM said.

The upcoming university will be Assam's first institution with an explicit focus on

industry-oriented education, offering specialised courses in cutting-edge technologies such as artificial intelligence, quantum computing, and ro-

botics. "This will be a unique university for Assam—one that aligns education with the needs of Industry. Experts from IIT Guwahati and Jawaharlal Nehru University have been roped in to design the curriculum. Our goal is to position Assam as a leader in advanced technological education and innovation," Sarma asserted. The education department is currently finalising the academic framework, which aims to prepare students for the rapidly evolving industrial landscape while honouring the legacy of freedom fighter Kanaklata Barua, after whom the university is named.

OM SHANTI



NIRMAL NUNISA

Date of Birth: 13/11/1964

Date of Death : 05/06/2020

5th Death Anniversary

We fondly remember my husband/father/brother/brother-in-law/uncle late Nirmal Nunisa who left for his heavenly abode on the 5th of June, 2020. We pray to the Almighty for the eternal peace of his departed soul.

FAMILY MEMBERS: –

Dr. Ritu Thaosen Nunisa (Wife),
Ringsmaidi Nunisa (Daughter),
Ringdao Nunisa (Son) and Aditya Goel (Son-in-law)
Dr. Motilal Nunisa (Brother)
Pradip Nunisa (Brother)
Usha Hojai (Sister)
Dr. Rupal Nunisa (Brother)
Alo Thaosen (Sister)
Dr. Bishnu Ram Nunisa (Brother)
Ramesh Thaosen (Brother in law)
Jayanti Nunisa (Sister in law)
Prabhathi Thaosen Nunisa (Sister in law)
Anima Thaosen Nunisa (Sister in law)
All nephews and nieces

India calls for WTO action on non-tariff barriers, ensuring strong dispute resolution mechanism

PARIS, June 4: India has called for action to curb non-tariff barriers, address trade distortions caused by non-market economies, and restore a strong dispute settlement mechanism at the WTO, Commerce and Industry Minister Piyush Goyal said on Wednesday.

The minister also pitched for strengthening the current consensus-based approach at the World Trade Organisation (WTO), the special and differential treatment given to less developed countries and developing countries, and bringing back focus on issues that have already been finalised and mandated at previous ministerial meetings.

"India made a strong pitch for addressing non-tariff barriers that certain countries use to deprive others of market access, take necessary action against non-market economies, ensure that we have a strong dispute settlement mechanism at the WTO so that finality can be brought and discipline can be maintained," Goyal told reporters here.

The minister made these remarks in a meeting of about 25 ministers of WTO member countries, including Australia, Singapore, France and Nigeria. WTO Director General Ngozi Okonjo-Iweala also participated in the meeting.

This mini-ministerial informal gathering was called by Australia ahead of the 14th ministerial conference, scheduled in Cameroon in



March next year. It was held on the margins of the OECD (Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development) Ministerial Council Meeting here.

The WTO deals with the global rules of trade between nations. Its main function is to ensure that trade flows as smoothly, predictably and freely as possible. It is a Geneva-based 166-member body. Since 2009, the WTO's dispute settlement mechanism has not been functioning properly as the US has stalled appointments of members in the appellate body. On earlier occasions, India has pressed for a two-tier dispute resolution system at the WTO.

"All in all, the shared concerns of all the ministers were placed before the gathering today, and we have all resolved to collectively work to strengthen the working of

the WTO, to ensure the core principles are respected and work towards global good and global growth in trade," he said.

He added that it was agreed upon by the member nations to make an effort to bring back the mojo into the organisation as all countries recognise the importance of multilateralism. The other tracks which came up for discussion include resolving agri issues, including finding a permanent solution to the issues of public stockholding for food grains.

"There is the track on finding solutions to address the concerns of overfishing and indiscriminate fishing that is leading to depletion of fish stocks, there are concerns about several JSIs (joint statement initiatives) (or) pluri-laterals, which some countries believe should be brought within the

multi-lateral framework," he said.

On the China-led proposal for an investment facilitation pact, he said, issues that have been mandated at the WTO should get priority and should be the first issues to be resolved.

Issues going beyond trade (like this proposal) should not be brought into it as it would create further differences between member countries, he added. India is against this proposal.

Whether any member raised the issue of MPIA (multi party interim appeal arbitration arrangement), the minister said only one or two members spoke about that.

"But there does not seem to be very much consensus or any traction to that idea. I have not heard of any cases resolved through MPIA," he said.

The MPIA is being pushed by certain members. It is an alternative mechanism to resolve WTO disputes that are appealed by a country in the absence of a functional WTO Appellate Body. Whether the WTO is facing an existential crisis, he said that one should not jump to the conclusion that an existential crisis has been created.

"Challenges will come and situations will arise, we have to address such challenges, face these situations and within the ambit of the WTO framework," he said, adding "the WTO now is about 30 years old, what we need to do is work with an open mind and unlock possibilities". (PTI)

Stock markets rebound after 3-day fall; Sensex recovers 260 points

MUMBAI, June 4: Indian benchmark equity indices Sensex and Nifty snapped the three-day losing streak and settled in the positive territory on Wednesday, mirroring a rally in global markets and supported by buying in blue-chips Reliance Industries and HDFC Bank. Market analysts said Indian equities closed with gains on better-than-expected US job market data and optimism over trade talks between the US and Chinese President this week also added optimism to markets recovery. The 30-share BSE Sensex climbed 260.74 points, or 0.32 per cent, to settle at 80,998.25. During the day, it jumped 349.78 points, or 0.43 per cent, to 81,087.29. The NSE Nifty went up 77.70 points, or

0.32 per cent, to 24,620.20. From the Sensex firms, Eternal climbed 3.32 per cent. Bharti Airtel, IndusInd Bank, Tech Mahindra, Reliance Industries, Tata Motors, HDFC Bank, Tata Steel and Hindustan Unilever were the other major gainers.

However, Bajaj Finserv, Axis Bank, Tata Consultancy Services, Titan and Larsen & Toubro were among the laggards. "Indian equities closed with gains following positive global cues with Nifty-50 up 0.32 per cent at 24,620. US markets ended higher on Tuesday after better-than-expected April job openings data, indicating resilience in the US labour market despite concerns over tariff policies. (PTI)

Contd. from Page 1...

Central panel complains of SC

been informed about the Supreme Court's 2019 directions. It instructed the KAAC to file quarterly status reports through the chief secretary of Assam and asked the DGP and the Karbi Anglong SP to take immediate and effective steps to ensure that no illegal mining and transportation of minerals from the area are allowed. (PTI)

2026 polls will be between

ties with Pakistan, and he will reveal everything publicly by September 10. Asked about the difference between Gogoi and Sarma in the assembly polls, the CM said, "There is no foreigner at my home. All my type of skinned people are there at my home. So, there is a huge difference between him and me. "I reached this position after a lot of struggle. My father was not a CM and I did not have a golden spoon at home."

Sarma was alluding to the late Tarun Gogoi, the father of Gaurav Gogoi. The present CM was also a minister under Tarun Gogoi.

In the 2026 polls, the BJP will sweep because of the development programmes of the saffron party and the popularity of Prime Minister Narendra Modi. "People also know that supporting Rahul Gandhi means supporting Pakistan. Voting in his name means voting for Pakistan. There is no option other than BJP in case of nationalism, identity and development," Sarma said.

He claimed that for India and Assam, the BJP is a necessity as the party has taken several major decisions like recovering land from encroachers, stopping child marriage, preventing rhino poaching and giving arms licences to indigenous people.

"For Assamese people, BJP is a compulsion. BJP follows Assamese culture and tradition. The Assamese people for the first time got their own government," he asserted. Talking about social media campaigns, Sarma said around 2,000 Facebook accounts have started from a "particular date" and are now commenting on next year's assembly elections.

"Out of them, half have originated from Bangladesh and Pakistan. We have earmarked those and asked the Special Branch to look after those accounts and review accordingly," he added. Sarma claimed that Pakistan's ISI wants "somebody" to win the election in Assam. "These accounts belong to one community. There is a call centre also in Kolkata for this job," he added. (PTI)

Indian delegation in US to push

The countries the delegation visited have "very clearly understood why India was constrained to respond militarily in the way it did, and have supported India's counterterrorism measure."

On Wednesday, when the Indian delegation begins its meetings here, a parliamentary delegation from Pakistan led by Pakistan Peoples Party Chairman and former foreign minister Bilawal Bhutto Zardari is also set to arrive in Washington, DC.

Speaking to reporters at the United Nations headquarters in New York, Zardari—who met UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres along with his delegation—said they would meet US government representatives and lawmakers in the American capital.

"The President of the United States has a unique opportunity to deliver on his commitment to peace within the context of India and Pakistan. The United States enjoys good relations with Pakistan and enjoys good relations with India...we will be seeking to encourage the United States and other international players to play their role, to facilitate this process," Zardari said.

On the Pakistani delegation arriving in Washington the same day, Deora said, "There is no doubt in anyone's mind in the United States that Pakistan is a banana republic, a failed state, a terror exporter, a country where the civilian government has no power, (it's) the army that controls the power. So I don't think that it matters to India that there's a Pakistani delegation trying to play copy and paste."

Surya also said that it was not the "first time that the Pakistanis tried to copy India in what India tries to do, but they end up a cheap copy."

He said that the world has long observed what India stands for and what Pakistan stands for.

Investing in India, he said, is seen as an investment in democracy, responsible civilian leadership and global progress. On the other hand, he noted that every terrorist attack in the last 20-30 years that has rocked the world has had investigations directly or indirectly leading to Pakistan.

He added that over 50 UN-designated terrorists have formed a safe haven in Pakistan. "So the narrative of a country like Pakistan cannot be salvaged by an accented English speaking suit-wearing ex-foreign minister. Pakistan's hands are too full in blood to be washed away by this overnight drama," Surya said. The Tharoor-led delegation is one of the seven multi-party delegations India had tasked to visit 33 global capitals to reach out to the international community to emphasise Pakistan's links to terrorism.

Tensions between India and Pakistan escalated after the April 22 Pahalgam terror attack, with India carrying out precision strikes on terror infrastructure in Pakistan and Pakistan-occupied Kashmir in the early hours of May 7. Pakistan attempted to attack Indian military bases on May 8, 9, and 10. The Indian side responded strongly to the Pakistani actions. The on-ground hostilities ended with an understanding of stopping the military actions following talks between the directors general of military operations of both sides on May 10. (PTI)

Assam flood toll rises to 19;

were also operational. A total of 14,977 hectares of cropland has been inundated, the ASDMA bulletin said. The Brahmaputra was flowing above the danger level at Neamatighat, Tezpur and Dhubri, Burhidighat at Chenimari and Khowang, Kopili at Kamrup and Dharantul, Barak at Fulertal, BP Ghat and AP Ghat, Sonai at Amraghat, Rukni at Dholai, Dhaleswari at Gharmura, Katakhal at Matizuri and Kushiayara at Sribhumi.

Damage to roads, bridges, educational institutions, Anganwadi centres, electricity poles and other infrastructure was also reported from different parts. The bulletin added that two districts remained affected by 'urban floods', with 1,066 people hit by the deluge.

A Northeast Frontier Railway (NFR) spokesperson said train services in parts of southern Assam have been affected due to rising water level at tracks and waterlogging at washing pits, particularly in Silchar.

A number of passenger trains were cancelled, short-terminated or rescheduled during the day as had been in the past few days, he said.

Heavy rainfall and landslides have posed a threat to the Badarpur-Lumding hill section which connects Barak Valley to the rest of the country, though rail movement has not been snapped with on-ground staffers and technology being deployed to ensure the tracks remain clear, another NFR official said. He said that water from the Barak River, which flows close to Silchar railway station, has entered parts of the station, rendering difficulties in normal operations.

As the washing pits are inundated, the maintenance of the trains parked there has not been possible and it has led to cancellation or rescheduling of some trains, he said. Regarding the Badarpur-Lumding hill section, he said small landslides, incidents of boulders blocking tracks, etc. have been reported over the last few days.

"But our personnel are working round-the-clock and clearing the tracks. Some short-distance passenger trains have been cancelled but no long-distance train has been cancelled so far. We are ensuring movement with some time and speed adjustments to minimise problems for the passengers," the official added. (PTI)

Madhya Pradesh tourist may

an SP-level officer and assisted by four DSP rank officers. Sohra, also known as Cherrapunji, has been receiving heavy rain, which affected the search and rescue operations, he said. The area recorded 500 mm of rain between May 29 and 31, which is equivalent to Mysore's annual rainfall, a weather department official said. A clip of a telephone conversation between Sonam and her mother-in-law has gone viral on social media.

In the undated clip, Sonam could be heard expressing discomfort about a steep trek. "Today must be your fast," the mother-in-law could be heard saying, to which Sonam responded, "Yes, it is. But I won't break my fast just because we are travelling."

Sonom then went on to describe the area she was in along with Raja. "We're in a dense forest, nothing is available here. The climb is steep. I had told him not to go, but he never listens. I'm exhausted. The food here isn't good either. It's hard to breathe while walking."

PTI could not independently verify the authenticity of the clip. Earlier this year, Hungarian tourist Puskas Zsolt went missing soon after he started trekking to the living roots bridge. His body was found dead 12 days later. Medical reports indicated that he died due to a fall. (PTI)

Core committee for year-long

we plan to gift it to 10 lakh people," Sarma added. The state government had earlier announced that the year-long celebration will be held from September 8, and it will be attended by Prime Minister Narendra Modi. Events across India and commemorative coin, among others, have been planned, Sarma had said.

Commemorative events will also be held in Arunachal Pradesh, where Hazarika spent his early years, Kolkata where he lived extensively during his creative years, and Mumbai where he spent his last years and breathed his last in 2011. A documentary on the musical genius and issuance of a commemorative coin in honour of Hazarika are also being pursued, Sarma added. (PTI)

India vehemently opposed

economic affairs, posing risks of policy slippages and reversal of reforms as has been witnessed in the past, they said. Even when a civilian government is in power, the army continues to play an outsized role in domestic politics and extends its tentacles deep into the economy, they added.

Pakistan's policy of cross-border terrorism has led to a worsening of the security situation in the region and has significantly escalated macroeconomic risks for Pakistan, which also heightens the enterprise risks for the ADB, sources said. India also highlighted that the economic fragility of the borrowing country (Pakistan) poses credit risks to the ADB too, sources added. (PTI)

Infinix launches GT 30 Pro Gaming Smartphone

HT Bureau

GUWAHATI, June 4: Smartphone brand Infinix has launched its latest gaming-focused smartphone, the GT 30 Pro, in India.

Designed with a comprehensive gaming philosophy, the device combines flagship-level processing power, advanced thermal engineering, and immersive control features to deliver a high-performance experience. The GT 30 Pro is priced at ₹ 24,999 for the 8GB/256GB variant and ₹ 26,999 for the 12GB/256GB variant, and will be available exclusively on Flipkart from June 12. A special Day 1 offer will allow buyers to purchase it at ₹ 22,999. The phone will be available in two colour options—Dark Flare with RGB lighting and Blade White with white illumination.

According to Anish Kapoor, CEO of Infinix India, the GT 30 Pro represents a significant milestone for the brand and the mobile gaming community in India.

Kapoor said that mobile gamers are now seeking performance-driven features instead of mere cosmetic upgrades. The GT 30 Pro addresses these needs by integrating the world's first MediaTek Dimensity 8350 ULTIMATE processor, certified support for 120FPS gameplay in Battle-grounds Mobile India (BGMI) by Krafton, tactile GT Shoulder Triggers for enhanced control, and a striking Cyber Mecha Design with customizable RGB lighting.

Additional enhancements include AI-based features such as Esports Mode, XBOOST optimisation, AI-powered audio enhancements, and responsive haptic feedback to deliver a competitive edge in gaming. The device features a 1.5K AMOLED display with a 144Hz refresh rate and 4500 nits peak brightness, ensuring vivid visuals across environments.

Indian Medtech start-up SS Innovations makes Nasdaq debut

HT Bureau

GUWAHATI, June 4: In a significant milestone for Indian medical technology on the global platform, SS Innovations International, the developer of the indigenous SSI Mantra surgical robotic system, marked its debut on the Nasdaq by ringing the opening bell at the Nasdaq MarketSite in New York City.

The company's shares are now trading under the ticker symbol 'SSII', marking a proud moment for India and a major step forward in the country's contribution to global healthcare innovation.

The bell-ringing ceremony was led by Dr Sudhir Srivastava, Founder, Chairman, and CEO of SS Innovations International, who was joined by members of the management team, Board of Directors, key advisors, and special guests.

The event not only celebrated the company's recent uplisting to Nasdaq in April 2025 but also highlighted the growing international recognition of Indian-origin healthcare solutions, particularly in the advanced medical technology sector.

SS Innovations has made rapid strides with its clinically validated and patented SSI Mantra Surgical Robotic System, which is currently installed in 80 hospitals across 75 locations in India.

The company has also expanded its footprint inter-

nationally, with deployments in Nepal, Ecuador, Guatemala, the Philippines, Indonesia, Sri Lanka, Colombia, and Ukraine.

To date, over 4,000 robotic surgeries have been successfully conducted using the SSI Mantra, covering more than 100 surgical procedures.

Designed as a cost-effective and high-precision solution, the system is playing a critical role in making robotic surgery more accessible to a wider patient base.

Speaking at the ceremony, Dr Srivastava expressed gratitude and pride, stating that the milestone represented the dedication of the SS Innovations team in developing a world-class, affordable surgical robotic platform in India.

He emphasised that the completion of over 4,000 procedures without any complications, injuries, or mortalities is a testament to the system's safety and reliability.

Dr Srivastava also noted the growing adoption of the SSI Mantra by surgeons across India and six other countries, while reiterating the company's plans to expand into key markets in Europe and the United States. He reaffirmed the company's mission to democratize access to advanced surgical care worldwide, with India leading the charge.

HDFC Bank Parivartan launches nationwide campaign against plastic ahead of World Environment Day

HT Bureau

GUWAHATI, June 4: In the run-up to World Environment Day on June 5, HDFC Bank has launched a wide-ranging awareness campaign under its CSR initiative, Parivartan, to promote mindful use of plastic and enhance environmental responsibility.

The campaign involves customers, employees, and the general public in a collective effort to reduce plastic consumption and encourage sustainable alternatives.

As part of this initiative, HDFC Bank is conducting awareness drives across select branches, urg-

ing customers to deposit plastic e-waste for recycling and to adopt non-plastic alternatives in their daily lives.

Employees are actively leading clean-up and collection drives as well as awareness sessions that aim to build a sense of community responsibility in addressing plastic pollution.

The Bank has also introduced a dedicated online platform to educate citizens about the harmful effects of plastic on the environment.

Through this page, individuals can take a pledge to minimize their plastic usage by incorporating sim-

ple yet impactful changes into their routines.

Beyond awareness, HDFC Bank is strengthening its on-ground efforts through Parivartan's community-led waste management programmes.

By 2025, the Bank aims to implement solid waste management systems in over 1,000 villages and set up material recovery facilities in 15 urban local bodies.

These interventions support national priorities such as the Swachh Bharat Abhiyan and align with the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals.

Tata Memorial Centre and GE HealthCare join hands to establish cancer research & innovation centre

HT Bureau

GUWAHATI, June 4: Tata Memorial Centre (TMC), a grant-in-aid institution under the Department of Atomic Energy, Government of India, has signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with GE HealthCare Technologies Inc., a global leader in medical technology, pharmaceutical diagnostics, and digital solutions, to establish a state-of-the-art Cancer Research & Innovation Centre.

GE HealthCare will serve as the technology partner, while TMC will take the lead as the clinical oncology partner.

This collaboration is set to boost clinical research and academic engagement through the formation of a Joint Working Group that will identify key project areas and chart a five-year roadmap.

The partnership comes at a critical time, as cancer cases in India are projected to rise significantly.

Currently, around 100 out of every one lakh people are diagnosed with cancer annually.

According to data from the Cancer Registry Program, the incidence of cancer is expected to



increase by 12.8% in 2025 compared to 2020.

These sobering statistics highlight the urgent need for precision-driven and AI-enabled innovations to improve cancer care outcomes across the country.

Dr C S Pramesh, Director of Tata Memorial Hospital, noted that while the government is making policy-driven efforts to tackle cancer through the establishment of day care centres, expansion of care infrastructure, and increased

awareness and screening programmes, challenges around early detection, access, and preventive care persist.

He said that the partnership with GE HealthCare, a global leader in MedTech, will advance clinical research and academic initiatives aimed at transforming personalised cancer care in India.

