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74th Foundation Day of KAAC CEM lauded founding leaders for their commitments



HT Correspondent
KHERONI, June 23: The 74th Foundation Day of the Karbi Anglong Autonomous Council (KAAC) was celebrated with grandeur and a strong sense of community at Sarsing Teron Langkung Habe (Town Hall) in Diphu.

The occasion reflected the cultural vibrancy and developmental strides of Karbi Anglong, drawing participation from prominent leaders, cultural personalities, and local residents. Chief Executive Member (CEM) Tuliram Ronghang led the celebration as chief guest, with Member of Parliament Amarsing Tisso attending as Guest of Honour.

The event was also graced by MLAs Darsing Ronghang of Howraghat and Bidya Sing Englung of Diphu, KAAC Chairman Raju Tisso, Padmasree Dhoneaswar Ingti, executive members, District Commissioner Nirola Phangchopi, Senior Superintendent of Police Sanjib Kr Saikia, and several other dignitaries including Kache Teropni, Humsing Bey, and BJP district president Roland Killing.

The day featured a rich array of

cultural performances, traditional music, and folk expressions showcasing the ethnic diversity of the region. In their addresses, dignitaries recalled the journey of the KAAC since its establishment on June 23, 1952, as the Mikir Hills Autonomous Council. The progress made in infrastructure, education, and public service delivery was highlighted as a testament to the success of self-governance.

In his speech, CEM Tuliram Ronghang paid tribute to the founding leaders of the Council, lauding their commitment to the ideals of autonomy and development. He announced that several road projects undertaken under KAAC were completed in 2025, while remaining works are scheduled for completion by March 2026. He also inaugurated newly developed websites for the Information & Technology and Art & Culture Departments to strengthen digital governance and cultural documentation.

A major highlight of the event was the presentation of awards to individuals who have made remarkable

(CONTD. ON PAGE-2)

15 Bangladeshis detained in Cachar

SILCHAR, June 23: Police have detained 15 suspected Bangladeshis who had entered the country illegally from Assam's Cachar district, an officer said on Monday.

Ten Bangladeshis, including two children and five women, were detained from Hilara area in Katigorah while five others were intercepted by locals in Bishambarpur village under West Katigorah and handed over to police on Sunday night.

The detained people have been sent to a temporary detention centre in Silchar, police said.

The Assam Police have launched a statewide crackdown on illegal immigrants, particularly Bangladeshis, residing without valid documents. As per the official records, nearly 100 undocumented (CONTD. ON PAGE-2)

Weather delays efforts as ONGC, experts push ahead with care

Heavy rain slows ONGC well capping operation in Sivasagar

HT Correspondent
SIVASAGAR, June 23: Persistent heavy rainfall disrupted the ongoing well capping operations at the ONGC site in Barichuk, Bhatiapur on Monday, creating a slushy and challenging work environment.

The critical operation, being carried out under the supervision of US-based experts, experienced a temporary setback due to the inclement weather.

However, ONGC officials confirmed that the Crisis Management Team (CMT) continued making steady progress in safely clearing the rig derrick of tubing.

Public hearing on Cachar Greenfield airport ends peacefully A step forward to transform Barak Valley: CM

HT Bureau
GUWAHATI, June 23: The proposed Greenfield Doloo Airport project in the Cachar district took a significant leap forward on Monday as the mandatory public hearing concluded without incident, asserted Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma.

The CM has called it "A Major Step Forward" in the state's efforts to transform Barak Valley into a thriving hub of connectivity and economic progress.

"The public hearing for the Greenfield Doloo Airport project in Cachar district concluded peacefully today — a significant milestone in our journey to transform Barak Valley into a hub of connectivity and development," Sarma wrote. "We are now one step closer



to realising our grand vision for the region. Gratitude to all stakeholders for their cooperation and support." The public hearing, a key

part of the environmental clearance process, saw the participation of government officials, local residents, and environmental experts.

The peaceful conclusion is being seen as a positive indicator of public support and a green signal for the next phase of approvals and groundwork. The Doloo Airport project, once completed, is expected to boost tourism, improve regional access, and open new avenues for trade and employment in southern Assam.

Earlier, last year, The Supreme Court overturned an order from the National Green Tribunal (NGT) that had rejected a plea against land clearance at the Doloo Tea Estate in Silchar, Assam, for a proposed greenfield airport.

The Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) notification of 2006 was broken by the clearing activities that were underway, according to (CONTD. ON PAGE-2)

₹ 80 lakh aid for cop's family under Govt insurance scheme

HT Bureau
GUWAHATI, June 23: In a significant step towards ensuring the welfare of government employees and their families, the Assam government has disbursed ₹ 80 lakh to the family of a deceased police officer under a life insurance scheme initiated by Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma.

The scheme, implemented through a formal agreement between the Government of Assam and the State Bank of India (SBI), is aimed at providing financial support to families of government employees who die while in service.

According to an official statement, the compensation was granted to the family of late Sub-Inspector Archana Devi, who was serving at

Bhangagarh Police Station in Guwahati. On October 9, 2024, Archana Devi met with an accident and sustained serious injuries.

Despite receiving treatment at the Gauhati Medical College and Hospital, she succumbed to her injuries on October 21.

Following her death, her mother, Bhumi Devi, submitted a formal appeal to chief minister Sarma, requesting financial compensation of ₹ 1 crore under the provisions of the police life insurance scheme.

Recognising the gravity of the loss and the urgent need to support the bereaved family, the chief minister directed officials to take immediate administrative action to process the claim.

In accordance with the terms of

the agreement between the state government and the State Bank of India, all necessary formalities were completed and the claim was approved.

Subsequently, on May 26, the State Bank of India disbursed a sum of ₹ 80 lakh to Bhumi Devi as insurance compensation.

The official statement noted that this disbursement marks a successful implementation of the life insurance initiative, which was introduced as a part of the Chief Minister's larger vision to ensure social security for government employees, particularly those serving in high-risk sectors such as the police force. The scheme has been widely appreciated for bringing a sense of (CONTD. ON PAGE-2)

Shut down terror finance, Union Minister Puri tells world on Kanishka bombing anniversary

DUBLIN (IRELAND), June 23: Union Minister Hardeep Puri on Monday called on the international community to close down funding channels to terrorists and to unitedly combat the global menace as he paid tributes to the victims of the Air India Flight 182 Kanishka bombing on its 40th anniversary.

Puri also urged for deeper collaboration between India and Canada through intelligence sharing, counter-radicalisation efforts, and the disruption of terror financing as he described the Kanishka explosion as "one of the worst and most dastardly acts of aviation terror."

The Montreal-London-New Delhi Air India 'Kanishka' Flight 182 exploded 45 minutes before it was supposed to land at UK's Heathrow Airport on June 23, 1985 due to a bomb planted by Canada-based terrorists, killing all 329 people on board, including over 80 children, most of them Canadians of Indian descent.

The Union Minister of Petroleum and Natural Gas was joined by Irish Prime Minister Taoiseach Micheal Martin and Canada's Minister of Public Safety Gary Anandasangaree to pay tributes to the Kanishka victims at the Ahakista Memorial in County Cork, about 260 kilometres southwest from here.

Speaking at the commemoration of the 40th anniversary, Puri thanked the "wonderful community of Ahakista and the people of Ireland," who he said, rose to the occasion when the ac-



cident happened 40 years ago.

"Irrespective of the differences in ideologies and political differences, we need to be vigilant about terrorism and united in combating the menace," he said on X.

Asserting that time has come to close off the funding channels of terrorists and separatist mindsets, so that there is no scope for extremism, Puri said in another post on X, "We need to double our efforts to ensure that what happened on June 23, 1985 is not repeated anywhere in the world in future."

He said the tragedy was not an accident but a "deliberate, heinous act carried out by fringe elements seeking to divide India."

Puri called on the international community to unite against terrorism as he said, "The world needs to come together — not only in isolated

episodes of solemn mourning such as these, but in collective, proactive efforts to combat terrorism."

The minister further stressed that terrorism and extremism are not issues of the past but present-day threats that continue to endanger innocent lives across the world, according to a statement by the Ministry of Petroleum and Natural Gas.

"India has suffered the scourge of terrorism for decades — from Jammu & Kashmir to Punjab to Mumbai. Time and again, our people have endured bombings, assassinations, and atrocities," he said.

"The world has seen the inhuman cruelty perpetrated against our citizens in Pahalgam by terrorists nurtured by networks operating in our infested and volatile neighbourhood. The world would also have seen how an undaunted India undertook Operation Sindoor to take out the terror infrastructure and its masterminds with a non escalatory approach," Singh said in a post on X, referring to the April 26 Pahalgam terror attack that claimed 26 lives.

"While the Khalistani extremist ideology has failed in its misguided mission to tear India apart, we recognise that these dangerous ideologies have not disappeared entirely. Today, they persist in some diaspora circles and continue to provoke hate and division," he added. The minister further noted that (CONTD. ON PAGE-2)



In a significant development, an extra-long boom crane, vital for both capping the well and clearing remaining rig equipment, arrived at the site (CONTD. ON PAGE-2)

'97 'anti-nationals' arrested post Pahalgam terror attack in Assam'

GUWAHATI, June 23: Two people have been arrested for allegedly being "anti-Hindu" from different parts of Assam following the Pahalgam terror attack, taking the total number of arrests to 97 so far, Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma said on Monday.

In a post on X, Sarma said one person each was apprehended from Tinsukia and Nagaon districts.

"Crackdown on anti-Hindu elements continues... 97 anti-national and anti-Hindu culprits behind bars now," he added.

The arrested person from Tinsukia had shared objectionable content on Hinduism on social media, while the accused from Nagaon made a derogatory comment on Lord Ram, the CM stated.

Earlier, opposition AIUDF MLA Aminul Islam was arrested on

sedition charges for allegedly defending Pakistan and its complicity in the Pahalgam terror attack.

After getting bail in the case, Islam was again detained under the National Security Act (NSA).

On May 2, Sarma threatened to break the legs of those who raised the 'Pakistan zindabad' slogan in the aftermath of the Jammu and Kashmir terror attack.

Addressing a campaign rally for the panchayat elections, he had appealed to the people to pray and give strength to Prime Minister Narendra Modi and the Indian Army so that Pakistani terrorists hiding anywhere in the world can be brought for "breaking their legs".

Terrorists struck a prime tourist location in Pahalgam in south Kashmir on April 22 killing 26 people, mostly tourists, and injuring several others. (PTI)



UAE ambassador calls on CM

GUWAHATI, June 23: United Arab Emirates ambassador to India Abdunnasser Alshaali called on Assam Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma here on Monday.

"Had the pleasure to host H.E @aj alshaali, the Ambassador of UAE to India at Lok Sewa Bhawan today", the Chief Minister posted on 'X'.

UAE is keen to expand trade, boost connectivity and explore investment opportunities in Assam, Sarma said.

"We had a good discussion on how the North East could accelerate the close collaboration between our nations", he added. (PTI)

3,000-MW power project to come up in Dhubri or Goalpara, says Sarma

GUWAHATI, June 23: Two plots of land in Dhubri and Goalpara have been identified for setting up a 3,000-MW thermal power project, with foundation for it likely to be laid by November, Assam Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma said.

He said though the state government was mulling establishing the project in Kokrajhar to ensure greater benefits for the district, it is unlikely to push for it as a section of people has blamed the dispensation of "trying to take away tribal land".

"This 3,000-MW thermal power project will be coming up in our state. A sum of ₹ 40,000 crore will be spent on it and the tender will be issued soon," Sarma said at a press conference here on Sunday.

He said the Assam government had mooted allocating the project to Kokrajhar so that it can reap benefits of a major investment, which is set to create one lakh direct and indirect employment opportunities.

"The ₹ 26,000-crore semiconductor unit (of the Tata Group) is coming up in Jajirao. We thought that a project of similar investment should come to Kokrajhar, too," Sarma said.

"But, we don't want to go ahead with it by taking the blame that we are after tribal land," the CM said, referring to criticism in some sections that the government was "plotting to hand over" tribal land to corporates. (CONTD. ON PAGE-2)

Weather models, ocean science, and polar research strengthened over 11 years Cyclone warning systems have become substantially more accurate: MoES

NEW DELHI, June 23: Cyclone warning systems have become substantially more accurate, with improvements of up to 65 per cent in landfall prediction within 48 hours, a senior official on Monday said.

Addressing a press conference on 11 years of the Modi government, Ministry of Earth Sciences (MoES) Secretary Dr M. Ravichandran said forecasts of other severe weather events such as heavy rainfall, fog, and heat-waves have improved by 40 per cent over the last five years.

Monsoon forecasting has also seen a major shift, moving from statistical to physics-based models under the National Monsoon Mission, significantly enhancing the accuracy and spatial resolution of seasonal predictions.

"These improvements are the result of sustained investments in research infrastructure and technology over the past decade," said Dr Ravichandran, while outlining the ministry's key achieve-

ments from 2014 to 2025.

Among the major milestones highlighted was the launch of the Bharat Forecast System in May 2025, a high-resolution (6 km) global weather model aimed at strengthening India's capability in weather prediction.

In September 2024, the government also rolled out 'Mission Mausam', a nationwide initiative to make India "weather ready and climate smart".

India's first Earth System Model (IITM-ESM) played a key role in international climate science, contributing to the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change's Sixth Assessment Report (IPCC AR6) and the Coupled Model Intercomparison Project Phase 6 (CMIP6), he said.

In ocean science, the Deep Ocean Mission marked a turning point with successful wet harbour trials of Matsya-6000, India's manned submersible capable of reaching 6,000 metres below sea level.



Dr Ravichandran said this will pave the way for deep-sea exploration and sustainable extraction of marine resources.

"We have also discovered two active and two inactive hydrothermal vents in the Indian Ocean and identified 23 new species in biodiversity surveys --strengthening India's position in ocean science," he added.

The ministry also released an In-

tegrated Ocean Energy Atlas to assess renewable energy potential, estimated at 9.2 lakh TWh annually, from India's Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ), including wave, tidal, wind and ocean thermal energy.

Services for the fishing and maritime community have expanded considerably, with over seven lakh fishermen now receiving Potential Fishing Zone (PFZ) advisories, up

from one lakh in 2014.

Marine services such as oil spill alerts, coral bleaching forecasts and harmful algal bloom warnings now reach nearly 9.45 lakh stakeholders across India and in six other Indian Ocean countries, the official said.

India's tsunami alert capabilities have also advanced, he added.

"Earlier, we were limited to Indian Ocean events, but now we can issue tsunami warnings within 10 minutes for any global ocean earthquake. These alerts are shared with 25 Indian Ocean Rim countries," said Dr Ravichandran. In polar science, India continues to operate two Antarctic research stations and one in the Arctic, supporting over 100 scientists annually.

The passage of the Antarctic Bill in 2022 and the release of the Indian Arctic Policy the same year further strengthened India's scientific and diplomatic presence in polar regions, he said.

Domestically, the National Seismological Network now comprises

166 observatories, up from 86 in 2014, enabling the detection of earthquakes of magnitude 3.0 and above, he said.

Eight Indian cities have undergone seismic microzonation to improve earthquake-resilient infrastructure, he said. A three-km deep borehole in Maharashtra's Koyna region is being studied to understand reservoir-triggered quakes.

The MoES official said the ministry has also implemented thermal desalination in Lakshadweep, improving access to potable water and reducing water-borne illnesses. Coastal restoration projects in Puducherry and Tamil Nadu have reclaimed eroded beaches using innovative engineering solutions.

To make scientific services more accessible, the ministry has launched several public-facing mobile apps -- Mausam, Meghdoot, Damini, SAFAR AIR, and Bhookamp -- and digital platforms like the Earth System Science Data Portal and Digital Ocean. (PTI)

Markets slump on heightened tensions in Middle East; Sensex drops 500 pts

MUMBAI, June 23: Stock market benchmark indices Sensex and Nifty tumbled on Monday, as intensifying tensions in the Middle East after the US bombed three major nuclear sites in Iran unnerved investors.

Besides, selling pressure in IT, tech and auto stocks amid elevated global crude prices dented market sentiments, traders said.

After losing over 900 points in day trade, the 30-share index recovered some lost ground to close with a loss of 511.38 points or 0.62 per cent at 81,896.79.

During the day, it tumbled 931.41 points or 1.13 per cent to 81,476.76. As many as 2,204 stocks declined, while 1,854 advanced and 182 remained unchanged on the BSE.

The 50-share NSE Nifty dropped 140.50 points or 0.56 per cent to 24,971.90.

"The entry of the US into the Israel-Iran conflict heightened tension as panic selling by investors triggered major correction in early trade. Also, if oil prices shoot up rapidly due to the ongoing war, higher import bills would lead to a fast decline in the local currency against the dollar and weigh on inflation."

"However, FIIs turning out buyers of local shares worth over ₹ 10,000 crore in the past 4 sessions



shows that India's strong fundamentals continue to attract foreign investors despite global uncertainty," Prashanth Tapse, Senior VP (Research), Mehta Equities Ltd, said.

The US bombed three major nuclear sites -- Fordow, Natanz and Isfahan -- in Iran, directly engaging itself in the Israel-Iran conflict.

From the Sensex pack, HCL Tech, Infosys, Larsen & Toubro, Mahindra & Mahindra, Hindustan Unilever, ITC, Tata Consultancy Services and Maruti were the biggest laggards. In contrast, Trent, Bharat Electronics, Bajaj Finance and Kotak Mahindra Bank were among the gainers.

The BSE smallcap gauge

climbed 0.57 per cent, and the midcap index rose 0.20 per cent.

Among BSE sectoral indices, BSE Focused IT lost 1.48 per cent, IT tanked 1.46 per cent, tech (1.10 per cent), auto (0.88 per cent), FMCG (0.62 per cent), telecommunication (0.50 per cent) and bankex (0.38 per cent).

Capital Goods jumped 0.94 per cent, services (0.73 per cent), metal (0.71 per cent), commodities (0.46 per cent) and consumer durables (0.38 per cent).

"Last Friday, markets buildup in anticipation of easing Middle East tensions, following the US announcement of a two-week window to deliberate its involvement

in the Israel-Iran conflict. However, the unexpected US airstrike on Iran's nuclear facilities over the weekend disrupted those expectations, triggering a sharp rise in crude oil prices and leading to consolidation in the domestic equity market," Vinod Nair, Head of Research, Geojit Investments Limited, said.

In Asian markets, South Korea's Kospi and Japan's Nikkei 225 index settled lower, while Shanghai's SSE Composite index and Hong Kong's Hang Seng ended higher.

European markets were trading lower in mid-session.

US markets ended mostly lower on Friday.

Global oil benchmark Brent crude climbed 0.49 per cent to USD 77.39 a barrel.

Despite the initial setback, the market recovered some of its losses, supported by gains in capital goods and metal stocks, as fears of an immediate oil supply disruption remained low, he added.

Foreign Institutional Investors (FIIs) bought equities worth ₹ 7,940.70 crore on Friday, according to exchange data.

On Friday, the 30-share BSE Sensex surged 1,046.30 points or 1.29 per cent to settle at 82,408.17. The Nifty climbed 319.15 points or 1.29 per cent to 25,112.40. (PTI)

Contd. from Page 1...

Heavy rain slows ONGC well

from Guwahati this evening. ONGC teams are also working diligently to maintain the functionality of essential RCMT pumps located near the Dikhow River, ensuring that critical machinery remains operational despite adverse conditions.

According to an official ONGC press release, there has been a considerable reduction in gas pressure at the well on Monday, marking a positive development in the crisis response effort. The mobilisation of other heavy equipment, including an Athey Wagon and bulldozers, is also progressing steadily to support the capping process.

Meanwhile, SK Petro Company, which has been embroiled in controversy over its role at the site, issued a statement to the media expressing willingness to meet the demands raised by the Bir Lachit Sena, led by Shringkhal Chaliha. In a letter, Krishna Agarwalla of SK Petro conveyed the company's intent to compensate all affected workers, including those who have left, according to their preferences.

Local residents in Bhatiapur, who have been vocal in their criticism of ONGC, continue to accuse the corporation of neglecting the hardships faced by the community. They have reiterated their demand for adequate compensation to address loss of livelihood and other damages caused by the ongoing crisis.

₹ 80 lakh aid for cop's

assurance to government employees and their families, reinforcing the state's commitment to their welfare. Officials said the initiative is part of a broader effort to institutionalise mechanisms that support government staff and their dependents in times of personal tragedy. The government has reiterated its commitment to continue strengthening such welfare measures and urged employees to register under the insurance scheme to avail of its benefits.

Shut down terror finance

countries across the world are grappling with this problem and highlighted that global terrorism-related deaths increased by 22 per cent in 2024, the statement added. Calling upon the Government of Canada to join India in countering this shared threat, Puri said, "Canada is a valued partner and friend. We share vibrant cultural and economic relations with each other. India and Canada are bound by democratic traditions." He urged for deeper collaboration between the two nations through intelligence sharing, counter-radicalisation efforts, and the disruption of terror financing. "India stands ready to do more. Our security agencies, intelligence apparatus, and diplomatic channels are fully committed to partnering with the world to ensure that such tragedies are never repeated," he added.

Earlier, Puri also acknowledged and thanked the people of Ahakista and the Irish government for their compassion in the aftermath of the 1985 tragedy. "They opened their homes and hearts to grieving families—an act of humanity that continues to inspire." He further noted that the unique friendship forged between India and Ireland in the wake of the disaster has blossomed into strong bilateral ties, with trade reaching nearly USD 16 billion in 2023, the statement said. "It was a privilege to attend the commemoration to mark 40 years since the Air India disaster in West Cork. 329 innocent people lost their lives over the skies of Ireland that morning, and the passing of time does not dim the scale of loss and of this atrocity," Micheal Martin said in a post on X.

According to The Air India Flight 182 Archive, maintained by the McMaster University, the Ahakista memorial was unveiled on June 23, 1986, at the first anniversary of the bombing and consists of a garden, a sundial, and a rounded stone wall inscribed with the names of each person who died. Family members of the passengers and crew of the plane gather every year at various memorials set for the victims.

According to RTE, the Irish public service broadcaster, some 60 relatives of the victims were represented at the annual ceremony on Monday in Ahakista near Bantry, the nearest point on land to the crash site. "The ceremony at the memorial monument began with a minute's silence at 8.13 am, the exact time the explosion occurred on Air India Flight 182. It was followed by tributes from the families and Hindu and Christian readings," it said in a report.

The members of the delegation that Puri led were leaders from various states including Tarun Chug (Punjab), Dr Narinder Singh (UT of Jammu and Kashmir), Arvinder Singh Lovely (Delhi), Baldev Singh Aulakh (Uttar Pradesh), Gurveer Singh Brar (Rajasthan) and Sardar Trilok Singh Cheema (Uttarakhand). (PTI)

3,000-MW power project

He said two plots of land in Dhubri and Goalpara districts have been identified for the project. Sarma claimed that the "4,000-bigha" plot considered for the project in Kokrajhar district is under the possession of "only 80 families". "The land may not be given for the power project, but I think it is not correct for only a few people to have possession of so much land. Some institution like a hospital or a college can come up there," he added. (PTI)

15 Bangladeshis detained

Bangladeshis have been detained over the past four weeks from Cachar's Katigora area, which shares a border with Bangladesh. In the last three days alone, 21 individuals were apprehended and they will be deported across the international border as per state government instructions, the police officer said.

