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## Honeymoon horror: Wife behind husband's murder; 5 held

Sonom gives in at Ghazipur in UP ● Conrad congratulates Meghalaya police for cracking the case

SHILLONG/ LUCKNOW, June 9: Indore tourist Raja Raghuvanshi was allegedly killed by men, hired by his wife, during their honeymoon in Meghalaya, DGP I Nongrang said on Monday.

Speaking to PTI, she said the wife, Sonam, surrendered before the Nandganj Police Station in Uttar Pradesh's Ghazipur, while three other assailants were arrested on overnight raids.

Of the three arrested men, two are from Madhya Pradesh's Indore and one from Lalitpur in Uttar Pradesh, she said.

East Khasi Hills SP Vivek Syiem said one more was arrested from Madhya Pradesh's Sadar district on Monday.

Raghuvanshi and his wife went missing while vacationing in Sohra area in Meghalaya's East Khasi Hills district on May 23. His body was found in a gorge on June 2,

while a search for his wife was underway.

"One person was picked up from UP, and another two accused were apprehended from Indore by the SIT," the DGP said.

"Sonam surrendered at the Nandganj police station in UP, and was subsequently arrested," she added.

Nongrang said the arrested men had revealed that the wife had hired them to kill Raghuvanshi.

The East Khasi Hills SP said, "The first person arrested was Akash Rajput, 19 years old, from Lalitpur, Uttar Pradesh. The second was Vishal Singh Chauhan, 22 years old, from Indore, Madhya Pradesh. The third was Raj Singh Khushwaha, 21 years old, also from Indore."

"Sonam Raghuvanshi is currently in police custody. This afternoon, we arrested Anand Kurmi,



23 years old, from Sadar district, Madhya Pradesh," the SP said.

Earlier in the day, Uttar Pradesh ADG Law and Order Amitabh Yash, in a statement, said, "Sonam Raghuvanshi, Govindnagar

Khadsa, Indore, Madhya Pradesh, aged about 24 years, was found in the night at Kashi Dhaba situated on the Varanasi Ghazipur main road. She was sent to Sadar Hospital for initial treatment and then

kept in One Stop Centre..."

A one-stop centre provides assistance to women in distress, both in private and public places.

A statement, issued by the Meghalaya Police, said Sonam is currently in the custody of the Uttar Pradesh Police, and necessary legal protocols are being followed for her transit.

"The arrests mark a decisive development in unravelling the circumstances surrounding the tragic death of Raja Raghuvanshi and the subsequent disappearance of his wife," it said.

The outcome of the investigation is the "result of round-the-clock efforts by the Meghalaya Police's Special Investigation Team (SIT), supported by State Disaster Response Force and National Disaster Response Force, local intelligence units and law enforcement (CONTD. ON PAGE-2)

## 'Assam govt to intensify drive to identify illegal foreigners'

GUWAHATI, June 9: Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma on Monday said the state government would enforce a 1950 law to identify and evict illegal foreigners, which empowers district commissioners (DCs) to carry out the proceedings.

He also maintained that a Supreme Court order delinking updating the National Register of Citizens (NRC) with foreigner identification process will help in intensifying action against illegal migrants.

The final NRC, a list of Indian citizens residing in Assam, was released in 2019 by excluding 19,06,657 people. However, it has not been notified by the Registrar General of India, leaving the controversial document without any official validity.

Speaking during a special day-long Assembly session, he alleged

that the Congress does not value citizenship, as out of four family members of one of its leaders, three are foreigners.

He was alluding to Congress state president Gaurav Gogoi whom the chief minister has been targeting for his alleged Pakistan links through his British wife. Gogoi was seated at the visitors' gallery of the Assembly during the day.

Replying to issues of detection and deportation of foreigners, Sarma said the state government will implement the Immigrants (Expulsion from Assam) Act, 1950, which allows DCs to declare illegal immigrants and evict them.