Chaitanya Sarawate, President and CEO of GE HealthCare South Asia, highlighted that over 14 lakh new cancer cases were reported in

India in 2023.

He emphasized GE HealthCare's global focus on oncology and its commitment to precision-led care through advanced devices and AI-powered digital solutions.

Praising TMC's contributions in cancer research, education, and service delivery, he said the partnership will enhance the ability to connect every stage of cancer care—from discovery and diagnosis to treatment—through the integration of cutting-edge imaging technologies and AI-enabled platforms. Through this collaboration, TMC and GE HealthCare aim to accelerate the development and validation of emerging oncology technologies.

The centre will focus on AI-based medical imaging applications, clinical workflow optimisation, and the development of advanced visualization tools for image processing and analysis.

The partnership will also support data annotation for application development, and create enterprise health informatics solutions aimed at improving efficiency and personalizing cancer care to achieve better patient outcomes.

Indus water treaty and Pakistan

On April 23, 2025, the Cabinet Committee on Security (CCS), which was presided over by Prime Minister Narendra Modi, decided to keep the Indus Waters Treaty (IWT) in abeyance. It bears mention here that the word abeyance is not used anywhere in the Treaty text. As such, the Pakistani leaders are correct when they claim that it has no legal backing. Well, this is something they have to now deal with, legal or otherwise, and face the consequences of this decision. Most Pakistanis term the decision as an existential threat since an agrarian society's dependence on irrigation water is foundational. The possibilities opening up with India's announcement is what worries Pakistan as hell because this is uncharted territory. India has paused bombardments on Pakistani targets, be it military or terrorist camps, but refused to reverse its decision on the IWT. The first impact the decision had in Pakistan was that Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif conceded defeat before Bilawal Zardari Bhutto on April 29 as he announced stoppage of all work on new Indus canals. This was a stinging slap for Pakistan Army Chief General Asim Munir who had inaugurated this project along with Punjab Chief Minister Maryam Nawaz on February 15, 2025.

Be it scholars, lawyers or politicians, all Pakistanis argue that there is no provision for unilateral abeyance of the Treaty. On this basis, all of them have termed India's action with regard to the Treaty as illegal and lacking the force of law. It bears mention here that there indeed is no provision for keeping the Treaty in abeyance in any of the 12 Articles and eight appendices. Under Article XII, called Final Provisions, the Treaty can be modified from "time to time". Article XII, Final Provisions is being reproduced hereunder in full. It says: (1) This Treaty consists of the Preamble, the Articles hereof and Annexures A to H hereto, and may be cited as "The Indus Waters Treaty 1960". (2) This Treaty shall be ratified and the ratifications thereof shall be exchanged in New Delhi.

It shall enter into force upon the exchange, of ratifications, and will then take effect retrospectively from the first of April 1960. (3) The provisions of this Treaty may from time to time be modified by a duly ratified treaty concluded for that purpose between the two Governments. (4) The provisions of this Treaty, or, the provisions of this Treaty as modified under the provisions of Paragraph (3), shall continue in force until terminated by a duly ratified treaty concluded for that purpose between the two Governments. This Article XII was invoked by India, for the first time ever, on January 25, 2023, and Pakistan did not respond in the manner India expected or wanted it to. It refused to start fresh negotiations for modification of the Treaty, under this provision. Can it not be said then that Pakistan was "unilaterally" nullifying Article XII of the Treaty?

South Korea's new president may bring some changes in foreign policy



By Satyaki Chakraborty

Lee Jae Myung of majority Liberal Democratic Party was sworn in as the new President of South Korea after the National Election Commission declared him as the winner with 48.8 per cent of the votes polled in the presidential elections held on June 3. Lee's main rival Kim Moon-soo of the conservative People Power Party got 42 per cent of the votes.

Lee took office immediately without a transition period, as the snap election was held on Tuesday to replace former South Korean President Yoon Suk-yeol, who was ousted over a failed bid to impose martial law. The political situation in South Korea in the last six months witnessed lot of convulsions leading to the June 3 election. The South Korean citizens are now relieved as the duly elected President has started functioning.

Lee delivered a victory address from the National Assembly on Wednesday, pledging to restore democracy, revive the economy, ensure public safety and pursue peace on the Korean Peninsula. He also called for national unity and an end to political division proposing to wipe out authoritarianism and reopen dialogue with North Korea for ensuring peace and security in the region.

Lee faces what could be the most daunting set of challenges for a South Korean leader in nearly three decades, ranging from healing a country deeply scarred by the martial law attempt to tackling unpredictable protectionist moves by the US, a major trading partner and security ally.

Lee, 61 who served as Governor of Gyeonggi province and Mayor of Seongnam city has been in active politics for long having a controversial career all along. As a former child labourer known for his inspirational rags-to-riches story, Lee drew attention of South Korean middle class through his criticism of the country's conservative establishment and call to build a more pragmatic South Korea in foreign policy.

During his campaign, Lee called for finetuning the existing foreign relations by smoothing ties with China and Russia and resetting the economic relations with USA on an

objective basis. South Korean exports had been badly hit by Trump's reciprocal tariff policy. The U.S. administration is expecting a South Korean response on trade talks before the July 9 deadline. The new President has to take up this trade issue as the major one as the South Korean trade is intricately linked with the U.S. market. At the same time, President Lee has to evolve a more pragmatic policy relating to South Korea's relations with North Korea.

Born to a poor family in Andong, Lee became a factory worker after primary school and became disabled due to workplace injuries. Lee earned middle and high school equivalency diplomas and studied at Chung-Ang University, earning his law degree in 1986. As a human rights and labour lawyer, Lee organized with Minbyun and advocated for opening a new hospital in Seongnam.

Lee entered politics in 2005 and unsuccessfully contested a few elections. He was elected Mayor of Seongnam in 2010 and re-elected in 2014. He first ran for the presidency in 2017, losing the Democratic nomination to Moon Jae-in. Lee resigned as mayor in 2018 for a successful run for Governor of Gyeonggi Province; he would resign as governor in 2021. Lee ran for president in 2022, winning the party nomination, but narrowly losing to Yoon Suk-yeol of the People Power Party in the general election.

In January 2024, Lee survived an assassination attempt. In November, he was convicted of violating the Public Official Election Act by falsely denying his connection with Kim Moon-ki, a former executive of Seongnam Development Corporation, during his 2022 presidential campaign. During the 2024 South Korean martial law crisis, Lee gained international attention for climbing the National Assembly building and documenting the event in a livestream. He subsequently played a significant role in leading the impeachment against Yoon. Upon the termination of Yoon's presidency by the Constitutional Court of Korea, Lee mounted a third campaign for the presidency in 2025, winning the DPK nomination and defeating PPP nominee Kim Moon-soo in the general election on June 3. (IPA Service)

ASEAN's missed opportunity for beleaguered Myanmar

The Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) once again failed Myanmar at the summit in Kuala Lumpur from 26 to 27 May 2025 with a "Peace Formula", when the country plunged into a bloody civil war with "revolutionary" armed ethnic groups.

ASEAN is an intergovernmental organization of ten Southeast Asian countries: Brunei, Cambodia, Indonesia, Laos, Malaysia, Myanmar, the Philippines, Singapore, Thailand, and Vietnam. Host Malaysia, as the current chairman of ASEAN, delivered a meaningless statement on Myanmar and offered no new approaches to dealing with the crisis in the country, which has been beleaguered by a military dictatorship since 2021.

Instead of dusting off their hands, the summit offered a toothless Five-Point Consensus (5PC) as a road map for addressing Myanmar's tribulations. The ethnic rebels are more concerned with holding their ancestral territories and establishing regional autonomy under a constitutional government. None of the rebels has a military plan to capture Myanmar's capital.

To topple the military regime in Naypyidaw and form a national democratic government, the rebel groups have placed the responsibility upon the National Unity Government (NUG), a shadow government in exile under the political inspiration of Nobel laureate Aung San Suu Kyi. The ousted leader is presently serving jail terms on charges of sedition.

Myanmar's capital, Naypyidaw, is besieged by ethnic rebels who have taken two-thirds of the country from the military junta led by General Min Aung Hlaing, who has ruled Myanmar as the State Administration Council (SAC) Chairman since seizing power in the February 2021 coup d'état. In July 2024, he wore presidential robes in July 2024.

To the Myanmar people, the obsession with the failed peace plan is beyond frustrating. They simply can't help wondering why ASEAN leaders remain so delusional when it comes to this "consensus", which has delivered nothing for Myanmar.

Since ASEAN adopted the 5PC in 2021, the junta has never honoured it. First and foremost, the consensus calls for the immediate cessation of violence in Myanmar. This step has never been implemented by the junta. Instead of ending military rule, the regime has rained bombs on its citizens and blocked essential supplies, including healthcare facilities, not to mention the continued atrocities like arson and massacres.

Over the past four years, more than 6,000 civilians have been killed by the military, including children, prompting the UN early this year to say that the junta had ramped up its violence against civilians to a level that was unprecedented in the four years since the generals launched their coup.

Rather than taking the junta's total disregard for its plan as a blatant insult, ASEAN's leadership doggedly clings to the 5PC as its "main reference to address the political crisis in Myanmar," writes Hpone Myat in anti-establishment news portal The Irrawaddy. The news organization Irrawaddy, named after a yawning river in Myanmar, operates in exile in a neighbouring country for the safety and security of its staff.

Myanmar has become the most dangerous place for journalists after the recent sentencing of Than Htike Myint to five years in jail under Myanmar's Counter Terrorism Law on 3 April. The military was holding 55 journalists in detention in June 2024, according to a report by the International Centre for Not-for-Profit Law (ICNL).

ASEAN's continued faith in the 5PC in the face of the regime's re-

peated intransigence is incomprehensible. In the light of this, the people of Myanmar are not sure whether to praise the bloc for its "consistency" or feel sorry for its naivety in dealing with the most ruthless regime on earth. Apart from the statement, remarks from the bloc's current chair, Malaysian Prime Minister Anwar Ibrahim, were out of context and deliberately did not touch base as the military junta is sinking into a quicksand.

In April, Anwar met with junta chief Hlaing in Bangkok and held virtual talks with Myanmar's National Unity Government (NUG) in exile. Malaysian Premier Anwar Ibrahim should not have appeased Min Aung Hlaing, believing in the illusions that the General would restore peace in the country, riddled with civil strife. After a call from the ASEAN meeting in April, Hlaing promised a ceasefire by the Myanmar armed forces, Tat-

DEGREE OF THOUGHT

By: Saleem Samad

madaw, and the ethnic rebels. His junta even signed an MOU with some rebels, but that ceasefire was broken within days.

Hlaing's air force continued to bomb civilian areas, causing immense suffering, pain, and agony for the villagers. At the summit, he (Anwar) described those talks as "significant", saying both sides were open to engagement while highlighting Gen Hlaing's supposed willingness to engage in peace efforts despite dubbing NUG as a "terrorist organization".

In his opening remarks to the summit in Kuala Lumpur, Anwar said ASEAN had been able to "move the needle forward" in its efforts to achieve an eventual resolution to the Myanmar crisis, adding that the steps may be small and the bridge may be fragile, but "even a fragile bridge is better than

a widening gulf."

There is not even a "fragile bridge", given his dishonesty and insincerity. His willingness to engage in peace talks is merely fictional and a hollow promise; Myanmar's generals have historically never been known for sincerely engaging in peace efforts. They only engage or join dialogue as a pretext to ease external pressures. No such talks have ever borne fruit. Ask any ethnic armed resistance organization or opposition politician in Myanmar, and they will enlighten you as to how historically untrustworthy the previous generals and Min Aung Hlaing are, laments Hpone Myat.

ASEAN members have univocally urged the regime in Naypyidaw to extend a temporary ceasefire and engage in peace talks with its rivals at the summit, but did not spell out a timeline. Instead, the ASEAN urged that negotiations were needed and that Malaysia's Foreign Minister Mohamad Hasan would visit Naypyidaw in June regarding the mitigation of the crisis.

Furthermore, the regional leaders' statement on an extended and expanded ceasefire in Myanmar can only be greeted with dismay. The leaders further called for "the sustained extension and nationwide expansion of the ceasefire in Myanmar," but the reality is the ceasefire has never existed on the ground, as the junta has consistently violated the truce from the very start, wrote The Irrawaddy.

Instead of being unrealistic about the reality of present-day Myanmar, ASEAN should have adopted a serious resolution against the regime. Such moves would have put pressure on the junta by making it harder for it to survive, but also would have helped move the currently stalled resolution mechanism for Myanmar's crisis forward. To make that happen, the bloc must first drop its empty rhetoric and take meaning-

ful steps, concludes Hpone Myat.

Last week, the United Nations Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) raised concern over the deteriorating human rights situation and economic collapse in Myanmar, with violent military operations killing more civilians last year than in any year since the 2021 coup. The military operations have sparked an unfolding humanitarian crisis.

"The country has endured an increasingly catastrophic human rights crisis marked by unabated violence and atrocities that have affected every single aspect of life," said Volker Türk, the U.N. High Commissioner for Human Rights. Myanmar's economy has lost USD 93.9 billion over the last four years, with inflation surging and the kyat (local currency) losing 40 per cent of its value.

Over half the population now lives below the poverty line, facing food insecurity and soaring prices, which has worsened since the March 28 earthquake, according to the U.N. Possibly, ASEAN has lost all moral position to pressurise the military junta, since Justice for Myanmar accused 54 companies in Southeast Asian countries ASEAN of supplying the regime with funds, jet fuel and technology.

"ASEAN's failure to address corporate complicity has allowed the [regime] to intensify its brutal campaign of terror that has killed thousands of civilians and displaced millions with total impunity," said Yadanar Maung, spokesperson of Justice for Myanmar, while calling on the leaders of ASEAN to end their support to the regime in Naypyidaw. (The author is an award-winning independent journalist based in Bangladesh. A media rights defender with Reporters Without Borders (@RSF_inter). The recipient of Ashoka Fellowship and Hellman-Hammett Award. He could be reached at saleemsamad@hotmail.com)

Israel is all set to take over Gaza, West Bank area

By Nantoo Banerjee

Gaza's Hamas militants face an unmitigated disaster as Israel is all set to take full control over Gaza strip after a gap of almost 20 years. Simultaneously, Israel seems to be gearing up to annex a substantial portion (Area C) of West Bank ignoring protests from France, the United Kingdom and Sweden and even a section of its own people in Tel Aviv. Last week, Israel said it would establish 22 additional Jewish settlements in the occupied West Bank. Hamas has few genuine supporters in the Arab world barring Iran and pro-Iran Houthis. Gaza may soon become a part of Israel's extended territory with Palestinian population vastly diminished due to death and displacement during the Israel-Hamas war since October 7, 2023. The present Gaza war follows several unresolved Israeli-Palestinian conflicts in the past, including those in 2008, 2009, 2012, 2014, and 2021.

Ironically, Israel gave up the control of the Gaza strip, one of the world's most densely populated settlements, in 2005. It withdrew from the Gaza strip and dismantled all its settlements. Israel also withdrew from the Philadelphi Route, a narrow strip of land adjacent to the border with Egypt, after Egypt agreed to secure its side of the border after the Agreement on Movement and Access, known as the Rafah accord. The Israeli army had invaded and took control of the Gaza strip in 1967 following a six-day war. It also captured the West Bank and east Jerusalem. At the time of Israel's withdrawal from the 40-kilometer-long Gaza strip, its population was as large as 1.3 million. The birth rate in Gaza is among the highest in the world. However, there was little room for a proper Jewish settlement there to govern the place without much tension.

The Palestinian population is expected to be reduced significantly due to death and displacement by the time of the end of the war, which seems to have reached the final stage. Nearly 70 per cent of Gaza's Palestinian population are refugees, depending mostly on humanitarian assistance for their daily livelihood. The security-linked Israeli blockade of transport movement through the land, air, and sea has forced a good number of the Gaza population to flee the area or die of starvation. In a way, Gaza's refugee population has long been held captive by the Hamas militants running the show in the narrow strip. Once reacquired, Israel will ensure an adequate presence of Jewish population in Gaza to ensure its smooth management and make the strip economically viable.

Once the Gaza strip is conquered and a good part of the West Bank comes under the full Israeli control, the country is expected to concentrate on realising its long-cherished dream to emerge as one of the world's top economic and military power. Currently, Israel is West Asia's most developed and advanced country, boasting the 17th largest

foreign-exchange reserves in the world. It has the highest average wealth per adult in the 18-member West Asian region, including those on or near the Arabian Peninsula, as well as Turkey, Egypt, and Iran. Israel ranks 10th worldwide by financial assets per capita. Notably, as many as eight Arab states now openly and unabashedly deal with Israel. They are: Saudi Arabia, the UAE, Egypt, Jordan, Oman, Morocco, Bahrain and Sudan.

Assuming that Israel's fighting in Gaza and Lebanon will ease soon, the latest economic survey report of the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) has forecast that the country's economy will grow at a rate of 3.4 percent in 2025 and 5.5 percent in 2026, which is faster than the OECD's average growth forecast for the global economy of 3.1 percent in 2025 and three percent in 2026. The OECD's growth forecast for the current year is lower than the Bank of Israel's projection of four percent and the Israel Finance Ministry's 4.4 percent. However, the OECD expects Israel's economy to rebound this year although it is pessimistic about the pace of growth, citing the risk of war-related spending that continues to take a toll on the country's finances.

The 2023 US News & World Report ranked Israel among the world's 10 most powerful countries. It found the Israeli military the fourth strongest globally, behind only the US, China and Russia. The Report said Israel is also the world's sixth most politically influential power. It should be noted that Israel's bid to become a leading global economic and military power are multifaceted. They include strengthening of the country's high-tech sector, continuous innovation in defence technology, and fostering a robust economy. Several multinational corporations are setting up R&D centres in the country. It has a vibrant startup ecosystem, which attracts both local and international investment, and fosters innovation. Israel has a well-established and highly innovative defence manufacturing industry, developing advanced weaponry and technology. The country is a significant exporter of defence equipment.

Israel wants to end the Gaza war as early as possible to concentrate on the country's economic development. In his first press conference of the year, Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu vowed that by the end of the current war, the entire Gaza strip would be under Israeli security control. Interestingly, Palestinians in the southern Gaza region have lately taken to the streets to protest against Hamas. Those Gaza-based Palestinian demonstrators were seen in videos posted on social media calling for an end to the war and for the removal of the armed group from Gaza. "Out! Out! Out! All of Hamas, out!" they chanted. With the head of the Hamas armed wing, Mohammed Sinwar, killed in an Israeli strike last week, the Gaza war is most unlikely to last long. (IPA Service)

DLF confident of winning Nilambur by-election

By P. Sreekumar

The stage is set for a prestigious and no-holds barred contest in the by-election from Nilambur constituency to the Kerala Assembly. The by-election has been necessitated by the exit of PV Anvar from the Left Democratic Front (LDF). The last date for filing of nominations was June 2. Polling will be held on June 19 and the results announced on June 23.

The picture is clear after the last date for filing nominations. It will be a four-cornered contest. The LDF has chosen M. Swaraj, CPI(M) State Secretariat member and editor of the party daily Deshabhimani. The UDF candidate is Aryadan Shoukat, son of veteran Congress leader Aryadan Mohammed who dominated the Nilambur constituency for over four decades. Apart from being a politician, Shoukat is a known film personality. He has written scripts for a number of Malayalam films which have won critical acclaim.

Anvar, who has since become the State convener of the All India Trinamool Congress, has decided to contest as an Independent because the TMC has not been registered in Kerala.

The Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) has named Mohan George, a prominent Christian lawyer as its candidate, obviously with an eye on the Christian voters in the Constituency.

The CPI(M) leadership finally decided on Swaraj after considering the possibility of a few consensus candidates and LDF independents. The party has opted to field its own candidate as the leadership felt a political fight was necessary in view of the local bodies election this year and the assembly poll battle next year.

Swaraj made it to the State Assembly in 2016 by defeating Congress strongman K Babu from Tripunithura assembly constituency. However, in 2021 he lost to Babu. Swaraj thinks the LDF government's development and welfare measures will set the agenda for the by-election campaign. The Nilambur by-election will be the starting point for LDF's third term in governance, added Swaraj, who had worked as the state secretary of SFI and DFYI.