"The detained persons told us they had travelled from Gujarat and were attempting to return to their country by crossing the border. Some local residents, with the help of the Village Defence Party (VDP), stopped them, and our team detained them," the officer said.

The detained persons claimed that they were originally from Khulna in Bangladesh and had been living in Surat, Gujarat, for the past several years. Fearing arrest amid a recent crackdown on undocumented migrants in Gujarat, they decided to return to Bangladesh, he said. Last week, another group of nine Bangladeshis, including women and children, were stopped in Hilara while travelling in two autorickshaws.

They told police they had entered India illegally 5-6 years ago and were also attempting to return home after living in Gujarat.

Earlier this month, Assam Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma said that 35 Bangladeshis had been caught in Katigora after the crackdown began and all of them were later deported. He said that nearly 330 illegal migrants had been sent back from Assam in the last one month, with more expected to be pushed back soon. (PTI)

CEM lauded founding leaders

contributions to Karbi society. The Semson Sing Ingti Award 2025 was conferred on Smt. Pakhila Lekthepi, a modern singer and recipient of the Asom Gaurav Award 2024. The Khosing Terang Award 2025 was presented to Kangther Bey, a noted singer and cultural activist.

The Sarsing Teron (Langkung Habe) Award 2025 was given to Dr Alice Enghipi, the first Karbi MBBS graduate from Assam Medical College, Dibrugarh. The Bonglong Terang Literary Award 2025 went to Hangmiji Hanse, a respected poet and contributor to Karbi literature and culture. The CEM Special Award 2025 was awarded to Nirola Phangchopi, the first Karbi woman to serve as District Commissioner, for her leadership and service.

The CEM Lifetime Achievement Awards 2025 honoured five individuals: Biren Sing Engti, the first Karbi Member of Parliament and a former Union Minister; Kache Teronpi for her achievements in sports and cultural promotion; Dhansing Rongpi for his contributions to youth engagement and cultural development; Satyendra Terang for excellence in fine arts; and Mangal Sing Kathar for his efforts in preserving Karbi folk culture. Certificates of appreciation were also presented to several individuals including Binita Chetry, who was the 2nd Runner-up in Britain's Got Talent 2025.

Others recognised included Sashikala Hansepi, Jeevan Ingti who received Trinity College's Excellent Teacher Award, and Sarbamon Engti for contributions in the fields of music, dance and visual art. CEM Ronghang also highlighted the distribution of over 1,00,000 land pattas to indigenous communities between December 2023 and April 2024, which he described as a landmark achievement in ensuring land rights and transparent governance.

The 74th Foundation Day celebration of KAAC stood as a powerful expression of pride in Karbi Anglong's identity, autonomy, and development. It brought together the region's cultural richness and administrative commitment, reaffirming a collective vision for a more prosperous and empowered future.

A step forward to transform

a bench made up of Chief Justice of India (CJI) DY Chandrachud, Justices JB Pardiwala and Manoj Misra. Consequently, it reversed the Eastern Zonal Bench of NGT's ruling and ordered that no action be taken that would violate the 2006 notification. The Court further stated that by declining to consider the plea, the NGT had disregarded its obligation.

The apex Court said, "We are of the view that authorities in the present case have acted in violation of the notification by carrying out extensive clearance at the site in absence of environmental clearance. Assam says the need was to set up a civilian airport. The decision where the airport should be is a matter of policy but when the law prescribes specific norms for carrying out activities. The provision of law has to be complied with and no environmental clearance has been issued till date."

Notably, Solicitor General Tushar Mehta declared in an affidavit submitted to the Supreme Court that no work would be done until an environmental clearance was obtained. The NGT ruling from March 25 that rejected the argument against the removal of around 41 lakh bushes was the subject of an appeal being heard by the court.

According to the petition before the NGT, the airport's environmental clearance (EC) had not been approved and the EIA report was still pending. The CJI recommended maintaining a status quo until the environmental clearance report was obtained during Monday's hearing.

In response to the petitioners, Solicitor General (SG) Tushar Mehta asserted that a few of the 1300 kilometers away petitioners were submitting self-serving petitions. He contended that on-site laborers also chopped down trees for residential use and underlined the necessity of taking the greenfield project's wind direction into account.

The CJI then noted a report from the secretary of the District Legal Services Authority (DLSA) in the Cachar district that the court-appointed officer was unable to travel far because of the dense forest and dangerous fauna, and that tea bushes had been uprooted by heavy machinery.

The SG claimed that the petitioners were misleading the court by bringing up certain images with it.

The Court recommended against taking any more action until an EIA report was available, despite the arguments. SG Mehta argued that erroneous claims that houses were being demolished and trees were being chopped down were misleading the Court. "This is an example of the abuse of this court's jurisdiction. The so-called expert says some other land is better land and hasn't even been to the site," he said.

However, petitioners' advocate Prashant Bhushan emphasized that trees were also chopped down in addition to shrubs. He added that it was acknowledged that 41 lakh tea bushes had been uprooted, and as a result, he argued that the joint secretary's affidavit contained misleading information. "Social impact assessments also have to be completed. According to the new land purchase statute, the workers are impacted," he added.

According to the Court, 41 lakh bushes had been removed, hence the act could not be considered a routine cleaning. It mentioned, "What needs to be noted is that in the present case the clearance of the site was by no means traceable to the cultivation of the tea estate. The clearance was not a part of regular maintenance of tea estate." The Court noted that the uprooting was in breach of the EIA notification and that the NGT "abdicated" its duty by dismissing the plea.

The apex Court set aside the NGT order and directed that the Assam government can again request to commence work at the site once the clearance report is received.

Bandhan Bank opens 18 new branches across four states

KOLKATA, June 23: Private lender Bandhan Bank on Monday said it has opened 18 new branches across four states in the country.

Of the 18, seven new branches were in Jharkhand, five in Andhra Pradesh and three each in Bihar and Odisha.

All the new branches will serve semi-urban and rural areas of the four states. The bank will now have 6,300 banking outlets across the country, it said in a statement.

Partha Pratim Sengupta, MD&CEO of the bank, said, "We are committed to delivering exceptional customer service by adapting our products and services to meet evolving needs. As we expand nationwide, we remain focussed on sustainable growth and providing innovative solutions".

Bandhan Bank is now spread across 35 out of 36 states and UTs in the country. (PTI)

Gold falls ₹ 160 to ₹ 99,800 per 10 g; silver trades flat

NEW DELHI, June 23: Gold price fell by ₹ 160 to ₹ 99,800 per 10 grams in the national capital on Monday due to continuous selling by jewellers and stockists, according to the All India Sarafa Association.

The precious metal of 99.9 per cent purity had closed at ₹ 99,960 per 10 grams on Friday. Gold of 99.5 per cent purity depreciated by ₹ 150 to ₹ 99,100 per 10 grams (inclusive of all taxes). It had settled at ₹ 99,250 per 10 grams in the previous market close.

However, silver traded flat at ₹ 1,05,200 per kilogram (inclusive of all taxes) on Monday. On the global front, spot gold went lower marginally to USD 3,365.40 per ounce. "Gold briefly surged to USD 3,413.80 per ounce on Monday but has since pulled back, as investors await Iran's response following US participation in the air strikes on Tehran," Kaynat Chainwala, AVP-Commodity Research, Kotak Securities, said.

Investors will be awaiting key economic events, including Fed Chair Jerome Powell's congressional testimony, US GDP data, and core PCE inflation figures, which could offer fresh clues on monetary policy direction amid a mixed message from the Federal Reserve, Chainwala added.

Commodities markets experts said the release of flash PMI data from major economies, including the US and the UK, later in the day, is expected to offer fresh cues on the state of global economic health.

According to Emkay Global Financial Services' Research Analyst - Commodities and Currency Riya Singh, domestic prices of gold have risen 4 per cent so far in June, although trading at a growing discount to global rates owing to weak jewellery demand.

Despite muted festive buying, investment demand for bars and coins, especially 10g coins remains robust, driven by inflation fears, loan-linked monetisation, and lower fabrication costs. RBI's easing of norms for loans against gold has further supported household gold monetisation, she added. (PTI)

Rice exporters stare at major disruptions, payment delays amid escalating Iran-Israel conflict

CHANDIGARH, June 23: With the escalation of Iran-Israel conflict, rice exporters in Haryana -- which accounts for 30 per cent of the country's basmati rice shipments to Iran -- are struggling with major disruptions in ship movements and payment delays.

While Karnal is the main hub of basmati exports, Kaithal and Sonapat too contribute to the foreign demand.

"The ongoing Iran-Israel conflict has impacted the trade," said Sushil Jain, Rice Exporters Association's state unit president.

"Nearly 10 lakh metric tonnes of Basmati rice is exported from the country to Iran, of which Haryana's share is about 30-35 per cent," he said, adding that shipments of about 1 lakh metric tonnes of basmati rice for Iran are stuck at ports.

Besides, the payments amounting to ₹ 1,500 crore to ₹ 2,000 crore for nearly 2 lakh MT of the rice exported to Iran by Indian exporters has also got stuck due to the conflict, Jain said.

The escalation in the conflict is going to impact the Indian market which is already witnessing some fall in the prices, he said.

"Another issue which the exporters are facing is the lack of in-



surance cover for the vessels during war which increases the risk for us," he added.

Iran is India's second-largest basmati rice market after Saudi Arabia. India exported around 1 million tonnes of the aromatic grain to Iran during the 2024-25 fiscal year. India exported approximately 6 million tonnes of basmati rice during 2024-25, with demand primarily driven by the Middle East and West Asian markets. Other major buyers include Iraq, the United Arab Emirates and the United States.

The Israel-Iran conflict has escalated significantly in recent weeks, with both sides exchanging heavy strikes and the US becoming

directly involved in the hostilities.

The shipping disruption adds to challenges facing Indian rice exporters, who have previously dealt with payment delays and currency issues in the Iranian market due to international sanctions.

On Sunday, Prime Minister Narendra Modi conveyed to Iranian President Masoud Pezeshkian India's "deep concern" over Iran's conflict with Israel and called for immediate de-escalation of the situation through "dialogue and diplomacy".

The phone conversation initiated by Pezeshkian came hours after the US bombed three major nuclear sites -- Fordow, Natanz and Isfahan -- in Iran. (PTI)

EMS Ltd emerges lowest bidder for 2 urban projects worth ₹ 203 cr in UP

NEW DELHI, June 23: Water and sewerage infra player EMS on Monday said it has emerged as the lowest bidder (L1) in two projects worth ₹ 202.85 crore floated by the UP Jal Nigam (Urban).

As of March 31, 2025, the Ghaziabad-based multidisciplinary EPC company's total order book was at ₹ 2,236.43 crore.

In a release, EMS said it has emerged as L1 for a ₹ 104.05 crore project under the Agra Water Supply Reorganisation Scheme (Trans Yamuna Zone I&II).

As part of the project, the company will undertake surveying, soil investigation, engineering, design and supply of all materials, labour, T&P required for construction, completion, testing and commissioning of an intake well-cum-pump house and approach bridge and a water treatment plant in Agra.

The estimated time of completion of this project is around 24 months.

It has also received the L1 status for a ₹ 98.8-crore project under the Nagar Nigam Ayodhya Sewerage Scheme on a turnkey basis. Under this project, the

company will undertake surveying, soil investigation, engineering, design and supply of all materials, labour, T&P required for construction, completion, testing and commissioning for the completion of Package 2 of Nagar Nigam Ayodhya Sewerage Scheme.

The estimated time of completion of this project is around 21 months. "At EMS, it has been our constant endeavour to provide world-class turnkey service in sewerage solutions and water supply systems...We have been working with the local and state governments in the northern and western parts of the country to boost the infrastructure," said Ramveer Singh, Chairman, EMS Limited.

Incorporated on December, 2010, the company offers water and sewerage infrastructure solutions, including laying sewerage networks and building sewerage and water treatment plants across Uttar Pradesh, Maharashtra, Bihar, Uttarakhand and Rajasthan, and now recently entered in the West Bengal also. (PTI)

Decision to exempt Delhi restaurants from police NOC will reduce hurdles, improve EoDB: NRAI

NEW DELHI, June 23: The National Restaurant Association of India (NRAI) on Monday welcomed the order issued by Delhi Lieutenant Governor V K Saxena to exempt eateries operating in the national capital from the requirement of obtaining a 'no-objection' certificate from police, saying the decision will reduce administrative hurdles and significantly improve ease of doing business.

As per the order, restaurants in Delhi will no longer be required to obtain the Delhi Police Eating House Licence. The decision also applies to other business activities such as hotels, motels, guest houses, swimming pools, auditoriums, video game parlours, discotheques, and amusement parks. The licensing power will now be



transferred to local bodies such as the Municipal Corporation of Delhi, New Delhi Municipal Council, or Delhi Cantonment Board.

"As per the new directive, restaurants operating in Delhi will no longer be required to obtain the Delhi Police Eating House Licence. This change will reduce administrative hurdles and

significantly improve the ease of doing business for the F&B sector in the capital. This will also increase investments by the F&B Sector, which will bring in additional revenue to the Delhi government's exchequer in various forms in the future," the NRAI stated.

This decision is expected to bring major relief to thousands of restaurant owners, particularly small and medium-sized enterprises, who have long struggled with the burden of acquiring multiple governmental clearances, it added.

NRAI Delhi Chapter Head Sandeep Anand Goyle said, "This move will encourage entrepreneurship, support job creation, and revive ease of doing business in the F&B space". (PTI)

Neglect, silted canals and unfinished drains leave town underwater

Sivasagar town reels under flash flood after heavy downpour

HT Correspondent

SIVASAGAR, June 23: A spell of intense rainfall lasting barely two and a half hours on Monday plunged the historic temple town of Sivasagar into chaos, exposing its crumbling drainage infrastructure and lack of urban planning.

Roads in the town's commercial hub, including Central Market, Doulmukh Chariali, Boarding Road, and the ONGC Colony, were submerged in filthy water overflowing from clogged and open drains, severely affecting residents, students, and businesses.

Despite its long history, Sivasagar town remains without a comprehensive master drainage plan.

The existing drainage system—century-old kutchra gutters running along either side of AT Road—has not been modernised.

Although the Sivasagar Municipality Board (SMB), established in 1916, has recently converted parts of Boarding Road drains into concrete structures using grants from the 15th Finance Commission, these have failed to address the core issue.

Due to the absence of a proper gradient, waterlogging has worsened in areas like Muktinath Chariali, triggering public frustration.

Several residents and senior citizens allege poor quality control in infrastructure works carried out under the Board's supervision.

Contractors, reportedly close to the inner circle of the municipality, have been accused of executing substandard projects with little regard for long-term functionality or public



welfare.

Speaking to this correspondent, SMB Chairperson Mrinali Konwar admitted that the Board lacks adequate funds to construct proper drainage along the AT Road.

She said she had already written to the Chief Minister seeking financial assistance.

Konwar also stated that over the last three to four years, more than ₹1 crore had been spent on drainage works, yet many remain incomplete or ineffective due to poor execu-

tion and lack of professional oversight.

A glaring example of faulty planning lies in the drain meant to collect stormwater from Old Amolapatty and Phukan Nagar.

It remains unfinished for over a year, choking water flow into the main tunnel that ultimately drains into the Jamuna canal.

At Station Chariali Bazar, a 90-degree turn in the tunnel is partially covered with steel sheets by a private business for car parking, further obstructing the natural watercourse.

Drainage near the Central Market area also lacks proper slope and gradient, preventing effective runoff.

Urban planners blame decades of neglect and encroachment on natural water channels as the main causes of flash floods in the town.

The Jamuna Canal and the Mori Dikhow channel, once vital lifelines, have lost much of their water-carrying capacity due to heavy siltation.

Another lost reservoir, the Tengani Bill in the heart of the town, was levelled and converted into a modern stadium using truck-loads of earth, removing yet another natural buffer against floods.

Encroachment on water bodies by land grabbers has further worsened the town's vulnerability to flooding.

One of the worst-affected institutions during such events is Fuleswari Girls' High School, whose entire campus goes underwater every time it rains heavily.

The school authorities had earlier appealed to the former Deputy Commissioner for desilting and restoring the Jamuna canal but received no response.

Now, the School Management and Development Committee (SMDC) hopes the newly appointed DC Ayush Garg will take necessary action.

As the town continues to suffer after every shower, the lack of long-term vision, poor execution of infrastructure, and absence of accountability threaten to undermine Sivasagar's stature as one of Assam's most historically significant towns.

Train services suspended in Lumding-Badarpur section after slope collapse near New Haflong

HT Bureau

GUWAHATI, June 23: Train services through the Lumding-Badarpur hill section have been suspended following a major safety hazard caused by a slope collapse between New Haflong and Jatinga Lampur.

According to an official statement issued by Northeast Frontier Railway, the disruption occurred due to boulders and landmass falling onto the railway tracks, a situation attributed to improper construction activities being carried out by the National Highways Authority of India (NHAI) for road repairs in the area.

The statement said that repair work being undertaken on the nearby road led to a failure in the downstream slope situated between the road and the rail line.

This caused the landmass to bulge and shift toward the tracks, making it dangerous for trains to pass through the section.

Additionally, water flowing directly from the road onto the railway tracks worsened the situation, prompting authorities to immediately suspend rail traffic between Lumding, New Haflong and Badarpur for safety reasons.

As a result of the damage, multiple train services have been affected.

Several trains including the Guwahati-Silchar Express, Rangiya-Silchar Express, Guwahati-Dullabcherra Express and Silchar-Rangiya Express, scheduled to run on June 23, have been cancelled.

The Dullabcherra-Guwahati Express and Naharlagun-Silchar Special, scheduled for June 24, have also been cancelled. Other services have faced partial disruptions.

The Silchar-Naharlagun Special on June 23 was short-terminated at New Harangajao, while the Charlaipalli-Silchar Express of June 21 was short-terminated at Lumding.

The Kolkata-Agartala Garib Rath Express from June 22 was short-terminated at Guwahati.

Similarly, the Agartala-Anand Vihar Tejas Express scheduled for June 23 was short-terminated at Badarpur.

The Lokmanya Tilak Terminus-Agartala Express of June 22 was short-terminated at Guwahati, and the Sealdah-Silchar Kanchanjunga Express scheduled for June 23 was short-terminated at Lumding.

In addition to these cancellations and terminations, the Silchar-New Delhi PSK Express scheduled for June 23 has been rescheduled to depart at 6:00 am on June 24.

Railway authorities have already deployed manpower to begin clearing the debris from the affected section. The Lumding Division has written to the NHAI requesting immediate protection work, including the deployment of additional manpower and machinery to prevent further damage to the track.

The affected railway line serves as a crucial connectivity route for the states of Manipur, Mizoram, Tripura and the Barak Valley region, making its swift restoration a priority.

Four endangered Golden Langurs rescued; conservationists demand repatriation to Assam

HT Correspondent

DHUBRI, June 23: In a significant wildlife rescue operation, four endangered golden langurs were saved from an alleged smuggling attempt on Saturday night in the Beldanga area of Murshidabad district, West Bengal.

The operation, carried out near the Bhabta rail-gate under Behrampur sub-division, led to the arrest of six individuals and the seizure of two vehicles suspected to have been used in the trafficking.

The arrested individuals have been identified as Mithu Das (33), Titu Das (29), Samil Hossain Biswas (39), Rafiqul Mandal (29), Hasibul Mondal (25), and Biswajit Bagh (23).

The vehicles, bearing registration numbers WB-02Z-8382 and WB-52BE-1786, were intercepted following intelligence inputs received by the local police.

According to officials, the langurs were being illegally transported when the operation was conducted. The golden langur (*Trachypithecus geei*) is listed under Schedule I of the Wildlife Protection Act of India, granting it the highest level of protection.

This species is native only to the western Assam region in India and some parts of Bhutan, and is known for its limited population and rapidly shrinking natural habitat.

Given West Bengal's proximity to Assam, it is strongly suspected that the rescued pri-

mates originated from the northeastern state.

Authorities have initiated a detailed investigation to identify the source of the animals and map the wider network involved in the trafficking operation.

The rescue, however, has sparked debate



cles have alleged a pattern in which rescued wildlife, especially endangered species, are sent to private or high-profile institutions far from their ecological origins.

"Why not send the seized langurs back to Assam, their native habitat?" one conservationist asked. "There is growing concern that such rescues often end with the animals being moved permanently to centres like Vantara in Gujarat, after a brief stopover at a local zoo."

These allegations, though unproven, highlight a deeper issue within wildlife conservation—the ethical responsibility of authorities to ensure rescued animals are rehabilitated in their natural habitats whenever possible.

Experts argue that repatriation to native ecosystems gives endangered species the best chance of survival and plays a crucial role in preserving the region's ecological balance.

As the police continue their probe into the smuggling racket, wildlife officials are under increasing pressure to make a transparent decision regarding the fate of the langurs.

Conservationists are urging that the langurs be returned to Assam, where they can be rehabilitated under appropriate scientific and ecological guidance.

For now, the rescued golden langurs remain in protective custody, and their future awaits the outcome of an investigation that could shape the broader discourse around wildlife rescue, relocation, and ethical conservation practices in the country.

among conservationists, with concerns being raised over the future destination of the animals.

While the immediate priority is the langurs' safety, wildlife activists are questioning whether they will be returned to their natural habitat in Assam or relocated to far-off facilities.

Anonymous voices within conservation cir-

Murder accused held after 13 Years

HT Correspondent

BOKAJAN, June 23: In a major breakthrough, police arrested Md Nur Hussain, alias Md Kabir Hussain, also known as Selbestin Ekka, who had been evading arrest for 13 years in connection with two murder cases—Case No 104/2013 and Case No 123/2015.

The accused was apprehended by Khatkhati Police from Tin Basti in Japrajan, Karbi Anglong, where he had been living under a false identity.

During his time in hiding, he had assumed the name Selbestin Ekka and even changed his father's name to Late Alabed Ekka to support his new persona.

Originally, Md Nur Hussain is the son of Late Abdul Hussain and a resident of Nutun Basti under Khatkhati Police Station. Acting on a tip-off, the police tracked down his location and arrested him from Japrajan Tin Basti.

Police sources confirmed that he had been wanted in connection with two separate murder cases and had successfully eluded capture for over a decade by completely altering his identity.

Awareness programme on Parthenium eradication held in Nagaon

HT Correspondent

NAGAON, June 23: An awareness programme on the eradication of Parthenium hysterophorus, a highly invasive and harmful weed, was held at Uriagaon Bypass Chariali in Nagaon on Monday. The event was organised by the Zonal Research Station, Shillongani, in collaboration with the Assam government, Assam Agricultural University (AAU), Jorhat, the district administration, and the Agriculture Department.

District Commissioner Debashish Sarma, scientists from the Zonal Research Station and AAU, and local residents participated in the programme. The event began with a welcome address by Dr Hiranya Kr Borah, Chief Scientist of Zonal Research Station, Shillongani. Dr Niranjana Deka, Principal Scientist, mentored the programme.