He said a constitutional bench of the Supreme Court, in a recent ruling on a case of the Citizenship Act, has given "sweeping power" to the state government by mentioning that the 1950 law remains valid. (CONTD. ON PAGE-2)

## No eviction of tribals under my government: CM



GUWAHATI, June 9: Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma on Monday said no tribal people have been evicted during his tenure, maintaining that his government was prepared to resolve the land rights issues of indigenous people in Kamrup and Goalpara districts through dialogue.

Speaking in the assembly, he accused the Congress of instigating the people in the Borduar tea estate and Rakhyasini hills by misleading them that the government was conspiring to take away their land.

Sarma was replying to AGP MLA Ramendra Narayan Kalita, who raised the protests in Borduar tea estate by a section of Rabha tribe people over apprehension of losing their land to a satellite township project of the government.

The CM said that developing a

satellite township meant improving infrastructure like roads, bridges, power connections, and water supply, and the government has no intention of taking land from the people there.

Regarding the proposed satellite township in Bordua-Palasbari area, he said that when the government received information that there were tribal people in Bordua tea estate, it had been mulling over buying out the estate.

The land under the possession of the tribals will be handed to them, and the remaining will be kept in the government land bank, which will be used for projects that would benefit the people, he said. "I had asked our minister to pursue the matter with the locals, and I cannot understand why this agitation happened. (CONTD. ON PAGE-2)

## Dibrugarh airport to be named after Bhupen Hazarika

Assembly session: MLAs pay tribute to 'Bard of Brahmaputra' by singing his evergreen numbers

GUWAHATI, June 9: The Assam Assembly on Monday echoed with soulful melodies of Bhupen Hazarika as legislators across party lines sang his iconic songs and recited his timeless compositions as the House unanimously adopted a resolution urging the central government to rename the Dibrugarh airport in honour of the legendary musician.

Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma, along with ministers and MLAs from both the treasury and opposition benches, paid glowing tributes to Hazarika's enduring legacy, especially his message of universal love and humanity through his creative works.

State Transport Minister Jogen Mohan moved the government resolution recommending that the central government rename the Dibrugarh airport as 'Bharat Ratna Bhupen Hazarika Airport, Dibrugarh', during the day-long special session convened for this purpose.



Several members punctuated their speeches with songs of Hazarika, with BJP minister Prasantha Phukan to CPI(M) legislator Manoranjan Talukdar singing together a couple of evergreen numbers by the 'Bard of Brahmaputra'.

Leader of opposition Debabrata Saikia of

Congress, supporting the resolution, said Hazarika wanted Assam to be the messenger of unity for the whole nation, and efforts must be made to turn it into a reality.

He made several proposals for preserving the memory of Hazarika, including a website with free access to his songs and films and scholarship to youngsters to study his compositions.

AUDIP legislators underlined the message of humanity in Hazarika's creative works and stressed the need to emulate it in all aspects.

Sarma, participating in the discussion, emphasised on Hazarika's identity as a 'humanist' above anything else.

"Who is a Leftist, BJP, Hindu, Muslim, we have to rise above it today...he was humanity. He had contested from Naoboicha Assembly seat as an Independent. I don't want to mention which party he represented," he said, seeking to downplay Hazarika's (CONTD. ON PAGE-2)

## BJP, AGP candidates file nomination for RS polls in Assam



GUWAHATI, June 9: Assam BJP secretary Kanad Purkayastha and AGP candidate Birendra Prasad Baishya on Monday filed nomination papers for elections to two Rajya Sabha seats in the state.

A senior official of the Assembly Secretariat said that two candidates belonging to the ruling coalition in the state came almost together and submitted their papers.

So far, they are the only candidates to file nominations as the opposition has decided not to field anyone as the numbers do not add up to ensure victory of a nominee.

Purkayastha, a BJP leader from Barak valley, is the son of veteran party leader and former Union minister Kabindra Purkayastha.

A former Union minister, Baishya has served one term in the Lok Sabha and two terms in the Rajya Sabha. (CONTD. ON PAGE-2)

## AXIOM-4 launch postponed till tomorrow

NEW DELHI, June 9: Due to weather conditions, the launch of Axiom-4 mission carrying Indian astronaut Shubhanshu Shukla and three others to the International Space Station has been postponed to June 11, the ISRO said on Monday evening.