While the by-election is important for both the LDF and UDF, it is crucial for Anvar, whose resignation necessitated the exercise. The outcome will not only test his 'influence in the constituency but also seal his political fate. Anvar, who won in 2021 with the LDF's backing, resigned from the seat after differences with Chief Minister Pinarayi Vijayan over his tirade against the home department, the CM's political secretary P Sasi,

ADGP Ajith Kumar and SP Sujith Das. He later joined the Trinamool Congress.

Nilambur has not been a traditional left stronghold. After K Kunjali, who won in 1965 and 1967, the CPM has not won Nilambur on its own. Even party leader TK Hansa won in 1982 as an independent. Later, after the dominance of Aryadan Muhammed, the Left won in 2016 and in 2021 through Anvar, another independent.

Anvar's decision to contest as an Independent followed his failure to join the Congress-led opposition United Democratic Front (UDF). Anvar wanted the UDF to name Malappuram District Congress Committee (DCC) president V S Joy as its candidate. The UDF snubbed him by making Aryadan Shoukat its candidate.

The CPI(M) is confident of winning the seat. The impressive performance of the Pinarayi Vijayan-led LDF Government will help the party to romp home the winner. That is the prevailing perception in the LDF corridors. The very fact that the CPI(M) has decided to field its own candidate instead of backing Independents as in the past is itself indicative of this confidence.

The stakes are high for the Congress. The election will pose the first major challenge to the newly-anointed Congress's state president Sunny Joseph. A defeat at Nilambur will further demoralise the Congress rank and file, besides meaning a major setback to the party-led UDF's aim of wresting the State from the LDF in the 2026 Assembly elections. The outlook is not all that good for the UDF for a variety of reasons. First and foremost, the party is anything but united. Senior leaders continue to work at cross purposes. Differences between former PCC president K. Sudhakaran and leader of the Opposition V D Satheesan are an open secret. It remains to be seen whether Sunny Joseph, a protégé of Sudhakaran, can forge unity under these trying circumstances.

The PV Anvar factor may also impact the chances of the Congress candidate. It is true that Anvar has pockets of influence in the constituency. But his presence in the fray will affect the chances of the UDF candidate more than his LDF counterpart. Anvar's tirades against the Congress candidate Aryadan Shoukat also incurred the wrath of the Congress leadership, which said a firm No to his request for joining the UDF. Although the UDF camp says the Anvar factor won't have any effect on the Congress candidate's chances, in private they are apprehensive of the possibility of Anvar taking away a slice of the traditional UDF vote bank. (IPA Service)

Preserving nature: The significance of World Environment Day

By: Satyabrata Borah

World Environment Day, observed annually on June 5, serves as a global platform to raise awareness about environmental issues and inspire collective action to protect our planet. Initiated by the United Nations in 1972 during the Stockholm Conference on the Human Environment, this day has since become a cornerstone for promoting sustainable practices and addressing pressing environmental challenges. Each year, World Environment Day focuses on a specific theme, rallying governments, organizations, and individuals to tackle issues such as climate change, pollution, deforestation, and biodiversity loss. The significance of this day lies in its ability to unite people across borders, encouraging them to reflect on their relationship with the environment and take meaningful steps toward its preservation.

The environment is the foundation of life on Earth, providing the resources necessary for human survival, from clean air and water to fertile soil and biodiversity. However, human activities have placed unprecedented pressure on these natural systems. Industrialization, urbanization, and unsustainable consumption patterns have led to environmental degradation, threatening ecosystems and the well-being of future generations. Climate change, driven by greenhouse gas emissions, has caused rising global temperatures, melting ice caps, and extreme weather events like floods, droughts, and hurricanes. Pollution, whether in the form of air, water, or soil contamination, has further exacerbated the crisis, affecting human health and wildlife. World Environment Day serves as a reminder of these challenges and the urgent need to address them through collective responsibility.

In the context of a region like Assam, India, the importance of environmental conservation is particularly pronounced. Assam is renowned for its rich natural heritage, from the mighty Brahmaputra River to its lush forests and biodiversity hotspots like Kaziranga and Manas National Parks. These areas are home to unique species such as the one-horned rhinoceros, Royal Bengal tiger, and numerous migratory birds. However, Assam's environment faces significant threats due to deforestation, industrialization, and population growth. The Brahmaputra, a lifeline for millions, is increasingly polluted by industrial waste and plastic debris. Urban centers like Guwahati are grappling with air pollution caused by vehicular emissions and unplanned urban expansion. World Environment Day provides an opportunity to highlight these regional issues and mobilize local communities to protect their natural surroundings.

One of the key messages of World Environment

Day is the power of individual and collective action. While governments and organizations play a crucial role in enacting policies and implementing large-scale conservation efforts, the participation of ordinary citizens is equally vital. Activities such as tree planting, clean-up drives, and awareness campaigns are commonly organized on this day to engage communities. In Assam, schools, colleges, and local organizations often conduct programs to educate people about the importance of preserving forests, rivers, and wildlife. For instance, efforts to protect Kaziranga National Park from poaching and habitat destruction rely heavily on the involvement of local communities who live in close proximity to these areas. By fostering a sense of ownership, World Environment Day encourages people to take pride in their natural heritage and work toward its preservation.

Pollution remains one of the most pressing environmental challenges globally and locally. Air pollution, caused by industrial emissions, vehicular exhaust, and burning of fossil fuels, has led to respiratory illnesses and reduced air quality in cities worldwide. In Assam, urban areas like Guwahati face similar issues, with air quality indices often reaching unhealthy levels due to traffic congestion and industrial activities. Water pollution is another critical concern, particularly for rivers like the Brahmaputra, which are contaminated by plastic waste, industrial effluents, and untreated sewage. Plastic pollution, in particular, has become a global crisis, with single-use plastics clogging waterways and harming marine life. World Environment Day campaigns often focus on reducing plastic use, promoting recycling, and encouraging the adoption of sustainable alternatives. In Assam, initiatives to clean rivers and promote biodegradable materials are gaining traction, but more concerted efforts are needed to address this issue effectively.

Climate change is another focal point of World Environment Day, as its impacts are felt across the globe. Rising temperatures have led to unpredictable weather patterns, affecting agriculture, water availability, and livelihoods. In Assam, climate change has intensified the frequency and severity of floods, particularly along the Brahmaputra River. These floods displace thousands of people annually, destroy crops, and disrupt local economies. Addressing climate change requires global cooperation to reduce carbon emissions, transition to renewable energy, and promote sustainable land use practices. On a local level, Assam can benefit from reforestation projects, sustainable agriculture, and community-based adaptation strategies. World Environment Day serves as a call to action for governments to implement policies that mitigate climate change



while empowering communities to adopt climate-resilient practices.

Biodiversity loss is another critical issue highlighted on World Environment Day. The destruction of habitats, poaching, and invasive species have threatened countless plant and animal species worldwide. In Assam, biodiversity hotspots like Kaziranga and Manas are under pressure from deforestation and human encroachment. The one-horned rhinoceros, a symbol of Assam's natural heritage, faces threats from poaching, while other species like tigers and elephants are at risk due to habitat loss. Protecting biodiversity requires a multifaceted approach, including stricter enforcement of wildlife protection laws, habitat restoration, and community engagement. World Environment Day provides a platform to educate people about the importance of biodiversity and the role it plays in maintaining ecological balance.

Sustainable development is a key theme that runs through World Environment Day initiatives. Balancing economic growth with environmental protection is a challenge that requires innovative solutions. In Assam, sustainable agriculture practices, such as organic farming, can reduce the reliance on chemical fertilizers and pesticides,

which harm soil and water quality. Promoting renewable energy sources, such as solar and wind power, can also help reduce the region's carbon footprint. Additionally, sustainable tourism in places like Kaziranga and Manas can generate economic opportunities while ensuring that natural habitats are preserved. World Environment Day encourages governments and businesses to adopt sustainable practices that benefit both people and the planet.

Education and awareness are critical components of World Environment Day. By engaging young people, in particular, this day fosters a sense of responsibility toward the environment. In Assam, schools and colleges often organize essay competitions, debates, and rallies to mark the occasion. These activities help instill environmental consciousness in the younger generation, who will play a pivotal role in shaping the future. Community-based organizations also play a vital role in spreading awareness about local environmental issues, such as the need to protect wetlands and forests. By empowering individuals with knowledge, World Environment Day creates a ripple effect, inspiring long-term commitment to environmental stewardship.

At the individual level, small actions can make

a significant difference. Reducing energy consumption, conserving water, minimizing waste, and planting trees are simple yet effective ways to contribute to environmental protection. In Assam, traditional practices like using locally sourced materials and promoting organic farming align with sustainable living. Encouraging the use of reusable bags, bottles, and containers can help reduce plastic waste. Community-led initiatives, such as village-level tree planting drives or river clean-up campaigns, demonstrate the power of collective action. World Environment Day inspires individuals to adopt these practices and integrate them into their daily lives.

Government policies and international cooperation are essential for addressing large-scale environmental challenges. In Assam, the state government has launched initiatives like afforestation programs and river conservation projects to combat environmental degradation. However, the success of these initiatives depends on effective implementation and public support. Globally, agreements like the Paris Climate Accord aim to limit global warming and promote sustainable development. World Environment Day serves as a reminder of the importance of these commitments and the need for governments to work together to address shared challenges.

The role of technology in environmental conservation is also worth noting. Innovations such as renewable energy, waste recycling systems, and eco-friendly materials can significantly reduce humanity's environmental footprint. In Assam, the adoption of solar-powered irrigation systems and biogas plants can support sustainable agriculture and reduce reliance on fossil fuels. World Environment Day highlights the potential of technology to address environmental challenges while emphasizing the need for equitable access to these solutions.

World Environment Day is a powerful reminder of our shared responsibility to protect the planet. For a region like Assam, with its rich natural heritage and unique environmental challenges, this day holds special significance. By addressing issues like pollution, climate change, and biodiversity loss, and by promoting sustainable practices, we can ensure a healthier and more resilient environment. World Environment Day inspires individuals, communities, and governments to work together toward a common goal: preserving the Earth for future generations. Through collective action, awareness, and commitment, we can create a sustainable future where humanity and nature thrive in harmony. This day is not just a celebration but a call to action, urging us to take responsibility for our planet and make a lasting difference.

World Environment Day calls for a plastic-free planet



By: Himangshu Ranjan Bhuyan

Every year on June 5th, the world comes together to celebrate World Environment Day, a global platform for raising awareness and driving action on pressing environmental issues. This year, the focus is on one of the most pervasive and damaging pollutants: plastic. The theme "Beat Plastic Pollution" serves as a rallying cry for individuals, governments, and industries to take decisive steps toward a plastic-free planet.

Plastic pollution has reached alarming levels, infiltrating every corner of the Earth—from the deepest ocean trenches to the highest mountain peaks. Single-use plastics, in particular, have become a symbol of our throw-away culture, with devastating consequences for ecosystems, wildlife, and human health. As the United Nations and environmental organizations amplify their calls for urgent action, World Environment Day presents a crucial opportunity to reevaluate our relationship with plastic and commit to sustainable alternatives.

The plastic crisis is a global menace that demands immediate attention. Plastic was once hailed as a revolutionary material—durable, lightweight, and versatile. However, its very durability has become its curse. Unlike organic materials, plastic does not biodegrade; instead, it breaks down into microplastics, persisting in the environment for centuries. Today, over 400 million tons of plastic are produced annually, with nearly half designed for single use. Shockingly, only 9% of all plastic waste ever produced has been recycled, while the rest accumulates in landfills, oceans, and

natural habitats.

The impact on marine life is particularly dire. Millions of marine animals, including seabirds, turtles, and whales, die each year from ingesting or becoming entangled in plastic debris. Microplastics have entered the food chain, contaminating seafood and even drinking water, raising serious concerns about long-term health effects on humans. Land ecosystems are no less affected. Plastic waste clogs rivers, chokes soil, and releases toxic chemicals as it degrades. In developing nations, where waste management systems are often inadequate, plastic pollution exacerbates public health crises, contributing to flooding and the spread of disease.

The role of corporations and governments is critical in addressing this crisis. While individual actions matter, systemic change requires bold policies and corporate accountability. Many countries have taken steps to curb plastic pollution, such as banning single-use plastics, imposing taxes on plastic bags, and promoting extended producer responsibility schemes. The UN Global Plastics Treaty, currently under negotiation, aims to establish a legally binding agreement to end plastic pollution by 2040—a landmark effort akin to the Paris Climate Agreement.

However, progress remains uneven. Some nations resist stringent regulations due to economic concerns, while others lack the infrastructure to enforce bans. Meanwhile, the fossil fuel industry—which produces the raw materials for plastic—continues to expand production, driven by declining demand for oil in energy sectors. Without a shift in industrial practices, plastic production is projected to

triple by 2060, rendering current mitigation efforts futile. Corporations, particularly in the food and beverage sector, must transition to sustainable packaging. Some companies have pledged to reduce plastic use, but misleading claims of environmental responsibility remain rampant. True progress requires investment in biodegradable materials, reusable systems, and circular economy models that prioritize recycling and waste reduction.

Grassroots movements and individual action play a significant role in combating plastic pollution. Despite the daunting scale of the crisis, community clean-up drives, zero-waste initiatives, and plastic-free campaigns have gained momentum worldwide. Activists and NGOs continue to pressure policymakers and corporations, proving that public demand can drive change. Individuals can contribute by adopting simple yet impactful habits, such as refusing single-use plastics, opting for reusable containers and water bottles, supporting brands that use eco-friendly packaging, participating in local clean-up efforts, and advocating for stronger plastic regulations.

Education also plays a vital role. Schools, media, and social platforms must amplify awareness about plastic pollution, empowering consumers to make informed choices. The path forward requires a collective effort to build a sustainable future without plastic. World Environment Day serves as a reminder that the fight against plastic pollution is not just an environmental issue—it is a matter of global justice, public health, and intergenerational responsibility. While eliminating plastic entirely may not be feasible in the short term, drastic reduction and innovation in alternatives are imperative.

Governments must enforce stricter regulations, corporations must adopt sustainable practices, and individuals must embrace conscious consumption. Together, we can turn the tide against plastic pollution and pave the way for a cleaner, healthier planet. As we mark this year's World Environment Day, let us reaffirm our commitment to a plastic-free future—one where nature thrives, wildlife is protected, and future generations inherit a world unburdened by our waste. The time for action is now. (The author can be reached at himangshur1989@gmail.com or 9954812261, 9864000260)

A global call to end plastic pollution: World Environment Day 2025

By: Dipak Kurmi

The Earth, our shared home, faces an unprecedented environmental crisis, with plastic pollution emerging as one of the most pressing and pervasive threats to ecosystems, human health, and global sustainability. Each year, World Environment Day, celebrated on June 5, serves as a clarion call to action, galvanizing millions across the globe to confront environmental challenges. Led by the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) since its inception in 1973, this day has evolved into the largest global platform for environmental outreach. In 2025, the Republic of Korea will host World Environment Day, focusing on the urgent need to end plastic pollution globally—an issue intricately linked to the triple planetary crisis of climate change, biodiversity loss, and pollution. This article explores the significance of World Environment Day 2025, the global and regional dimensions of plastic pollution, and the collective responsibility to forge a sustainable future, with a particular emphasis on Assam, a region rich in natural beauty yet grappling with environmental challenges.

Plastic pollution has insidiously infiltrated every facet of our world. From the microplastics that contaminate the water we drink and the food we consume to the vast quantities of plastic waste choking rivers, oceans, and landfills, the scale of the crisis is staggering. An estimated 11 million tonnes of plastic waste leak into aquatic ecosystems annually, while microplastics accumulate in soils through agricultural practices, sewage, and landfills. The societal and environmental costs are immense, ranging from US\$300 billion to US\$600 billion each year. These figures underscore the urgency of addressing plastic pollution, which exacerbates the interconnected crises of climate change, biodiversity loss, and waste management. Yet, amid this daunting challenge lies an opportunity: plastic pollution is one of the most actionable environmental issues of our time. Solutions such as refusing, reducing, reusing, recycling, and rethinking plastics use are within reach, and World Environment Day 2025 aims to amplify these efforts through the UNEP-led #BeatPlasticPollution campaign.

The Republic of Korea, hosting World Environment Day for the second time since 1997, is a fitting choice for this global observance. Over the past three decades, the country has made remarkable strides in environmental stewardship, improving air and water quality, managing chemicals safely, and restoring ecosystems. Its comprehensive approach to plastic pollution, anchored in a full life-cycle strategy, addresses every stage of plastics—from production and design to consumption, reuse, and recycling. By engaging government, businesses, and consumers, the Republic of Korea is transitioning toward a circular economy, curbing waste at its source and expanding recycling efforts. Jeju Province, the designated host location, exemplifies this commitment. In 2022, Jeju declared an ambitious vision to become plastic-pollution-free by 2040, implementing innovative measures such as a disposable cup deposit system and mandatory waste separation at recycling support centers. These initiatives have driven higher recycling rates and fostered a culture of environmental responsibility, serving as a model for regions worldwide.

World Environment Day 2025 also builds on global momentum to address plastic pollution through international cooperation. In 2022, nations committed to developing a legally binding

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global treaty to end plastic pollution, including in marine environments. The Republic of Korea played a pivotal role by hosting the fifth session of negotiations in November 2024, with the second part scheduled for August 5–14, 2025, in Geneva, Switzerland. This treaty represents a historic opportunity to establish a unified framework for reducing plastic waste, promoting sustainable production and consumption, and protecting ecosystems. By spotlighting scientific evidence on the impacts of plastic pollution, World Environment Day will galvanize communities to advocate for and implement solutions, reinforcing the global commitment to a plastic-free future.

In the context of Assam, a state in northeastern India renowned for its natural splendor, the fight against plastic pollution takes on particular significance. Assam's lush landscapes, from the mighty Brahmaputra River to dense forests and biodiversity-rich national parks like Kaziranga, Manas, and Dibru-Saikhowa, are integral to its identity. However, rapid industrialization, population growth, deforestation, and pollution threaten this ecological heritage. The Brahmaputra, a lifeline for millions, faces increasing water pollution from plastics and industrial effluents, while urban centers like Guwahati grapple with deteriorating air quality due to vehicular emissions and waste mismanagement. Plastic pollution, in particular, has become a growing concern, with single-use plastics clogging waterways and landfills, harming aquatic life, and contributing to soil degradation. World Environment Day offers a vital platform to raise awareness in Assam, encouraging local communities, students, and youth to take action to protect their environment.

The broader environmental challenges facing Assam mirror global trends. Climate change, driven by rising carbon emissions, has intensified the frequency and severity of natural disasters, such as floods and droughts, which disproportionately affect vulnerable regions like Assam. The Brahmaputra's annual floods, exacerbated by global warming, devastate agriculture, displace communities, and disrupt livelihoods. Similarly, biodiversity loss threatens Assam's iconic wildlife, including the one-horned rhinoceros in Kaziranga and tigers in Manas. Deforestation, poaching, and habitat degradation have reduced populations of elephants, birds, and other species,

underscoring the need for conservation efforts. World Environment Day serves as a reminder of the interconnectedness of these issues and the importance of collective action to address them.

Public participation is the cornerstone of environmental protection, and World Environment Day fosters this engagement through diverse initiatives. In Assam, tree-planting campaigns, educational programs, and community events organized by schools, NGOs, and government bodies inspire action. For instance, efforts to protect Kaziranga and Manas involve local communities in conservation, emphasizing the role of grassroots participation in preserving biodiversity. Similarly, Jeju's waste management model offers lessons for Assam, where improving recycling infrastructure and promoting waste separation could mitigate plastic pollution. By empowering individuals to adopt sustainable practices—such as reducing plastic use, conserving energy, and supporting organic farming—World Environment Day cultivates a sense of shared responsibility.

At the individual level, small actions can yield significant results. In Assam, rural communities often rely on locally produced goods, a practice that reduces environmental impact. Expanding organic farming, minimizing chemical fertilizers, and planting trees can further enhance sustainability. Globally, the principles of refusing single-use plastics, reusing materials, and recycling waste align with these local efforts. In urban areas like Guwahati, where air pollution from vehicles and industrial activities is a growing concern, promoting public transportation, renewable energy, and green urban planning can improve air quality and public health. These measures, while seemingly modest, contribute to the broader goal of achieving the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), including those on climate action, sustainable consumption, and ecosystem protection.

The global and local dimensions of World Environment Day 2025 converge on a shared vision: a world free from the scourge of plastic pollution. The Republic of Korea's leadership, exemplified by Jeju's innovative policies, demonstrates that systemic change is possible through collaboration and commitment. In Assam, the challenges of pollution, climate change, and biodiversity loss are daunting, but they are not insurmountable. By leveraging the momentum of World Environment Day, Assam can strengthen its environmental policies, such as tree-planting campaigns and river cleanup initiatives, while fostering public awareness. The state's rich cultural and ecological heritage serves as both an inspiration and a call to action, reminding us that protecting the environment is not just a duty but a legacy for future generations.