Dr Mrinal Saikia, Associate Director of Research (Agriculture), AAU, and Dr Prasanna Kumar Pathak, Dean, Faculty of Agriculture, also addressed the gathering and expressed concern over the growing threat posed by Parthenium in Assam. Speaking at the event, DC Debashish Sarma highlighted the dangers of Parthenium hysterophorus, noting its adverse impact on agriculture, the environment, and human health.

He said the weed causes skin allergies, respiratory problems, and asthma, and also affects livestock by reducing milk production.

The awareness programme focused on educating the public about the harmful effects of the weed and the urgent need for its eradication.

Participants were encouraged to use social media to spread awareness and promote control measures.

As part of the initiative, the Zonal Research Station has launched a four-day campaign from June 23 to 26 across Nagaon and Morigaon districts. The campaign will include awareness drives, weed removal activities, and the application of biological control methods.

Officials from the district administration, Agriculture Department, Animal Husbandry Department, Assam State Rural Livelihoods Mission (ASRLM), Farmer Producer Organisations (FPOs), and scientists from AAU and the Zonal Research Station were present at the event.

NFR announces special arrangements for Ambubachi Mela pilgrims

Special trains, help desks, food aid in place as NFR gears up for Ambubachi Mela rush



HT Bureau

GUWAHATI, June 23: The Northeast Frontier Railway (NFR) has undertaken a series of special measures to facilitate the smooth movement of pilgrims arriving for the Ambubachi Mela at Kamakhya Temple, one of the region's most significant spiritual events.

According to an official statement, NFR has set up round-the-clock special ticket counters at Kamakhya and Guwahati railway stations to manage the surge in passenger footfall and ensure quick and hassle-free ticketing for devotees. In a welfare initiative, the Northeast Frontier Railway Women's Welfare Organisation (NFRWWO), under the leadership of its president Shalini Shrivastava, has been distributing hygienically packed food and drinking water to

pilgrims at Kamakhya station and its vicinity.

To address the increased passenger demand, NFR will operate two pairs of special unreserved trains.

Train No 05672/05671 (Guwahati-Alipurduar Junction-Guwahati) will run daily from June 22 to 27.

Train No 05672 will depart Guwahati at 7:25 pm and reach Alipurduar Junction at 4:00 am the next day, while the return train No 05671 will leave Alipurduar Junction at 8:00 am and arrive in Guwahati at 4:20 pm.

Additionally, Train No 05698/05697 (Guwahati-New Jalpaiguri-Guwahati) will be operated to accommodate further passenger traffic.

Train No 05698 will leave Guwahati at 11:55 pm on June 26

and reach New Jalpaiguri at 8:15 am the next day.

The return service, Train No 05697, will depart New Jalpaiguri at 11:15 am on June 27 and arrive in Guwahati by 7:30 pm.

NFR has also increased manpower deployment across key stations and pilgrimage points.

Additional personnel from the Railway Protection Force (RPF), Government Railway Police (GRP), and railway staff have been stationed to assist with passenger guidance, security, and crowd management. Help desks and enquiry booths are also operational to provide on-the-spot assistance.

The NFR urged all passengers to cooperate with railway personnel to ensure a safe and convenient travel experience during the Ambubachi Mela.

Mega awareness camps held across Dima Hasao

HT Bureau

GUWAHATI, June 23: As part of the ongoing Dharti Aaba Janjatiya Gram Utkarsh Abhiyan, the Dima Hasao district administration has been conducting a series of mega awareness camps across its five development blocks, aiming to empower tribal communities through access to welfare schemes and services.

According to an official statement, the 15-day outreach campaign has already seen the organisation of over 20 camps at the village level, with the initiative set to continue until June 30.

The camps are witnessing enthusiastic participation from the local population.

Officials and experts from various government departments are providing detailed information on a wide array of schemes related to health, hygiene, social security, livelihood and skill development.

Medical teams are also conducting awareness sessions and screenings for sickle cell disease as part of the health outreach.

Efforts are being made to address public grievances on the spot, ensuring prompt redressal, particularly in remote and underserved areas. The initiative aims to bridge service delivery gaps and ensure that no tribal household is left out of the government's welfare net.

Three sisters from Chirang appointed as GT/PGT under BTR govt

HT Correspondent

KOKRAJHAR, June 23: In a remarkable achievement, three sisters from South Barilgaon in Chirang district have secured appointments as Graduate and Post Graduate Teachers under the Education Department of the Bodoland Territorial Region (BTR) government.

Daughters of Dipen Basumatary and Balu Rani Basumatary, the sisters were among 1,336 candidates who received appointment letters during a ceremonial distribution event held recently at Udalguri College Auditorium.

Niju Rani Basumatary has been appointed as a Graduate Teacher at Baleng Girls' High School, Medhaghat in Baksa district.

Biju Rani Basumatary joins KBR Junior College in Orang, Udalguri as a Post Graduate Teacher, while Moon Basumatary will serve as a Graduate Teacher at Ballanguri High School in Bijni, Chirang.

Their accomplishment has been hailed as a testament to determination, family support, and the BTR government's continued focus on strengthening the education sector.



The story of the three sisters has become a source of inspiration, encouraging many parents across the region to invest in their daughters' education.

The BTR government, led by Chief Executive Member Pramod Boro, has prioritised employment generation and educational

development. The recent teacher appointments across schools and higher secondary institutions are part of this initiative.

Local communities have expressed gratitude to the BTR administration for its efforts to improve educational access and empower youth through meaningful employment.

QUOTE OF THE DAY

In love, the one who runs away is the winner
—Henri Matisse

Iran and Israel tension and crude price

Tensions between Iran and Israel have long simmered beneath the surface of Middle Eastern geopolitics, but recent escalations have reignited fears of a broader regional war. At the heart of the economic fallout is the energy market. Iran, a major oil producer and a member and rotating president of OPEC this year, plays a crucial role in the global energy supply chain. Any disruption in oil exports resulting from military action—particularly blockades in strategic chokepoints like the Strait of Hormuz—could trigger significant upheaval in global markets. This vulnerability was evident in past confrontations, where tensions between Iran and the West led to volatility in global oil prices. In today's tightly interconnected energy markets, a sustained conflict could push oil prices above \$100 per barrel, reigniting inflationary pressures across the globe. In fact, following the recent attack, oil prices have already surged by approximately \$10 (around INR 870) per barrel, with a prolonged war likely to drive them even higher. There are 42 gallons in a barrel of oil, and a \$1 increase in the price of crude oil per barrel translates to an increase of approximately 2.4 cents per gallon. According to a report by ClearView Energy Partners, in markets where fuel prices are not subsidized, a \$10 rise in crude oil typically leads to a 7-cent (approximately, INR 6) increase per litre of petrol at the pump. In extreme cases, such as a blockade of the Strait of Hormuz, prices could surge by an additional 27 cents (approximately, INR 23). So far, shipping lanes through the Strait remain open and operational. However, that may change with Iran threatening to lay naval mines if the US joins the war.

While Iran accounts for less than 2% of the global oil supply, a closure of the Strait of Hormuz would disrupt the flow of approximately 12% of the world's oil, given that much of the Middle East's oil exports pass through this strategic chokepoint. This makes the Strait's security critical not just for the region, but for global energy markets as a whole. As per data from UN COMTRADE, in 2024, Iran, exported \$13.26 billion around the world, the main destinations being: China (34.59%), Turkey (16.45%), And India (7.68%). Valued at US\$ 4.59 Billion, China is the main export destination (by trade value) for Iran. For energy-dependent nations—especially developing economies already burdened by debt and post-COVID recovery challenges—such price hikes could prove economically destabilizing. In fact, two of the largest economies, such as China and India, buy as much as 80% of the oil which passes through the Strait of Hormuz.

China will be more impacted than India, as it has become a major importer of Iranian oil following the US sanctions on Iran. Like Russia, Iran has also been using a "shadow fleet" to sell oil at discounted prices to China. A "shadow fleet" refers to oil tankers that operate outside standard regulations—often lacking mandatory insurance and disabling tracking systems—to evade sanctions or regulatory oversight. A significant portion of formal oil trade relies on insured shipping, and since most major insurers are based in the EU and the US, Western-led sanctions can make regular oil transport increasingly difficult.

The looming shadow of a Third World War



The world once again finds itself perched precariously on the edge of a conflict that threatens to engulf nations far beyond its epicenter. The simmering tensions between Iran and Israel, exacerbated by direct military interventions from the United States, have rekindled fears of a Third World War. While the Middle East has historically been a cauldron of geopolitical strife, recent escalations have elevated this regional dispute into a potential global crisis, implicating the major powers and casting a long shadow over international peace and stability. The multifaceted nature of this conflict—with its historical grievances, strategic alliances, economic repercussions, and humanitarian consequences—demands urgent attention and an unwavering commitment to diplomacy from the global community.

The genesis of the current crisis lies in a complex web of historical, ideological, and strategic confrontations that have defined Iran-Israel relations for over four decades. The 1979 Islamic Revolution was a watershed moment that transformed Iran's political identity, positioning the country as a staunch opponent of Israel and its Western allies, particularly the United States. Since then, Iran has vehemently denied Israel's legitimacy, framing its existence as a colonial imposition and a manifestation of Western hegemony in the Middle East. This ideological animosity has been compounded by Iran's ambition to assert itself as a regional power, particularly through its contentious nuclear program. While Tehran maintains that its nuclear ambitions are peaceful, Israel and many in the international community view the development of nuclear capabilities as an existential threat, prompting preemptive and covert military actions against Iranian nuclear facilities. This cycle of attack and retaliation has escalated rapidly, turning a latent hostility into an active military confrontation.

The conflict is further complicated by Iran's extensive network of proxy groups throughout the region, including Hezbollah in Lebanon, the Houthis in Yemen, and Hamas in Gaza. These groups serve as Iran's strategic instruments to exert influence and challenge Israel's security without engaging in direct warfare. Their operations often provoke retaliatory strikes from Israel, deepening the cycle of violence and instability. Israel's intelligence and military operations have been relentless, aiming to dismantle Iran's nuclear infrastructure and curb the capabilities of these proxy forces. However, these actions have not only heightened tensions but also introduced the risk of miscalculation and wider regional escalation.

The involvement of the United States introduces an additional and profoundly destabilizing dimension to this conflict.

Washington's unequivocal support for Israel and its stringent stance against Iran's nuclear program have shaped the dynamics of the crisis. The U.S. withdrawal from the 2015 Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA), despite initial hopes for diplomatic resolution, rekindled hostility and distrust. The recent military strikes on Iranian nuclear sites represent a significant escalation, signaling a willingness to employ force rather than diplomacy. Iran's vehement responses, including threats of

retaliation against U.S. military bases across the Middle East, have raised fears of direct confrontation between these two powerful nations. The involvement of the U.S. not only intensifies the conflict but risks drawing in regional allies, transforming a bilateral conflict into a broader confrontation.

This widening conflict threatens to redraw global alliances and exacerbate existing geopolitical rivalries. Russia and China, both holding strategic partnerships with Iran, are critical players in this unfolding crisis. Russia's provision of military support and nuclear technology to Iran underlines a growing antagonism with the United States, and any direct conflict involving Russian interests could escalate into a major global confrontation. China's deep economic ties with Iran, especially in the energy sector, further complicate the situation. Beijing's opposition to unilateral U.S. actions in the region could lead it to assert a more active role in support of Iran, thereby intensifying the divisions between major world powers. The potential emergence of a bipolar global order—mirroring Cold War dynamics with the U.S. on one side and a Rus-

sia-China-Iran bloc on the other—raises the stakes dramatically. This polarization threatens not only regional peace but the very fabric of international order.

Economic ramifications of the conflict cannot be overstated. The Middle East remains a pivotal supplier of the world's energy needs, and disruptions in this region reverberate across global markets. Iran's threats to close the Strait of Hormuz, a vital maritime chokepoint through which a significant portion of the world's oil

passes, could trigger unprecedented spikes in oil prices. Such shocks would exacerbate inflationary pressures worldwide, deepen economic instability, and potentially provoke social unrest in vulnerable economies. These economic disruptions may also exacerbate tensions among nations as competition for resources intensifies, increasing the likelihood of conflict spillover beyond the Middle East.

Equally concerning are the profound humanitarian consequences of this escalating violence. The conflict has already resulted in devastating loss of civilian lives, widespread displacement, and a burgeoning refugee crisis that strains the resources of neighboring countries. Infrastructure destruction, shortages of essential supplies, and the looming threat of environmental contamination from attacks on nuclear facilities add layers of complexity to the humanitarian emergency. The international community's response will be critical in mitigating suffering and preventing further destabilization. The ethical imperative to protect civilians and uphold human rights must guide global action alongside strategic considerations.

Despite these daunting challenges, the

prospect of a Third World War, while alarmingly plausible, is not inevitable. The shared awareness of the catastrophic consequences of global conflict among the world's powers has maintained a fragile check on outright warfare. Diplomatic engagement, though fraught with difficulties, remains the most viable path to de-escalation. International organizations, including the United Nations, must redouble efforts to mediate and facilitate dialogue. Reviving the JCPOA or establishing new frameworks for nuclear non-proliferation could serve as critical confidence-building measures. Regional powers such as Turkey, Saudi Arabia, and Egypt have a pivotal role in fostering dialogue and bridging divides. Their involvement could help forge a collective regional approach to security, reducing the risks of external interference and confrontation.

A comprehensive diplomatic strategy must also address the broader regional grievances and rivalries that fuel this conflict. Constructive engagement that respects the sovereignty and security concerns of all parties is essential. International efforts should focus on building mechanisms for transparency and accountability in nuclear programs, curbing the influence of proxy groups, and promoting economic cooperation to alleviate regional poverty and instability. Such measures would contribute to breaking the cycle of hostility and mistrust that has long plagued the Middle East.

Ultimately, the responsibility to prevent the outbreak of a Third World War rests with all members of the global community. The Iran-Israel conflict and U.S. intervention symbolize a dangerous flashpoint in a world already grappling with multiple crises. This moment calls for collective wisdom, restraint, and an unwavering commitment to peace. The alternative—a descent into widespread, devastating warfare—would not only shatter the fragile international order but also impose unimaginable suffering on millions. There is no substitute for dialogue, diplomacy, and cooperation in navigating these perilous times.

As global citizens and policymakers, the imperative is clear: to reject the path of confrontation and instead embrace avenues of peaceful resolution. The lessons of history remind us that war brings destruction and despair, while diplomacy, however challenging, offers hope for stability and progress. In an interconnected world, the security of one nation is bound to the security of all. The fear of a Third World War should galvanize the international community not into panic, but into purposeful action—a united stand for peace, stability, and the preservation of humanity's shared future. *(The writer can be reached at himangshur1989@gmail.com or 9954812261, 9864000260)*

U.S. strikes Iran's Nuclear sites: A path to war?

By: Satyabrata Borah

The recent military strikes by the United States on three of Iran's nuclear facilities have sent shockwaves through the global community, raising critical questions about the future of international relations and the potential for a broader conflict. This unprecedented escalation has intensified tensions in an already volatile Middle East, with fears of a larger war, possibly even a third world war, dominating discussions among policymakers, analysts, and the public. The attack, targeting Iran's nuclear sites at Fordow, Natanz, and Isfahan, marks a significant turning point in the long-standing animosity between the United States and Iran. This article explores the context of these strikes, their immediate consequences, the geopolitical ramifications, and the potential pathways forward, while assessing whether the world stands on the brink of a catastrophic global conflict.

The U.S. strikes on Iran's nuclear facilities were described by American officials as a preemptive measure to curb Iran's nuclear ambitions, which the U.S. and its allies, particularly Israel, have long viewed as a threat to regional and global security. The facilities at Fordow, Natanz, and Isfahan are central to Iran's nuclear program, particularly its uranium enrichment activities. According to reports, the U.S. operation was precise, utilizing advanced weaponry to inflict significant damage on these sites. U.S. President Donald Trump, who authorized the strikes, stated that the action was necessary to prevent Iran from developing nuclear weapons, a prospect that has alarmed the international community for decades. However, the strikes have provoked a fierce response from Iran, with Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei vowing "severe consequences" and labeling the attack an act of aggression that violates international law. Iran's Foreign Ministry has condemned the strikes as a betrayal of diplomatic norms, further straining the already fragile relationship between the two nations.

The roots of this conflict lie in the decades-long hostility between the U.S. and Iran, which began with the 1979 Iranian Revolution and the subsequent hostage crisis at the U.S. embassy in Tehran. The U.S. has consistently opposed Iran's nuclear program, viewing it as a potential pathway to nuclear weapons, despite Iran's claims that its program is for peaceful energy purposes. The 2015 Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA), commonly known as the Iran nuclear deal, was a landmark agreement aimed at curbing Iran's nuclear activities in exchange for sanctions relief. However, the U.S. withdrawal from the deal in 2018 under the Trump administration marked a significant setback, leading to increased tensions and Iran's gradual resumption of uranium enrichment. The recent strikes appear to be a culmination of these tensions, exacerbated by Iran's growing regional influence and its support for proxy groups like Hezbollah and the Houthis, which have clashed with U.S. allies, particularly Israel and Saudi Arabia.

Israel's role in this escalation cannot be overlooked. For years, Israel has viewed Iran's nuclear program as an existential threat and has conducted covert operations, including cyberattacks and targeted assassinations, to disrupt it. Reports suggest that Israel provided intelligence support for the U.S. strikes, and some analysts believe the operation was coordinated to align with Israel's strategic objectives. The strikes have already trig-

The roots of this conflict lie in the decades-long hostility between the U.S. and Iran, which began with the 1979 Iranian Revolution and the subsequent hostage crisis at the U.S. embassy in Tehran. The U.S. has consistently opposed Iran's nuclear program, viewing it as a potential pathway to nuclear weapons, despite Iran's claims that its program is for peaceful energy purposes

gered retaliatory actions from Iran, which launched ballistic and hypersonic missiles targeting Israeli territory. According to Iranian sources, these counterattacks resulted in significant casualties, with Iran claiming 430 deaths, while Israel reported 24 fatalities. The exchange of attacks has heightened fears of a broader regional conflict, potentially drawing in other actors such as Syria, Lebanon, and Yemen, where Iran's proxies operate.

The immediate consequences of the U.S. strikes are multifaceted. On one hand, the operation has reportedly set back Iran's nuclear program by at least two years, according to Israeli military assessments. This could temporarily alleviate concerns about Iran's ability to develop nuclear weapons. However, the strikes have also galvanized Iran's resolve to resist Western pressure. Iran has vowed to rebuild its nuclear facilities and has accelerated its missile development program, signaling its intent to maintain a strong deterrent against future attacks. Moreover, the strikes have inflamed anti-American sentiment in Iran and across the Middle East, potentially strengthening hardline factions within Iran's government and undermining prospects for diplomatic engagement.

The geopolitical ramifications of this crisis extend far beyond the U.S. and Iran. The international response to the strikes has been polarized. U.S. allies, such as the United Kingdom and Saudi Arabia, have expressed support for the operation, citing the need to prevent Iran from acquiring nuclear weapons. However, other global powers, including Russia and China, have condemned the strikes as a violation of Iran's sovereignty and warned of the destabilizing impact on the region. Russia, a key ally of Iran, has called for an emergency meeting of the United Nations Security Council, while China has urged all parties to exercise restraint. The European Union, caught between its commitment to diplomacy and its alignment with the U.S., has expressed concern about the potential for a refugee crisis stemming from further escalation in the Middle East. Countries like India, which rely heavily on Middle Eastern oil, have begun evacuating their citizens from Iran, highlighting the far-reaching implications of the crisis.

The specter of a third world war looms large in public discourse, but the likelihood of such a scenario depends on several factors. A full-scale global conflict would require the involvement of major powers beyond the U.S. and Iran, such as Russia, China, or NATO allies. While

Russia and China have voiced support for Iran, their involvement has so far been limited to diplomatic rhetoric and economic cooperation. However, if the conflict spreads to involve Iran's proxies or other regional actors, it could draw in additional powers, creating a domino effect. For instance, an escalation involving Hezbollah in Lebanon or the Houthis in Yemen could prompt further intervention from Israel and Saudi Arabia, potentially leading to a broader regional war. Such a scenario could disrupt global energy supplies, given the Middle East's critical role in oil production, and trigger economic turmoil worldwide.

Economically, the strikes have already caused ripples in global markets. Oil prices have surged due to fears of supply disruptions, particularly given Iran's strategic location near the Strait of Hormuz, a vital chokepoint for global oil shipments. Countries like India, which imports a significant portion of its oil from the Middle East, face the prospect of higher energy costs and economic strain. Additionally, the potential for a refugee crisis, as seen in previous Middle Eastern conflicts, could place further pressure on neighboring countries and Europe, which are already grappling with migration challenges. The economic fallout could exacerbate existing global inequalities, disproportionately affecting developing nations.

Diplomatically, the path to de-escalation remains uncertain. Iran's Foreign Minister has indicated a willingness to engage in talks if the U.S. ceases its aggressive actions, but the hardline stances of both nations make negotiations challenging. The United Nations and other international bodies have called for restraint and dialogue, but their influence is limited in the face of entrenched geopolitical rivalries. The U.S. decision to act without congressional approval has also sparked domestic criticism, with some lawmakers arguing that the strikes risk entangling the U.S. in another prolonged Middle Eastern conflict. The lack of a clear diplomatic framework, such as the JCPOA, further complicates efforts to resolve the crisis peacefully.

Looking ahead, the international community faces a critical juncture. The strikes have underscored the fragility of global security and the dangers of unilateral military actions. To prevent further escalation, a renewed commitment to diplomacy is essential. This could involve reviving elements of the JCPOA or establishing a new framework for negotiations that includes all relevant stakeholders, including Iran, the U.S., Israel, Russia, and China. Confidence-building measures, such as a temporary ceasefire or mutual commitments to halt military actions, could create space for dialogue. Additionally, addressing the broader regional dynamics, including Iran's support for proxies and Israel's security concerns, will be crucial to achieving lasting stability.

The U.S. strikes on Iran's nuclear facilities have thrust the world into a period of heightened uncertainty. While the immediate impact has been a setback for Iran's nuclear program, the long-term consequences could be far-reaching, with the potential to destabilize the Middle East and beyond. The specter of a third world war, though not imminent, serves as a sobering reminder of the stakes involved. The international community must prioritize diplomacy and cooperation to prevent further escalation and address the root causes of this crisis. Only through collective action can the world avoid the catastrophic consequences of a broader conflict and chart a path toward peace.

POST BAG

The irony behind the pride in our Gamocha

Sir/Ma'am

It is ironic that while we take immense pride in our traditional identity symbolised by the gamocha, we are yet to achieve even basic self-sufficiency in its production. Around 90 per cent of the gamochas available in Assam's markets today are machine-made and imported from outside the state. This reality starkly contrasts with the image we like to project. Despite all the rhetoric, our local weavers—the real custodians of Assamese handloom heritage—struggle to survive. Without government assistance schemes like Arundoi, many of these artisans would be forced to abandon their craft altogether. And yet, we celebrate the Hon'ble Prime Minister wearing a gamocha during International Yoga Day as if it reflects the thriving state of our traditions.