SpaceX's Falcon-9 rocket was scheduled to blast off from the Kennedy Space Centre (KSC) in Florida on Tuesday evening.

"Due to weather conditions, the launch of Axiom-4 mission for sending Indian Gaganyatri to International Space Station is postponed from 10th June 2025 to 11th June 2025. The targeted time of launch is 5:30 PM IST on 11th June 2025," the Indian Space Research Organisation (ISRO) Chairman V Narayanan said.

Shukla's travel to space marks India's return to human spaceflight 41 years after Rakesh Sharma scripted history by undertaking a journey to space onboard Soviet Russia's (CONTD. ON PAGE-2)

## Six active COVID-19 cases in Assam

GUWAHATI, June 9: Assam's active Covid case count declined to six in the current wave as two more persons recovered from the disease in the last 24 hours, according to the Union Health Ministry data released on Monday.

According to the data, there are six active cases in Assam, while two have recovered since Sunday.

Since January this year, Assam has seen seven people recovering from the COVID-19 virus, it added.

There are 6,133 active COVID-19 cases in India, and six more deaths have been reported, the ministry said. Official sources have maintained that most cases are mild and managed under home care. (PTI)

## Assam sees all-time high paddy procurement at 5.85 lakh MT: CM

GUWAHATI, June 9: Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma on Monday said the state has recorded the highest ever paddy procurement with the purchase of over 5.85 lakh metric tonnes of the grain.

In a post on X, Sarma said that the total figure will rise further in the coming days as the procurement will continue till June 30.

"Milestone achieved in paddy procurement - We are pleased to share that, for the first time ever,

Assam has achieved its full paddy procurement target for the year 2024-25," Sarma said.

Of the target of 5,85,500 MT, the various state-run agencies have procured 5,85,012.75 MT of paddy till Sunday, he said.

"With the procurement window open till 30th June, we are confident that the final figure will surpass the target, marking a new chapter in Assam's agricultural growth story," he added. (PTI)



GUWAHATI, June 9: The flood situation in Assam remained critical with around 2.6 lakh people in six districts still suffering from the deluge on Monday, even as the water levels continued to recede in many parts of the state, officials said.

A senior official of the Assam State Disaster Management Authority (ASDMA) told PTI that the floodwaters continued to recede in almost all inundated areas, with most parts of the state not witnessing any rain in the last 24 hours.

"If it does not rain today, we hope that the situation will improve considerably in most parts of the state," he added.

A report, issued by the ASDMA on Sunday night, said that three more people lost their lives in Kamrup district, and around 2.6 lakh people are suffering from the deluge across six districts.

The total number of people who lost their lives in this year's flood and landslides has increased to 26.

Sribhumi is the worst hit with over 1.62 lakh people suffering, followed by Hailakandi with almost 52,000 and Cachar with more than 36,000 reeling under floodwaters, it added.

The administration has been operating 130 relief camps and relief distribution centres in four districts, taking care of 24,908 displaced people currently.

The authorities have distributed 262.2 quintals of rice, 46.02 quintals of dal, 21.2 quintals of salt and 2,122.53 litres of mustard oil among the flood victims of the state in the last 24 hours.

At present, 741 villages are under water and 6,311.16 hectares of crop areas have been damaged across Assam, the ASDMA said.

Embankments, roads, bridges and other infrastructure have been damaged by flood waters in many districts across the state.

Currently, no river is flowing above the danger level.

On account of widespread flooding, over 1,44,597 domestic animals and poultry are affected across the state. (PTI)

## The IMD's annual reports record 3,436 deaths due to 'heatwave' between 2015 and 2022

## India's heatwaves worsening, but no one knows how many dying

NEW DELHI, June 9: On a scorching May afternoon last year, a ragpicker in Delhi's Ghazipur area collapsed from heat exhaustion.

"The family rushed him to the hospital," says Majida Begum, a sanitation worker who witnessed it. "But he was declared dead on arrival. They had no proof that he died due to heat, so they were not given any compensation."

His death was never officially counted, just one of the countless lives lost in India's intensifying heatwaves that go unrecorded and uncompensated.