As we approach June 5, 2025, World Environment Day invites us to reflect on our relationship with the planet. The fight against plastic pollution is a microcosm of the broader environmental struggle, requiring innovation, cooperation, and resolve. From the negotiating tables in Geneva to the riverbanks of the Brahmaputra, the message is clear: every action counts. By refusing single-use plastics, advocating for sustainable policies, and protecting biodiversity, we can reshape our world for the better. In Assam and beyond, let us heed the call of World Environment Day to build a healthier, more sustainable future—one where the Earth's ecosystems thrive, unburdened by the weight of plastic waste. (The writer can be reached at dipakkurmipltd@gmail.com)

Israel says it fired near suspects Gaza officials say Israeli forces killed 27 heading to aid site

RAFAH (GAZA STRIP), June 4: Israeli forces fired on people as they headed toward an aid distribution site in Gaza on Tuesday, killing at least 27, Palestinian health officials and witnesses said, in the third such shooting in three days. The army said it fired "near a few individual suspects" who left the designated route, approached its forces and ignored warning shots. The near-daily shootings have occurred after an Israeli and US-backed foundation established aid distribution points inside Israeli military zones, a system it says is designed to circumvent Hamas. The United Nations has rejected the new system, saying it doesn't address Gaza's mounting hunger crisis and allows Israel to use aid as a weapon.

The Israeli military said it "fired to drive away suspects." In a statement, army spokesperson Effie Deirin said "the numbers of casualties published by Hamas were exaggerated" but that the incident was being investigated. He said the army is not preventing Palestinians in Gaza from reaching aid in the distribution areas but rather allowing it.

The Gaza Humanitarian Foundation, which operates the sites, says there has been no violence in

or around them. On Tuesday, it acknowledged that the Israeli military was investigating whether civilians were wounded "after moving beyond the designated safe corridor and into a closed military zone," in an area that was "well beyond our secure distribution site."

A spokesperson for the group said it was "saddened to learn that a number of civilians were injured and killed after moving beyond the designated safe corridor."

Gaza's roughly 2 million people are almost completely reliant on international aid because Israel's offensive has destroyed nearly all of Gaza's food production capabilities. Israel imposed a blockade on supplies into Gaza in March, and limited aid began to enter again late last month after pressure from allies and warnings of famine.

Either way we will die

Witnesses have said the shootings all occurred at the Flag Roundabout, around a kilometre (half-mile) from one of the GHF's distribution sites in the now mostly uninhabited southern city of Rafah. The entire area is an Israeli military zone where journalists have no access outside of army-approved embeds.

Yasser Abu Lubda, a 50-year-old displaced person from Rafah, said the shooting started around 4 am Tuesday, and he saw several people killed or wounded.

Neima al-Aaraj, a woman from Khan Younis, said the Israeli fire was "indiscriminate." She added that when she managed to reach the distribution site, there was no aid left.

"After the martyrs and wounded, I won't return," she said. "Either way we will die."

Rasha al-Nahal, another witness, said that "there was gunfire from all directions." She said she counted more than a dozen dead and several wounded along the road.

When she reached the distribution site, she found there was no



aid left, she said. She gathered pasta from the ground and salvaged rice from a bag that had been dropped and trampled upon.

"We'd rather die than deal with this," she said. "Death is more dignified than what's happening to us."

UN human rights official condemns shootings

At least 27 people were killed early Tuesday, according to Gaza's Health Ministry.

Hisham Mhanna, a spokesperson for the International Committee of the Red Cross, confirmed the toll, saying its field hospital in Rafah received 184 wounded people, 19 of them declared dead on arrival, with eight others later dying of their wounds.

The dead were transferred to Nasser Hospital in the city of Khan Younis. Three children and two women were among the dead, according to Mohammed Saqr, head of nursing at the hospital.

Hospital director Atef al-Hout said most of the patients had gunshot wounds.

An Associated Press reporter who arrived at the Red Cross field hospital at around 6 am saw wounded people being transferred to other hospitals by ambulance. Outside, people were returning from the aid hub, mostly empty-handed, while empty flour bags stained with blood lay on the ground. Jeremy Laurence, a spokesman for the UN human rights office, told reporters it also had information indicating that 27 people were killed.

"Palestinians have been presented the grimmest of choices: die from starvation or risk being killed while trying to access the meagre food that is being made available through Israel's militarised humanitarian assistance mechanism," Volker Türk, the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights, said in a statement.

The Gaza Humanitarian Foundation said it distributed 21 truckloads of food at the Rafah site on

Tuesday while its other two operational sites were closed.

During a ceasefire earlier this year, around 600 aid trucks entered Gaza daily.

3 Israeli soldiers killed in northern Gaza

The Israeli military, meanwhile, said three of its soldiers were killed in northern Gaza, in what appeared to be the deadliest attack on Israel's forces since it ended a ceasefire with Hamas in March.

The military said the soldiers, all in their early 20s, died during combat on Monday without providing details. Israeli media reported they were killed in an explosion in the Jabaliya area.

Israel ended the latest ceasefire after Hamas refused to change the agreement to release more hostages sooner. Israeli strikes have killed thousands of Palestinians since then, according to Gaza's Health Ministry.

Israel says the new aid distribution system is designed to prevent Hamas from stealing aid. The UN says its own ability to deliver aid across Gaza has been hindered by Israeli restrictions, the breakdown of law and order and widespread looting, but that there's no evidence of systematic diversion of aid by Hamas. (AP)

Israel has been suspicious of the Islamist former insurgents who formed the new Syrian government, led by President Ahmad al-Sharaa, and has launched hundreds of airstrikes on Syria and seized a UN-patrolled buffer zone on Syrian territory since Assad's fall.

Syria's foreign ministry said in a statement carried by the state-run TV channel that it has "not yet verified the accuracy" of the reports of strikes launched from Syria toward Israel.

"We affirm that Syria has not and will not pose a threat to any party in the region," the statement said. It condemned the Israeli shelling, which it said had resulted in "significant human and material losses."

The US, which has warned to al-Sharaa's government and recently moved to lift some sanctions previously imposed on Syria, has pushed for Syria to normalise relations with Israel.

In a recent interview with the Jewish Journal, al-Sharaa said he wants to see a return to a 1974 ceasefire agreement between the two countries but stopped short of proposing immediate normalisation, saying that "peace must be earned through mutual respect, not fear." (AP)

The last resolution was also proposed by the 10 elected council members and also demanded "an immediate, unconditional and permanent ceasefire to be respected by all parties."

Fourteen of the 15 council members voted in favour last November 20, but the US vetoed the resolution because it was not linked to the immediate and unconditional release of all hostages. (AP)

The US Mission to the United Nations said it had no comment on the draft resolution at this time. Israel's UN Mission did not respond to a request for comment on the draft.

Gaza's roughly 2 million people are almost completely reliant on international aid because Israel's offensive has destroyed nearly all of Gaza's food production capabilities. Israel imposed a blockade on supplies into Gaza on

March 2, and limited aid began to enter again late last month after pressure from allies and warnings of famine.

UN spokesman Stephane Dujarric said Tuesday that the needs in Gaza are enormous, and what's getting into Gaza from the UN "is still just a trickle." Since the complete blockade was partly lifted, he said, just over 620 truckloads have made it from Israel to the Palestinian side of the Kerem Shalom crossing, and only about 370 truckloads — mainly with flour, food and medical and nutrition items — have gotten closer to people in need, with some looted including by armed gangs.

"The unimpeded entry of humanitarian assistance at scale must be restored immediately," Dujarric said. "The UN must be allowed to work in safety and in security under conditions of full respect for humanitarian principles."

Since October 7, 2023, the Security Council has voted on 14 Gaza-related resolutions and approved four.

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Israel says rockets fired from Syria for the first time since Bashar Assad's fall

DAMASCUS (SYRIA), June 4: The Israeli army said two rockets were fired from Syria into open areas in the Israel-controlled Golan Heights on Tuesday, marking the first time a strike has been launched toward Israel from Syrian territory since the fall of former Syrian President Bashar Assad in December.

Syrian state media reported that Israel shelled the western countryside of Syria's Daraa province after the rocket launch. The Syrian Observatory for Human Rights, a UK-based war monitor, also reported Israeli airstrikes that caused "violent explosions" around the city of Quneitra and in the Daraa countryside.

A group calling itself the Mohammed Deif Brigades — named after a Hamas military leader killed by an Israeli strike in Gaza last year — claimed the attack in a post on Telegram. The group first surfaced on social media a few days before.

"Until now, it's just a Telegram channel. It's not known if it is a real group," said Ahmed Aba Zeid, a Syrian researcher who has studied armed factions in southern Syria.

Israeli Defense Minister Israel Katz said in a statement that Israel considers "the Syrian president directly responsible for every threat and firing toward the State of Israel" and warned of a "full response" to come "as soon as possible."

Israel has been suspicious of the Islamist former insurgents who formed the new Syrian government, led by President Ahmad al-Sharaa, and has launched hundreds of airstrikes on Syria and seized a UN-patrolled buffer zone on Syrian territory since Assad's fall.

Syria's foreign ministry said in a statement carried by the state-run TV channel that it has "not yet verified the accuracy" of the reports of strikes launched from Syria toward Israel.

"We affirm that Syria has not and will not pose a threat to any party in the region," the statement said. It condemned the Israeli shelling, which it said had resulted in "significant human and material losses."

The US, which has warned to al-Sharaa's government and recently moved to lift some sanctions previously imposed on Syria, has pushed for Syria to normalise relations with Israel.

In a recent interview with the Jewish Journal, al-Sharaa said he wants to see a return to a 1974 ceasefire agreement between the two countries but stopped short of proposing immediate normalisation, saying that "peace must be earned through mutual respect, not fear." (AP)

South Korea's new President Lee vows to pursue talks with North and bolster ties with US and Japan

SEOUL (SOUTH KOREA), June 4: South Korea's new President Lee Jae-myung vowed on Wednesday to restart dormant talks with North Korea and bolster a trilateral partnership with the US and Japan, as he laid out key policy goals for his single, five-year term.

Lee, who rose from childhood poverty to become South Korea's leading liberal politician vowing to fight inequality and corruption, formally began his term earlier Wednesday, hours after winning a snap election that was triggered in April by the removal of then-President Yoon Suk Yeol over his ill-fated imposition of martial law late last year.

In his inaugural address at the National Assembly, Lee said that his government will deal with North Korean nuclear threats and its potential military aggressions with "strong deterrence" based on the solid South Korea-US military alliance. But he said he would "open a communication channel with North Korea and establish peace on the Korean Peninsula through talks and cooperation."

He said he will pursue pragmatic diplomacy with neighbouring countries and boost trilateral Seoul-Washington-Tokyo cooperation based on the robust South Korea-US alliance. "Through pragmatic diplomacy based on national interests, we will turn the crisis posed by the major shift in global economic and security landscapes into an opportunity to maximise our national interests," Lee said.

Security and economic challenges lie ahead

It was unclear whether Lee's election would cause any major, immediate shift in South Korea's foreign policy. Lee, previously accused by critics of tilting towards China and North Korea and away from the US and Japan, has recently repeatedly stressed South Korea's alliance with the US as the foundation of its foreign policy and avoided any contentious remarks that would raise questions on his views on the US and Japan.

"We'll have to now see if the pressures of office will cause Lee Jae-myung to govern from the cen-

ter — at least when it comes to matters of national security and the alliance with the United States," said Ankit Panda, an expert with the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace. The toughest external challenges awaiting Lee are US President Donald Trump's tariff policy and North Korea's expanding military partnerships with Russia. But experts earlier said whoever becomes president cannot do much to secure major progress in South Korea's favour on those issues.

During his inauguration speech, Lee did not directly mention trade issues with the US.

Allies react

The US and Japan said they congratulated Lee's election and expressed their commitments to developing three-way cooperation.

Japanese Prime Minister Shigeru Ishiba said he wants to hold summit talks with Lee "as early as possible," saying he hopes to further promote bilateral ties, both public and commercial. The US State Department said that Seoul and Washington share "an ironclad commitment" to the alliance grounded in their mutual defense treaty, shared values and deep economic ties. It is unclear how North Korea would react to Lee's speech, as it has shunned any talks with South Korea since 2019. North Korea in recent years has supplied weapons and troops to support Russia's war against Ukraine, and South Korea, the US and their partners suspect Russia might in return transfer high-tech technologies to North Korea to help it perfect its nuclear weapons programme.

Russia's Tass news agency said on Wednesday that one of President Vladimir Putin's top security officials, Security Council Secretary Sergei Shoigu, has arrived in Pyongyang for a meeting with North Korean leader Kim Jong Un, in the latest sign of the countries' alignment over Putin's war in Ukraine.

Lee said revitalising a slowing domestic economy would be his top priority and that his government would immediately launch an emergency task force to wage a "head-on battle" against the threats of recession. (AP)

Trump admin revokes guidance requiring hospitals to provide emergency abortions

WASHINGTON, June 4: The Trump administration announced on Tuesday that it would revoke guidance to the nation's hospitals that directed them to provide emergency abortions for women when they are necessary to stabilise their medical condition.

That guidance was issued to hospitals in 2022, weeks after the US Supreme Court upheld national abortion rights in the US. It was an effort by the Biden administration to preserve abortion access for extreme cases in which women were experiencing medical emergencies and needed an abortion to prevent organ loss or severe haemorrhaging, among other serious complications.

The Biden administration had argued that hospitals — including ones in states with near-total bans — needed to provide emergency abortions under the Emergency Medical Treatment and Active Labor Act. That law requires emergency rooms that receive Medicare dollars to provide an exam and stabilising treatment for all patients. Nearly all emergency rooms in the US rely on Medicare funds.

The Trump administration announced on Tuesday that it would no longer enforce that policy.

The move prompted concerns from some doctors and abortion rights advocates that women will not get emergency abortions in states with strict bans.

"The Trump Administration would rather women die in emergency rooms than receive life-sav-

ing abortions," Nancy Northup, president and CEO of the Center for Reproductive Rights, said in a statement. "In pulling back guidance, this administration is feeding the fear and confusion that already exists at hospitals in every state where abortion is banned. Hospitals need more guidance, not less, to stop them from turning away patients experiencing pregnancy crises."

Anti-abortion advocates, meanwhile, praised the announcement. Marjorie Dannenfelser, president of SBA Pro-Life America, said in a statement that the Biden-era policy had been a way to expand abortion access in states where it was banned.

"Democrats have created confusion on this fact to justify their extremely unpopular agenda for all-trimester abortion," she said. "In situations where every minute counts, their lies lead to delayed care and put women in needless, unacceptable danger."

An Associated Press investigation last year found that, even with the Biden administration's guidance, dozens of pregnant women were being turned away from emergency rooms, including some who needed emergency abortions.

The Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services, which provides oversight of hospitals, said in a statement that it will continue to enforce the federal law "including for identified emergency medical conditions that place the health of a pregnant woman or her unborn child in serious jeopardy." (AP)

During the question-answer session, Egyptian-American journalist Ahmad Fathi, UN correspondent of American Television News (ATN), asked Bilawal about his comments on India's treatment of Muslims and reminded him that it was an Indian

Muslim military officer who was briefing the media during the conflict.

"Let me start with a statement you made today, saying that the recent terrorist attack in Kashmir is being used as a political tool to demonise Muslims in India. Sir, I have watched the briefings on both sides, and as far as I recall, there were Muslim Indian military officers who were conducting the briefing on the Indian side," Fathi said.

He was about to ask his second question when Bilawal stopped him mid-sentence.

The Pakistani leader then went on to criticise India and continued his usual rhetoric.

Tensions between India and Pakistan escalated after the Pahalgam terror attack, with India carrying out precision strikes on terror infrastructure in Pakistan and Pakistan-occupied Kashmir in the early hours of May 7.

Pakistan attempted to attack Indian military bases on May 8, 9, and 10. The Indian side strongly responded to the Pakistani attempts by inflicting heavy damage to a number of key Pakistani military installations, including air bases, air defence systems, command and control centres and radar sites.

On May 10, the militaries of the two countries agreed on an understanding to end the hostilities. (PTI)

In his inaugural address at the National Assembly, Lee said that his government will deal with North Korean nuclear threats and its potential military aggressions with "strong deterrence" based on the solid South Korea-US military alliance. But he said he would "open a communication channel with North Korea and establish peace on the Korean Peninsula through talks and cooperation."

He said he will pursue pragmatic diplomacy with neighbouring countries and boost trilateral Seoul-Washington-Tokyo cooperation based on the robust South Korea-US alliance. "Through pragmatic diplomacy based on national interests, we will turn the crisis posed by the major shift in global economic and security landscapes into an opportunity to maximise our national interests," Lee said.

Security and economic challenges lie ahead

It was unclear whether Lee's election would cause any major, immediate shift in South Korea's foreign policy. Lee, previously accused by critics of tilting towards China and North Korea and away from the US and Japan, has recently repeatedly stressed South Korea's alliance with the US as the foundation of its foreign policy and avoided any contentious remarks that would raise questions on his views on the US and Japan.

"We'll have to now see if the pressures of office will cause Lee Jae-myung to govern from the cen-

ter — at least when it comes to matters of national security and the alliance with the United States," said Ankit Panda, an expert with the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace. The toughest external challenges awaiting Lee are US President Donald Trump's tariff policy and North Korea's expanding military partnerships with Russia. But experts earlier said whoever becomes president cannot do much to secure major progress in South Korea's favour on those issues.

During his inauguration speech, Lee did not directly mention trade issues with the US.

Allies react

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UN Security Council to vote on Gaza ceasefire resolution amid humanitarian crisis

UNITED NATIONS, June 4: The UN Security Council scheduled a vote Wednesday on a resolution which demands "an immediate, unconditional and permanent ceasefire in Gaza respected by all parties." UN diplomats said the United States is likely to veto it.

The resolution, drafted by the council's 10 elected members who serve two-year terms, reiterates its demand for the release of all hostages held by Hamas and other groups following their October 7, 2023 surprise attack in southern Israel.

Calling the humanitarian situation in Gaza "catastrophic," the proposed resolution also demands "the immediate and unconditional lifting of all restrictions on the entry of humanitarian aid into Gaza and its safe and unhindered distribution at scale, including by the UN and humanitarian partners."

The vote, scheduled for late Wednesday afternoon, comes amid near-daily shootings following the establishment by an Israeli and US-backed foundation of aid distribution points inside Israeli military zones, a system it says is designed to circumvent Hamas.

The United Nations has rejected the new system, saying it doesn't address Gaza's mounting hunger crisis, allows Israel to use aid as a weapon, and doesn't comply with the humanitarian principles of neutrality, impartiality and independence.

Pakistan's Bilawal Bhutto Zardari called out by journalist at UN

NEW YORK, June 4: Pakistan's former foreign minister Bilawal Bhutto Zardari was called out here by a journalist on his comments about alleged "demonisation" of Muslims in India.

The former Pakistan foreign minister, who is leading a team of experts to inform the world about the recent conflict with India, was briefing the media about their perspective on Tuesday.

During the question-answer session, Egyptian-American journalist Ahmad Fathi, UN correspondent of American Television News (ATN), asked Bilawal about his comments on India's treatment of Muslims and reminded him that it was an Indian

Muslim military officer who was briefing the media during the conflict.

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Flood situation grim with 3,000 affected

Incessant rain continues to batter Arunachal

ITANAGAR, June 4: The flood situation in Arunachal Pradesh remained grim on Wednesday with incessant rain causing fresh landslides and inundation across the state and affecting over 3,000 people in 23 districts, officials said.

At least 12 people have lost their lives due to landslides and floods triggered by monsoon rain this year, while search operations are underway for two missing persons, a report from the State Emergency Operation Centre (SEOC) said.

Fresh landslides were reported in Dibang Valley and Anjaw districts and along the Likabali-Aalo highway near Magi and Siji, disrupting vehicular movement, the report said, adding that several major rivers in the state are in spate.

Of the fatalities due to landslides and flood-related incidents, seven were reported from East Kameng, two from Lower Subansiri and one each from Longding, Lohit, and Anjaw districts.

Nine of the deceased lost their lives due to landslides, one in a flood-related incident, another due to a wall collapse, and a person was killed in May after a

tree fell on him during inclement weather conditions in Longding district, the officials said.