Indeed, blessed is the King, and blessed are the people! But perhaps it's time we reflect on whether symbolic pride can replace real support and empowerment for those who keep our heritage alive.

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Which field of study leads to high-paying jobs quickly?

Sir/Ma'am

Since 2005, I have been providing free career counselling to students and parents across different regions of Assam every Saturday from 6 PM to 9 PM over the phone (09435188630). During career counselling sessions, one of the most frequently asked questions by students and parents is: 'Which field of study leads to a high-paying job quickly?'

The answer to this question does not solely depend on a specific academic stream or degree. The path to higher earnings is determined by a combination of factors—the student's personality, interests, skills, the current demand, future market potential etc. However, to spread awareness among the general public regarding this matter, I feel it is necessary to highlight a few important aspects. To begin with, it is important to understand that merely performing well in any academic stream—whether Arts, Science, or Commerce—is not sufficient. True success is more likely when a student selects a career path that aligns with their inner abilities, interests, and life goals.

Therefore, every student should first deeply identify their personality—whether they are introverted, extroverted, realistic, investigative, artistic, social, enterprising, conventional etc. Choosing a career that matches one's personality not only boosts confidence but also brings greater life satisfaction and increases the chances of long-term success. In today's world, academic qualifications alone are not enough. To secure a good job, technical skills, interpersonal abilities, critical thinking, problem-solving capacity etc. are equally important.

However, it is often observed that many students, despite securing high marks, fail to get desirable jobs in either the government or private sector. The main reason is that a degree alone is not enough. In today's competitive world, it is essential to possess practical skills, applied knowledge, and the ability to continuously update oneself according to the demands of the time. Apart from jobs, one can also become self-reliant by building their own small or large enterprise or starting a business venture, which can also create employment opportunities for others. Finally, the most important point to remember is—fruits don't ripen instantly; they take time to mature. Whether it is a job or a business, there is no substitute for deep study, proper training, and hard work on the path to high salaries or greater income. Higher earnings are possible for those who choose skill-based courses and careers in high-demand sectors that align with their interests, personality, and current market needs.

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How much protein do you need to build muscle?

By: Lindsey DeSoto

Protein is found in every cell and tissue in the body. While it has many vital roles in the body, protein is crucial for muscle growth because it helps repair and maintain muscle tissue.

The current recommended dietary allowance (RDA) to prevent deficiency in minimally active adults is 0.8 grams (g) of protein per kilogram (kg) of body weight. However, newer research suggests individuals trying to build muscle need more than this.

Consuming less protein than the body needs has been linked to decreased muscle mass. In contrast, increased protein intakes above the RDA may help increase strength and lean body mass when paired with resistance exercise.

Why is protein important for building muscle?

Protein is made up of amino acids that act as building blocks for cells and tissues in the body. There are 20 amino acids that combine to form proteins.

While some can be synthesized by the human body, others cannot. The nine amino acids that the body cannot make are called essential amino acids. These must be obtained through diet.

When a person eats protein, it is digested and broken down into amino acids, which are involved in many processes in the body, including tissue growth and repair, immune function, and energy production.

Like other body tissues, muscle proteins are continuously broken down and rebuilt. In order to build muscle, a person must consume more protein than what is broken down. This is often referred to as a

net positive nitrogen balance, as protein is high in nitrogen.

If a person is not consuming adequate amounts of protein, their body tends to break down muscle. Trusted Source to provide the body with the amino acids needed to support body functions and preserve more important tissues. Over time, this can lead to decreased muscle mass and strength.

Lastly, the body uses amino acids for muscle protein synthesis (MPS), the primary driver of muscle repair, recovery, and growth after strenuous exercises.

How much protein do you need?

According to the 2020-2025 Dietary Guidelines for Americans, most healthy adults over 19 years old should get between 10-35% of their daily calories from protein. One gram of protein provides 4 calories.

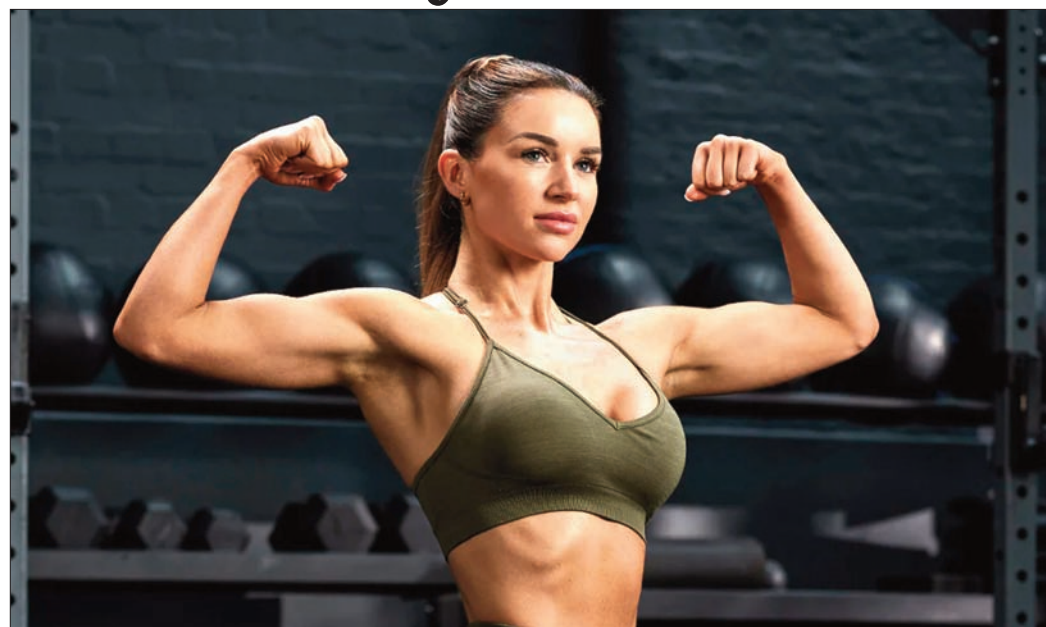
This means that a person who eats 2,000 calories per day would need to consume between 50 and 175 grams of protein per day.

The current RDA of 0.8 g per kg of body weight for protein is based on the amount required to maintain nitrogen balance and prevent muscle loss. However, extending these recommendations to active individuals who are looking to build muscle may not be appropriate.

When it comes to building muscle mass, the ideal amount of daily protein a person should consume varies depending on several factors, including age, gender, activity level, health, and other variables.

However, several studies have given us a good idea of how to calculate the amount of protein adults need for muscle gain based on body weight.

What do studies say?



While most studies agree that higher protein intakes are associated with improvements in lean body mass and strength when combined with resistance training, the optimal amount of protein required to build muscle remains controversial. Here is what the latest research says.

One 2020 meta-analysis published in the journal *Nutrition Reviews* found that protein intakes ranging from 0.5 to 3.5 g per kg of body weight can support increases in lean body mass.

In particular, researchers noted that gradually increasing protein take, even by as little as 0.1 grams per kilogram of body weight per day, can help maintain or increase muscle mass.

The rate of increase in lean body mass from higher protein intakes rapidly decreased after 1.3 g per kg

of body weight was exceeded. Strength training suppressed this decline. This suggests that increased protein intake paired with strength training is best for gaining lean body mass.

Another 2022 meta-analysis published in the journal *Sports Medicine* concluded that higher protein intakes of around 1.5 g per kg of body weight daily paired with resistance training are required for optimal effects on muscle strength. Researchers noted that the benefits of increased protein intake on strength and muscle mass appear to plateau at 1.5 to 1.6 g per kg of body weight per day.

Lastly, one 2022 systematic review and meta-analysis published in the *Journal of Cachexia, Sarcopenia, and Muscle* concluded that a protein intake of 1.6 g per kg of body weight per day or higher

results in small increases in lean body mass in young, resistance-trained individuals. The results on older individuals were marginal.

Notably, 80% of studies examined in this review reported participants consuming a minimum of 1.2 g of protein per kg of body weight per day, which is still higher than the current RDA. This may be a potential contributor to the decreased effects of protein intervention in combination with resistance training in older adults.

While it is difficult to give exact figures due to varying study results, the optimum amount of protein for muscle-building appears to be between 1.2 and 1.6 g per kg of body weight.

This means a 180-pound (81.8 kg) male, for example, would need to consume between 98 and 131 g of protein daily, combined with re-

sistance training, to support muscle growth.

What are the best protein sources?

A person can meet their daily protein needs by eating animal and plant-based protein sources.

Animal-based protein sources include:

- Lean meats (beef, pork, or lamb)
- Poultry
- Eggs
- Fish and seafood
- Dairy products
- Whey protein powders.

Plant-based protein sources include:

- Beans
- Peas
- Nuts
- Lentils
- Seeds
- Soy products
- Plant-based protein powders.

Some nutritionists consider animal protein sources to be better than plant-based protein sources when it comes to building muscle mass. This is because they contain all the essential amino acids the body needs in sufficient amounts. They are also easy to digest.

Some plant-based proteins are less bioavailable and harder to digest. They also have varying amino acid profiles. However, individuals who opt for plant-based diets can easily supplement by eating more overall protein, and opting for a variety of foods.

To obtain all the necessary amino acids in a plant-based diet, individuals can pair ingredients such as rice and beans, hummus and pita bread, or peanut butter on whole wheat bread.

One notable exception is soy, which is highly bioavailable, has a

good profile of amino acids, and is easy to digest.

How much protein is too much?

Doctors generally agree that healthy adults can safely tolerate a long-term protein intake of up to 2 g per kg of body weight per day without any side effects. However, some groups of people, such as healthy, well-trained athletes, may tolerate up to 3.5 g per kg of body weight.

Most research suggests that eating more than 2 g of protein per kg of body weight per day can cause health issues over time.

Potential risks

Symptoms of excessive protein intake include:

- Intestinal discomfort
- Nausea
- Dehydration
- Fatigue
- Weight gain
- Irritation
- Headache.

More severe risks associated with chronic protein overconsumption include:

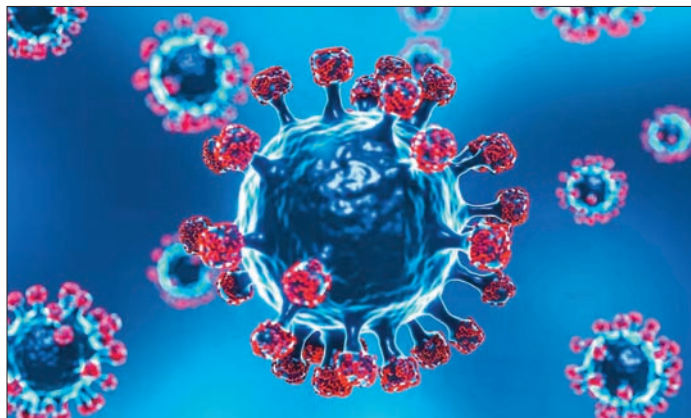
- Heart disease
- Seizures
- Kidney and liver injuries
- Death.

Final word

When combined with resistance training, protein intakes above the current RDA can support muscle building. The best way to meet your daily protein needs is by consuming lean meat, fish, beans, nuts, and legumes.

Since the optimal amount of protein a person needs depends on age, health status, and activity level, consider speaking with a healthcare provider or a registered dietitian to discuss how much protein is suitable for you. (Courtesy: *Medical News Today*)

Will the COVID-19 surge in India accelerate? Here's what wastewater surveillance can tell



By: Preetha Banerjee

India is witnessing a steady rise in COVID-19 cases since May 2025. Just in the last fortnight, the country's active caseload has grown 18 times, going from 257 on May 19 to 4,866 on June 5. Although the infections are mild, 51 people have died of the infection in the country since the beginning of 2025; most of them had comorbidities, other ailments, cancer or were elderly.

It is unclear if the situation will snowball into a COVID-19 wave but clues from wastewater indicate a concern. The Council of Scientific & Industrial Research-National Chemical Laboratory (NCL) found the presence of the virus in wastewater samples from every sewage treatment plant in Pune, according to a news report in *The Times of India*.

It started with just one STP showing traces of SARS-CoV-2 on April 22, said NCL scientist Mahesh S Dharne to the newspaper. By May 6, samples from all the 10 STPs in the city tested positive for coronavirus through RT-PCR examination. This is indicative of the viral load in the entire community.

It is a matter of concern because wastewater surveillance has been considered an early warning for case spikes. Even in this instance, the scientist noted that the "viral load pattern" was similar to those observed before the infection surge picked up pace in the past.

Since the initial days of the pandemic, this method has been used to understand the viral load in a particular population. A person with coronavirus infection can shed viral material in faecal sampled up to 35 days. It is said that the virus can be excreted by symptomatic, asymptomatic and presymptomatic individuals, wrote Rajeshwari Sinha, Programme Manager, Food Safety and Toxins, Centre for Science

and Environment, New Delhi in a *Down To Earth* story.

In the first half of 2020, sewage samples were tested in Hyderabad and the analysis showed that some 6 per cent of the city's population had the infection. The findings published in August 2020 showed that some 600,000 people in the city were 'potentially infected'. Most of them were asymptomatic, which is why the clinically identified cases and hospitalisations were much lower.

A study that analysed over 1,100 wastewater samples from the city during May 2022 and May 2023 had found that the population has a high case load although not as many cases were being report. This means the virus was being passed on undiagnosed, the researchers wrote, in something they termed a 'silent wave'. The findings were published in December 2024.

Moreover, the examination of wastewater also revealed virus lineages in circulation months ahead of their clinical identification, the authors added. "The BA.2.86.X was identified 103 days prior to its clinical detection in Pune, highlighting WBE's remarkable lead time."

Globally, SARS-CoV-2 infections have been on the rise since mid-February 2025, according to a situation report by the World Health Organization posted on May 28, 2025. The test positivity rate reached 11 per cent, highest since July 2024, the United Nations health organisation wrote. "This rise is primarily observed in countries in the Eastern Mediterranean, South-East Asia, and Western Pacific regions."

According to WHO data till May 18, 2025, the number of cases in the South-East Asia region was a lot higher than any other part of the world. In the seven days till May 18, the region had recorded 58,720 cases, while Europe had some 2,800 cases and the Americas 2,300. (Down to Earth)

Regain mobility and live pain-free: When is joint replacement the right choice?

By: Dr. Deepak Raina

Joint pain can be more than just discomfort—it can take away your ability to move freely, enjoy daily activities, or maintain your independence. When medications, physiotherapy, and lifestyle changes no longer provide relief, joint replacement surgery may be the next step toward a more active and pain-free life.

But how do you know when it's time to consider this option? Understanding Joint Replacement

Joint replacement is a surgical procedure where a damaged joint—commonly the knee, hip, elbow, ankle or shoulder—is replaced with an artificial implant. These implants are designed to function like your natural joint, restoring movement and reducing pain. With advancements in technology and surgical techniques, joint replacement has become safer and more effective, offering quicker recovery and long-term relief.

When Is Joint Replacement Recommended?

Joint replacement is not the first step in the treatment process. It is usually recommended when conservative treatments such as medication, physiotherapy, or weight management no longer provide relief and the quality of life is significantly affected.

Some common indications for joint replacement include:

- Severe Joint Pain: Persistent, intense pain that limits the ability to perform everyday tasks like walking, climbing stairs, or even getting out of a chair—is one of the



main signs. This pain may be present during movement or even while resting.

- Joint Stiffness or Swelling: Loss of flexibility, swelling, and stiffness in the joint can reduce mobility. If stiffness is affecting your sleep or preventing you from performing routine activities, surgery might be needed to restore function.

- Advanced Arthritis: Conditions like osteoarthritis, rheumatoid arthritis, and post-traumatic arthritis can cause long-term joint damage. In severe cases where cartilage has worn away, and bones rub against each other, joint replacement is often the most effective treatment.

- Deformity in the Joint: Changes in joint shape, such as bowing of the legs or shortening of one limb, can indicate joint degeneration. These deformities may lead to further complications if not corrected.

Hidden tumor causing Pancreatitis removed in high-risk life-saving surgery

By: Dr Parveen Mendiratta

A 34-year-old woman from Greater Noida, who arrived at the hospital with severe abdominal pain, was found to be suffering from an extremely rare cause of acute pancreatitis, a hidden parathyroid tumor. Thanks to the swift coordination and expertise of doctors, she underwent a successful high-risk surgery and was discharged just five days later with significant recovery.

The Unexpected Cause Behind Severe Abdominal Symptoms

When the patient was first admitted to the Hospital, her symptoms pointed to acute pancreatitis, a painful and potentially life-threatening condition. However, further evaluation revealed something unusual, a high calcium level in the blood, a condition known as hypercalcemia.

While pancreatitis due to hypercalcemia is extremely rare, occurring in less than 1 percent of cases, the Doctors suspected a deeper cause. In collaboration with the hospital's endocrinology department, they discovered a parathyroid adenoma, a benign tumor in the right parathyroid gland. This tumor was disrupting the body's calcium balance and affecting vital organs including the bones, kidneys, and muscles.

A Complex Case Made

Riskier by a Weak Heart

The complexity of the case increased when tests showed the patient had a severely reduced heart function. Her ejection fraction (EF), a measure of how much blood the heart pumps out with each beat, was just 25 percent, far below the normal range. This made surgical intervention particularly risky.

Despite the odds, the team decided to move forward with the surgery. The anesthesiology department played a critical role in



managing the patient's fragile heart condition during the operation to ensure safety.

Surgical Precision and Real-Time Confirmation

During the surgery, the team removed the tumor and immediately sent the tissue for analysis to confirm it was indeed parathyroid tissue. Simultaneously, the biochemistry department monitored the patient's hormone levels. Remarkably, within just 20 minutes of the tumor's removal, her parathormone (PTH) levels dropped sharply from 1233 to

140, providing real-time confirmation that the surgery had been successful.

Multidisciplinary Teamwork Made the Difference

This case was an extraordinary example of team-based care and quick clinical judgment. Hypercalcemia-induced pancreatitis is rare and often overlooked. Identifying it early gave a critical opportunity to intervene. Despite the patient's compromised heart function, the surgery proceeded safely because of seamless collaboration across departments. It truly reflects the strength of multidisciplinary medicine.

A Positive Outcome and a Message for the Future

The patient made a steady recovery and was discharged just five days after surgery. By the time she left the hospital, her heart's ejection fraction had improved to 45 percent.

This case highlights not just a rare link between parathyroid tumors and pancreatitis, but also the vital importance of early diagnosis, precise surgical planning, and coordinated hospital care. Even in high-risk and complex medical situations, timely intervention and teamwork can make all the difference. (The writer is the Head of Department, Surgical Oncology, Yatharth Hospital, Greater Noida)

Understating brain tumours

By: Dr. Rohit Bansil

When we hear the words "brain tumour," it often brings a very grim image to mind. However, the reality is that many brain tumours can be successfully treated if diagnosed early. There is still a lack of awareness among the public about the symptoms and available treatment options for brain tumours. This Brain Tumour Day gives us an opportunity to spread awareness and educate people about the advancements in treatment.

A brain tumour refers to any abnormal growth or mass in the brain. It can be either benign (non-cancerous) or malignant (cancerous). Benign tumours do not spread and are usually curable, while malignant tumours can grow rapidly, spread to other parts, and may return even after treatment. The location of the tumour plays a major role in determining the outcome of treatment. To know the exact nature of the tumour, doctors need to examine a sample of the tissue under a microscope, which is done through a biopsy. Often, the biopsy is performed along with the removal of the tumour in the same surgery. The approach to surgery can be open, minimally invasive, or endoscopic, depending on where the tumour is located in the brain.

In recent years, brain surgeries have become much safer and more precise due to technological advancements. Tools like neuronavigation, intraoperative nerve monitoring, high-resolution microscopes, and robotic assistance have improved outcomes significantly. Neuronavigation helps guide the surgeon in real-time during the operation, allowing for safer and more complete tumour removal. Intraoperative nerve monitoring helps prevent damage to important nerves during surgery, while microscopes offer a clearer view of delicate areas in the brain.

Brain tumours can present a range of symptoms such as early morning headaches, blurring of vision, vomiting that brings temporary relief from headache, changes in vision, hearing problems, difficulty walking, weakness on one side of the body, and seizures. Early diagnosis using MRI and PET CT scans can significantly improve the chances of a successful outcome. Once the tumour is surgically removed, the next steps depend on the biopsy report. If the tumour is benign, no further treatment may be needed. However, if the tumour is malignant, the patient may require additional treatment such as chemotherapy or radiotherapy. In some cases, repeat surgeries may also be necessary.

With the help of modern technology, brain tumour surgeries have become safer and more effective. Today, most patients recover well and are discharged within 4-5 days of surgery. The key to success lies in early detection and timely medical attention. On this Brain Tumour Day, let us focus on increasing awareness, encouraging early check-ups, and supporting complete and effective treatment for those affected. (The writer is the Associate Director - Neuro Surgery & Neuro Spine, BLK-Max Super Speciality Hospital, Delhi)

Israel targets Iran's govt, notorious Tehran prison as Iran launches more attacks on Israel

DUBAI, June 23: Israel hit Iranian government targets in Tehran on Monday in a series of strikes that followed a salvo of missiles and drones fired by Iran at Israel in the wake of the Trump administration's massive strikes on Iranian nuclear sites the day before.

The Israeli military also confirmed it hit roads around Iran's Fordo enrichment facility to obstruct access to the site. The underground site was one of those hit in Sunday's attack by the United States on three nuclear facilities. The Israeli military did not elaborate. In Tehran attacks, Israel's Defence Ministry said it hit targets that included the notorious Evin Prison in the Iranian capital and the security headquarters of the paramilitary Revolutionary Guards. "The Iranian dictator will be punished with full force for attacking the Israeli home front," the ministry said.

Nuclear fears mount after US strikes

In Vienna, the head of the United Nations nuclear watchdog said he expected there to be heavy damage at the Fordo facility already following the Sunday's US airstrike there with sophisticated bunker-buster bombs.

"Given the explosive payload



utilised ... very significant damage ... is expected to have occurred," said Rafael Grossi, the head of the International Atomic Energy Agency. With the strikes on Sunday on Iranian nuclear sites, the United States inserted itself into Israel's war, prompting fears of a wider regional conflict. Iran said the US had crossed "a very big red line" with its risky gambit to strike the three sites with missiles and 30,000-pound bunker-buster bombs. Several Iranian officials, including Atomic Energy Organisation of Iran spokesman Behrouz Kamalvandi, have claimed Iran removed nuclear material from tar-

geted sites ahead of time.

Grossi told the IAEA board of governors on Monday that Iranian Foreign Minister Abbas Araghchi had informed him on June 13 that Iran would "adopt special measures to protect nuclear equipment and materials."

Israel and Iran press their attacks Iran described its Monday attack on Israel as a new wave of its Operation "True Promise 3," saying it was targeting the Israeli cities of Haifa and Tel Aviv, according to Iranian state television.

Explosions were also heard in Jerusalem. There were no immediate reports of damage.

In Iran, witnesses reported Israeli airstrikes hit areas around Iran's capital, Tehran, around midday. Iranian state television confirmed one Israeli strike hit the gate of Evin Prison.