An investigation by PTI reveals that disjointed, outdated reporting systems are obscuring the true toll, weakening both public awareness and policy action. Accurate data on heat-related deaths helps identify who is most at risk.

Without it, the government cannot plan effectively, create targeted policies or take timely action to save lives. But behind the missing numbers are real people, many



poor and undocumented, whose deaths routinely slip through the cracks of India's incoherent reporting system.

Currently, at least three separate datasets attempt to monitor heatstroke or heat-related deaths. The two most commonly cited in the media are maintained by the National Centre for Disease Control

(NCDC) under the health ministry and the National Crime Records Bureau (NCRB) under the home ministry. The India Meteorological Department (IMD) also reports figures on deaths caused by "heatwaves" in its annual reports, drawing data primarily from media coverage.

However, these three sources re-

port widely-varying numbers.

For instance, data obtained through an RTI query from the health ministry shows 3,812 heat-related deaths were recorded between 2015 and 2022 under the Integrated Disease Surveillance Programme (IDSP), managed by the NCDC.

In contrast, NCRB figures, cited multiple times in Parliament by Union Health Sciences minister Jitendra Singh, put the number of deaths due to "heat/sunstroke" during the same period at 8,171.

Meanwhile, the IMD's annual reports record 3,436 deaths due to "heatwave" between 2015 and 2022. While the NCDC and the IMD have already released the figures for 2023 and 2024, the NCRB is yet to publish the data for these years.

Since 2015, the health ministry has been collecting data on heat illness and deaths from April to July. In 2019, this was extended to March through July, covering 23 states. (CONTD. ON PAGE-2)

## India cannot hold talks on IWT until terror concerns addressed: Sources

NEW DELHI, June 9: India will not engage with Pakistan on the Indus Waters Treaty (IWT) till New Delhi's concerns regarding terrorism are addressed and the pact is completely revamped, sources said.

They said Pakistan's Water Resources secretary Syed Ali Murtaza has reached out multiple times, urging India to reconsider the decision to put the IWT in abeyance.

In multiple letters to his Indian counterpart, Debashree Mukherjee, Murtaza has repeatedly expressed his government's readiness to discuss specific objections raised by New Delhi.

India has not responded to any of Pakistan's letters and will not engage with the neighbouring country in any capacity till New Delhi's concerns regarding terrorism are addressed and the pact is completely revamped, the sources said.

India placed the 1960 IWT in

abeyance following the April 22 Pahalgam terror attack, in which 26 people were killed and Mukherjee had officially conveyed the decision to Pakistan.

Brokered by the World Bank, the IWT has governed the distribution and use of the water of the Indus river and its tributaries between India and Pakistan since 1960.

The Indus river system comprises the main river, the Indus, and its tributaries. Ravi, Beas and Sutlej are collectively referred to as the eastern rivers, while the Indus, Jhelum and Chenab are known as the western rivers.

After putting the IWT in abeyance, India is planning a study to maximise the utilisation of its share of water within the treaty with Pakistan. The study aims at optimising water resources, including the development of new infrastructure, and ensuring that India's rights under the treaty are fully utilised. (PTI)



# Stock markets rise for 4<sup>th</sup> day on global rally, gains in banking shares after RBI rate cut

**MUMBAI, June 9:** Stock markets closed higher for a fourth consecutive day on Monday driven by gains in banking and financial shares and a rally in global markets.

The 30-share BSE Sensex climbed 256.22 points or 0.31 per cent to settle at 82,445.21 as 21 of its constituents closed higher and nine declined. During the day, it jumped 480.01 points or 0.58 per cent to 82,669.

The 50-share NSE Nifty surged 100.15 points or 0.40 per cent to 25,103.20.

In the four-day rally to Monday, Nifty has gained over 560 points or 2.27 per cent while Sensex has jumped 1,707 points or 2.1 per cent. Optimism over a new round of trade talks between the US and China also drove the markets higher.

Analysts said the RBI's jumbo 50 basis point rate cut last week has boosted investor sentiment helping most sectoral indices close higher. Energy, IT, and financial sectors emerged as lead gainers while broader market indices outperformed benchmark indicators.