Four others were also injured during the natural calamities, he said.

Over 3,000 people have been affected by the deluge and landslides across Arunachal Pradesh, another official said.

Changlang is the worst-affected district, with six villages inundated and 2,231 people rendered homeless.

Flash floods washed away half of the Makantong bridge on the Trans-Arunachal Highway, cutting off road connectivity between Miao and Bordumsa.

Several areas in the Miao subdivision remain submerged, with significant losses reported in livestock and horticultural property, the officials said.

Popular tourist spots such as Zupra and River Cafe near the Noa-Dehing river in Changlang have been submerged by floodwater.

Damage to hostels, staff quarters, water tanks and other infrastructure in the Industrial Training Institute (ITI) at

Balinong under the Kharsang Circle was reported, the officials said.

The swollen Noa-Dehing river has caused damage to agricultural and horticultural fields in the Dharmapur block under the Namphai circle, they said.

Altogether, 212 houses were damaged across the state, and 425 livestock deaths were reported, including 335 poultry and 95 animals.

Additionally, floods and landslides damaged around 17 hectares of farmland and 20 hectares of horticulture plantations.

Lower Subansiri also reported major destruction, including 114 kutcha houses, and damage to 51 roads, 17 power lines, 23 water supply lines, and two schools.

In the Itanagar Capital Region and Pakke Kessang, critical infrastructure such as the main water pipeline and the Dariya Hill road suffered severe damage.

The authorities have opened three relief camps, providing shelter to 239 displaced people, the officials said.

A total of 2,249 people have been

evacuated so far, and 2,231 of them were from Changlang alone.

Relief and rescue efforts are underway with support from the National Disaster Response Force (NDRF), State Disaster Response Force (SDRF), state police and volunteers.

Deputy Chief Minister Chowna Mein chaired a high-level review meeting on Tuesday to assess the damage and take stock of the disaster response efforts.

"The safety and well-being of our people remains our top priority as we confront the challenges of the monsoon together," Mein posted on X, expressing grief over the lives lost and the hardships endured by citizens.

Arunachal Pradesh Congress Committee (APCC) president Nabam Tuki has called for the establishment of early warning systems to prevent loss in natural disasters.

He urged the state Disaster Management Authority and district administrations to deploy real-time flood and landslide sensors and ensure that multi-channel alerts reach even the most remote villages. (PTI)

Governor urges BRO for coordinated response to monsoon disruptions in Arunachal

Computer education flagged off at AICL

ITANAGAR, June 4: With heavy monsoon rains severely impacting road connectivity across Arunachal Pradesh, Governor Lt Gen (Retd) K T Parnaik on Wednesday urged the Border Roads Organisation (BRO) to ensure smooth and safe vehicular movement, particularly in vulnerable and remote regions.

Expressing concern over reports of several villages being cut off due to landslides and waterlogging, the governor stressed the need for heightened preparedness, according to an official statement.

The flood situation in Arunachal Pradesh remained grim on Wednesday with incessant rain causing fresh landslides and inundation across the state and affecting over 3,000 people in 23 districts, officials said.

At least 12 people have lost their lives due to landslides and floods triggered by monsoon rain this year, while search operations are underway for two missing persons, a report from the State Emergency Operation Centre (SEOC) said.

With more heavy rainfall forecast in the coming days, Parnaik asked the BRO to stay on high alert and work closely with district administrations to promptly clear blockages and maintain critical road links.

During a meeting at Raj Bhavan, BRO officers assured the governor that men and machinery have been proactively deployed in landslide-prone and critical areas, the statement said.



Parnaik also called on all district administrations to remain vigilant, particularly in areas prone to landslides and flash floods.

He advised timely precautionary measures, such as issuing alerts and relocating residents when needed, to protect lives and property.

The governor stressed the need for fully equipped rescue and relief teams to be positioned at district, sub-divisional and circle levels.

These teams, he said, must be capable of swift response to any natural calamity triggered by ongoing weather conditions.

Parnaik commended the Indian Air Force, Assam Rifles, state police, and district authorities for their coordinated rescue and relief operations in the affected areas.

The governor affirmed that the government is taking all steps to address the challenges posed by the monsoon and to ensure the safety and well-being of the people. (PTI)

HT Bureau

NAMSAL, June 4: The Arunachal Institute of Computer Learning (AICL), a newly established educational initiative under the National Board of Computer Education (NBCE), officially launched its operations today at Bage Tinali, Nirjuli. The inauguration ceremony was graced by Arunachal Chamber of Commerce and Industries (ACC&I) president and Nirjuli IMC Corporator, Tarh Nachung, who also flagged off the institute's first academic batch.

In a candid interaction with media representatives, Nachung issued a strong caution to students regarding the growing menace of fake educational certificates. He cited several alarming cases where students from Arunachal Pradesh had unknowingly obtained counterfeit certifications from institutes outside the state, only to face setbacks in their careers later.

"It is imperative that students thoroughly check the credentials of any institute before taking admission," Nachung emphasized, urging students and parents alike to exercise due diligence.

He further called upon AICL to maintain high educational standards and uphold student welfare as a top priority. Stressing ethical responsibility in the education sec-



tor, Nachung made a heartfelt appeal to all private computer training centers:

"Please do not sell fake certificates for a few bucks. The damage it does to a student's future is irreversible and harms the integrity of our state's educational system."

Also present at the event, prominent social worker Tok Tabin Camdir echoed Nachung's sentiments, highlighting the importance of practical learning over rote memorization.

"In today's competitive world, practical skills are far more valuable than mere theoretical understanding," Camdir said, urging students to embrace hands-on ex-

periences to boost their employability.

The inauguration ceremony was attended by several notable figures including Tarh Tamey, Chairman of the Nirjuli Market Welfare Committee (NMWC), businessmen Govind Gupta and Nurul Haque, as well as executive members of NMWC and other dignitaries.

AICL aims to offer quality computer education in various domains including PGDCA, DCA, ADCA, Tally, and typing proficiency. With a clear focus on practical, career-oriented training, the institute aspires to bridge the digital skills gap among youth in the region.

ArSRLM launches official website to strengthen digital governance in rural development

Arunachal Guv urges people to join 'end plastic pollution' campaign



HT Bureau

NAMSAL, June 4: In a significant stride towards enhancing transparency, digital governance, and community outreach, the Arunachal State Rural Livelihoods Mission (ArSRLM) today launched its official website — srlm.arunachal.gov.in — at its State Mission office in Itanagar.

The launch was ceremoniously led by Sangeeta Yirang, Chief Executive Officer-cum-State Mission Director of ArSRLM, in the presence of senior officials, thematic experts, and key stakeholders. The event also saw the symbolic distribution of departmental diaries, underscoring the importance of documentation, coordination, and strategic planning in rural development initiatives.

The newly launched website serves as an integrated digital platform offering real-time access to programme updates, policy guidelines, beneficiary data, and key mission resources. Designed to streamline internal processes and empower rural communities,

the platform reflects ArSRLM's commitment to transparency and participatory governance.

As of June 2025, ArSRLM has successfully reached over 1.35 lakh rural households across 1,234 villages in 27 districts of Arunachal Pradesh. The mission's robust efforts in community mobilization and capacity-building have supported 15,971 Self Help Groups (SHGs) and enabled 4,526 women beneficiaries to become 'Lakhpati Didis' — a flagship milestone denoting rural prosperity and women's economic empowerment.

Speaking at the event, Jechonia Islary, Chief Operating Officer (Programme), said:

"The launch of this website is more than a technological upgrade. It reflects our commitment to open governance, ease of access, and citizen-centric service delivery. We envision this platform as a tool for collaboration and communication with the rural communities we serve."

The programme was coordinated by Charu Okam, Pro-

gramme Manager (Knowledge Management & Communication), and attended by officials from various mission wings, including the Deen Dayal Upadhyaya Grameen Kaushalya Yojana (DDU-GKY), who applauded the step towards digital advancement.

A presentation on the website's key features was delivered by Sonny Patey, State Mission Manager (Monitoring & Evaluation and MIS), highlighting its user-friendly interface and ease of navigation for stakeholders and the public alike.

The website was developed in collaboration with the in-house IT team and Sumato Global Tech Pvt. Ltd., a Guwahati-based tech firm, whose representatives were also present at the launch.

With its digital-first approach, the ArSRLM website is poised to become a central hub for stakeholders, Self Help Groups, and citizens—supporting a more inclusive, informed, and digitally empowered rural development framework in Arunachal Pradesh.

ITANAGAR, June 4: Arunachal Pradesh Governor Lt Gen (Retd) K T Parnaik on Wednesday called on the people of the state to unite in support of the nationwide campaign 'One Nation, One Mission: End Plastic Pollution'.

The campaign was launched by the Union Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change to mark World Environment Day observed on June 5.

He highlighted that this initiative, aligned with the Mission LiFE (Lifestyle for Environment), encourages every Indian to adopt sustainable practices and firmly reject single-use plastics, according to a Raj Bhavan statement.

Parnaik emphasised that Arunachal Pradesh, known for its dense forests and rich cultural heritage, is among India's greenest treasures.

With this natural gift, comes the duty to protect and preserve it. As the nation embraces this



campaign, Arunachal Pradesh should set an example by moving from awareness to meaning-

ful action, the governor said.

He urged citizens to reduce single-use plastics, promote eco-friendly alternatives, and practise responsible waste segregation and recycling.

Parnaik also encouraged participation in clean-up drives and community efforts to safeguard the state's rivers, forests, and future.

The Governor stressed that every small effort counts and assured the people that the state government remains dedicated to supporting these efforts.

Parnaik appealed to the people of the state to join the movement, inspire change, and help end plastic pollution.

"Our choices today will shape the health of the environment tomorrow. Together, let's work towards a cleaner Arunachal Pradesh and a greener India," he added. (PTI)

Pune-based NGO donates oxygen plant to Indian Army Field Hospital in Tawang

SIRF members traveled to Tawang twice to ensure the completion of the project

HT Bureau

NAMSAL, June 4: In a laudable act of service to the nation, Soldiers Independent Rehabilitation Foundation (SIRF), a Pune-based NGO, has donated a 200-litre capacity oxygen plant and refilling facility to the Indian Army's Military Field Hospital located at Teli Village, under the Tawang circle.

The oxygen plant was formally dedicated to the soldiers of the Indian Army's Tawang sector by Major General KS Grewal, SM, VSM, General Officer Commanding (GOC) of the 5 Mountain Division. The inauguration ceremony witnessed the presence of Sumedha Yogesh Chithade, President of SIRF, along with executive members of the foundation.

Expressing deep appreciation on behalf of the Army and the people of Tawang, Major General Grewal said:

"This noble gesture by the SIRF Foundation is deeply appreciated. The oxygen plant will serve not only our soldiers but also the civilians of Tawang, as all Army facili-



ties are shared equally with the local population."

He also acknowledged the foundation's dedicated efforts, highlighting that SIRF members traveled to Tawang twice to ensure

the completion of the project. The GOC extended special thanks to the engineers and technical team responsible for the plant's successful installation, noting its vital contribution to strengthening

emergency medical infrastructure in this strategically sensitive border region.

During the ceremony, Major General Grewal felicitated the President and executive members of SIRF, as well as the technical and military personnel who played key roles in executing the project.

The event was attended by a host of dignitaries, including Sangey Wangmu Mosobi (EAC Tawang), Dy. SP Tasso Kato, DMO Dr. Rinchin Neema, Tenzin Jorden, President of NGO Monyul, ex-servicemen, Commander Tawang Brigade Brigadier Bhupal Singh, SM, Colonel Milind Sawant, other senior Army officers, and ladies from the Tawang Brigade.

This initiative stands as a sterling example of civil-military co-operation, underscoring the shared commitment to national service and public welfare. With its far-reaching impact, the donation is expected to enhance critical care capabilities in one of the country's most remote and strategic areas.

2027 Census with caste enumeration schedule announced

NEW DELHI, June 4: The 2027 Census with caste enumeration will be carried out with the reference date of October 1, 2026 in snow-bound areas like Ladakh and of March 1, 2027 in the rest of the country, the Home Ministry announced on Wednesday.

It has been decided to conduct Population Census-2027 in two phases along with the enumeration of castes, it said.

"The reference date for Population Census - 2027 will be 00:00 hours of the first day of March 2027.

"For the Union Territory of Ladakh and the non-synchronous snow-bound areas of the UT of Jammu and Kashmir and states of Himachal Pradesh and Uttarakhand, the reference date will be 00.00 hours of the first day of October 2026," the ministry said in a statement. The notification for the intent of conducting the Population Census with these reference dates will be published in the official gazette "tentatively on 16.06.2025, as per provision of section 3 of Census Act 1948", it said.

Officials said the second and final phase of the census will begin in February 2027 and conclude on 01 March 2027 (reference date).

It is immediately not clear whether the exercise to update the National Population Register (NPR) will be carried out along with the Census or not. The government was planning to do it along with the Census in 2020 but the exercise was postponed due to the COVID-19 outbreak.

The Census of India is conducted under the provisions of the Census Act, 1948 and the Census Rules, 1990.

The last Census was conducted in 2011 in two phases: Phase I of House Listing (HLO) from April 1 to September 30, 2010) and Phase II of Population Enumeration (PE) (February 9 to 28, 2011) "with reference date - 00:00 hours of the first day of March 2011, except for snow-bound non-synchronous areas of Jammu and Kashmir, Uttarakhand and Himachal Pradesh for which it was conducted during September 11 to 30, 2010 with reference date as 00.00 hours of the first day of October 2010".

PM Modi to inaugurate Chenab bridge tomorrow

NEW DELHI, June 4: PM Narendra Modi will on Friday launch multiple development projects worth more than Rs 46,000 crore at Katra in Jammu and Kashmir and inaugurate the Chenab bridge, the world's highest railway arch bridge.

He will also flag off Vande Bharat trains between Katra and Srinagar.

A PMO statement said Modi will launch multiple development projects worth over ₹ 46,000 crore at Katra, the base camp for pilgrims visiting the Mata Vaishno Devi temple.

Lauding the Chenab bridge as an architectural marvel, of the statement noted that it is at a height of 359 metres above the river. It is a 1,315-metre-long steel arch bridge engineered to withstand seismic and wind conditions.

"A key impact of the bridge will be in enhancing connectivity between Jammu and Srinagar. Through Vande Bharat train moving on the bridge, it will take just about three hours to travel between Katra and Srinagar, reducing existing travel time by two-three hours," it said, stressing Modi's commitment to boosting infra and connectivity in the region.

The PM will also inaugurate the Anji Bridge, which is India's first cable-stayed rail bridge that will serve the nation in a challenging terrain, it added. Among the other projects to be launched is the 272-km Udhampur-Srinagar-Baramulla Rail Link (USBRL) project. Constructed at a cost of around Rs 43,780 crore, it includes 36 tunnels (spanning 119 km) and 943 bridges. The project establishes all-weather, seamless rail connectivity between the Kashmir Valley and the rest of the country aiming to transform regional mobility and driving socio-economic integration. (PTI)



Census 2021 was also proposed to be conducted in two phases with phase I during April-September 2020 and the second phase in February 2021.

All preparations for the first phase of the Census to be conducted in 2021 were completed and the fieldwork was scheduled to begin in some States/UTs from April 1, 2020. However, due to the outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic across the country, the census work was postponed.

The government recently decided that it will carry our caste enumeration along with the census. It will also be the first digital census giving the citizens an opportunity to self-enumerate.

The entire Census exercise is likely to cost the government over Rs 13,000 crore.

A meeting of the Union cabinet on December 24, 2019, approved the proposal for conducting the Census of India 2021 at a cost of Rs 8,754.23 crore and updating the NPR at a cost of Rs 3,941.35 crore.

However, the Budget 2025-26 allocated just Rs 574.80 crore for census surveys and statistics/the Registrar General of India (RGI).

A government functionary said the budget was a minor issue and could be sorted out without any impediment.

On April 30, the Cabinet Committee on Political Affairs chaired by Prime Minister Narendra Modi decided to include caste enumeration in the upcoming census.

The decision demonstrated that the Modi government is committed to the holistic interests and values of the nation and society, an official statement issued by the government on April 30 said.

According to Article 246 of the Constitution, the Census is a subject listed at 69 in the Union List in the Seventh Schedule.

While some states have conducted surveys to enumerate castes, these surveys have varied in transparency and intent, with some conducted purely from a "political angle, creating doubts in society", the government had said.

"Considering all these circumstances, and to ensure that our social fabric does not come under political pressure, it has been decided that caste enumeration should be included in the main census instead of being conducted as a separate survey," the statement said.

This will ensure that society becomes

stronger economically and socially, and the country's progress continues without hindrance. It is noteworthy that when a provision of 10 per cent reservation was made for the economically weaker sections of society, it did not create tension in any section of society, it said.

Caste was excluded from all census operations conducted since independence.

In 2010, then Prime Minister Manmohan Singh had assured the Lok Sabha that the matter of caste census would be considered in the Cabinet. A Group of Ministers was formed to deliberate on this subject, and most political parties recommended conducting a caste census. However, the previous Congress-led government opted for a survey instead of a caste census, known as the Socio-Economic and Caste Census (SECC).

The Office of the Registrar General and Census Commissioner had prepared around three dozen questions to be asked to the citizens.

The questions include whether a family has a telephone, internet connection, mobile or smartphone, bicycle, scooter or motorcycle or moped and whether they own a car, jeep or a van.

The citizens were asked questions such as the cereal they consume in the household, the main source of drinking water, the main source of lighting, access to latrine, type of latrine, wastewater outlet, availability of bathing facility, availability of kitchen and LPG/PNG connection, main fuel used for cooking and availability of radio, transistor and television.

They were to be asked about the predominant material of floor, wall and roof of the census house, the condition of the census house, the total number of persons normally residing in the household, whether the head of the household is a woman, whether the head of the household belongs to Scheduled Caste or Scheduled Tribe, the number of dwelling rooms exclusively in possession of the household and the number of married couples living in the household among others. (PTI)

Punjab YouTuber in contact with influencer Jyoti Malhotra held

Police says part of spy network with Pak links

CHANDIGARH, June 4: A Punjab-based YouTuber alleged to be in close touch with influencer Jyoti Malhotra, who is in custody on charges of spying for Pakistan, has been arrested after a "terror-backed espionage network" linking him to Pakistani intelligence and army officials was unearthed, police said on Wednesday.

Punjab Director General of Police Gaurav Yadav said Jasbir Singh alias Jaan Mahal (41) was allegedly spying for Pakistan's Inter-Services Intelligence (ISI).

Singh, a resident of Mahlan village in Rupnagar, was running the YouTube channel "JaanMahal Video" with over 11 lakh subscribers, ostensibly posting travel and cooking vlogs, said police.

He was found to be associated with Pakistani Intelligence Operative (PIO) Shakir alias Jutt Randhawa, who was in contact with a recently-expelled Pakistan High Commission official on charges of spying and had met Pakistan Army officials during one of his three visits to the neighbouring country, Yadav said.

Singh was allegedly in close contact with Malhotra, who was earlier arrested by Haryana Police on espionage charges.

A Mohali court sent Singh to three-day police remand after he was produced before it.

Singh also maintained close contact with Ehsan-ur-Rahim alias Danish, the expelled Pakistan High Commission official, said Yadav.

Investigation found that Singh attended the Pakistan National Day event in Delhi on Danish's invitation, where he met Pakistani Army officials and vloggers.

He had also travelled to Pakistan on three occasions including in 2020, 2021 and 2024, and came into direct contact with ISI officers, who subsequently recruited him to carry out espionage activities within India, Yadav said.

The DGP said after Malhotra's arrest, Singh had attempted to erase all traces of his communication with these PIOs to avoid detection.

Further investigation is underway to find the broader espionage-terror network and identify all collaborators, he added.

Sharing operation details, Assistant Inspector General of Police Ravjot Grewal said police teams have received reliable input about Singh being in touch with many Pakistan based entities including

agents of ISI and has been providing sensitive information about movement of Indian Army and other inside activities of the country to Pakistan.

Teams of State Special Operation Cell, SAS Nagar, launched an intel-based operation and arrested the suspect and recovered his mobile device, she said.

She said around 150 Pakistan contacts have been retrieved from the initial mobile phone forensics of the arrested and those included numbers of Pakistan ISI agents, Pakistan High Commission officials and other Pakistan based entities.