The report shared what appeared to be black-and-white-surveillance footage of the strike. The prison is known for holding dual nationals and Westerners often used by Iran as bargaining chips in negotiations with the West.

Evin also has specialized units for political prisoners and those with Western ties, run by the paramilitary Revolutionary Guard, which answers only to Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei. The facility is the target of both US and European Union sanctions.

Calls for de-escalation The US described its Sunday attack on the Fordo and Natanz enrichment facilities, as well as the Isfahan nuclear site, as a one-off to take out Iran's nuclear programme, but President Donald Trump has warned of additional strikes if Tehran retaliates. Mousavi described the American attacks as violating Iran's sovereignty and being tantamount to invading the country, the state-run IRNA news agency reported. (AP)

Pak politicians, others ask govt to review Trump's nomination for Nobel Peace Prize

ISLAMABAD, June 23: Several Pakistani politicians and notable figures have asked the government to reconsider its decision to recommend President Donald Trump for the 2026 Nobel Peace Prize after the US bombed Iran's three nuclear sites.

The government, in a surprise move on Friday, announced that it would nominate Trump for the prestigious award due to his self-proclaimed peacemaking efforts during the recent India-Pakistan conflict.

A letter of recommendation, signed by Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister Ishaq Dar, has already been sent to the Nobel Peace Prize Committee in Norway. But the decision came under scrutiny after the US bombed Iran's Fordo, Isfahan and Natanz nuclear sites, joining Israel to dent Tehran's nuclear programme.

The Dawn newspaper reported that some leading politicians demanded the government review its decision in light of the latest development. Veteran politician Maulana Fazlur Rehman, who heads the Jamaat Ulema-i-Islam (JUI-F), demanded that the government rescind its decision. "President Trump's claim

of peace has proven to be false; the proposal for the Nobel Prize should be withdrawn," Fazl told workers at a party meeting in Murree on Sunday.

He said that Trump's recent meeting and lunch with Chief of Army Staff (COAS) Field Marshal Asim Munir "pleased Pakistani rulers so much" that they recommended nominating the US president for the Nobel Prize. "Trump has supported the Israeli attacks on Palestine, Syria, Lebanon and Iran. How can this be a sign of peace?" Fazl questioned. "With the blood of Afghans and Palestinians on America's hands, how can he claim to be a proponent of peace?"

Trump had campaigned for office as a "peacemaker" who would use his negotiating skills to quickly end wars in Ukraine and Gaza, but both conflicts are still raging five months into his presidency.

Former senator Mushahid Hussain wrote on X: "Since Trump is no longer a potential peacemaker, but a leader who has willfully unleashed an illegal war, Pakistan government must now review, rescind and revoke his Nobel nomination!" (PTI)

Bangladesh's ex-election commission chief arrested for manipulating polls during his tenure

DHAKA, June 23: Bangladesh's former chief election commissioner K M Nurul Huda has been arrested on charges of manipulating elections during his tenure, police said.

Dhaka metropolitan police's Deputy Commissioner Mohidul Islam on Sunday said Huda was arrested in the case filed by former prime minister Khaleda Zia's Bangladesh Nationalist Party (BNP) against the former election commission chief and 18 others, including deposed prime minister Sheikh Hasina. Election Commission officials said this was probably the first time that a former CEC has been detained over issues related to elections, the Daily Star newspaper reported.

Earlier in the day, the 77-year-old, who oversaw the elections in 2014, 2018 and 2024, was assaulted by a mob outside his Uttara residence. Uttara West police station chief Hafizur Rahman said, "We went to the scene after being informed" that a mob has surrounded Huda. "We have brought him into our custody."

Another police officer said the mob raided Huda's residence located at Uttara area in Dhaka and dragged him out of his house before the arrival of police.

Videos circulating on social media show a group of people thrashing Huda with shoes, garlanding him with footwear, and throwing eggs at him from close proximity.

In the videos, the mob was seen abusing him with filthy language and continuing to

beat him even after the police arrived at the scene.

Huda would spend the night at the police's detective branch office and would be produced before a court for consequent legal actions, he said.

The BNP filed a case against 19 people, including Huda, for conducting general elections in 2014, 2018 and 2024 under Hasina regime "without people's mandate". Hasina had won all these elections.

The assault of Huda triggered an uproar on social media, prompting Chief Advisor Muhammad Yunus' interim government to issue a statement around midnight.

"The mob-created unruly situation and the physical assault on the accused has drawn the government's attention. The government urges citizens not to take the law into their hands," the statement said.

It also warned of appropriate actions against such people.

Yunus took over as the head of the interim government after Hasina was ousted in a massive student-led protest in August last year. She fled to India following the toppling of her Awami League government.

Most senior leaders of the Awami League and ministers and senior officials of the ousted regime were arrested or fled the country after the fall of the then government. Several of these leaders, including ministers, in the past several months have come under mob attack, particularly on court premises. (PTI)

Okinawa marks 80 years since end of one of harshest WWII battles with pledge to share tragic history

TOKYO, June 23: Okinawa marked the 80th anniversary of the end of one of the harshest battles of World War II fought on the southern island.

With global tensions escalating, its governor said on Monday it is the Okinawan "mission" to keep telling the tragic history and its impact today. The Battle of Okinawa killed a quarter of the island's population, leading to a 27-year US occupation and a heavy American troop presence to date.

Monday's memorial comes one day after US attacks on Iranian nuclear facilities, adding to a sense of uncertainty on the island about the heavy American military presence and in its remote islands, already worried about getting embroiled in a potential conflict in Taiwan.

Gov. Denny Tamaki, noting the escalating global conflicts and nuclear threats, made a resolve to contribute to global peace studies, disarmament and the preservation of war remains. "It is our mission, as those living in the present, to preserve and pass on the reality

and lessons to future generations."

Fierce battle and civilian deaths US troops landed on the main Okinawa island on April 1, 1945, beginning a battle in their push toward mainland Japan.

The Battle of Okinawa lasted nearly three months, killing some 200,000 people — about 12,000 Americans and more than 188,000 Japanese, half of them Okinawan civilians including students and victims forced into mass suicides by Japan's military.

Okinawa was sacrificed by Japan's Imperial Army to defend the mainland, historians say. The island group remained under US occupation until its reversion in 1972, two decades longer than most of Japan. Monday's memorial was held at the Mabuni Hill in Itoman City, where the remains of most of the war dead reside.

Remembering the tragedy

Prime Minister Shigeru Ishiba was in a hot seat when he attended Monday's ceremony. Weeks earlier, one of his ruling party lawmakers Shoji Nishida, known for



whitewashing Japan's wartime atrocities, denounced an inscription on a famous cenotaph dedicated to students as "rewriting history" by portraying the Japanese army as having caused their deaths, while Americans liberated Okinawa. Nishida also called Okinawa's history education "a mess."

His remark triggered an uproar in Okinawa, forcing Ishiba days later to apologise to the island's governor, who had criticised the

Russian attacks on Ukraine kill at least 10, injure dozens

KYIV, June 23: Russian drones and missiles killed at least 10 civilians in Ukraine in nighttime attacks, local officials said Monday, with seven deaths reported in the capital, Kyiv, where emergency crews raced to find people believed trapped under the rubble of a partially collapsed apartment building.

Russia fired 352 drones and decoys overnight, as well as 11 ballistic missiles and five cruise missiles, Ukraine's air force said. Air defences intercepted or jammed 339 drones and 15 missiles before they could reach their targets, a statement said.

The strikes came nearly a week after a combined Russian attack on Ukraine last Tuesday killed 28 people in Kyiv, 23 of them in a residential building that collapsed after sustaining a direct missile hit.

Russian forces have for several months been trying to drive deeper into Ukraine as part of a renewed summer push along the roughly 1,000-kilometre front line, though the Institute for the Study of War said their progress has been limited.

"Russian forces have failed to make significant gains during this period of intensified offensive operations, however, due in part to the fact that Russian forces are largely relying on poorly trained infantry to make gains in the face of Ukraine's drone-based defence," the Washington-based think tank said late Sunday.

At the same time, Russia has pounded civilian areas with long-range strikes in an apparent attempt to weaken public morale.

Ukrainian leader notes role of Iran, North Korea

Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy said preliminary data indicated that Russian forces used North Korean missiles in the Kyiv strike. He called Russia, North Korea and Iran, which has provided drones to Russia, a "coalition of murderers" and warned of a potential spread of the "terror" if their alliance continues.

Zelenskyy said Ukraine's defence and new ways to pressure Russia will be the two main topics in his visit to the United Kingdom on Monday. Zelenskyy was to meet with Prime Minister Keir



Starmer in London ahead of this week's NATO summit in The Hague, Starmer's office said.

French Foreign Minister Jean-Noël Barrot said the latest strikes demonstrated Russia's "unlimited cruelty," by deliberately taking aim at civilian targets, and promised more European sanctions on Moscow.

Rescue workers search for survivors

Drones and missiles hit residential areas, hospitals and sports infrastructure in numerous districts across Kyiv in the early hours of Monday, emergency services said.

The most severe damage was in the Shevchenkivskyi district of Kyiv, where a section of a five-story apartment building collapsed.

Six people were killed in that district, Kyiv Mayor Vitali Klitschko said. Ten others, including a pregnant woman, were rescued from a nearby high-rise that also sustained heavy damage in the blast.

Dozens of vehicles, some burned out and others mangled by flying debris from the blast, formed a snarl in the courtyard in front of the partly demolished building, which had collapsed down to the second floor.

Onlookers, some wrapped in blankets, watched tearfully as the cleanup operation took place. Dozens of volunteers worked to remove broken glass, downed tree branches and other debris.

Oleksii Porychaniuk, 29, who lives in the building next to the one struck in the attack, said he heard the whistle of the rocket approaching from inside his apartment and "froze in terror" before feeling the

impact. "Windows burst out, glass was flying everywhere," he said. "We barely made it downstairs with my child, everything here was on fire. We didn't see the neighboring building yet because everything was covered in smoke, the cars were smoldering, tires were bursting from the high temperature which was also scary."

Klitschko told reporters that rescue workers were still searching the collapsed building for survivors.

The Russian attack also damaged the entrance to the Sviatoshyn subway station in Kyiv, slightly injuring two people, said Timur Tkachenko, the head of Kyiv's military administration. He said more than 30 people were injured across the city.

Since the early days of Russia's invasion, underground subway stations have served as shelters for those seeking protection from aerial attacks. During almost nightly strikes, stations across Kyiv are often filled with people waiting out the danger.

Elsewhere in Ukraine, a Russian short-range drone attack killed two people and wounded 10 more in the Chernihiv region late Sunday night, authorities said. Three children were among the wounded, according to the regional administration head, Viacheslav Chaus. Another person was killed and eight wounded overnight in the city of Bila Tserkva, around 85 kilometres (53 miles) southwest of the capital.

Meanwhile, Russia's Defence Ministry said its air defences shot down 23 Ukrainian drones overnight into Monday. (AP)

NATO leaders set to agree historic defence spending pledge, but hike won't apply to all

THE HAGUE (NETHERLANDS), June 23: NATO leaders are expected to agree this week that member countries should spend 5% of their gross domestic product on defence, except the new and much vaunted investment pledge will not apply to all of them.

Spain has reached a deal with NATO to be excluded from the 5% of GDP spending target, while President Donald Trump said the figure shouldn't apply to the United States, only its allies.

In announcing Spain's decision Sunday, Prime Minister Pedro Sanchez said the spending pledge language in NATO's final summit communiqué — a one-page text of perhaps half a dozen paragraphs — would no longer refer to "all allies." It raises questions about what demands could be insisted on from other members of the alliance like Belgium, Canada, France and Italy that also would struggle to hike security spending by billions of dollars. On Friday, Trump insisted the U.S. has carried its allies for years and now they must step up. "I don't think we should, but I think they should," he said. "NATO is going to have to deal with Spain." Trump also branded Canada "a low payer."

NATO's new spending goals

The 5% goal is made up of two parts. The allies would agree to hike pure defence spending to 3.5% of GDP, up from the current target of at least 2%, which 22

of the 32 countries have achieved. Money spent to arm Ukraine also would count.

A further 1.5% would include upgrading roads, bridges, ports and airfields so armies can better deploy, establishing measures to counter cyber and hybrid attacks and preparing societies for future conflict. The second spending basket is easy for most nations, including Spain. Much can be included. But the 3.5% on core spending is a massive challenge.

Last year, Spain spent 1.28% of GDP on its military budget, according to NATO estimates, making it the alliance's lowest spender. Sanchez said Spain would be able to respect its commitments to NATO by spending 2.1% of GDP on defence needs.

Spain also is among Europe's smallest suppliers of arms and ammunition to Ukraine, according to the Kiel Institute, which tracks such support. It's estimated to have sent about 800,000 euros (\$920,000) worth of military aid since Russia invaded in 2022.

Beyond Spain's economic challenges, Sanchez has other problems. He relies on small parties to govern and corruption scandals have ensnared his inner circle and family members. He is under growing pressure to call an early election.

Why the spending increase is needed

There are solid reasons for ramping up spending. The Europeans believe Russia's war on Ukraine poses an existential threat

to them. Moscow has been blamed for a major rise in sabotage, cyberattacks and GPS jamming incidents. European leaders are girding their citizens for the possibility of more.

The alliance's plans for defending Europe and North America against a Russian attack require investments of at least 3%, NATO experts have said. All 32 allies have endorsed these. Each country has been assigned "capability targets" to play its part. Spanish Foreign Minister Jose Albares said Monday that "the debate must be not a raw percentage but around capabilities." He said Spain "can reach the capabilities that have been fixed by the organization with 2.1%."

Setting a deadline

It's not enough to agree to spend more money. Many allies haven't yet hit an earlier 2% target that they agreed in 2014 after Russia annexed Ukraine's Crimean Peninsula. So an incentive is required.

The date of 2032 has been floated as a deadline. That is far shorter than previous NATO targets, but military planners estimate Russian forces could be capable of launching an attack on an ally within five to 10 years. The U.S. insists it cannot be an open-ended pledge and a decade is too long. Still, Italy says it wants 10 years to hit the 5% target.

The possibility of stretching that period to 2035 also has been on the table for debate among NATO envoys. (AP)

and ignorance about the suffering grows. Ishiba, at Monday's memorial, said Japan's peace and prosperity is built on the sacrifices of Okinawa's history of hardship and that it is the government's responsibility to "devote ourselves to achieve a peaceful and prosperous Okinawa."

Postwar years and growing fear

Okinawa remained under US occupation from 1945 until the 1972 reversion to Japan. The US military maintains a heavy presence there due to Okinawa's strategic importance for security in the Pacific. Their presence serves not only to help defend Japan but also for missions elsewhere, including in the South China Sea and the Middle East.

Private properties were confiscated to build US bases, and the base-dependent economy has hampered the growth of local industry.

Fear of a Taiwan conflict rekindles bitter memories of the Battle of Okinawa. Historians and many residents say Okinawa was used as a pawn to save mainland Japan.

There are also ancient tensions between Okinawa and the Japanese mainland, which annexed the islands, formerly the independent kingdom of the Ryukus, in 1879.

Burden of history

Okinawa remains home to the majority of about 50,000 US troops stationed in Japan under a bilateral security pact. The island, which accounts for only 0.6 per cent of Japanese land, hosts 70 per cent of US military facilities.

Even 53 years after its reversion to Japan, Okinawa is burdened with the heavy US presence and faces noise, pollution, aircraft accidents and crime related to American troops, the governor said.

Nearly 2,000 tons of unexploded US bombs remain in Okinawa, with some regularly dug up. A recent explosion at a storage site at a US military base caused minor injuries to four Japanese soldiers.

Remains of hundreds of war dead are still unrecovered on Okinawa, as the government's search and identification effort is slow to make progress. (AP)

Army, Governor discuss security, youth outreach, civil-military synergy

GOC of 56 Infantry Division meets Governor Parnaik; calls made for stronger coordination, youth engagement and support for ex-servicemen

HT Correspondent

ITANAGAR, June 23: The General Officer Commanding (GOC) of the 56 Infantry Division, Major General Vivek Bakshi, called on Arunachal Pradesh Governor Lt General KT Parnaik (Retd), PVSM, UYSM, YSM, at Raj Bhavan here on Monday in a high-level meeting that underscored the strategic importance of the state's frontier areas.

The discussion centred on key issues ranging from border security along the Line of Actual Control (LAC) to broader themes of civil-military cooperation, youth engagement, disaster preparedness, and welfare measures for ex-servicemen and Veer Naris (war widows).

According to an official statement, the Governor appreciated the Indian Army's professionalism, discipline, and unwavering commitment to safeguarding the sensitive border areas of Arunachal Pradesh.

He expressed full confidence in the Army's operational readiness to handle challenges along the LAC and highlighted the pivotal role the armed forces play in preserving national integrity and regional stability.

Governor Parnaik, himself a former Army officer with vast operational experience, reiterated the significance of coordinated efforts between the military and the civil administration, particularly in Arunachal Pradesh's remote and vulnerable regions.

He noted that the challenges in such terrains require a concerted approach in-



volving both armed forces and civil authorities to ensure infrastructure development, timely disaster response, and public welfare outreach.

The Governor also spoke extensively

about government initiatives such as the Vibrant Villages Programme, which aims to bolster development in border settlements.

He emphasised that schemes like these

have transformative potential when supported by military-civil collaboration.

The Governor highlighted successful examples of joint efforts, such as road construction in inaccessible areas, flood

and landslide response mechanisms, and community service drives undertaken by Army formations in coordination with district administrations.

The meeting also gave special attention to the welfare of veterans and Veer Naris residing in Arunachal Pradesh.

Parnaik, who has been actively participating in ex-servicemen rallies across the state, proposed that the Indian Army, in coordination with civil agencies, organise regular job fairs, medical camps, pension enrolment and verification drives, and awareness campaigns in far-flung districts.

He pointed out that such activities are vital for improving access to services and benefits for retired personnel and their families, many of whom live in difficult-to-reach areas.

A significant segment of the discussion centred on youth engagement, a subject the Governor stressed with urgency and optimism.

He urged the Indian Army to take a more proactive role in inspiring and mentoring the youth of Arunachal Pradesh by organising motivational talks in schools, career awareness programmes, and regular interactions to familiarise students with opportunities in the armed forces.

He observed that such engagement not only opens new horizons for the younger generation but also helps instil values of discipline, responsibility, and patriotism.

The Governor suggested that outreach efforts focused on youth, particularly in

the rural and border belts, would play a key role in fostering national integration and building a sense of belonging among young citizens.

He noted that military personnel, with their sense of duty and experience, are ideally positioned to serve as role models for aspiring students.

Responding to the Governor's proposals, Major General Bakshi assured him of the Indian Army's continued commitment to working closely with the state government in achieving shared objectives of security, development, and social upliftment.

The GOC emphasised the Indian Army's readiness to assist civil agencies wherever needed and expressed appreciation for the Governor's continued guidance and encouragement.

The meeting concluded with a strong reaffirmation of the existing synergy between the armed forces and the civilian administration in Arunachal Pradesh.

Both leaders expressed confidence that sustained collaboration will lead not only to enhanced border security but also to meaningful development in some of India's most strategic yet underserved regions.

The interaction between Governor Parnaik and Major General Bakshi stands as a testament to the enduring partnership between the military and civilian institutions in Arunachal Pradesh, united in their mission to safeguard national interests and uplift local communities. (With inputs from PTI)

Military-Civil Fusion Workshop held in Nafra to strengthen coordination in border region

HT Correspondent

TEZPUR, June 23: In a significant move to enhance collaboration between the armed forces and civil administration, a Military-Civil Fusion Workshop was conducted at Nafra, the headquarters of Bichom District in Arunachal Pradesh.

Organised under the leadership of the Indian Army's Blazing Sword Division, the workshop brought together a wide range of stakeholders—including senior Army officers, the Deputy Commissioner, Superintendent of Police, representatives of civil departments, personnel from the Indo-Tibetan Border Police (ITBP), and tribal leaders—to explore avenues for deeper synergy in ensuring both development and security in the strategically important frontier region.

The workshop aimed to serve as a high-level platform for promoting mutual trust, cooperation, and a sense of shared responsibility among military and civil stakeholders working in the remote and often challenging terrains of Arunachal Pradesh.

Addressing the gathering, the presiding Brigadier described the initiative as a cornerstone of the Army's vision to partner with the local administration and communities in furthering peace and progress in border areas.

He noted that proactive collaboration between uniformed personnel and civil institutions is key to fostering stability and inclusive growth in the sensitive border belt.

Deputy Commissioner Bopai echoed the sentiment, reaffirming the civil administration's unwaver-

ing commitment to coordinate with the defence forces in all spheres of public interest.

"Development and national security are two sides of the same coin," Bopai remarked, adding that the administration is keen to ensure that welfare and infrastructure development in the region proceed in tandem with the robust security efforts of the armed forces.

The Superintendent of Police present at the event highlighted critical areas of concern, particularly the need to engage youth through skill development and awareness campaigns to prevent drug abuse and antisocial activities.

He underlined that law enforcement and developmental strategies must work in tandem to empower the younger generation and discourage them from falling into the trap of narcotics and delinquency.

A significant portion of the workshop was dedicated to showcasing various community welfare initiatives undertaken by the Indian Army under 'Operation Sadbhavna'.

These included National Integration Tours for school students, free medical and eye-care camps, distribution of computers in remote schools, and logistical assistance for the establishment of a Vocational Training Centre in Bana aimed at strengthening local Self-Help Groups (SHGs).

These programmes, the Army noted, are designed to bridge gaps between the local populace and the military, ensuring that the dividends of peace and security are tangibly felt on the ground.

The Army's participation in important community celebrations such as the Ching Dang festival, as well as national holidays like Independence Day and Republic Day, was praised for fostering a spirit of inclusivity and national pride among local communities.

Officials acknowledged that such shared cultural engagements have been instrumental in building bonds of goodwill and respect between the military and local populations.

The workshop also threw light on Army-backed infrastructure projects that have directly benefitted the region's residents.

These include the construction of a Transit Facility, a Community Hall, and an Overhead Water Tank, which have significantly improved civic amenities in and around Nafra. Participants welcomed the discussion of new proposals, including the promotion of adventure sports and the development of a Rafting Node at Nafra.

These initiatives are expected to not only boost tourism in the area but also provide recreational opportunities and economic prospects for the local youth.

By the end of the workshop, a strong consensus emerged among all stakeholders to continue deepening civil-military cooperation to ensure Arunachal Pradesh's border districts grow stronger, safer, and more connected.

The initiative was widely appreciated by those in attendance and hailed as a timely intervention in fostering a unified approach to regional development and national security.

Inter-Battalion Cross Country Race kicks off with fanfare at 186 Bn HQ in Namsai

HT Bureau

NAMSAL, June 23: The Inter-Battalion (Jorhat Operations Sector) Cross Country Race Competition was inaugurated on Monday with great fervour at the Headquarters of the 186 Battalion in Jaipur, Namsai, Arunachal Pradesh.