"Financial stocks extended their rally in Indian markets, driven by the RBI's supportive aggressive policy of rate and CRRA cut.



These actions have boosted investor confidence and are expected to enhance liquidity in the near to medium term, especially in mid-caps," Vinod Nair, Head of Research, Geojit Investments Limited, said.

Among Sensex stocks, Kotak Mahindra Bank, Bajaj Finance, Axis Bank, Power Grid, IndusInd Bank, Maruti, Bajaj Finserv and NTPC were the biggest gainers.

However, Eternal, ICICI Bank, Titan, Mahindra & Mahindra, Adani Ports, Tata Steel and Bharti Airtel were among the laggards.

"Equity markets continued to ride the momentum from last week's RBI policy surprise, with the Nifty-50 opening strong and extending gains on Monday. Except for realty, all major sectors ended with gains with realty likely weighed down by profit-booking after the recent rally.

"Broader mid- and small-caps continued to outperform the benchmarks and posted strong gains on positive RBI surprise lifting sentiment for domestic outlook," Satish Chandra Aluri, Analyst, Lemonn Markets Desk,

said.

The BSE smallcap gauge jumped 1.19 per cent and midcap climbed 1.03 per cent.

Among sectoral indices, utilities rallied 1.65 per cent, power (1.43 per cent), services (1.35 per cent), oil & gas (1.12 per cent), IT (1.02 per cent) and energy (0.93 per cent).

Realty emerged as the only laggard.

As many as 2,798 stocks advanced while 1,409 declined and 128 remained unchanged on the BSE.

In Asian markets, South Korea's Kospi, Japan's Nikkei 225 index, Shanghai's SSE Composite index and Hong Kong's Hang Seng settled in positive territory. European markets were trading marginally lower. US markets ended sharply higher on Friday.

"The positive US jobs data and renewed optimism over US-China trade talks lifted global sentiment," Nair said.

Foreign Institutional Investors (FIIs) bought equities worth ₹1,009.71 crore on Friday, according to exchange data.

Global oil benchmark Brent crude went up 0.30 per cent to USD 66.67 a barrel. (PTI)

## ICAI to organise mega CA students conference in Guwahati

**HT Bureau**

**GUWAHATI, June 9:** The Institute of Chartered Accountants of India (ICAI) will organise a two-day mega CA students conference named "Parividdhi – Sankalp Se Siddhi Tak", on the June 14 and 15 at ICAI Bhawan, Manik Nagar in Guwahati, an official statement said on Monday.

The conference is being organised by the Board of Studies - Operations ICAI, chairman BOS (Operations) and Conference chairman led by CA (Dr.) Rohit Ruwata, vice chairman, BOS (Operations), ICAI and conference co-chairman CA Sanjib Sanghi and CA Ravi Kumar Patwa, conference director and central council member, ICAI.

The said conference is hosted by Guwahati Branch led by conference co-ordinators and CA. Raginee Goyal (Guwahati Branch EIRC chairperson) and CA. Dr Ranoo Pegu, minister of Education, Tribal Affairs (Plain) Government of Assam has been invited to formally inaugurate the Conference on June 14.

"The conference shall witness four knowledge sessions over two days wherein selected CA students shall present papers on topics relating to Accounting and Auditing Standards, Direct and Indirect Taxation and Artificial Intelligence. The sessions shall be chaired by experts from across the country in the above fields, namely Advocate (CA.) Giridhar Dhelia from Kolkata, CA. Yagnesh Desai from Mumbai, CA. Yash Dhadha from Jaipur and CA. Aashish Sachdev from Jaipur who shall share their insights and knowledge with the students," the statement added. It further said that the best three paper presenters will be awarded at the conference.

As per the statement, there shall be a special interactive session with Board of Studies-Operations ICAI which shall be addressed by CA Sanjib Sanghi. "Three special Skill-Up Sessions shall be conducted at the Conference. Exam Strategy session "Pariksha se Pariksha Tak" by CA Vijay Sarda from Pune, Startup skilling session by CA Shivam Palan from Pune and Special Motivational Session by CA Rajesh Sharma, Central Council Member of ICAI," the statement said.