In a bid to cover his tracks, the accused deleted crucial digital evidence, including chats, contact records, and documents exchanged with Pakistani intelligence handlers from his mobile phone, said Grewal, adding that technical recovery and forensic examination are underway to retrieve deleted data and information leaked through him.

She said investigations have found that Singh used this platform as a cover to share sensitive information about Indian Army movements and activities with Pakistani handlers.

She said Singh got introduced to Malhotra through Pakistan embassy officials at an event hosted by Pakistan embassy in 2024.

Both Singh and Jyoti also visited Pakistan together.

An FIR has been registered at the State Special Operation Cell under relevant sections of the Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita (BNS) and the Official Secrets Act in Mohali.

Hisar native Malhotra (33) who was running a YouTube channel 'Travel with JO' was arrested last month.

On Tuesday, a man hailing from Tarn Taran district was arrested for allegedly sharing sensitive information related to the Army's movements during Operation Sindoor with PIOs. He was also allegedly in contact with Pakistan-based pro-Khalistan leader Gopal Singh Chawla.

Last month, police arrested six persons for allegedly spying for Pakistan.

The action on spy networks within the country comes in the aftermath of the Pahalgam terror attack that left 26 people dead and the four-day military conflict with Pakistan that followed. (PTI)

Monsoon session announced 47 days ahead to 'run away' from special session on Pahalgam: Cong

NEW DELHI, June 4: The Congress on Wednesday alleged that the government has announced the start of the Monsoon session of Parliament 47 days before it is due in order to run away from the demand of the party and INDIA bloc for an immediate special session to discuss the Pahalgam attack and the Centre's failure to bring the terrorists to justice.

Parliamentary Affairs Minister Kiren Rijiju on Wednesday said the Monsoon session of Parliament will be held from July 21 to August 12. The Cabinet Committee on Parliamentary Affairs, chaired by Defence Minister Rajnath Singh, has recommended the dates, he told reporters here.

In a post on X, Congress general secretary,

communications, Jairam Ramesh, said normally the dates for a Parliament session are announced a few days in advance, but "never have the dates been declared 47 days before a session is due".

"This has been done solely to run away from the demand being made repeatedly by the Indian National Congress and the INDIA parties for an immediate special session to discuss the brutal Pahalgam attacks and the failure to bring the terrorists who did the killings themselves to justice, the impacts of Operation Sindoor and its blatant politicisation, the revelations of the CDS in Singapore, the hyphenation of India and Pakistan, the embedding of China in the Pakistan Air Force, the continuous claims of Presi-

dent Trump on mediation, and the numerous failures of our foreign policy and diplomatic engagements," he said in his post.

"The monsoon session will, however, still be dominated by these issues of supreme national importance. The PM has run away from a special session but will have to answer very tough questions six weeks from now," the Congress leader said.

Rajnath Singh's recommendation will be sent to the president for convening the session, Rijiju said.

The announcement by Rijiju comes against the backdrop of a demand for a special session by opposition leaders to discuss Operation Sindoor. (PTI)

Wrong to think Modi is India and India is Modi: Congress slams BJP's criticism of Rahul

NEW DELHI, June 4: The Congress on Wednesday said it is wrong to think that "Narendra Modi is India and India is Narendra Modi", as it slammed the ruling BJP for its criticism of Rahul Gandhi over his dig at the prime minister and doubled down on the "Narendra-surrender" jibe.

Amid the BJP's criticism of his remarks, Gandhi reposted a post he had made on X on June 21, 2020, in which he had said, "Narendra Modi is actually Surrender Modi."

Congress's media and publicity department head Pawan Khara claimed that Gandhi's "Narendra...surrender" remarks encapsulate how the prime minister has time and again "surrendered India's national interests in situations where the requisite deft and the 'vishwaguru' status should have been shown.

"The BJP people were making a film for their hero for the last 11 years -- 'Muqaddar Ka Sikandar'. But when the film was ready, it turned out to be 'Naren-

der Ka Surrender'. Actually, there is no injection of bravery, but it is in-built in the character of a person. The history of BJP-RSS people has been of cowardice," Khara told a press conference at the Congress's Indira Bhawan headquarters here.

When such a person takes over the reins of the country, its future comes in danger, which is being witnessed at present, he claimed.

The Congress leader's remarks came a day after Gandhi said in Bhopal that "as soon as Trump signalled from there, picked up the phone and said, 'what are you doing Modi?' Narendar, surrender".... And Modiji obeyed Trump's orders with 'Ji Huzoor'".

Urging people to remember 1971, Gandhi said back then, a phone call had not come but the United States had sent its 7th fleet, weapons and an aircraft carrier, but prime minister Indira Gandhi did not surrender and said she would go by national interest.

Referring to the Bharatiya Janata Party

(BJP) and the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS), Gandhi said they are habituated to writing "surrender letters" since Independence.

The BJP has accused Gandhi of insulting the armed forces with his "surrender" barb at Modi, saying it amounted to undermining the success of Operation Sindoor.

BJP national spokesperson Sudhanshu Trivedi said the Congress leader has surpassed even Pakistan's army chief, prime minister and the terror masterminds based there in speaking in support of the neighbouring country, and alleged that his jibes reflect a sick and dangerous mindset.

Hitting back at the BJP, Khara said, "When the brave Indian Army had Pakistan on its knees, (US President Donald) Trump called and Narendra Modi surrendered. Trump said many times that we got the ceasefire done by threatening about trade, but Modi has not given a reply to Trump till date." (PTI)

Projects worth ₹ 24,000 Cr to be taken up to decongest Delhi: CM Rekha Gupta

NEW DELHI, June 4: The Centre is helping in a big way to decongest Delhi and make it a pollution-free city through various infrastructure projects, including a proposed elevated road from INA to the IGI airport, Chief Minister Rekha Gupta said on Wednesday.

After a meeting with Union Road Transport and Highways Minister Nitin Gadkari, Gupta said detailed project reports (DPRs) of projects worth ₹ 24,000 crore have been prepared.

She said feasibility is also being assessed for a tunnel from Sarai Kale Khan to the Indira Gandhi International (IGI) airport. Lieutenant Governor V K Saxena, Minister of State for Road Transport Harsh Malhotra and Delhi ministers were present at the meeting to review the progress of ongoing National Highways Authority of India (NHAI) projects in the national capital.

Gupta said the "double-engine" government is benefitting the people of Delhi a great deal -- a reference to the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) being in power at the Centre as well as in the city. "NHAI projects worth ₹ 35,000 crore are ongoing in Delhi, while projects worth ₹ 64,000 crore have been completed," Gupta said, thanking the Centre for it.

The chief minister shared that the NHAI has also approved road overbridge (RoB) and road underbridge (RuB) projects worth ₹ 150 crore for the capital. "Projects worth ₹ 1.25 lakh crore have been carried out for Delhi and I am thankful to Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Nitin Gadkari for that," she said. Gupta said these projects, including a proposal for an underground, 7-km tunnel from Shivmurti to Nelson Mandela Marg, will help decongest Delhi and reduce pollution.

She cited various projects, including an elevated road from INA to the airport that will be later connected to Faridabad and Gurugram, the Delhi-Katra-Amritsar highway that will be connected to the UER (Urban Extension Road)-II and an extension of the UER-II from Alipur to Tronica City. This will enable vehicles to reach Dehradun from Haryana and Noida without entering Delhi, Gupta said.

The NHAI has also taken over the development of various roads, including the Delhi-Rohat road, a road from Punjabi Bagh to Nangoli, the Ashram-Badarpur road and MG Road, and will also make those signal-free. The NHAI will develop a drainage system and service roads along these roads, the chief minister said. (PTI)

Train to Kashmir: Maharaja Pratap Singh's dream turns a reality

REASI, June 4: A train to the Kashmir valley through the Shivalik and Pir Panjal mountain ranges is more than a century-old ambitious plan that is set to turn into reality on Friday when Prime Minister Narendra Modi flags off a Vande Bharat train from Katra to Kashmir.

Modi will also inaugurate the Chenab bridge, which will be the world's highest railway arch bridge.

"What was once a vision proposed in the 19th century by Dogra maharaja Pratap Singh is now transforming into one of the most significant infrastructure achievements in independent India's history," a senior railway official said.

Vikramaditya Singh, grandson of Maharaja Hari Singh and son of former Sadr-e-Riyasat Karan Singh, said he feels proud that the Dogra ruler's plan conceived over 130 years ago has finally materialised.

"The railway line project to the Kashmir Valley was first envisaged and drawn up during Maharaja Pratap Singh's rule. It is a matter of great pride not only for the people of Jammu & Kashmir but for the entire nation that this dream will be realised by our prime minister," Singh, who has been a legislator in Jammu and Kashmir, told PTI.

The Dogra ruler had commissioned British engineers to survey the rugged terrain for a railway route to Kashmir, an ambitious project that remained unrealised for over a century.

He appointed three British engineers to prepare and execute detailed reports. However, two of the three reports prepared in 11 years between 1898 and 1909 were rejected.

According to special documents from the Jammu and Kashmir archives department, the idea of a rail link to Kashmir was



first proposed on March 1, 1892 by the Maharaja. Subsequently, in June 1898, British engineering firm S R Scott Stratton and Co was engaged to conduct surveys and execute the project.

The first report, submitted by D A Adam, recommended an electric railway between Jammu and Kashmir regions, featuring steam locomotives on a narrow two-foot-six-inch gauge line. This proposal was rejected due to the challenging elevation levels.

Another proposal, submitted in 1902 by W J Weightman, suggested a railway line connecting Kashmir from Abbottabad (now in Pakistan) along the Jhelum river. This, too, was turned down.

The third proposal, by Wild Blood, recommended a railway alignment along the Chenab river through the Reasi area. This report was approved.

Later, plans for powering electric trains and establishing power stations near Udhampur, Ramsu, and Banihal were also examined but ultimately rejected.

Following this, British engineer Col D E Bourel was tasked with submitting a detailed report on local coal reserves. Additionally, a report was commissioned from T D La Touche, the then deputy superintendent of the Geological Survey of India, on the Sangarmarg and Mehowgala coal mines.

In December 1923, S R Scott Stratton and Co was re-engaged to implement the coal extraction project. However, the death of Maharaja Pratap Singh in 1925 and the growing Indian independence movement led to the project being shelved permanently, the documents said.

The idea was revived nearly six decades later, when the then prime minister Indira Gandhi laid the foundation stone for the Jammu-Udhampur-Srinagar railway line in 1983. At the time, the project was estimated to cost ₹ 50 crore and was expected to be completed in five years, officials said.

However, in 13 years, only 11 km of the line could be constructed, which comprised 19 tunnels and 11 bridges - at a cost of ₹ 300 crore, they said.

It was followed by the broader Udhampur-Katra-Baramulla railway project, estimated at ₹ 2,500 crore, which saw its foundation stones laid by prime ministers H D Deve Gowda and I K Gujral in 1996 and 1997 at Udhampur, Qazigund, and Baramulla.

Construction began in 1997 but faced repeated delays due to challenging geological, topographical, and weather conditions, significantly inflating the cost to over ₹ 43,800 crore as of now.

Recognising the strategic importance of the Udhampur-Srinagar-Baramulla Railway Line (USBRL), it was declared a national project in 2002, the officials said.

Out of the 272 km stretch, 209 km has already been commissioned in phases including Qazigund-Baramulla in 2009, Banihal-Qazigund in 2013, Udhampur-Katra in 2014, and Banihal-Sangaldan in 2023. The final stretch connecting Katra to Sangaldan has completed the link in February 2024, they said.

The engineering marvel includes 38 tunnels and 927 bridges along the Kashmir rail project. The highlight is the Chenab bridge, standing 359 metres above the riverbed which is 35 metres taller than the Eiffel Tower making it the world's highest railway arch bridge, they said.

"The Kashmir train project, once just a royal vision, now stands as a symbol of national integration and engineering excellence", an official said.

To support construction in the rugged, militancy-affected terrain, more than 215 km of approach roads were built, many in areas previously accessible only by foot or boat.

This improved infrastructure has transformed the lives of approximately 1.5 lakh people in 70 remote villages such as Dugga, Surukot, Sawalkot, Khari, and Hingni.

These areas have seen the emergence of marketplaces, eateries, and repair shops, significantly boosting local livelihoods, the officials said. (PTI)

Team will meet Chief Minister Manik Saha during the visit

Tripura govt to partner with AIIMS-New Delhi to revamp healthcare facilities

AGARTALA, June 4: The Tripura government is looking to partner with AIIMS-New Delhi for the improvement of healthcare facilities in the state, a senior official said on Wednesday.

For the purpose, a four-member team from AIIMS-New Delhi, headed by its Director M Srinivas, will arrive in Tripura on June 7 on a two-day visit, he said.

"We are keen to enhance collaboration with AIIMS-New Delhi for research, development and hospital management to improve overall healthcare in the state," Health Secretary Kiran Gite said.

The team will meet Chief Minister Manik Saha during the visit, he said.



It will also visit the GBP Hospital and Agartala Govt Medical College (AGMC), and discuss with the authorities on how to

improve healthcare facilities, he added. GBP Hospital's Deputy Medical Superintendent Kanak Chowdhury

said the visit is important as it will guide the upgrading of the healthcare facilities at the state's premier hospital.

"Around 2,000 patients visit the hospital's outpatient department daily. Already, seven super-specialty departments, including neurosurgery and urology, have been introduced," he said.

"The AIIMS team will meet stakeholders of GBP Hospital to know the existing facilities, shortcomings in the system, and will suggest how to upgrade the services," he said.

Chowdhury said the assistance of AIIMS will be beneficial for Tripura's young healthcare professionals. (PTI)

Rio launches nine Lighthouse School complexes



HT Correspondent

DIMAPUR, June 4: Nagaland chief minister Neiphiu Rio virtually laid the foundation stones and launched nine Lighthouse School complexes (LSCs) in the state at an official launch programme in Kohima on Wednesday.

Speaking at the launch programme, Rio expressed his happiness to witness the progress of the LSCs, under the Nagaland Education Project-The Lighthouse (NECTAR). He said the education sector in the state was undergoing significant reforms.

Rio commended the school ed-

ucation department and the Lighthouse (NECTAR) project for their innovative work, which aims to transform classrooms and teaching methods, reforming the entire ecosystem of schools in the State.

He further thanked the Union ministry of education and the funding partners of the project for their continued support and partnership.

Rio emphasised the importance of primary schools, which lays the foundation of education for students, and how with the new initiatives, the students from the state can perform and compete

with others from within and outside the state.

The LSCs are envisioned as model schools with all necessary facilities required to function as hubs of academic excellence that support neighbouring spoke schools.

Under the NECTAR project, one LSC each will be developed in 16 districts of Nagaland. The total cost for the construction of the 16 LSCs has been estimated at ₹ 198.57 crore.

The LSCs will be spaces of holistic learning fostering inclusivity, strong community engagement and constant innovation, thriving on local knowledge of the communities. They will be economically and ecologically sustainable and also promote an evidence-based education system.

They will lay emphasis on reaching out to the socio-economically disadvantaged groups and provide learning spaces with adequate resources for children with special needs.

Further, the LSCs will work towards integrating the national education policy's recommendations on school management and teaching-learning practices.

15 COVID-19 cases in Sikkim: Health minister

GANGTOK, June 4: Sikkim has reported 15 COVID-19 cases since May 29, state Health minister G T Dhungel said on Wednesday.

He said 526 samples were tested since May 29, of which 15 tested positive for COVID-19 at STNM Hospital, Gangtok.

The Health minister said that wearing masks and use of sanitisers has been made mandatory along with following COVID protocols in all state-run medical facilities in the state.

Dhungel said that all hospitals and health centres in the state have already established separate COVID facilities with adequate beds, oxygen cylinders and medical equipment. He also said specialised manpower to deal with COVID cases has also been constituted.

The minister asked the people of the state that there was no need to panic and to follow COVID-19 protocols.

"Prevention is better than cure and we urge all citizens to remain safe by following the laid down guidelines by the Centre and state agencies. We can tackle this communicable and contagious disease with awareness," he said.

The minister also said that the Health department will immediately start organising COVID awareness camps throughout the state. (PTI)

Rainfall causes extensive damage in Nagaland

HT Correspondent

DIMAPUR, June 4: The Nagaland State Disaster Management Authority (NSDMA) said extreme monsoon weather caused widespread damage throughout the state.

In Kohima, a major land sink was reported near Kisama Heritage village. A major landslide was also reported between Kigwema to Mima to Chakhabama road. A major retaining wall also collapsed at Phesama village, the NSDMA said on Wednesday.

In Tuensang district, a landslide occurred at Phingjang ward in Tuensang town. A road blockage at Tobu road below Tuensang village was also reported.

Also, due to windstorm, an Anganwadi centre was damaged at Phir Ahir village under Longkhim sub-division.

In Kiphire district, continuous rains have caused landslides and road blockage between Khongiri to Mimi village. Another landslide was reported between 02 Junction to Pungro town. A landslide was also reported in Singrep village.

Damages to agricultural fields were also reported from Moya village and Pungro village.

The village guard office guard room was damaged by landslide in Meluri district.

According to reports, paddy fields along Araju river in Reguri



village were damaged due to the overflowing of the river. A retaining wall collapsed at Wutsi colony, affecting a residential house.

In Noklak district, road blockage report was received from Noklak to Chingmei to Tuensang road, Noklak to Pangsha road, Panso to Tuensang road and Panso via Kusong road, Noklak to Tsuwao village road, Panso to Saddle to Tuensang road.

Several maize fields were also reportedly damaged by windstorm and torrential rains at Chassir village under Shamator district. A major landslide also occurred between Shamator to Kiphire road.

In Mokokchung district, a retaining wall collapsed, causing damage to one residential house at Mongsenbai ward. A retaining wall also collapsed at Luyong ward under Mangkolemba sub-di-

vision, affecting nearby footpath and three residential houses.

In Wokha district, several electric poles have been uprooted due to cyclonic windstorm causing power supply interruption. A landslide incident occurred at Tribal Circuit Doyang, affecting the office reception and cafeteria building.

In Zunheboto district, landslide incident was reported from Atoizu sub-division.

In Peren district road blockages were reported between Vamsi Akilesh and New Ngaulong.

A landslide along National Highway 2, triggered by incessant rainfall, caused significant damage to National Highway 2 between Phesama and Kisama in Kohima district, leaving several vehicles stranded on both sides of the affected stretch.

Tripura CM explores partnership with Patanjali, joins Scindia, Meghalaya CM in NE Tourism Meet



HT Correspondent

AGARTALA, June 4: Tripura Chief Minister Manik Saha on Wednesday announced a potential collaboration with Patanjali Yogpeeth to promote yoga, wellness, spiritual tourism, biodiversity, education, and more in the state.

Saha further informed that the Tripura government would soon sign a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) aimed at boosting the state's socio-economic development.

Taking to Facebook, the Chief Minister wrote, "Exciting collaborations ahead! Discussed potential

partnership with Dr. Acharya Balkrishna, Secretary General, Patanjali Yogpeeth & team... Soon, signing an MoU to boost Tripura's socio-economic growth."

In another key development, Saha participated in the 2nd High-Level Task Force meeting on North East Tourism, chaired by Meghalaya Chief Minister Conrad K. Sangma. The meeting was also attended by Union DoNER Minister Jyotiraditya Scindia and other dignitaries.

"We deliberated on unlocking the region's untapped tourism potential and charted strategies for sustainable tourism development across the Northeast," the CM said.

These initiatives are part of Tripura's broader vision to position itself as a hub for eco-tourism and holistic wellness in the region.

13 Bangladesh nationals arrested in Tripura

AGARTALA, June 4: A total of 13 Bangladesh nationals have been arrested in West Tripura's Hapania area, police said on Wednesday.

Out of the 13 Bangladeshis, two are women and the rest are men. Acting on a tip-off, police conducted a raid in a rented accommodation near Tripura Medical College and Hospital at Hapania on Tuesday night and apprehended thirteen people, Amtali Sub-Divisional Police Officer (SDPO), Sakar Chandra Das said.

Initially, they claimed they were residents of Tripura's Gandacherra subdivision adjoining Bangladesh's Chittagong Hill Tract (CHT) and had come to Hapania for treatment.

"However, they could not produce any valid document substantiating their claim of being residents of Tripura. During search, we found some Bangladesh documents indicating that they were actually Bangladesh nationals. (PTI)

DIPR gifts rare historical photograph to Nagaland guv

HT Correspondent

DIMAPUR, June 4: In a significant effort to preserve and honour the cultural heritage of Nagaland, the information and public relations department presented a rare historical photograph to Governor La Ganesan at Raj Bhavan in Kohima on Wednesday. Adviser to information & public relations and soil & water conservation Imkong L Imchen, along with director of information & public relations Dzuvino Theinuo and joint director Asangla Im-song, presented the photograph on behalf of the department.