Organised under the aegis of the Assam Rifles, the opening day witnessed a vibrant celebration of sportsmanship, discipline and unity, drawing participation from 81 athletes representing 11 battalions under the Jorhat Ops Sector.

The two-day athletic event was formally inaugurated by the Deputy Commissioner of Namsai, C R Khampa, who graced the ceremony as the chief guest.

The inaugural programme commenced with a ceremonial march-past by the participating teams, followed by a captivating band demonstration by the students of Vivekananda Kendra Vidyalaya (VKV), Namsai, which left the audience thoroughly impressed.

The welcome address was delivered by Dharmendra Kumar Singh, commandant of the 186 Battalion, who outlined the objectives and importance of the race.

Emphasising the role of physical fitness and camaraderie in the life of a soldier, he described the competition as a platform not just for testing physical endurance but also for fostering brotherhood and morale among the ranks.

In his keynote address, Khampa commended the high level of enthusiasm displayed by the participants and lauded the discipline and dedication of the soldiers. He stated that such initiatives not only enhance physical fitness but also promote a culture of healthy competition and team spirit within the force.

The Deputy Commissioner also encouraged the jawans to continue setting high standards of performance in all fields, including sports.

The event was also attended by several other dignitaries and officials who played a significant role in supporting the race.

Among them were B C Das, district sports of-



ficer of Namsai; Padma Nabham, vice principal of VKV, Namsai; Sandip Sharma, second-in-command, 186 Bn; K N Haldar and Sourabh Somvanshi, both deputy commandants; Karpoor Babala, Assistant Commandant; S Seema Devi, assistant commandant; Varun, assistant commandant, and several other officers and jawans of the 186 Battalion.

The large gathering also included teachers and students from VKV Namsai, members of the band party, representatives from the district administration, and local media personnel who were present to witness and document the unfolding event.

The central theme of the competition is to promote physical fitness, endurance, and mutual respect among the battalions, reinforcing the values of discipline and unity that lie at the heart of military service.

According to an official statement issued by

the organisers, the event also aims to build morale and solidarity across battalions operating in different regions, particularly in the Northeast.

The competition will continue over the next two days and will conclude with a grand award ceremony in which the top-performing battalion will be honoured for their achievement.

Commendation will also be given to individual athletes for their outstanding performance, reflecting the spirit of excellence promoted by the Assam Rifles.

Organisers expressed their deep gratitude to all participants, dignitaries, supporting staff, and volunteers whose efforts made the inaugural day a resounding success.

With the event now underway, expectations are high for the coming days as the battalions compete in a display of grit, endurance, and unwavering spirit.

AP Biodiversity Board holds training in Ziro

HT Correspondent

ZIRO, June 23: In a concerted push towards strengthening grassroots biodiversity governance and conservation in Arunachal Pradesh, the Arunachal Pradesh Biodiversity Board (APBB) organised a Training and Capacity Building Programme for the Biodiversity Management Committee (BMC) of Lower Subansiri district at Ziro on Friday.

The initiative, aimed at empowering local stakeholders with the knowledge and tools necessary for sustainable biodiversity management, was conducted as part of the state's commitment to its Biodiversity Strategy and Action Plan 2025-2035.

According to an official statement issued by the APBB, the programme was designed to sensitise BMC members, traditional leaders (Gaoon Buras), line department officials, technical experts, and local residents about their critical role in preserving the unique and fragile ecosystems of Arunachal Pradesh.

The event began with a welcome address by Dr Bamin Yakang, research officer at the State Biodiversity Board, who laid emphasis on the urgent need for collective stewardship in preserving the state's rich natural heritage.

She highlighted that local communities are the first responders to changes in biodiversity and ecosystem health, and equipping them with the right knowledge is key to ensuring long-term conservation outcomes.

In his keynote address, H B Abo, IFS, member secretary of the APBB, underscored the importance of community participation, capacity building, and aligning biodiversity conservation goals with the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

He noted that effective implementation of biodiversity action plans requires strong institutional support from both government departments and village-level institutions.

As part of the technical sessions, Dr Bamin Yakang provided a detailed presentation on the Biological Diversity Act, 2002, and the recent BD (Amendment) Act of 2023.

She explained the legal responsibilities of Biodiversity Management Committees, Panchayati Raj Institutions, and other local bodies in preparing and updating the People's Biodiversity Register (PBR).



Dr Yakang also stressed the significance of access and benefit-sharing mechanisms that ensure equitable distribution of resources arising from biodiversity use.

Addressing the pressing issues faced by local farmers, Millo Tara, horticulture development officer, discussed sustainable agricultural practices, the importance of preserving indigenous plant species, and the application of modern water conservation techniques such as drip irrigation.

He called upon farmers to adopt organic methods and prioritise the cultivation of native horticultural crops for ecolog-

ical and economic resilience.

Adding to the discourse, Koj Hormin from the Agriculture Department spoke about the emerging threat posed by wild black grasshopper infestations in the region, linking it to ongoing climatic fluctuations.

He advocated for the implementation of eco-friendly pest management strategies and encouraged the community to avail government schemes such as the ATMA Krishi Yojana to mitigate crop losses.

From the fisheries sector, Lyagi Lasa of the Division Fishery

Department presented a comprehensive strategy to boost local fish production.

He advised communities to move towards sustainable fishery practices that not only ensure food security but also prevent environmental degradation, particularly in fragile paddy ecosystems which serve as important water and soil reservoirs.

K S Rab, scientist in-charge of the Zoology Division at the State Forest Research Institute (SFRI), gave a data-rich presentation on the exceptional biodiversity of Arunachal Pradesh. He highlighted the presence of over 200 mammal species, 115 reptile species, 65 amphibians, between 850 to 900 butterfly species, more than 6,000 arthropods, and 260 varieties of freshwater fish.

Rab warned that without adequate protective measures, these ecosystems could come under severe threat.

He called for the integration of biodiversity conservation with livelihood generation through ecotourism, bio-prospecting, and traditional practices.

Ashwini Krishna, consultant to the Biodiversity Board from Nativefolks Pvt Ltd, elaborated on the State Biodiversity Strategy and Action Plan (SBSAP), providing an overview of upcoming projects under the ten-year vision.

She advocated for incorporating indigenous knowledge systems and local traditions into mainstream conservation approaches, ensuring that community values are upheld while promoting scientific sustainability.

The programme also served as a platform for dialogue between local bodies and government officials, aiming to strengthen inter-departmental coordination and encourage joint responsibility for biodiversity protection and rural development. The event concluded with a vote of thanks from Guchi Nigma, junior research fellow at the Arunachal Pradesh Biodiversity Board, who acknowledged the active participation of all stakeholders and reaffirmed the Board's commitment to continued engagement and support for local biodiversity initiatives.

The training marked an important step in decentralising biodiversity governance in Arunachal Pradesh and reaffirmed the state's resolve to safeguard its ecological wealth through inclusive, community-driven efforts.

PM's dynamism, willingness to engage remains 'prime asset' for India on global stage: Tharoor



NEW DELHI, June 23: Prime Minister Narendra Modi's energy, dynamism and willingness to engage remains a "prime asset" for India on the global stage but deserves greater backing, Congress MP Shashi Tharoor said on Monday, in remarks that are likely to irk his party and widen the growing cracks in his ties with its leadership.

Tharoor's praise for the prime minister comes at a time when the Congress has been consistently attacking the Modi government over its foreign policy, alleging that Indian diplomacy is being "shattered" and the country stands "isolated" globally.

In an article published in The Hindu, Tharoor said the diplomatic outreach following "Operation Sindoor" was a moment of national resolve and effective communication.

The Prime Minister's Office shared Tharoor's article on X and said, "Lok Sabha MP and former Union Minister Dr. Shashi Tharoor writes- Lessons from Operation Sindoor's global outreach."

The BJP took a swipe at the Congress over Tharoor's article and said the Thiruvananthapuram MP has "exposed" Rahul Gandhi. Reacting to Tharoor's comments, Bharatiya Janata Party's (BJP) national spokesperson Pradeep Bhandari said on X, "Shashi Tharoor admits that PM Modi's dynamism and global outreach are a strategic advantage for India."

In his article, Tharoor said, "Prime Minister Narendra Modi's energy, dynamism and willingness to engage remains a prime asset for India on the global stage but deserves greater backing."

"The diplomatic outreach following 'Operation Sindoor' was a moment of national resolve and effective communication. It affirmed that India, when united, can project its voice with clarity and conviction on international platforms," said the Congress leader, who led a multi-party delegation to the US and four other countries to convey India's stand following the Pahalgalam terror attack and the military operation.

Tharoor said the lessons learned - the power of unity, the efficacy of clear communication, the strategic value of soft power and the imperative of sustained public diplomacy - will undoubtedly serve as guiding principles as India navigates an increasingly complex international landscape, leveraging its three Ts -- tech, trade and tradition -- and always striving for a more just, secure, and prosperous world.

In his article, Tharoor said the aftermath of the April 22, 2025, Pahalgalam terror attack and India's resolute response through 'Operation Sindoor' presented a critical juncture for the nation's foreign policy.

"While the immediate military action was decisive, the subsequent diplomatic outreach was equally, if not more, vital in shaping global perceptions and consolidating international support," he said.

Modi honoured SP Mookerjee's sacrifice by abrogating Article 370: Pradhan

NEW DELHI, June 23: Prime Minister Narendra Modi honoured Syama Prasad Mookerjee's sacrifice by abrogating Article 370 of the Constitution, which had granted a special status to the erstwhile state of Jammu and Kashmir, Union minister Dharmendra Pradhan said on Monday.

BJP leaders, including Pradhan and Delhi Chief Minister Rekha Gupta, paid floral tributes at the late leader's statue during a memorial meet organised by the Delhi unit of the party at the S P Mookerjee Park here on the occasion of his death anniversary. Pradhan said for Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) and Jana Sangh workers, Mookerjee was not merely a person or a leader, but a living ideology.

"Seventy two years ago, he entered Jammu and Kashmir opposing the concept of 'two systems in one country', which made history. His sacrifice was honoured when Prime Minister Narendra Modi abrogated Article 370 in 2019," Pradhan said.

He noted that the country had diverse ideological groups after Independence -- communists, communists and nationalists -- and Mookerjee, often disagreeing with prime minister Jawaharlal Nehru's policies, chose to resign from the cabinet.

"This critical moment led him to join hands with the RSS and establish an alternative political ideology in the form of Jana Sangh," Pradhan said.

He recalled that once Nehru reportedly told Mookerjee, "I will crush you," to which the latter replied, "I will crush this crushing mentality."

Stressing that India is now close to being free from Naxalism, confined to just a few districts, Pradhan

"Leading one of the seven all-party parliamentary delegations to five countries in the Western Hemisphere -- Guyana, Panama, Colombia, Brazil and the United States -- offered me a unique vantage point to reflect on the lessons learned from this intensive period of public diplomacy," Tharoor said. One of the most striking takeaways is the power of national unity in projecting a strong foreign policy voice, he said.

The very composition of the delegations, featuring Members of Parliament (MPs) from diverse political parties, different states and varied faiths, was a potent message in itself, Tharoor said.

"It underscored that when it comes to national security and confronting terrorism, India speaks with one voice. This transcended domestic political differences, imbuing our message with greater credibility and gravitas in the eyes of our international interlocutors."

"Whether engaging with the President of Guyana or the US Vice-President, the collective resolve of India, represented by its varied political spectrum, resonated deeply," he asserted.

The delegations' primary objective was to provide clarity on 'Operation Sindoor', its rationale, the targeted nature of India's initial strikes against terrorist infrastructure, its calibrated and measured nature, and its avoidance of any harm to civilians and even to Pakistani military facilities, he said.

"We meticulously explained that India's actions were a legitimate exercise of self-defence, a necessary response to persistent cross-border terrorism. The success of this narrative was evident in the shift witnessed in several capitals."

"For instance, Colombia's retraction of its initial statement expressing condolences for supposed civilian casualties in Pakistan and its subsequent reaffirmation of support for India's sovereign right to self-defence was a significant diplomatic victory, directly attributable to our detailed and persuasive engagements," he said.

Tharoor also talked about the engagements in Washington DC.

"Even as a Pakistani delegation was simultaneously present, we found US representatives, including those who met the Pakistani officials, echoing our concerns and urging decisive action against terrorist groups such as the Lashkar-e-Taiba and Jaish-e-Mohammed," Tharoor said.

Following the Pahalgalam attack, Tharoor has been making comments on the India-Pakistan conflict and the diplomatic outreach that are at variance with the stand of the Congress, which has been questioning the government over US President Donald Trump's claims of mediating a ceasefire between the two countries. He has often drawn criticism from his own party and jibes aimed at him by Congress leaders for his stand. (PTI)

Assembly bypolls: AAP retains 2 seats in Punjab, Gujarat

Cong-led UDF wrests Nilambur from Left front in Kerala

NEW DELHI, June 23: AAP's Gopal Italia on Monday won from Gujarat's Visavadar assembly constituency and his party also retained Punjab's Ludhiana West seat while the Congress-led UDF wrested Nilambur from the ruling LDF in Kerala, according to results of assembly bypolls in four states.

The ruling BJP in Gujarat retained the Kadi seat, while the Trinamool Congress maintained its hold on the Kaliganj assembly seat in West Bengal's Nadia district.

The bypolls in the five constituencies were held on June 19.

Italia, the former president of the Gujarat unit of Aam Aadmi Party (AAP), defeated his nearest rival, BJP candidate Kirit Patel, in Visavadar seat of Junagadh district by a margin of 17,554 votes, according to data shared by the Election Commission.

Despite its near-total dominance in the state, the BJP has not won the Visavadar seat since 2007. The seat fell vacant in December 2023 after the then AAP legislator Bhupendra Bhayani resigned and joined the ruling BJP.

Punjab's ruling AAP retained the Ludhiana West Assembly seat with its candidate Sanjeev Arora defeating his nearest rival and Congress candidate Bharat Bhushan Ashu by a margin of 10,637 votes.

Arora secured 35,179 votes while Ashu got 24,542 votes, according to the Election Commission data. BJP's Jiwan Gupta polled 20,323 votes while the Shiromani

AKALI Dal's nominee Parupkar Singh Ghuman got 8,203 votes. The by-election was necessitated following the death of AAP MLA Gurpreet Bassi Gogi in January.

Thanking the voters for the wins, Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) chief Arvind Kejriwal called the bypolls a "semi-final to 2027" and a clear sign that voters would reject both the BJP and the Congress.

Gujarat and Punjab will face assembly elections in 2027.

"Both the parties, Congress and BJP, contested the elections together in both places. Both of them had the same objective - to defeat AAP. But people rejected both these parties in both the places," Kejriwal said in a post on X.

Punjab Chief Minister Bhagwant Mann said the result is a clear indication that the people of the state are "extremely happy" with the government's work. "We are working day and night with complete honesty and without any discrimination for the progress and prosperity of Punjab," he said.

BJP's Rajendra Chavda bagged the Kadi seat of Mehsana district in Gujarat, reserved for the Scheduled Caste candidates, by a margin of 39,452 votes over Congress' Ramesh Chavda.

The Kadi seat fell vacant in February following the death of BJP MLA Karsan Solanki.

Gujarat Congress president Shaktisinh Gohil resigned from his post, taking moral responsibility for the defeat of the party's candi-



dates in Kadi and Visavadar assembly constituencies.

In Kerala, the Pinarayi Vijayan-led LDF government received a setback as the opposition Congress-led UDF wrested the Nilambur assembly constituency from it by a margin of 11,077 votes.

Congress' Aryadan Shoukath, the son of the late Congress stalwart Aryadan Muhammed, defeated CPI(M) state secretary member M Swaraj in the fiercely fought byelection.

It is the fourth byelection defeat for the Marxist party-led Left Democratic Front during the ongoing tenure of the second Pinarayi Vijayan government. The LDF earlier lost in Puthupally, Palakkad and Thrikkakara Assembly segments.

The ruling CPI(M) said it accepted the people's ruling.

Significantly, it is the first time

the LDF has lost a seat held by it to its political rivals.

The Nilambur seat fell vacant after LDF-backed independent and two-time MLA P V Anvar resigned, setting off a heated political contest in the forest-fringe constituency.

Swaraj said the LDF would closely examine the results but rejected suggestions of anti-incumbency against the Left government.

Shoukath said the outcome was expected.

"It was a victory anticipated by the people of Kerala -- a major win against the LDF government," he said.

Independent candidate and two-time legislator P V Anvar delivered a strong performance in the Nilambur by-election, surprising both the UDF and the LDF.

For the Congress-led UDF, a win here would provide a much-

needed boost ahead of the Assembly polls next year.

In West Bengal, the ruling Trinamool Congress candidate Alifa Ahmed won from the Kaliganj Assembly seat by a landslide margin of 50,049 votes over her nearest BJP rival Ashish Ghosh, bettering the 2021 winning margin of her father Nasiruddin Ahmed, whose demise in February this year necessitated the byelection.

After the final 23rd round of counting, Alifa bagged 1,02,759 votes compared to Ghosh who finished the race with 52,710 votes, according to figures posted by the Election Commission on its website.

The Left-supported Congress candidate Kabil Uddin Shaikh came in third with 28,348 votes.

Alifa, a 38-year-old engineer who quit her corporate job at an IT firm in Kolkata to foray into politics, attributed her victory to "people's love" and thanked them for "reposing faith in Mamata Banerjee's development politics".

In a post on X, CM Mamata Banerjee said, "People of all religions, castes, races and walks of life in the area have blessed us immensely by exercising their right to vote in the by-elections to the Kaliganj Assembly constituency. I humbly express my gratitude to them."

"The main architects of this victory are 'Maa, Mati, and Manush'. My colleagues from Kaliganj have worked tirelessly for this...." (PTI)

People will not tolerate if you belittle oppn, Kharge tells PM Modi

RAICHUR (KARNATAKA), June 23: Congress national president Mallikarjun Kharge on Monday slammed Prime Minister Narendra Modi for "trivialising" the opposition, and criticised his absence from the all-party meetings convened after the Pahalgalam terror attack.

Kharge said the prime minister's absence reflects his scant respect for the opposition.

Addressing a public gathering here, Kharge remarked that the country was going through a difficult phase.

"Recently, Pakistani terrorists killed 26 people in Pahalgalam. In response, the Indian armed forces carried out strikes on terror facilities inside Pakistan and eliminated the terrorists," he said.

He alleged that while the entire nation and the armed forces worked in unison to defend the country, some individuals tried to take personal credit.

"Had they served in the Army as a captain, colonel, or lieutenant colonel, we would have appreciated them for doing a great job and

fighting for the country. But that is not the case," Kharge said, without directly naming anyone.

Kharge was in Raichur along with Chief Minister Siddaramaiah, Congress ministers, and MLAs, where he laid the foundation stone for several projects and presided over the naming ceremony of Raichur University.

The Leader of Opposition in the Rajya Sabha said Congress was the first to demand an all-party meeting on the Pahalgalam terror strike.

"When the meetings were convened twice, the prime minister failed to attend on both occasions. I want to ask him why he did not attend," he noted that leaders from Kanyakumari to Kashmir had left behind important engagements to attend the meeting, yet the PM chose not to attend despite being in the country.

"Instead, he was busy campaigning for the Bihar elections. What does that mean? While the country and soldiers were fighting on one side, the prime minister chose to campaign on the other, after inviting us to an all-party

meeting. This is inappropriate," Kharge said.

He warned that such an attitude does not bode well.

"If you try to belittle the opposition, the leaders, people, and especially the youth of this country will not tolerate it," Kharge cautioned.

Kharge also took a dig at the USA for imposing retaliatory taxes.

"Modi was shouting the slogan 'Phir Ek Baar Trump Sarkar' (during the US elections). This great man said this in America, but Trump imposed hefty taxes on Indian goods. The PM did not speak a word on it," Kharge said.

The Congress chief reminded the prime minister that Iran had always supported India as the country imports 50 per cent of its fuel requirement from there.

"Now there is an armed conflict going on between Iran and Israel. We should have made attempts to stop it," the veteran Congress leader said.

Kharge said Modi's only loud slogan is that he is going to be the "Vishwa Guru". (PTI)

India has moved from tech follower to global leader in science and innovation: Jitendra Singh

NEW DELHI, June 23: Minister of State for Science and Technology Jitendra Singh on Monday said India has transformed into a global leader in science and technology over the past decade driven by a political climate that enabled scientific risk-taking and innovation.

Speaking at a press conference following detailed presentations by four major science departments, Singh said, "The last 11 years turned technology into the engine of India's growth story. More importantly, we are no longer a technology follower but a technology leader."

India is now setting global best practices in science and innovation rather than waiting to adopt them from

abroad, he added. The minister credited this shift to a "supportive political dispensation" after 2014 that allowed scientists the freedom to experiment even when success wasn't guaranteed.

"What a scientist needs most is the liberty to try and that space was given to us by the hon'ble prime minister," he said, pointing to reforms like opening up space and nuclear sectors to private participation and encouraging global collaborations.

Emphasising that India never lacked talent but previously lacked policy support, Singh said the country had moved away from working in silos and was now witnessing convergence between public and private sectors. (PTI)

Odisha plans to ease forest, wildlife restrictions to boost tourism; experts see red

NEW DELHI, June 23: Odisha is seeking to ease environmental restrictions to promote tourism inside and around some of its most ecologically sensitive regions, including tiger reserves and Ramsar wetlands, official records show. Experts have flagged the move as "dangerous" for conservation efforts and tribal rights.

According to minutes of a high-level meeting chaired by the Odisha chief secretary on May 30, the state plans to revisit and amend Eco-Sensitive Zone (ESZ) notifications to remove clauses prohibiting construction and commercial activities.

It also plans to request the Centre to allow forest land to be used for non-site-specific purposes such as hospitality infrastructure and to re-examine Coastal Regulation Zone (CRZ) classifications to accommodate more tourism projects along the coast.

ESZs are buffer areas created around protected forests, wildlife sanctuaries and national parks to protect wildlife and biodiversity from harmful human activities such as mining, construction and polluting industries. Activities like farming, eco-tourism and the use of renewable energy are usually allowed with restrictions.

These buffer areas between wildlife habitats and human-dominated regions act as "shock absorbers," said B K Singh, a retired Indian Forest Service (IFS) officer.

"The move is definitely not in the interest of



conservation and will lead to a rise in human-wildlife conflict, as seen in the case of Dhenkanal, where human-elephant conflict has increased over the years," he said. Retd IFS officer and ESZ guidelines author Prakriti Srivastava said the guidelines were designed to limit human impact, reduce human-wildlife conflict and maintain wildlife corridors.

In a state like Odisha, where 149 people died in elephant encounters in 2023 24, the push to restrict ESZs and promote commercial activity reflects "double standards and endangers both people and wildlife," she said.

The minutes of meeting (MoM) note that the current "no commercial/no construction" clause in ESZ notifications "does not accurately reflect the enabling spirit" of the 2011 guidelines is-

sued by the Centre.

"ESZs notified/to be notified should be discussed with the Department of Tourism (DoT) and the tourism master plan should be taken into consideration," the MoM read.