## Tension between India, China has eased significantly: Russian FM Lavrov

**MOSCOW, June 9:** The tension between India and China has eased "significantly" and the stalled work of the RIC troika could be restarted, Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov said on Monday.

Speaking at the "Forum of the Future-2050" here, he said the resumption of joint work in RIC format could be the first step towards pan-Eurasian processes, including the formation of a multi-polar architecture.

"I really hope that we will be able to restore the work of the Russia-India-China trio. We have not met at the level of foreign ministers for the last couple of years, but we are discussing this issue with my Chinese colleague and with the Indian head of the External Affairs department.

"I really hope that now that the tension has eased, in my opinion, has eased significantly on the border between India and China, and the situation is stabilising, there is a dialogue between New Delhi and Beijing, we will be able to resume the work of this Russia-India-China trio," Lavrov was reported as saying by Russia's state-run TASS news agency.

Lavrov said that Russia and China can and should play a leading and proactive role in the pan-continental process, including in the formation of a multi-polar architecture, and added that the restoration of the RIC format could act as the first step towards this.

"This will also be a very important step forward in the movement of continental processes," Lavrov added. The two-day forum inspired by Russian philosopher Alexander Dugin, often dubbed as Presi-

dent Vladimir Putin's 'guru', has attracted young participants. Tesla and SpaceX CEO Elon Musk's father Erol Musk is also attending the forum.

Last week, a Pakistani delegation met Lavrov in Moscow and handed over a letter from Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif for Russian President Vladimir Putin.

Lavrov said that a direct dialogue between Pakistan and India is needed to build mutual trust between the two countries, TASS news agency reported, citing the Russian Foreign Ministry.

On Friday, top diplomats from India and China discussed bilateral relations to implement the consensus reached by the leaders of the two countries last year, the Chinese Foreign Ministry said.

The meeting between Indian Ambassador to China Pradeep Kumar Rawat and China's Vice Foreign Minister Sun Weidong on Thursday is the first diplomatic engagement between the two countries post the Operation Sindoor that India launched in response to the April 22 Pahalgam terror attack that left 26 people dead.

Tensions between India and Pakistan, Beijing's all-weather ally, escalated after the Pahalgam terror attack, with India carrying out precision strikes on terror infrastructure in Pakistan and Pakistan-occupied Kashmir in the early hours of May 7. The four days of on-ground hostilities from both sides ended with an understanding of stopping the military actions following talks between the directors general of military operations of both sides on May 10. (PTI)

## NEGTA 47<sup>th</sup> garments fair begins in Guwahati

**HT Bureau**

**GUWAHATI, June 9:** One of the leading organisations of this region -- North Eastern Garments Traders Association (NEGTA) -- has organised a garments fair named '47th Buyers and Sellers meet' with an aim to uplift small traders of Assam and NE.

The said three-day meet has been organised by NEGTA from Sunday which was inaugurated president Shekhar Agrawal, general secretary Varun Rungta, vice president Anil Kochar, executive members Chandan Sethia, Deepak Agarwal, Sanjeet Jain along with other members of NEGTA.

During inauguration, president of the organisation, Agrawal said that NEGTA is an umbrella platform for those involved in the apparel and accessory industry.

"This Buyers and Sellers meet provides small business owners with an opportunity to network with Indian manufacturers and suppliers to purchase and sell their



latest Indian designs and collections," he added. He further said that since its inception, NEGTA has been organising buyers and sellers meet twice a year.

"This is India's most respected garment fair connecting the national and regional brands, manufacturers, designers of apparel and fashion accessories to the North East retailers and their distribution channels including high street retailers, agents & distributors. Being the largest conglomeration of retailers and manufacturers, it

serves as a single sourcing destination, thereby infusing efficiency of time and cost," he added.

Speaking on the occasion general secretary Rungta said this time the 47th garment meet has been organised keeping in mind the upcoming festivals and Autumn-Winter collection.