The photograph, believed to have been taken in the early 1900s, captures a large gathering of people, likely from a central Tenyimia village, that appears to be a traditional or communal setting.

While the exact date, event, and identities of those featured remain unknown, the

image holds immense historical and ethnographic value. The photograph remained unidentified, and the photograph was previously not published, making it a rare and unique archival piece.

The original negative, discovered in the departmental archives, was carefully restored and reprinted by the department in April 2025. This effort is part of the DIPR's ongoing initiative to document, preserve and share the visual history of Nagaland, and its people for future generations. Ganesan expressed his appreciation for the thoughtful presentation and lauded the department for its initiative in safeguarding the visual documentation of the state's past.

This presentation also reaffirmed the department's commitment to archival preservation and the promotion of Nagaland's diverse cultural legacy.

Sikkim CM holds high-level meeting to take stock of situation in landslide-hit Mangan

GANGTOK, June 4: Sikkim Chief Minister Prem Singh Tamang on Wednesday held a high-level meeting with senior state government officials to take stock of the situation in landslide-hit Mangan district.

Three army personnel were killed and six soldiers went missing after a landslide hit a military camp at Chaten. Several others were also injured. The landslide, which occurred at 7 pm on Sunday near Lachen town in Mangan district, was triggered by heavy rainfall in the area.

"Today, I convened a high-level meeting with the chief secretary and senior officials from the Planning and Land & Revenue Departments to take stock of the concerning situation in Mangan district," he said in a social media post.

"What is unfolding is truly heartbreaking. Our people are facing immense hardship due to this natural calamity and my heart goes out to every family affected," he said referring to large-scale destruction of road infrastructure due to landslides triggered by heavy rain in Mangan district.

The chief minister said that he has directed all departments to act swiftly and in close coordination with the NDRF, SDRF, BRO, TAAS, and other agencies concerned to ensure that rescue and relief operations are carried out without delay.

"Every possible effort is being made to reach those in need," he said.

Tamang urged all residents and tourists not to panic as the state government is doing everything within its power to manage the situation and protect lives.

"We are with you at every step, and we will not rest until safety and normalcy are restored," he said, while appealing for unity, strength, and cooperation from everyone.

"Let us stand together as one family, and we will overcome this challenge with courage and compassion," he said.

The state government has already declared the damage caused by incessant rainfall in Mangan district since May 28 as a "disaster" under Section 222(b) of the Disaster Management Act, 2005, according to an official statement.

The declaration was issued by the Sikkim State Disaster Management Authority (SSDMA) and the Land Revenue and Disaster Management Department.

Meanwhile, around 109 tourists stranded in Lachen in north Sikkim for nearly a week due to landslides were brought to Chaten on Wednesday for air evacuation, as and when the weather permits, officials said.

Despite damage to connectivity, approximately 109 stranded tourists have successfully reached Chaten from Lachen through coordinated efforts of the state government, Indian Army and local support teams, they



said. All tourists have been safely accommodated in nearby hotels and at the Army camp in Chaten and are being prepared for air evacuation, as and when the weather permits, they said.

No tourists are stranded in Lachen anymore, officials added.

Due to constant bad weather in the region, helicopter sorties from Pakyong Airport could not take place during the day, they said.

Two MI-17 V5 helicopters remain stationed at Pakyong on standby for immediate deployment once flying conditions improve, they said.

Earlier in the day, Relief Commissioner-cum-Secretary Mingma T Sherpa, SSDMA Director Prabhakar Rai, his deputy Rajiv Roka visited Pakyong airport during the day to assess the situation and oversee preparedness for the resumption of rescue and relief operations.

The ongoing relief operations in north Sikkim faced a critical setback after two key bridges over the Taran Chu River, situated between Munshithang and Chaten, were confirmed to have been washed away earlier due to incessant rain, severing motorable access to Chaten from Lachen.

The loss of infrastructure has intensified the logistical challenges of the ongoing disaster response.

In view of the washed-away bridges and suspension of aerial sorties, the state government is exploring an alternative ground-based evacuation route using a phased transshipment strategy.

The officials said that the state government remains fully engaged in managing the disaster response by ensuring continuous coordination with central agencies and the armed forces to safeguard lives and provide essential relief.

The restoration of connectivity and timely evacuation remain top priorities as the authorities continue to navigate through adverse terrain and weather conditions.

The state administration is actively coordinating with local authorities to provide relief and facilitate evacuations in Mangan district, the officials said.

The district administration has also appealed to the public to stay alert and cooperate with local authorities and the army. (PTI)

Nagaland CM unveils several education, sports projects

KOHIMA, June 4: Nagaland Chief Minister Neiphiu Rio on Wednesday virtually laid foundation stones for nine schools and inaugurated six sports and recreational infrastructure projects across the state.

Under the Nagaland Education Project - The Lighthouse (NECTAR) of the Department of School Education, Rio laid the foundation of Lighthouse School Complexes (LSCs) in nine districts, according to an official statement.

Funded by the World Bank, the LSCs are envisioned as model schools with all facilities required to function as hubs of academic excellence.

On December 1 last year, the chief minister also laid the foundation stones of the seven other LSCs.

The total cost for the construction of the 16 LSCs is estimated at ₹ 198.57 crore, the statement said.

Under the NECTAR project, one LSC each will be developed in the 16 districts of Nagaland.

LSCs would reach out to the socio-economically disadvantaged groups to provide learning spaces with adequate resources for children with special needs, the statement said.

Those institutes would be set up in Chumoukedima, Phek, Kiphire, Zunheboto, Shamator, Noklak, Longleng, Mokokchung and Dimapur districts.

The education sector is undergoing significant reforms in the state, Rio said at the programme held in the chief minister's residential complex here.

Rio commended the School Education Department and the NECTAR project for their innovative work which aims to transform classrooms and teaching methods and change the entire ecosystem of schools in the state.

He thanked the Union Ministry of Education and the funding partners for their continued support and partnership.

The initiatives would help the students of Nagaland compete with others from within and outside the state, Rio said.

The CM also inaugurated six sports and recreational facilities across the state. (PTI)

Profit made from the establishment is being given for police welfare

Visitors dine in at 140-year-old police station-turned-cafe in Meghalaya

SOHRA (MEGHALAYA), June 4: A 140-year-old police station in Meghalaya's Sohra has undergone a transformation into a trendy cafe, offering delectable and lip-smacking food to visitors at the world's wettest place.

Established in 1885, the Sohra police station's erstwhile building is the oldest such facility in Meghalaya, and it had been a dreaded detention centre during the British rule.

But now, 'Sohra 1885', or as the cafe is known, has become a hotspot for foodies and tourists. It offers a unique blend of history and hospitality, as the eatery allows visitors to have their favourite food in lockups turned into a dining area.

"Monetisation meant extra income for the force and especially for police welfare activities," Syiem said, adding that two years ago a formal bidding process for the cafe began to finalise a partner for running the show.

The new partner, a young entrepreneur, proposed designs to match the heritage building and aptly named the cafe 'Sohra 1885'.

Nafi Nongrum, the business partner, refurbished the entire building using the British-era items from the old police station.

"We have converted the lockups into a dining area. The visitors are enjoying the ambience," she said.

Soon after, the government started the process of constructing a new police sta-



tion building to accommodate more personnel, the process of monetising the heritage police station also began.

"Monetisation meant extra income for the force and especially for police welfare activities," Syiem said, adding that two years ago a formal bidding process for the cafe began to finalise a partner for running the show.

The new partner, a young entrepreneur, proposed designs to match the heritage building and aptly named the cafe 'Sohra 1885'.

Nafi Nongrum, the business partner, refurbished the entire building using the British-era items from the old police station.

"We have converted the lockups into a dining area. The visitors are enjoying the ambience," she said.

The SP said the business partner has done a great job in restoring the old building, leaving the walls and floors as they were.

"Even the fireplace has been renovated to its old glory. The floors have been left to their original state as they are still in very good condition," Syiem said.

According to Nongrum, a 200 kg safe was also refurbished, repainted and polished.

He said the cafe has a seating capacity of 100 people.

Since its official inauguration on May 22, the cafe has become a new hit among the locals and visitors alike.

Batskhem Thabab, one of the patrons at the cafe, said, "We really enjoyed our time in the lockup which has been converted into a dining area." (PTI)



HONOURER TO BE PART OF 'METRO... IN DINO': SARA ALI KHAN

MUMBAI, June 4: Actor Sara Ali Khan on Wednesday said she grew up watching filmmaker Anurag Basu's movies and that is why it was surreal for her to be a part of the director's latest, "Metro... In Dino".

An anthology of four stories of contemporary couples, the movie is a follow-up to Basu's critically-acclaimed 2007 movie "Life in a... Metro".

As an actor, Sara said she has never felt "less pressure" for a project but with "Metro... In Dino", she knew that the responsibility would be shouldered by everyone involved in the film.

"I have never felt less pressure. I just think that there are moments where I can't even believe that I'm here. I am just so honoured and privileged to be on a stage right now with like seven actors that I admire, with Anurag and Bhushan sir, in a film like this."

"It's just amazing. It's surreal to me to just be a part of it. So, I don't think that the pressure would be mine at all actually," the actor told reporters.

In the movie, Sara will feature alongside Aditya Roy Kapur, Ali Fazal, Fatima Sana Shaikh, Konkona Sen Sharma, Pankaj Tripathi, Neena Gupta and Anupam Kher.

The four stories of the movie are set in four main metro cities - Mumbai, Delhi, Kolkata and Bengaluru.

The "Sky Force" actor said she was new to Basu's style of filmmaking and that's why she relied on co-star Aditya, who had earlier starred in the director's 2020 anthology "Ludo".

"I had a lot of fun. I've grown up watching Basu da's films and I think that just being given an opportunity to be part of it was just amazing. Basu da has a way of working that I have never really seen before. Adi, having worked with Basu da before, it was like a nice bridge kind of a thing because they knew each other and they knew how to kind of work. I instantly felt very comfortable, she said.

Besides Aditya, Fatima, who also featured in "Ludo", helped Sara on the sets.

"They both were like, 'This is it, this is how it's going to be. Just go with the flow. So, I think that it was definitely helpful,' she said.

Asked about the box office pressure, Basu said a storyteller should honestly tell their stories and let audiences decide the fate of the movie.

"You can't plan it. A safe film is the most unsafe film. I think a film needs to be made with heart and then the audience will decide whether we did our job," he said.

"Metro... In Dino" is produced by Bhushan Kumar of T-Series and Anurag Basu Productions Pvt Ltd. The film will be released in theatres on July 4. (PTI)

If audience understands core of character, artist is appreciated: Ashutosh Rana

KOLKATA, June 4: Versatile actor Ashutosh Rana, who essays the role of Ravana in "Humare Ram", a play which retells the story of the Ramayana, affirms that when the audience understands the core of a portrayed character, the artist is appreciated naturally. Rana, who has been mostly seen portraying negative roles in films, also suggested that the audience connects with the art even when they hate a character more than loving it.

When they understand the core of the character and appreciate the art it represents, the artist is appreciated naturally. For me, the greatest reward is not about being loved or hated — it's about the audience recognising and valuing the craft the actor told PTI in a telephonic interview.

He asserted that theatre enthusiasts are watching "Humare Ram" repeatedly some even "20 times".

"The response we got from the audience underscores the appreciation for the presentation and artistic merit," said Rana who will be in Kolkata to stage the play. The success of "Humare Ram" is evident from the packed theatres, demonstrating the story's and artists' ability to touch hearts and drive repeat viewership, he said.

"We know Kolkata audience always backed rich content and power-backed performances," he added. The play will be staged in the city on June 7 and 8.

Ramayana is relevant to this day and will remain so in the future, Rana said, adding: "I feel obliged to be a part of this timeless saga."

"Humare Ram" a theatrical extravaganza directed by Gaurav Bhardwaj showcases scenes from the Ramayana, never before depicted on stage. Acclaimed actor Rahul R Bhuchar portrays Lord Ram. Danish Akhtar plays Lord Hanuman and Tarun Khanna essays the role of Lord Shiva.

Elevating the auditory experience, playback singers Kailash Kher, Shankar Mahadevan and Sonu Nigam lent their voices to the play.

Rana, whose portrayal of Hambirao in the recently released movie "Chhava" had earned audience praise, said that as a performer, he does not find much difference between acting on the stage and that before the camera.

If your performance is not truthful, it will not work in either theatre or film. However, theatre allows a more immediate and genuine connection with the audience, and that connection flows both ways. That is one of the biggest strengths of theatre, said Rana. Rana, who acted in a few Bengali films, said he is open to exploring new creative ventures with directors in West Bengal. He is currently working on a few projects that will be showcased across India. While he can't share details, he is excited about the opportunities ahead, he added. (PTI)



Former celebrity lawyer Tom Girardi gets 7 years in prison for stealing millions from clients

LOS ANGELES, June 4: A federal judge sentenced disbarred celebrity lawyer Tom Girardi to seven years and three months in prison on Tuesday for embezzling tens of millions of dollars from his clients, including several with severe physical injuries and families of people killed in accidents.

US District Judge Josephine L. Staton also ordered Girardi, 86, to pay a \$35,000 fine and \$2.3 million in restitution to former clients. A jury in August found him guilty of four counts of wire fraud, and he could have been sentenced to up to 80 years in prison.

Girardi is the estranged husband of "The Real Housewives of Beverly Hills" star Erika Jayne and appeared on the show himself dozens of times between 2015 and 2020.

He was once among the most prominent lawyers in the nation, often representing victims of major disasters against powerful companies. One lawsuit against California's Pacific Gas and Electric utility led to a \$333 million settlement and was portrayed in the 2000 Julia Roberts film "Erin Brockovich".

But his law empire collapsed, and he was disbarred in California in 2022 over client thefts.

Girardi has been diagnosed with Alzheimer's disease, and issues with his memory led another court to put him in a conservatorship under his brother. But on Monday, Staton ruled that he was mentally competent to be sentenced, just as she had previously found him mentally competent to stand trial.

The judge had allowed him to remain free until his sentencing but ordered him to surrender to authorities by July 17.

An email to Girardi's attorney seeking comment on the conviction was not immediately answered.

Former clients who testified against Girardi at his trial included an Arizona woman whose husband was killed in a boat accident and victims who were burned in a 2010 gas pipeline explosion in San Bruno, south of San Francisco.

Prosecutors played jurors' voicemails in which Girardi gave a litany of false reasons money that a court had awarded could not be paid, including tax and debt obligations and judge authorizations. He frequently told them, "Don't be mad at me." (AP)

'SITAARE ZAMEEN PAR' A FAN BOY'S LOVE LETTER TO AAMIR KHAN: DIRECTOR RS PRASANNA

MUMBAI, June 4: Dreams do come true, says filmmaker RS Prasanna who went from being a cheerleader for Aamir Khan as the accepted award for "Taare Zameen Par" in 2007 to finally directing him in its sequel "Sitaare Zameen Par".

Prasanna, known for "Kalyana Samayal Saadhan" in Tamil and its Hindi remake "Shubh Mangal Saavdhan", was still in film school in 2007 when he watched "Taare Zameen Par".

"I remember bawling my eyes out while watching 'Taare Zameen Par' with my friends, and my then-girlfriend, now wife. When Aamir sir won the Best Debut Director award at the Gollapudi Srinivas Award, he came to Chennai to accept it."

"I was part of the audience, who was cheering him on and from the outside, like Ekalavya, watching Drona. The closest I got to Aamir sir was in that (award) event, which is about 300 metres away. I didn't hope for anything more," the Chennai-born director told PTI in an interview. Prasanna said when he met Aamir with the idea of a film, which eventually became "Sitaare Zameen Par", he told him about how he had

cheered for him during the award ceremony.

"I was very emotional and I said, 'Sir, thank you for making me believe that dreams do come true'. This is not even a dream I dreamt. It was such a big thing that I didn't even dare to dream of this."

"In one of the wrap parties (of the new film), I told him, 'This movie is like a fan boy's love letter to his idol'. I told Aamir sir, 'Whatever I wanted to see you do as a fan is there in this film'. It is a film that entertains, makes you think, touches your heart and above all, I think it's a film that places so much faith in the audience."

It was Aamir who reached out to the 41-year-old director after the release of "Shubh Mangal Saavdhan".

"We had some discussions, and there was an intent that, 'If there was a kind of a good script, pass it on to AK sir', and that itself was great for me." A few years later, when Prasanna decided to make his next with writer Divy Nidhi Sharma, Aamir's name was an instinctive choice and it later became "Sitaare Zameen Par".

"As a fan of his, I would want him to do this movie. I thought, 'If he is



the only choice for it, then maybe this movie will never happen' because why is he going to say yes to a random director whom he doesn't even know, he has just seen one film? But he did, and I'm eternally indebted to him for that," he said.

It was Aamir, Prasanna said, who suggested the title "Sitaare Zameen Par". Drawing a parallel with his acclaimed film "Taare Zameen Par", he pointed out that both stories shared a similar essence.

"It had new characters, a new journey, it is a comedy, so it has

everything new, yet it has got the same heart of 'Taare Zameen Par', I thought it was a fabulous idea."

In addition to Aamir, the movie stars Genelia Deshmukh and ten newcomers, including Aroush Datta, Gopi Krishna Varma, Samvit Desai, Vedant Sharma, Ayush Bhansali, Ashish Pendse, Rishi Shahani, Rishabh Jain, Naman Mishra, and Simran Mangeshkar, all of whom are specially-abled.

Prasanna said the experience of directing the newcomers was a rewarding one.

"This movie cannot happen without them, so it is my job to take the time and effort to teach them some of the tools that they may not have. For me, they bring certain rawness and beauty, which is their advantage."

"Like, when you see the films of Majid Majidi, or 'Anjali' by Mani sir, or Darshel Safary in 'Taare Zameen Par', so those actors are real, they can bring out the real emotions. Now, professional actors have to bring it with a lot of effort. We focused on giving them a safe and playful kind of environment. They made us comfortable and they gave us love, they directed us," he said.

Prasanna and his team spent over six months conducting acting workshops.

He said his director of photography (DOP), Srinivas Reddy, adopted an innovative approach to filmmaking that focused on the comfort of the actors.

"We decided early on that wherever they (ten actors) want to move (they can), we would figure out the way; it's our job," Prasanna explained, describing the process as "almost invisible filmmaking."

"Sitaare Zameen Par" will see the

return of Aamir to movies after his 2022 release, "Laal Singh Chaddha", which received a lukewarm response.

Prasanna said the magic of cinema lies in a compelling script, whether it is a 'masala' film or a deeply emotional narrative.

"When a star chooses to work with a good script and a passionate director, then magic happens. Not every movie will run, not every movie will be successful. Every industry goes through its cycles; every industry will revive, and it's only a matter of time before that's going to happen. That is not just Bollywood, Tamil, Malayalam cinema went through it, but Hollywood went through it too."

"Stars are very important. I have worked with a superstar, and I know the difference. It is about how many people love you and expect from you. Like, when a Tom Cruise film is up for release, there's certain expectation. A star is like a curator, he or she brings a certain promise to the audience that 'if it is my film, it will be good no matter the genre'," he said.

"Sitaare Zameen Par" is set to release on June 20. (PTI)

RCB get ₹ 20 crore for winning IPL 2025, runners-up PBKS receive ₹ 12.5 crore

AHMEDABAD, June 4: Newly-crowned IPL champions Royal Challengers Bengaluru have received ₹20 crore for winning the 18th edition of the league while runners-up Punjab Kings got richer by ₹ 12.5 crore.

RCB lifted their maiden title in the world's biggest T20 league by getting the better of PBKS by six runs in an exciting summit showdown here on Tuesday ending a long wait of 18 years for the team as well as its talisman Virat Kohli.

Third-Place finishers Mumbai Indians earned ₹ 7 crore for reaching Qualifier 2 while the fourth-placed Gujarat Titans were given ₹ 6.5 crore for playing in the Eliminator.

Over the years the IPL prize money has grown exponentially. In the inaugural 2008 edition the winning side received ₹ 4.8 crore whereas the runner-up team was awarded ₹2.4 crore.

The Delhi District Cricket Association (DDCA) has got the Best Pitch and Ground award for the matches held at the Arun Jaitley

Stadium. Besides the recognition DDCA also got richer by ₹ 50 lakh.