The Odisha Coastal Zone Management Authority has been asked to re-examine CRZ classifications to support tourism in areas having "extremely high potential". The state has also decided to set up an empowered committee under the chairpersonship of the additional chief secretary, Forest and Environment Department, to discuss issues relating to tourism projects vis-a-vis forest clearance and ESZs.

However, independent ecologists, wildlife scientists or tribal representatives are absent from the panel. Experts say Odisha's move could allow economic interests to shape regulatory frameworks meant for ecological protection and mark a dangerous departure from India's legal and ecological commitments.

"The State is the constitutional trustee of forests and wildlife, with a mandate to safeguard these natural assets," Debadiyoti Sinha, Lead - Climate & Ecosystems at the Vidhi Centre for Legal Policy, said.

"A directive that requires states to merely 'take into consideration' the tourism master plan while notifying ESZs raises serious concerns. It implies that economic interests may override ecological imperatives," he said. (PTI)

Education Department must work to further improve literacy rate: Manik Saha

Tripura now third fully literate state in India: CM



HT Correspondent

AGARTALA, June 23: In a landmark achievement, Tripura Chief Minister Manik Saha on Monday declared Tripura as the third fully literate state in the country, marking a historic milestone in the state's educational journey.

Speaking at a celebration organized under the ULLAS - Nav Bharat Saaksharta Karyakram at Rabindra Satabarshiki Bhavan, Saha emphasized that the success of the literacy campaign must now be taken further by strengthening skill development among the newly literate and fostering self-reliance.

"Literacy is vital for realising Prime Minister Narendra Modi's vision of a Viksit Bharat by 2047. Tripura achieved full literacy is not just a proud moment but also a significant milestone in our state's development journey," said the Chief Minister.

Tripura now joins Mizoram and Goa as the only three states in India to achieve full literacy.

Saha congratulated all stakeholders, particularly the Education Department, for their tireless efforts.

"This moment embodies the spirit of Sabka Saath, Sabka Vikas, Sabka Vishwas, Sabka Prayas. We

have seen that spirit come alive through this achievement," he remarked.

Saha, who also holds the Education portfolio, credited the Union Ministry of Education for providing a robust framework and consistent support for the campaign.

Citing data to illustrate Tripura's remarkable progress, he noted, "In 1961, our literacy rate was just 20.24%. It rose to 60.44% in 1991, 73.19% in 2001, and 87.22% in 2011. Under the Nav Bharat Literacy Programme through the ULLAS initiative, the state achieved a literacy rate of 93.7% in

2023-24, which further rose to 95.6% in 2024-25. This figure is expected to go even higher with a comprehensive survey."

Saha also stressed the need for continued efforts, especially in rural and underserved areas.

"When parents are illiterate, they dream of an education for their children. Today, even educated children are inspiring their parents to learn. This campaign is not just about literacy—it's a social movement," he said.

He highlighted the widespread participation in the program, with 943 Social Consciousness Centres established across all blocks and villages, supported by 2,228 volunteer teachers. Students, retired educators, and local communities are also actively contributing.

Sharing the impact of recent assessments, Dr. Saha informed that on March 17, 2024, a total of 4,597 people appeared for the Foundational Literacy and Numeracy Assessment Test, with 3,581 passing.

On December 29, 2024, 13,909 out of 14,179 candidates passed, and in March 2025, 5,819 of 5,896 candidates successfully cleared the test. "In this united effort lies the key to a more educated, empowered, and prosperous Tripura," he concluded.

Nagaland Governor reviews TB elimination efforts

HT Correspondent

DIMAPUR, June 23: Nagaland Governor La Ganesan on Monday chaired a review meeting on the implementation of the Pradhan Mantri TB Mukti Bharat Abhiyan, underscoring the state's commitment to eliminating tuberculosis by 2025. The meeting, held at Raj Bhavan in Kohima, was attended by senior officials of the Health and Family Welfare Department, including Minister Paiwang Konyak and Commissioner and Secretary Anoop Khinchi.

In his address, Governor Ganesan stressed the urgent need to tackle the social stigma surrounding tuberculosis and called for leveraging the influence of religious leaders to raise awareness among communities. He highlighted the role of community engagement in the fight against TB and urged individuals, organisations, and institutions to register as Nikshay Mitras—voluntary donors under the national initiative. These donors provide essential nutritional and psychosocial support to TB patients, helping improve treatment outcomes and their overall quality of life.

Health Minister Paiwang Konyak briefed the Governor on the department's strategies and



ongoing initiatives aimed at combating the disease. He pointed out the challenges faced, particularly in reaching remote and vulnerable populations, and outlined the steps taken to strengthen surveillance, expand access to free treatment, and spread awareness through targeted campaigns.

The minister expressed hope that with the continued support of the Governor and collaboration from various sectors, Nagaland would be able to meet the national goal of TB elimination within the set timeframe.

Commissioner and Secretary of

Health, Anoop Khinchi, also presented an update on the department's focused efforts towards TB prevention, early detection, and comprehensive patient care. He stressed the importance of inter-sectoral coordination and the involvement of local communities in achieving sustainable results.

The meeting concluded with a strong reaffirmation from all stakeholders to intensify their efforts and work in a coordinated manner towards making Nagaland TB-free by 2025, in alignment with the national vision.

Restoration of free movement along state's highways key to peace process: Manipur Cong chief

IMPHAL, June 23: Manipur Pradesh Congress Committee (MPCC) president K. Meghachandra on Monday said restoring free movement along the state's National Highways and other routes is essential for the peace process in the conflict-hit state.

Speaking to reporters, Meghachandra said, "Amit Shah has said that the situation in Manipur is not yet conducive for re-establishing an elected government. There has been no complete free movement in the state for the last 780 days."

He added that while Shah had ordered the restoration of free movement from March 8 this year, with state transport buses placed under armed escort, the directive has failed in implementation.

"If the government restores free movement in the state, it will be a step towards the peace process," the Wangkhem legislator said.

Manipur continues to face various difficulties due to ongoing eth-

nic tensions and restricted movement, he added.

In the wake of the ethnic violence that broke out between the Kukis and the Meiteis in May 2023, Kuki organisations have strongly objected to free movement along NH-2 (Imphal to Dimapur) and NH-37 (Imphal to Silchar) which passes through Kuki-dominated areas.

They also demanded that unless a separate administration is given to the Kuki community, free movement will not be allowed.

On March 8, acting on Shah's directive, the Manipur government attempted to send a state transport bus through the Kuki-majority Kangpokpi district.

However, violence erupted when the bus, which started from Imphal, reached the district. Kuki protesters attacked the vehicle, leading to violent clashes between security forces and demonstrators. One person was killed in the firing, and dozens were injured. (PTI)

'Nagaland lost 354 sq km of humid primary forest between 2002 and 2024'



HT Correspondent

DIMAPUR, June 23: Noted wildlife conservationist and journalist Bano Haralu expressed concern that Nagaland lost 354 sq km of humid primary forest and 2,680 sq km of tree cover area from 2002 to 2024.

She attributed the loss of forest cover in the state to the fragmentation of forest as community conserved area, where connectivity is absent in most places and hunting of birds and animals is regular. "This is the major cause of slow

regeneration of the forest," Haralu noted.

Haralu is the programme manager of the Wildlife Conservation Society-India's Nagaland-Conservation and Livelihoods initiative.

She was speaking at a workshop on community biodiversity and wildlife conservation, organised by the Kohima Press Club in collaboration with Silviculture division Kohima, at Botanical Garden Kohima, a release said on Monday.

She added that the absence of conservation awareness on ecol-

ogy and indigenous and traditional knowledge about nature and its surrounding is another reason for the depleting forest cover in the state.

"Our state is not prioritising conservation of the environment and lags in creating alternate livelihood incomes for farmers and people," Haralu observed.

She also highlighted the imminent threats to the environment prevailing in state such as soil erosion, deforestation and the introduction of monocropping culture.

Sikkim celebrates Int'l Olympic Day with sports activities

GANGTOK, June 23: The Sikkim Olympic Association (SOA) on Monday celebrated the International Olympic Day 2025 with a series of sports activities at Paljor Stadium and a programme at the SOA office with the theme 'Move, Learn, Discover for a Better World.'

The celebrations began with multiple sporting events organised by member associations.

A blood donation camp was also organised by the SOA, showcasing the association's commitment to social responsibility alongside athletic development.

In a special felicitation ceremony, athletes who represented Sikkim at national-level tournaments were honoured for their achievements and contribution to sports.

Addressing the gathering, state Roads and

Bridges Minister NB Dahal commended SOA for celebrating Olympic Day with enthusiasm and purpose.

Emphasising the vital link between sports and youth development, he reiterated the government's commitment to strengthening sports infrastructure across the state.

Addressing a gathering, Dahal urged all member associations to conduct quarterly meetings with the 32 MLAs, allowing legislators to stay informed about sporting activities in their constituencies and extend meaningful support to emerging athletes.

In his address, SOA chief Kuber Bhandari highlighted the need for grassroots sports development at the panchayat level and expressed hope that Sikkim would see more Olympians emerge in the future. (PTI)

Cong MLA urges Tripura CM to abolish age limit for Assistant Professor recruitment

HT Correspondent

AGARTALA, June 23: Senior Congress leader and Tripura MLA Sudip Roy Barman has urged Chief Minister Prof. (Dr.) Manik Saha and the Tripura Public Service Commission (TPSC) to remove the upper age limit for the recruitment of Assistant Professors in General and Professional Degree Colleges, in accordance with the University Grants Commission (UGC) guidelines.

In his letter, Roy Barman highlighted that the existing recruitment rules in Tripura, as notified by TPSC, set the upper age limit at 40 years, which contradicts the UGC's regulations that do not prescribe any maximum

age for the appointment of Assistant Professors. "Currently, the age limit for the post of Assistant Professor in General and Professional Degree Colleges under the Tripura Government through TPSC is 40 years. The recently published advertisements No. 05/2025 (dated 30.01.2025) and No. 15/2025 (dated 07.05.2025) reflect this. However, as per UGC guidelines, there is no age limit for these posts. As a result, numerous qualified candidates—including those with NET/SET/PhD credentials and years of teaching experience as guest lecturers—are being unfairly excluded from applying," Roy Barman stated.

Kohima police cracks burglary cases

KOHIMA, June 23: In a major breakthrough, Kohima police have cracked a series of high-profile burglary cases, including the sensational theft of nearly ₹ 1 crore from the Kohima Municipal Council (KMC) office earlier this month. The accused, identified as Kekietuo, a resident of Kohima, has been arrested and has confessed to 11 major burglaries across the city since August 2023, police said today.

Briefing the media personnel at the office of Superintendent of Police, Kohima, Additional SP and PRO of Kohima Police, K Soriso Quinker NPS said Special Investigation Team (SIT) was constituted to probe the high-stakes KMC office burglary that occurred on June 3, 2025. The team, using a blend of advanced forensic tools, digital surveillance, and human intelligence, worked round the clock for over two weeks to track down the perpetrator.

According to Kohima police, suspicious spending patterns by the accused following the KMC incident provided a crucial lead. Subsequent investigation and surveillance led to the arrest of Kekietuo, who, during interrogation, admitted to committing a string of burglaries amounting to an estimated ₹ 1.5 crore. (NNN)

Nagaland MP urges CM to recognise tribal dialects as 'third language' to boost local employment

HT Correspondent

DIMAPUR, June 23: Lok Sabha MP from Nagaland, S Supongmeren Jamir, has urged Chief Minister Neiphiu Rio to initiate steps for official recognition of the state's tribal dialects and languages as a 'third language'.

In a letter addressed to the chief minister on Sunday, Jamir stressed that such recognition would not only uphold the linguistic diversity of the state but also create critical employment opportunities for local youth.

The appeal comes amid rising concerns over the engagement of non-local candidates as Gramin Dak Sevaks (GDS) in post offices across the North Eastern region, including Nagaland.

Drawing the chief minister's attention to the recruitment process, Jamir highlighted that the current system undermines the linguistic competencies of native candidates, placing them at a disadvantage.

According to the MP, the recruitment for Grade IV GDS posts in the postal department is conducted online and does not include any interviews or written examinations.

Eligibility is based solely on the submission of a Class X pass certificate and marksheet, with candidate shortlisting determined by marks obtained in English and Hindi—the languages currently prescribed as mediums of evaluation in Nagaland under notification No.17-02/2025-GDS (Annexure I) issued by the postal department.

Jamir argued that this language policy effectively disregards the third language or dialect spoken by local candidates, many of whom are more



fluent in their native tribal tongues than in Hindi or English.

As a result, local aspirants are often outperformed by candidates from other parts of the country, despite having the requisite academic qualifications.

He pointed out that over the past two years alone, there have been three rounds of recruitment for a total of 364 GDS posts in Nagaland, including a special recruitment drive in January 2023 that advertised 143 vacancies.

Jamir noted that the scale of recruitment highlights the urgency of ensuring that the process is inclusive and equitable for the state's indigenous population.

Jamir informed the chief minister that the Director General of GDS had, in principle, agreed to work with the North East Circle of the postal department to engage the state government in identifying local dialects and languages that could be recognised for recruitment purposes.

This initiative was intended to allow evaluation based on a candidate's fluency in their native language, thereby promoting fairer competition.

The MP further mentioned that the Director of Postal Services, Nagaland, had already communicated this proposal to the state Home Commissioner on April 16, 2025.

However, he lamented that the state government has yet to take concrete action towards formally recognising the dialects and languages spoken by the recognised tribes of Nagaland for inclusion as a third official language or medium of evaluation.

Jamir added that the state Home Department had subsequently written to the Commissioner of the state government and the Commissioner & Secretary of the Department of Art and Culture, seeking their comments and recommendations on the matter.

He emphasised that timely intervention by the chief minister could ensure a policy framework that reflects the linguistic diversity of Nagaland and secures greater employment avenues for its youth.

The MP's appeal reinforces the broader call for policy reforms that not only protect the cultural identity of indigenous communities but also empower them through inclusive and representative administrative measures.

Mizoram eyes Olympics with Vision 2036 plan

AIZAWL, June 23: Mizoram Chief Minister Lalduhoma on Monday said the state government is actively implementing Vision 2036, an initiative aimed at grooming young athletes to represent India in the 2036 Olympic Games.

Speaking at the closing ceremony of the Olympic Day Run held at Lammual here, Lalduhoma said, "So far, Mizoram has produced only two Olympians. We believe that many Mizo youths have the potential to represent India in future Olympics. Vision 2036 is a step in that direction. We have started training youths so that they represent the country in the Olympics."

The CM said sports brings unity and brotherhood among different communities.

The event, organised by Mizoram Olympic Association, was attended by Sports Minister Lalnginghlova Hmar.

In January, the Empowering Mizoram Sports (EMS) programme was launched under the state's flagship 'Bana Kaih' or handholding scheme to promote sports and groom talented youths.

The EMS programme aims to establish sports coaching and talent development programmes across Mizoram.

As part of this programme, basic coaching will be provided to children aged 8 to 15 years, focusing on preparing them for future competitions, particularly the 2036 Olympics.

The government has allocated ₹ 2.5 crore for implementation of the programme. (PTI)

Four PREPAK (PRO) militants arrested, firearms seized

IMPHAL, June 23: Four militants belonging to the proscribed outfit PREPAK (PRO) were arrested in Manipur's Imphal East district and a cache of arms and ammunition was seized from their possession, police said on Monday.

The arrested militants were identified as Thingbaijam Philip Singh, Lourembam Kumar Meitei, Laishram Haridas and Yumnam Akash Singh. They were arrested from different places in the district on Sunday, a police statement said.

Based on inputs provided by the arrested militants, a search operation was launched in the foothills of Kalika in the district and a cache of arms and ammunition was seized, it said.

The cache contained four self-loading rifles and 10 magazines, one light machine gun, one .303 modified sniper and two magazines, 82 cartridges, five hand grenades and nine detonators, the statement added. (PTI)

E-AUCTION FOR LEASING OUT OF SLR COMPARTMENT BY VARIOUS TRAINS

E-Auction for leasing contract of SLR compartments by various trains, originating from Tinsukia Division through e-Auction on single trip basis for a period of 2 years. Description: Leasing of 4.0 tonne FSLR compartment. Auction Start Date & Time: 10:00 hrs. on 09-07-2025; Auction Close Date & Time: 13:20 hrs. on 09-07-2025. Rate Unit: Per Trip Licensing Fee.

Auction Catalogue No.: TSK-SLR-58

Seq No.	Lot No./Category	Trips/Days
AA/1	15814-SLR-F1-MZS-DKGN-25-2 (Parcel-SLR)	730
AA/2	15614-SLR-F2-MZS-GHY-25-1 (Parcel-SLR)	730
AA/3	15614-SLR-F1-MZS-GHY-25-1 (Parcel-SLR)	730
AA/4	12068-SLR-F1-JTTN-GHY-25-1 (Parcel-SLR)	626
AA/5	15770-SLR-F1-MXN-APDJ-25-1 (Parcel-SLR)	730
AA/6	15770-SLR-R1-MXN-APDJ-25-1 (Parcel-SLR)	730
AA/7	15814-SLR-F2-MZS-DKGN-25-1 (Parcel-SLR)	730
AA/8	15896-SLR-F2-MZS-RNY-25-1 (Parcel-SLR)	730
AA/9	15666-SLR-R1-MXN-GHY-25-1 (Parcel-SLR)	730
AA/10	15926-SLR-F1-DBRG-DGHR-25-1 (Parcel-SLR)	105
AA/11	15907-SLR-F1-TSK-NHLN-25-1 (Parcel-SLR)	522
AA/12	15666-SLR-F1-MXN-GHY-25-1 (Parcel-SLR)	730
AA/13	15896-SLR-F1-MZS-RNY-25-1 (Parcel-SLR)	730
AA/14	15666-SLR-F2-MXN-GHY-25-1 (Parcel-SLR)	730
AA/15	15770-SLR-F2-MXN-APDJ-25-1 (Parcel-SLR)	730
AA/16	15814-SLR-R1-MZS-DKGN-25-1 (Parcel-SLR)	730
AA/17	15614-SLR-R1-MZS-GHY-25-1 (Parcel-SLR)	730
AA/18	15896-SLR-R1-MZS-RNY-25-1 (Parcel-SLR)	730

The Auction catalogue has already been uploaded on 19-06-2025 on IREPS website.

Divisional Commercial Manager (IC), Tinsukia

NORTHEAST FRONTIER RAILWAY
"SERVING CUSTOMERS WITH A SMILE"

'SITAARE ZAMEEN PAR' BIG WIN FOR AAMIR KHAN: TRADE EXPERTS AS FILM PERFORMS WELL IN OPENING WEEKEND

MUMBAI, June 23: Superstar Aamir Khan seems to have broken his box office drought with his latest movie "Sitaare Zameen Par" amassing ₹ 57.6 crore at the ticket window in just three days of its release, say trade experts.

The film, a follow-up to Aamir's 2007 critically-acclaimed movie "Taare Zameen Par", released in theatres on June 20 and raked in ₹ 10.7 crore on day one, followed by ₹ 19.90 crores on day two and ₹ 26.80 crores on day three, according to the makers.

The film's performance at the box office is definitely a big win for Aamir, whose last two releases -- "Thugs of Hindostan" (2018) and "Laal Singh Chaddha" (2022) -- failed to bring audiences to theatres.

"It's a massive win for Aamir Khan. He took a bold decision, and audiences have respected his sincerity. It's a little gem, the film is wonderful, it has fun and entertainment, but it also carries a strong social message. The film will be in theatres for a long time," Kamal Gianchandani, chief of Business Planning & Strategy at PVR INOX Ltd and also the CEO of PVR INOX Pictures Ltd, told PTI.

PVR INOX Pictures is the official distributor of "Sitaare Zameen Par", which is adapted from the acclaimed Spanish movie of the same title.

Gianchandani, who is also the president of the Multiplex Association of India (MAI), said the movie also shatters the myth that only spectacle cinema is working in theatres.

"The numbers are absolutely shattering this myth which we have long believed. It wasn't correct. The numbers are validating the fact that audiences want to come out and watch good films in the theatres irrespective of the size and scale of a film," he said.

"It will inspire a lot of producers and directors to come out with the stories that are rooted in Indian ethos, which are sensitive stories of Indian characters," he added. Devang Sampat, CEO of Cinepolis, said the film continues to perform well in theatres.

"Sitaare Zameen Par" had a powerful opening on Friday however by Sunday, admissions had nearly tripled, underscoring the audience's overwhelming enthusiasm.

"Even more impressive is that weekday box-office numbers are trailing the weekend by only a small margin, and we expect Monday footfalls to surpass Friday's. This rare trajectory in the film industry doesn't just point to commercial success—it reveals a deep, sustained emotional resonance with viewers, propelling the film into truly uncharted territory," he said in a statement. Trade expert Komal Nahta described the film's box office outcome as "terrific".

"The film is doing fantastic business, what a growth over the weekend, it is unimaginable. It has been almost a 150 per cent jump from the day it was released to now. The film was carrying low buzz before the release, and see how the audience has taken it forward," Adarsh told PTI.

Distributor-exhibitor Akshay Rathi, who owns theatres in Chhattisgarh, Maharashtra, and Madhya Pradesh, said "Sitaare Zameen Par" has done a "decent" business in urban India but "not that great".

"The film has risen like a phoenix from day one to three. Post the pandemic, massy big films like 'Pathaan', 'Jawan', 'Animal', and 'Gadar' worked, and everyone wrote off urban multiplex films, but 'Sitaare Zameen Par' marks the return of urban multiplex hits.

"The core business of the movie is from urban and multiplex audiences. This film is here for the long run, and its lifetime business should be ₹ 200 crores," he told PTI.

At the same time, experts expressed concerns about its performance in single-screen theatres.

Trade analyst Girish Wankhede said that despite a noticeable uptick in business, the numbers remain below the expected mark for an Aamir Khan-led movie.

"I believe stars should make films that reach a wide audience, but this has had a limited release. The single-screen theatres face losses in such a scenario, and the industry does not benefit much from this. The real test of the film is on weekdays," Wankhede told PTI.

Nitin Datar, President of the Cinema Owners and Exhibitors Association, India (COEAI), said the box office collection of "Sitaare Zameen Par" was driven by good word-of-mouth. (PTI)



Bans, censorship and more... Film industry fought Emergency with its back to the wall

NEW DELHI, June 23:

Kishore Kumar was banned from All India Radio and Doordarshan, "Aandhi" was axed from the big screen after its release and political satire "Kissa Kursi Ka" didn't see the light of day at all... The Emergency years were a time of great churn for the film industry where creativity peaked but so did censorship.

Then prime minister Indira Gandhi declared Emergency in the country on June 25, 1975, plunging the country into turmoil. And it was not just about politics. The entertainment sector felt the brunt of the long, repressive arm of the state and those who did not toe the line suffered hugely.

It was a stand out 21 months — Emergency was lifted on March 21, 1977 — that also saw Dev Anand start his own party, the National Party of India, in protest against the regime. The apolitical star brigade came out in strong support of the Janata Party with artists such as Pran, Shatrughan Sinha, Pran, Vijay Anand and Danny Denzongpa making their opinion known.

"During the Emergency, the film industry galvanised itself and stood against the government... At least the key people of

the film industry had the guts to stand up to the government and say, what are you doing is not right," film historian and author S M Ausaja told PTI.

In a 2003 interview with Reader's Digest, Dev Anand described how he suffered the consequences of refusing to praise Sanjay Gandhi. His films were banned from being screened on Doordarshan.

"They pushed us film people to the wall, and I got annoyed. They banned Kishore Kumar songs from All India Radio and Doordarshan because he didn't toe their line. And they called us to New Delhi to sloganeer for Sanjay Gandhi.

"I met (then) information minister VC Shukla and told him, 'I'll take part only if you admit we're now a police state'. He backed off. Then opposition leaders approached me for support. I spoke at their rallies and even formed the National Party of India (NPI)," Dev Anand recalled.

After the Emergency, the actor wound up his party because he said he was disillusioned with the Janata coalition. The period, Ausaja said, was a big blow to the freedom of expression in the field of cinema. (PTI)

Diljit's 'Sardaar Ji 3' to only release in overseas territories after row over Hania Aamir's casting

NEW DELHI, June 23 Punjabi singer-actor Diljit Dosanjh's new movie "Sardaar Ji 3" will only be released in overseas territories following controversy and calls for boycott over the casting of Pakistani actor Hania Aamir.

The movie, the third in Dosanjh's horror comedy franchise, will release in theatres outside India on June 27. "Sardaar Ji 3" Releasing 27th June overseas only. Fadh Lao Bhoond Dian Lattan," the actor-singer posted on Instagram.

The All Indian Cine Workers Association (AICWA) criticised Dosanjh and the movie's team for casting Aamir in the movie.

"Despite knowing the recent brutal terrorist attack in Pahalgam, Jammu & Kashmir, in which 26 innocent Indian lives were lost at the hands of Pakistani-sponsored terrorists, Diljit Dosanjh has shockingly chosen to cast a Pakistani artist.

"This decision comes at a time when the entire nation of 140 crore Indians, the government, the opposition, and citizens across all walks of life are united against Pakistan and standing in solidarity with the families of the martyred," the organisation said in a statement.

Through his actions, the AICWA said, Dosanjh has disrespected the sentiments of the nation and insulted the sacrifice of soldiers and civilians.

"His preference for Pakistani talent over Indian artists raises serious questions about his loyalty and priorities," it added.

Aamir's presence in the movie has irked many social media users, who expressed their disappointment in the comments section of Dosanjh's post. "Boycott," wrote one of the users.

"Diljit Dosanjh is a traitor," another user said. "Country first, boycott @diljitosanjh @teamdiljitglobal," wrote another.

Hostilities between India and Pakistan intensified following the Pahalgam terror attack that killed 26 people on April 22.

In response, Indian armed forces hit nine terror camps in Pakistan and Pakistan-occupied Kashmir (PoK) on May 7 under the codename Operation Sindoor. In the aftermath of the terror attack, social media accounts of many Pakistani actors, including Hania, Fawad Khan, Mahira Khan, Ali Zafar, Atif Aslam and Rahat Fateh Ali Khan, were withheld in India. PTI ATR

Around the same time, "Abir Gulaa", a romantic drama featuring Pakistani star Fawad Khan, was not allowed to release in theatres in India.

Directed by Amar Hundal, "Sardaar Ji 3" is produced by Gunbir Singh Sidhu and Manmord Sidhu of White Hill Studios alongside Story Time Productions. (PTI)



Restored, uncut version of 'Sholay' to be showcased at Il Cinema Ritrovato Festival in Bologna

NEW DELHI, June 23:

"Sholay", one of India's most celebrated films of all time, is set to create magic on the big screen once again with the premiere of its fully restored, uncut version at the prestigious Il Cinema Ritrovato Festival in Bologna, Italy.

The screening, commemorating the film's 50th anniversary, will take place on June 27 at the open-air Piazza Maggiore, said a press release. Featuring an ensemble cast of Amitabh Bachchan, Dharmendra, Hema Malini, Sanjeev Kumar, Jaya Bachchan and Amjad Khan, "Sholay" was written by Salim Khan and Javed Akhtar and directed by Ramesh Sippy.

The film is considered an inalienable part of Indian pop culture due to its popular characters like Jai, Veeru and Thakur as well as Gabbar Singh, one of the iconic villains of Hindi cinema, and plenty of dialogues and action sequences. "Some things in life remain permanently etched in your mind. 'Sholay' is one such film," said Amitabh Bachchan, who played the role of Jai in the movie.

He also recalled the "unforgettable experience" of shooting the movie.

"At the time I had no idea that it would be a watershed for Indian cinema. Its dramatic change in fortunes from being declared an unsuccessful venture, to its record-breaking box office run was an emotional rollercoaster for all of us.

"It's wonderful that the Film Heritage Foundation has restored 'Sholay' and that they have managed to locate and include the original ending as well as some deleted scenes in the restoration. I hope that even 50 years later, the film will capture the imagination of new audiences across the world," he added.

Dharmendra, who essayed the part of Veeru, called "Sholay" the 8th wonder of the world. "I am thrilled to hear that the film is being restored and I am sure it will have the same success as it had 50 years ago. Who can forget the dialogues of Salim-Javed and the direction of Ramesh Sippy? So many scenes have gone down in the history of Indian cinema and every character became a star. But the real hero was the coin," he said.

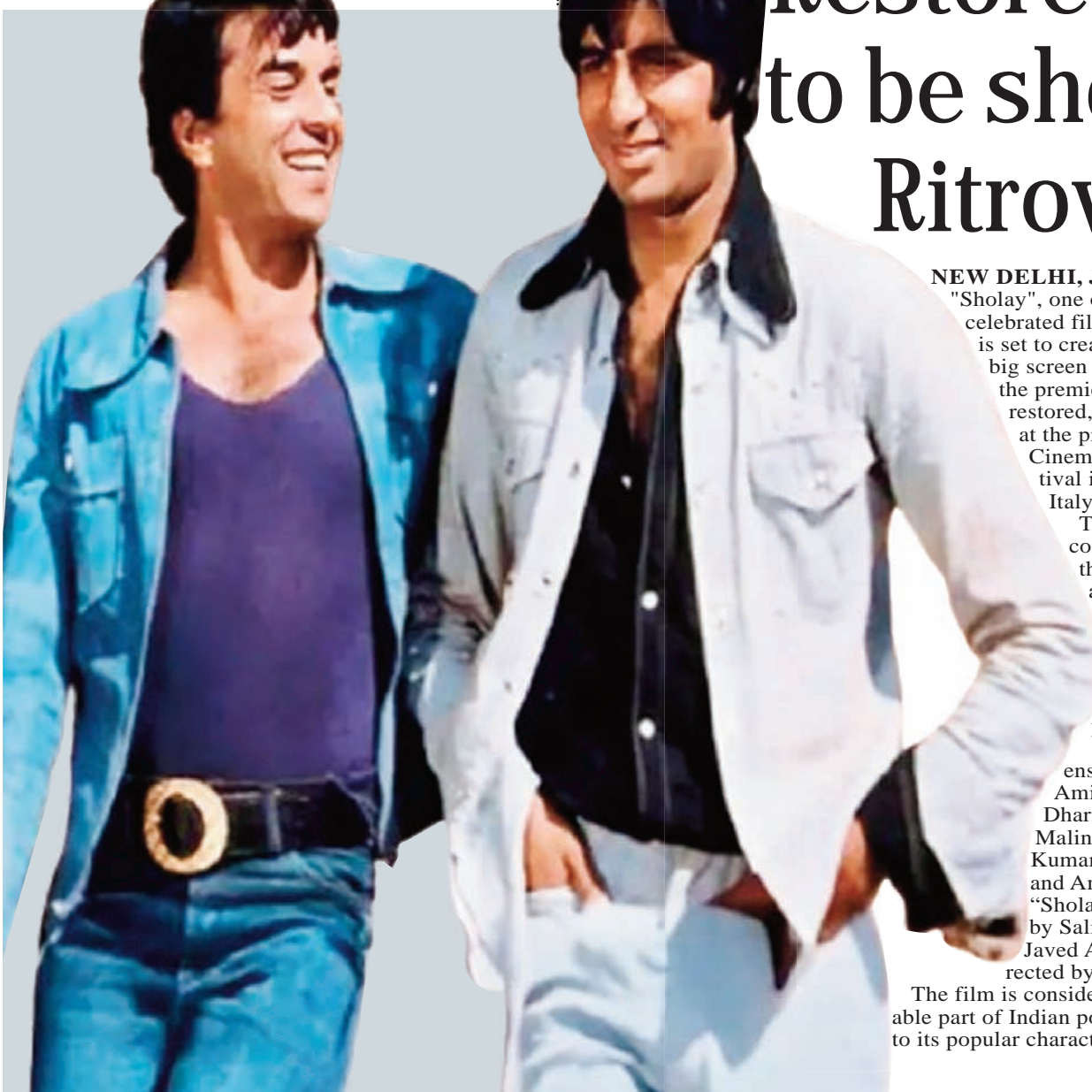
The veteran actor revealed that he was initially offered the choice between the roles of Gabbar and Thakur, but he wanted to play the role of Veeru as "he is so much like me". "I had so much fun on the shoot. My favourite scenes were the tanki scene, the scene in the temple, and so many others, but the most powerful scene I feel was the death of Jai, which is still etched in my mind," he added.

Shivendra Singh Dungarpur, director of Film Heritage Foundation, said, "My first memory of Sholay dates back to the time when I was six years old and I remember lamenting because my mother refused to allow me to go to the cinema to watch the film."

"I would never have imagined that 50 years later, I would have the opportunity to work on the restoration of the film — often described as the greatest Indian film ever made — with Shehzad Sippy of Sippy Films," he added.

Sippy, representing Sippy Films, called the project a deeply personal journey. "Sholay is the cornerstone of our family heritage and I am so proud that Sippy Films has been able to do a world-class restoration of the film with the Film Heritage Foundation."

"It has taken us three years, but we were able to find the original ending and some deleted scenes that the world will see for the first time at the grand premiere at the Il Cinema Ritrovato Festival in Bologna," he added. (PTI)



My main goal this season is World Championship in Tokyo: Neeraj Chopra



OSTRAVA (CZECH REPUBLIC), June 23: Unwilling to put himself under pressure of regular 90m throws, Indian javelin throw star Neeraj Chopra says he has a good feeling about Tuesday's Golden Spike Athletics meet here as he builds up for his ultimate goal this year -- a top finish at the World Championship in Tokyo.

Chopra defeated Julian Weber to win the Paris Diamond League with a throw of 88.16m last week. The two-time Olympic medallist

said with Czech great Jan Zelezny by his side as his coach and with his own determination, he is confident of good results.

The 27-year-old is riding high on his maiden 90m plus throw that he achieved in the season-opening Diamond League meet in Doha.

"I am really happy to work with such a great athlete and coach. I've already thrown 90m this year after little bit more improvement in technique. So let's

see when it comes next time but I am ready. Recently we've done a good training in Nymburk (Czech Republic) so I'll do my best here in Ostrava," he said.

"Main goal for the season is obviously World Championships in Tokyo," added the Haryana-lad who won a gold at the previous edition of the biennial showpiece.

Chopra said a part of his excitement for the Tuesday's event comes from watching on TV, greats like Usain Bolt compete

here in the past.

"When I was kid, I watched a lot of videos and photos of athletes as Usain Bolt competing here. I came last year but I didn't compete because of injury.

"Now I feel good, but I don't want to put any pressure on myself for 90m. But I'll try really hard."

The World Athletics Championships will be held in Tokyo from September 13 to 21 this year. Chopra, who won gold in

Two-time Olympic medallist hockey forward Lalit Upadhyay calls time on int'l career



NEW DELHI, June 23: Veteran Indian hockey forward Lalit Upadhyay has called time on his illustrious international career, drawing curtains on over a decade-long journey that saw him be a part of the teams that won bronze medals in Tokyo and Paris Olympic Games.

From making his debut at the 2014 World Cup to standing tall on the Olympic podium twice, Lalit's career is a time-line of some of Indian hockey's biggest milestones in the modern era.

He was a crucial part of the squad that scripted history at the Tokyo 2020 Olympics, helping India clinch a long-awaited bronze medal, and repeated the feat at the Paris Games in 2024, reinforcing his reputation as a big-match player.

"This journey began in a small village, with limited resources but limitless dreams," Lalit announced his decision through a heartfelt social media post shortly after India's final match of the European leg of the FIH Pro League 2024-25 season against Belgium on Sunday.

"From facing a sting operation to standing on the Olympic podium -- not once, but twice -- it's been a path full of challenges, growth, and unforgettable pride," Lalit posted.

"Becoming an Olympian from my city after 26 years is something I'll always carry with honor and gratitude," he added.

A natural play-maker with an uncanny knack for scoring goals, Lalit played 183 matches for India at the senior level, scoring 67 goals.

Over the years, he became a trusted name in India's forward line, known for his versatility, on-field intelligence, and calm demeanour in high-pressure situations.

The 31-year-old's final appearance in the Indian jersey came against Australia on June 15.

Reflecting on Lalit's contribution, Hockey India President Dilip Tirkey said, "Lalit has been one of the most graceful and dedicated forwards of his generation. Whether it was a crucial Olympic match or a league game, he always wore the Indian jersey with pride and played with heart."

"His journey from the narrow lanes of Varanasi to standing on the Olympic podium twice is nothing short of inspirational. We thank him for his selfless service to Indian hockey and wish him the very best for the next phase of his life."

Beyond the Olympics, Lalit was instrumental in India's victories at the 2016 Asian Champions Trophy, 2017 Asia Cup -- where he netted four goals -- and multiple other podium finishes. His medal-laden career includes a bronze at the 2017 Hockey World League Final 2017, silver at the 2018 Champions Trophy, bronze at the 2018 Asian Games, and gold at the 2018 Asian Champions Trophy.

He was also a part of the squads that finished third in the FIH Pro League 2021-22 and won gold at the 2022 Asian Games.

In recognition of his contributions to Indian hockey, Lalit was honoured with the Arjuna Award in 2021. (PTI)

Tame finish for Bhatia as Ryder Cup captain Bradley wins Travelers title

CROMWELL (USA), June 23: Akshay Bhatia had a tame finish with two double bogeys in the final round for a card of 4-over 74 that saw him finish in Tied-54th place in the Signature event.

Bhatia, who had rounds of 70-70-68-74 was 4-over 282 for the week.

In the final round, Bhatia started on the tenth and had just one birdie on the 17th, which was his eighth hole.

He double bogeyed the par-5 13th, bogeyed the 18th and double bogeyed the Par-4 ninth, his closing hole.

This season Bhatia's best has been a third place at the Players Championship.

Indo-British Aaron Rai (70) was Tied-17th with cards of 68-73-63-70 at 6-under.

Meanwhile, U.S. Ryder Cup Captain Keegan Bradley came back from three shots behind with four holes to play and birdied the 18th hole for a 2-under 68 to win the Travelers Championship in his hometown.

The victory also re-started discussion for Bradley to be playing captain for the first time since 1963 when Arnold Palmer played

as a playing captain at the Ryder Cup. Bradley was one behind Tommy Fleetwood going to the 18th hole.

Bradley hit his approach to just under six feet below the hole and Fleetwood, seeking his first PGA TOUR title, came up some 50 feet short and took three putts for bogey and a 72.

Bradley carded 69 and totalled 15-under as Fleetwood (72) was 14-under.

Bradley finished at 15-under 265 and won \$3.6 million for his first title in a Signature Event.

He also won the BMW Cham-

pionship, the second FedExCup Playoffs event, last August at Cherry Hills outside Denver.

Scottie Scheffler, who had a share of the 36-hole lead until a 72 in the third round, closed with a 65 and tied for sixth with Rory McIlroy, who also shot 65. They were three shots back.

It was tough for Fleetwood, 34, who was a runner-up for the sixth time on the PGA Tour.

Russell Henley chipped in from across the 18th green for birdie and a 69 to join Fleetwood in tied second. Henley called a one-shot penalty on himself in the second

round when he saw his golf ball move the length of a dime as he was playing a chip.

Bradley has two wins against world-class fields in the last 10 months -- only Scottie Scheffler has won more since August among players ahead of him in the Ryder Cup standings.

Bradley, who turned 39 earlier this month, won on the one-year anniversary that he received the call asking him to be Ryder Cup captain. Harris English (65) boosted his Ryder Cup hopes by tying for fourth with Jason Day (68). (PTI)

Tried not to think about discussions surrounding my place in side: Ollie Pope

LEEDS, June 23: His away series against India last year had started with a bang and ended in a whimper but Ollie Pope has consciously tried to not let discussions about his slot in the playing eleven affect him too much while constructing a stylish century during England's solid first innings reply on the second day of opening Test.

Vice-captain Pope, whose place in the team has been under scanner since his technique got exposed by Jasprit Bumrah and Indian spinners in the 2024 away series, scored a fine 106 in England's first innings score of 465.

For the record, Pope had started with 196 in Hyderabad and then in remaining four Tests, totalled 40 runs. "I've tried not to let it affect me too much," Pope said at post day press conference on Sunday.

"I've just been trying to make sure my game's in as good a place as possible and when I get in, try to make sure I make the most of it. I've tried to let the outside noise do its thing and make sure my game keeps improving, and that I get my headspace in as good a place as

possible too."

Pope has tried to bring about a change in his mindset wherein he doesn't feel too hard pressed to reach his first 30 runs and then feel set. "It's almost just trying my game a little bit more: not feeling like I've got to rush to 30 to then really feel 'in'. It's trying to enjoy the process of building an innings, rather than just, 'I want to get to 30 to then make a big one'..."

"It's something I've been working hard on, just generally putting my game in a better place and making sure my defence is as good as it can be."

However, the graceful right hander agreed that there is still a long way to go in the marathon five-Test series.

"It's a long series, and there's a lot to be done in this game still as well," he added.

"It's definitely (an innings) that I really enjoyed. It was disappointing not to kick on this morning, but I'm really happy with how I went about it and played, and I'm happy with where my game's at - so hopefully, I can kick on." (PTI)

Salzburg and Al Hilal play scoreless draw at Club World Cup, group remains up for grabs

WASHINGTON, June 23: Al Hilal dominated possession but Salzburg's defense held in a scoreless draw on Sunday that meant that Group H would come down a pair of consequential upcoming matches in the Club World Cup. Earlier in the day, Real Madrid defeated Pachuca 3-1, eliminating the Liga MX club.

But with the tie between Al Hilal and Salzburg, the group's spots in the knockout round remained up for grabs.

Salzburg will face a challenging match against Real Madrid in Philadelphia on Thursday with Kylian Mbappe likely return after missing Real Madrid's first two matches, according to coach Xabi Alonso. Al Hilal will face Pachuca in Nashville the same day.

Al Hilal, the runners up at the 2022 Club World Cup, pressured Salzburg from the start, with nearly 62 percent

possession through the first half. They took 10 shots, but had just one on target. For the game, Al Hilal had four shots on goal. It was clear that Al Hilal was missing the finishing touch of striker Aleksandar Mitrovic, who has missed both of the team's Club World Cup matches with a muscle injury.

The announced attendance at Audi Field was 16,167 fans, with big swaths of the crowd clad in Al Hilal's bright blue. In the final moments, the crowd chanted for Al Hilal, urging the team to score. Al Hilal goalkeeper Yassine Bounou stopped a nearly point blank shot from Salzburg's John Mellberg early in the second half. Moments later, Salzburg goalkeeper Christian Zawieschitzky saved a shot by Ruben Neves from outside the box as the game grew tense. Al Hilal has proven resilient throughout its first two

matches.

The club drew 1-1 with Real Madrid in its opening match with Neves converting a penalty and Bounou saving a penalty attempt at the death. "I think it's important in these competitions not to lose. We played today against a very good team. They defended very well, they didn't give us a lot of space. So it was difficult to find a solution. I think the draw is a very good result to play the third game with options," -- Al Hilal goalkeeper Yassine Bounou.

"We have four points after two matches and the boys are sitting in the room and they're disappointed. I think about it differently. We played against a very strong opponent, Al Hilal, and we showed good quality, we defended very well. We did it well with all the young players," Salzburg coach Thomas Letsch said. (AP)



France's court of auditors estimates \$6.8 billion public spending for 2024 Paris Olympics

PARIS, June 23: France's court of auditors provided Monday the first official estimate of public spending tied to the 2024 Paris Olympics and Paralympics, with the global public expenditure estimated at nearly six billion euros (\$6.8 billion).

The Cour des Comptes said in its preliminary report, which was published ahead of the 2030 Winter Olympics also awarded to France, that the spending includes €2.77 billion for the event organization and €3.19 billion for infrastructure investments.

Paris 2024 organizers challenged the estimates in comments attached to the report. They notably said that some expenditures which predated the



event and will continue afterward can't be attributed to Games. They also said that at-

tributing major investments to the Olympics, despite being unrelated projects launched long

before, is unjustified.

"Through its methodological choices, the Court has in fact declined to examine the only question that would meaningfully inform public debate: how much public money would have been saved if the Games had not been held in Paris?," said Tony Estanguet, the former head of the organizing committee.

"It is undeniable that this amount would be far less than the €6 billion currently cited by the court. The organizing committee, as it already stated during the contradictory procedure, estimates that this figure does not exceed €2 billion, while the expected economic benefits of the Games are said to represent three to five times that amount,"

he added.

The Cour des Comptes insisted that its progress report is based on data available as of March 31, 2025, and does not claim to draw final conclusions.

"The report does not include, due to unavailable data, any analysis of the positive or negative effects of the Games on economic activity or tax revenues, nor an assessment of tax expenditures related to their organization," the Cour said in a summary statement. "On this last point, the tax authorities informed the Court that no overall estimate is currently planned. This position is unsatisfactory, and the Court calls on the State to begin this evaluation without delay." (AP)

Kochhar finishes sole second in Morocco

MARRAKECH (MOROCCO), June 23: Indian golfer Karandeep Kochhar produced a bogey-free final round 7-under 65 but fell agonisingly short, finishing one stroke behind Filipino Aidric Chan to sign off with a runner-up finish at the Morocco Rising Stars Marakech.

Seeking his first win outside India as a pro, Kochhar finished 17-under with rounds of 70-67-69-65 while Chan shot a 7-under 65 in the final round to be 18-under at the Samanah Golf Club.

While Kochhar was the top Indian at the end of the week, the other Indians who made the cut were Ajeetesh Sandhu (12-under, T-13), Khalin Joshi (9-under, T-

34), Rahul Gangjee (7-under, T-43), Arjun Sharma (6-under, T-45) and Aman Raj (2-under, T-51).

Kochhar had seven birdies, made on the first, fourth, ninth, 10th, 12th, 16th and 17th holes.

Sandhu played a round of 4-under 68 on the final day to secure his top 15 finish, while Joshi, who was in the top 10 at the end of the third round, played a round of even par on the final day to fall out of the top 10.

Gangjee played even par round to finish tied 43. Arjun Sharma played a round of 3-under 69 on the final day to close the week at tied 45 while Aman Raj ended his week with an even par round to finish tied 51. (PTI)