The stadium hosted seven matches this season all of them being preliminary fixtures.

DDCA President Rohan Jaitley expressed his gratitude stating This award is a testament to the tireless work of our curators staff and management. We are committed to maintaining the highest standards in cricket infrastructure.

List of winners with prize purse: Winners RCB: ₹ 20 crore Runners-up PBKS: ₹ 12.5 crore Third-placed Mumbai Indians: ₹ 7 crore Fourth-placed Gujarat Titans: ₹ 6.5 crore

Orange Cap winner (Sai Sudharsan): ₹ 10 lakh Purple Cap winner (Prasidh Krishna): ₹ 10 lakh Emerging Player winner (Sai Sudharsan): ₹ 10 lakh Most Valuable Player (Suryakumar Yadav): ₹ 15 lakh Super Striker of the season (Vaibhav Suryavanshi): ₹ 10 lakh

+ Tata Curvv car Fantasy King of the season (Sai Sudharsan): ₹ 10 lakh Best Catch winner (Kamindu Mendis): ₹ 10 lakh Most Dot Balls (Mohammed Siraj): ₹ 10 lakh Super Sixes (Nicholas Pooran): ₹ 10 lakh Fours of the season (Sai Sudharsan): ₹ 10 lakh Fairplay Award (Chennai Super Kings): ₹10 lakh Pitch and Ground (Delhi Capitals home ground New Delhi): ₹ 50 lakh

List of award winners in the RCB vs PBKS final Player of the Match (Krunal Pandya): ₹ 5 lakh Super Striker (Jitesh Sharma): ₹ 1 lakh Most Dot balls (Krunal Pandya): ₹ 1 lakh Most fours (Priyansh Arya): ₹ 1 lakh Fantasy King (Shashank Singh): ₹ 1 lakh Most Sixes (Shashank Singh): ₹ 1 lakh. (PTI)

Gukesh Suffers Crushing Loss Against Nakamura, Erigaisi Wins in Norway Chess

STAVANGER (NORWAY), June 4 : American Grandmaster Hikaru Nakamura broke World Champion D. Gukesh's run of classical wins by comprehensively beating the Indian to earn three full points, even as Arjun Erigaisi roared back to contention with a victory over Fabiano Caruana in Norway Chess here.

India's Erigaisi trapped his opponent Caruana in a time scramble in the eighth round of the prestigious tournament on Tuesday.

World No. 2 and former Norway Chess champion Nakamura pressed home the early advantage he got with the white pieces to dominate his 19-year-old opponent and score a very smooth victory, taking revenge for his Round 3 loss to the Indian.

Gukesh, who had regained his mojo after a disappointing start to the tournament—beating World No. 1 Magnus Carlsen and Erigaisi in Round 6 and 7 respectively—was cornered by Nakamura, who didn't give his opponent an inch during the nearly four-hour-long contest.



With two more rounds to go, Gukesh was tied for third place with Nakamura on 11.5 points, while American GM Caruana, despite the loss to Erigaisi, was in the lead with 12.5 points. Carlsen, who lost to China's Wei Yi in the Armageddon tie-break, was second with 12 points, while Erigaisi was fifth with 10.5 points.

"It was a very smooth game. I'm very happy with it. It looks very good," said Nakamura after the win. The 37-year-old Nakamura, winner of the 2023 edition of Norway Chess in which Gukesh finished third, said the reigning world

champion was uncomfortable with the pawn structure, which probably resulted in him coming under time pressure and giving an easy win to the American.

"I'm not sure what happened—whether Gukesh just didn't know this bishop move or what exactly it was—but it was very clear to me that based on the long think, he didn't like the pawn structure at all," said Nakamura, who at 15 years of age had become the youngest American GM.

Nakamura added that his loss to Gukesh in Round 3 was more on account of him slackening a bit.

"Just when I had equalised, I completely relaxed. I just fell asleep for like one to two moves, and immediately I was in a lot of trouble and I couldn't recover," he added. Nakamura expressed surprise over Gukesh's play in the tournament so far, saying he was lucky to have survived Carlsen and Erigaisi in Round 6 and 7 respectively.

"It's a very strange term because

definitely showing very strong defensive skills."

Nakamura gave a strong indication that this could be his last appearance in Norway Chess, and that he had probably played his final classical game against Carlsen. He also averred that the future of chess is in India.

"India is basically the new Soviet Union as far as chess goes. You have Gukesh, you have Arjun, you have Praggnanandhaa. I think Aravindh (Chithambaram) just broke into the top-10, if I'm not mistaken. If I look forward to the next 5-10 years, Indians are going to dominate chess—there's no doubt about it," he said.

Two-time world rapid champion, India's Koneru Humpy wrestled back the lead with two rounds to go, beating Spanish International Master Sara Khadem in the day's only classical win. Humpy, on 13.5 points, was one point ahead of reigning world champion China's Ju Wenjun. Ju's six-match winning streak was broken by R. Vaishali—who is fifth on 9.5 points—in the Armageddon tie-break.

Results (Round 8): (Open): Arjun Erigaisi (Ind – 10.5 points) bt Fabiano Caruana (USA – 12.5); Hikaru Nakamura (USA – 11.5) bt D. Gukesh (Ind – 11.5); Wei Yi (Chn – 8) bt Magnus Carlsen (Nor – 12) in Armageddon tie-break.

(Women): Sara Khadem (Esp – 6) lost to Koneru Humpy (Ind – 13.5); R. Vaishali (Ind – 9.5) bt Ju Wenjun (Chn – 12.5) in Armageddon tie-break; Anna Muzychuk (Ukr – 12.5) bt Lei Tingjie (Chn – 10) in Armageddon tie-break. (PTI)

Theegala has his task cut out as he tees up alongside McIlroy

TORONTO, June 4: Indian-American Sahith Theegala knows his task is cut out for the next few weeks as he tries to regain the form that took him to world No. 11 on the rankings.

After missing the cut at the Memorial last week, Theegala will tee up at the RBC Canadian, which will also see Rory McIlroy in action at the TPC Toronto at Osprey Valley (North Course).

Theegala, who has been pushed back by a neck injury and some indifferent form has not had a single Top-10 in 2025 and has slipped to 39th in world rankings. Theegala's best in 2025 has been T-17 at the Genesis Invitational and T-18 at the Zurich Classic,

the only team event on the PGA Tour.

Though Theegala has missed the cut only twice this year -- at the Palmer Invitational and the Memorial and withdrew from the Trust -- he has not been able to find his form.

He is also trying to improve on his current FedEx Cup ranking, which is at 119 and he needs to be inside Top-70 to get into the play-offs in August and he is also hoping to find the rhythm ahead of the Ryder Cup, which has been his goal.

After the RBC Canadian, the schedule has two Majors and six other regular events left on and all Signature events are over. (PTI)

Former RCB owner Mallya recalls picking Kohli, says IPL title is dream-come-true moment for him

NEW DELHI, June 4: Former Royal Challengers Bengaluru owner Vijay Mallya recalled picking a young Virat Kohli 18 seasons ago in the players auction and said it was remarkable to witness the maestro staying loyal to the franchise which has finally won a long-awaited IPL trophy.

RCB defeated Punjab Kings by six runs in the IPL final in Ahmedabad on Tuesday to end their long wait in the 18th edition of the tournament.

When I founded RCB it was my dream that the IPL trophy should come to Ben-

galuru. I had the privilege of picking the legendary King Kohli as a youngster and it is remarkable that he has stayed with RCB for 18 years Mallya wrote in a post on X. RCB which was bought by Mallya for USD 111.6 million back in 2008 picked Kohli in the inaugural IPL auction in January 2008 and the batting superstar has only played for the Bengaluru-based franchise since then.

The UK-based Mallya lost ownership of the franchise in 2016 after defaulting on bank loans. The team is now completely owned by United Spirits.

Mallya is however credited with playing major role in signing the cricketing giants like AB de Villiers Chris Gayle Jacques Kallis and Anil Kumble among others for RCB.

I also had the honour of picking Chris Gayle the Universe Boss and Mr 360 AB deVilliers who remain an indelible part of RCB history. Finally, the IPL trophy arrives in Bengaluru.

Congratulations and thanks again to all who made my dream come true. RCB fans are the very best and they deserve the IPL trophy. (PTI)

No.KDB/BTC/6th ASFC/NIT/2024-25/762

SHORT NOTICE INVITING TENDER

Date 03/06/2025

Sealed tenders affixing a non-refundable Court Fee Stamp of Rs. 8.25 (Rupees Eight & Twenty-Five Paisa) only with a validity period of 180 (One Hundred Eighty) days, which will subsequently to be converted and drawn up in the APWD's printed F-2 forms are invited from the registered contractors of class-II and class-I (A, B & C) category of Assam PWD (Roads & Building) and BTC, according to their eligibility for submitting tenders for the following works under 6th Finance Commission Fund for the year 2023-24 during 2024-25. The Tenders will be received by the undersigned up to 2.00 P.M. on 23.06.2025 and will be opened on the same date & place at 2.30 P.M.

| Sl. No. | Name of Work | Estimated Amount | Earnest Money | Cost of Tender paper | Time of Completion |
|---------|--|------------------|--|----------------------|--------------------|
| 1 | Const. of Box culvert at Boda road Katrigasha village under Gendrabil VCDC | 7,00,000/- | 7000.00 (1% for ST, SC & OBC) & Rs. 14000/- (2% for General) | 210/- | 3 Months |

Details NIT may be seen in all working days during office hours in the office of the undersigned. Tender papers will be issued to the contractors or their authorized agent from 05.06.2025 to 23.06.2025 in the office of the undersigned on payment of cost of Tender paper in the form of demand draft/Banker Cheque from any Nationalized Bank, duly pledged in favour of Principal Secretary, BTC, Kokrajhar, payable at Kokrajhar.

IPR(BTC)/C/2025-26/591

Sd/-
Block Development Officer,
Kokrajhar Dev. Block, Titaguri

GOVERNMENT OF ASSAM
OFFICE OF THE SUPERINTENDING ENGINEER, P.W.D. (R&B),
DIPHU CIRCLE-1, DIPHU
No. C/S-10,141/2025/295 Dated : 22.05.2025

PRESS NOTICE INVITING TENDER

The Superintending Engineer PWD(R&B), Diphu Circle-1, Diphu, on behalf of Governor of Assam invites tender for the work under Annual Action Plan for the financial year 2025-26 under Barpathar Road Division in the district of Karbi Anglong, Assam. Details may be seen at the office of the undersigned during office hours from 5/06/2025 to 12/06/2025. The last Date / Time for receipt of tender will be upto 3.00 PM on 12/06/2025.

Sd/-
Superintending Engineer, P.W.D(R&B)
Diphu Circle-1, Diphu

Memo No. C/S-10,141/2025/295-A Diphu Dated : 22.05.2025

GOVT.OF ASSAM
OFFICE OF THE JOINT DIRECTOR OF HEALTH SERVICES,
KARBI ANGLONG DISTRICT,
D I P H U

NOTICE

Joint Director of Health Services, Karbi Anlong, Diphu wants to purchase tyre- tube and battery from local Supplier/Dealer. Any interested Supplier/ Dealer may contact the Service Engineer, M.M.U, Diphu in the office hours for the purpose before 20th June' 2025.

Sd/-
Jt. Director of Health Services,
Karbi Anglong, Diphu.

ADMISSION NOTICE

PM SHRI Kendriya Vidyalaya Diphu invites applications for admission to Classes 1,2,4,7,8, 10,11 & 12 against a few remaining vacant seats for the academic session 2025-26. Registration will be start from 04.06.2025 continued upto10.06.2025, provisional list will be declared on 11.06.2025. Admission will be carried out from 12.06.2025 to 16.06.2025. Admission will be carried out as per KVS Admission guidelines 2025-26.

Sd/-
PRINCIPAL
PM SHRI KV DIPHU

OFFICE OF THE
DISTRICT PRIMARY EDUCATION DEPARTMENT
KARBI ANGLONG AUTONOMOUS COUNCIL
DIPHU : 782460

No.KAAC/DPEO/Tender/ 2010-12/ 276- Pt-II/ 408 Date : 03/06/2025

SHORT TENDER NOTICE

Sealed tender affixing non-refundable KAAC money receipt of Rs.10.00 (rupees ten) only eventually to be drawn up in form are hereby invited from KAAC registered contractor/ reputed firms and will be received by the undersigned from 04/06/2025 up to 13/06/2025 02:00 PM and will be opened on the same date and place in presence of tenderers or their authorized agent if any. If the day of opening of tender happens to be any holiday, non-working day, the tender will be opened on the next working day. The undersigned has the right to accept/ reject any or all tenders in part or whole without assigning any reason thereof and will not be bound to accept the lowest tender.

| Sl.No. | Name of Work/ Scheme | Estimate Amount (Rs.in Lakhs) | Earnest Money | Time Allowed for Completion |
|--------|---|-------------------------------|--------------------------|-----------------------------|
| 1 | Repairing of lnglong Klampi English LP School under Socheng Block | Rs.12,00,000.00 | S.T/SC= 1% Other = 2% | 30 Days |

Details tender documents may be obtained from the office of the District Primary Education Department, KAAC, Diphu during office working hours.

Terms & Conditions :-
N.B.:

- The rate to be quoted as % (Percent) above/ below/ as per schedule of rate for Building/ Sanitary Works/ Works under APWD for the year 2021.
- Earnest money should be deposited in favour of the undersigned in the form of Call Deposit/ Bank Draft and should be attached with the tender without which tender will not be accepted.
- The works must be carried out as directed by the Executive Engineer (works) KAAC, Diphu.
- The undersigned is not bound to accept the lowest quoted rate.
- Payment will be made subject to availability of fund.

The following documents should be enclosed with the tender :-

- Professional Tax clearance certificate.
- Upto date GST clearance certificate.
- Council Registration.
- Call deposit 1% for ST and 2% for others.

Sd/-
District Primary Education Officer
Karbi Anglong Autonomous Council
DIPHU

IT'S RIGHT UP THERE BUT STILL FIVE NOTCHES BELOW TEST CRICKET: KOHLI ON IPL TRIUMPH

AHMEDABAD, June 4: It's right up there with the best moments of his storied career but Virat Kohli would still rank the IPL trophy won after 18 years of toil five notches below his Test achievements as he believes the longest format is the one that earns a player respect.

The 36-year-old who retired from Tests last month won the IPL for the first time when his franchise Royal Challengers Bengaluru edged past Punjab Kings by six runs in the season finale on Tuesday night.

You know this moment is right up there with the best moments I've had in my career. But it still marks five levels under Test cricket an emotionally overwhelmed Kohli told the tournament broadcaster.

That's how much I value Test cricket. And that's how much I love Test cricket, he added.

Considered the biggest promoter of the red-ball cricket in the past decade Kohli urged youngsters to respect Test cricket and chase greatness in that format for a lasting legacy.

So, I would just urge the youngsters coming through to treat that format with respect. Be-



cause if you perform in Test cricket you walk around anywhere in the world people look you in the eye and shake your hand and say well done you played the game really well.

So, if you want to earn respect in world cricket all over take up

Test cricket give your heart and soul to it added Kohli whose Test career yielded 9 230 runs in 123 appearances. Kohli was seen hugging and celebrating with former teammates A B de Villiers and Chris Gayle both of whom left the franchise without winning the

coveted trophy. He walked into the dressing room with de Villiers and joyously declared that the heartbreak corner no longer existed in it.

Finally, that's the heartbreak corner no more. It is very difficult to explain man. I am just relieved

he said with his franchise captain Rajat Patidar looking on.

(It's a) full bunch of match winners people stepping up at different stages and putting their hand up to get the job done for the team. I am just happy I could do it with RCB. These guys are a different mindset he added.

Kohli was not as composed when the moment of triumph hit him in the team dugout.

After Josh Hazlewood had bowled his second delivery of the 20th over an emotionally choked Kohli kissed the Motera turf and later stated that he had given his youth prime and experience to the team. I've tried to win it every season gave it everything I have the modern great said articulating his thoughts quite clearly despite the heavy emotions.

Commentator Matthew Hayden asked him where he would place his first IPL Trophy in the list of achievements that includes the ODI World Cup the T20 World Cup and Champions Trophy recently. Well it's right up there if I have to be honest. As I said I've given everything that I had for the last 18 years. I've stayed loyal to this team no matter what. I've had moments where I thought other-

wise but I stuck to this team. I stood behind them they stood behind me.

And I always dreamt of winning it with them. And this is far more special than winning it with anyone else because my heart is with Bangalore my soul is with Bangalore. And as I said this is the team I'm going to play for till the last day that I play the IPL. So, this one is absolutely right up there. Kohli described IPL as a tournament of high value in world cricket that demands high-intensity performances.

...And I'm someone that wants to win the big tournaments the big moments and this one was missing he said.

In the twilight of his career Kohli is already done with Test and T20 Internationals. And the stylish player wants to ensure that when he walks away from the game for good he does that with no regrets. Well, I have an opportunity to play this game for not many years. So, there is an end date to our career as you know. And by the time that I hang up my boots I want to sit at home and say I gave it everything I had.

So, I look for ways to improve he said. (PTI)

Nat'l Taekwondo: Sivasagar bag 6 gold medals



HT Correspondent

SIVASAGAR, June 4: In the 4th Guwahati Open National Taekwondo Championship held recently at Bhogeshwari Phukanani Indoor Stadium, Guwahati, athletes from the Sivasagar Panbessa Taekwondo Academy delivered an impressive performance by securing six gold medals.

In the Gyeonggi category, Gargi Phukan (46 kg), Munu Das (42 kg), and Gauri Phukan (44 kg) clinched gold medals in the girls' division.

In the junior boys' category, Prabal Chabukdhara (48 kg), Dipjyoti Buragohain (68 kg), and Bitopan Neog (45 kg) also secured gold medals. Additionally, Gauri Phukan was awarded the Best Player Award in the junior girls' category, informed coach Siddharth Phukan.

Ecstatic fans roll out the red carpet as IPL champions RCB land in Bengaluru

BENGALURU, June 4: Newly-crowned IPL champions Royal Challengers Bengaluru touched base at the Garden City on Wednesday afternoon amid a roaring and chaotic welcome from fans who lined up the streets and thronged the Chinnaswamy stadium to catch a glimpse of the team's stars including the talismanic Virat Kohli.

The Rajat Patidar-led squad was received by state's Deputy Chief

Minister D K Shivakumar at the airport before proceeding towards the Vidhana Soudha for a meeting with Chief Minister Siddaramaiah.

Virat Kohli from past 18 years has given his youth his experience his love and his heart (to RCB) and made our state proud. I stand here with the heartfelt support of all the youngsters of our state Shivakumar told PTI Videos.

On behalf of the Karnataka government we extend our heartfelt

congratulations to all of them and wish them continued success. 18 years of struggle is not a small thing he added.

En route to Siddaramaiah's office fans assembled on both sides of the road cheered the triumphant squad with gusto.

RCB defeated Punjab Kings by six runs in the IPL final at Ahmedabad on Tuesday to clinch their maiden title in 18 years.

It was another major achieve-

ment for the team's talisman Virat Kohli who has only played for this franchise since the league's inception.

After the appointment with the CM the RCB players will head to the M Chinnaswamy Stadium for a fan engagement programme.

The much-anticipated open-top bus parade from Vidhana Soudha to the stadium will also start at 5pm after the CM gave special permission for it. (PTI)

New Zealand Cricket seeks new head coach for all formats

WELLINGTON, June 4: New Zealand Cricket has begun a search for a new head coach to lead the Black Caps in all three formats after ruling out the incumbent Gary Stead who has been national coach since 2018.

Stead stepped down in April from the white ball formats and said he was considering his future as test coach. NZC hurried his decision when it said Wednesday it is now looking for one coach to cover all formats.

South African Rob Walter former New Zealand fast bowler Shane Bond and current assistants Luke Ronchi and Shane Jurgensen are expected to be interviewed.

Stead coached the Black Caps in 52 test matches winning 27 including the inaugural World Test Championship. Under his coaching New Zealand won 56 of 97 one-day internationals and 64 of 119 Twenty20 internationals.

New Zealand was runner-up on

a countback of boundaries in the 2019 World Cup and runner-up at the Champions Trophy earlier this year. Stead took over as head coach from Mike Hesson who had enjoyed success in company with captain Brendon McCullum.

"Brendon McCullum and Mike Hesson had left the team with strong values and a style of play and I've just tried to build and shape that further to grow our ability to be consistent in everything we do," Stead said. (AP)



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