"More than 150 Garments traders from different states are participating with more than 600+ brands of national and international level showcasing their new collection for women's, men's, kids apparels, footwear and accessories. In this three-day meet, more than 700 small and big traders from Northeastern region including Assam will be there for booking according to their need in view of the upcoming festival and Autumn Winter Seasons," Rungta added. Treasurer Shailesh Goenka also said that according to the demand of the traders of Northeast including Assam, garments have been included in this meet.

## Dalmia Bharat, Birla Corp incentive demand worth ₹430cr at risk after Bengal govt's policy churn

**KOLKATA, June 9:** Two major companies, Dalmia Bharat Ltd and Birla Corporation, said that about ₹430 crore in promised state incentives may now be at risk after the West Bengal government scrapped several industrial subsidy schemes in 2025.

An official of Dalmia Cement (Bharat) Ltd (DCBL), a wholly owned subsidiary of Dalmia Bharat, stated that it was supposed to receive ₹236.32 crore along with 8 per cent interest under the now-revoked 'WB State Support for Industries Scheme 2013'.

Dalmia Bharat operates a cement plant with a capacity of four million tonnes in Paschim Midnapore district.

Birla Corporation Ltd, another affected firm, disclosed that it was to receive ₹55.66 crore in Industrial Promotion Assistance (IPA), already sanctioned by the West Bengal State Industrial Development Corporation (WBSIDC). Additionally, the company has an



outstanding claim of ₹138.58 crore. Both companies fear that these incentive dues may be jeopardised due to the implementation of the Revocation Act.

"This legislation is likely to adversely affect the order of the Hon'ble Calcutta High Court," a Dalmia Bharat official said, adding that the company is evaluating all

legal options to protect its rights.

Officials of both companies said they are reviewing the legal validity and retrospective nature of the Act and are considering all avenues, including court challenges.

The West Bengal government had said in March that it had revoked eight incentive schemes for heavy industries, launched during

the 1993-2013 period, and would formulate a modern scheme to encourage the setting up of industrial units.

An industry chamber official, declining to be quoted, said these are just two cases and more are expected to list.

During a previous discussion on the Revocation of West Bengal Incentive Schemes and Obligations in the Nature of Grants and Incentives Bill, Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee had said the situation had changed significantly over the last 20-25 years and that some of the incentives introduced by the erstwhile Left Front government had become "irrelevant" and were being withdrawn.

"Now, various works are being done on AI technology. Many new ideas and approaches have been added to the industry. Therefore, a new policy is being brought with the opinions of all concerned," Banerjee had said. A committee was also set up in this regard. (PTI)

Contd. from Page 1...

## Honeymoon horror: Wife behind

agencies across multiple states", the statement said. Later in the day, Meghalaya Deputy CM Prestone Tynsong said the "final arrest took place on Monday". Meghalaya chief minister Conrad K Sangma congratulated the state police for cracking the case that had shocked the nation. "Within 7 days, a major breakthrough has been achieved by the #meghalayapolice in the Raja murder case... 3 assailants who are from Madhya Pradesh have been arrested, female has surrendered and operation still on to catch 1 more assailant... well done," he posted on X earlier in the day.

PTI had on Saturday reported that a tourist guide in Mawlakhiat, Albert Pde, had seen Raghuvanshi and his wife with three men on the day they went missing. Albert said that he had seen the couple, accompanied by three men, as they were climbing over 3,000 steps from Nongriat to Mawlakhiat around 10 am on May 23.

Albert said he recognised the couple as he had offered his services to them on the previous day to see the famed living roots bridge in Nongriat, but they had politely refused and hired another guide. He also said that all three men accompanying the couple were speaking in Hindi, indicating that they were not locals.

The families of the husband and the wife had sought a CBI investigation. Raghuvanshi's body was found in a gorge near Weisawdong Falls. A gold ring and a neck chain were found missing from his body, further leading to suspicion that he was murdered. A day later, a bloodstained machete was found nearby, and two days later, a raincoat that was similar to the one used by the couple was found in Mawkma village, halfway between Soharim and the gorge where Raghuvanshi's body was found. Madhya Pradesh chief minister Mohan Yadav on Saturday said he has requested Union home minister Amit Shah to order a CBI probe into the case.

On Friday, Sonam's family urged the Centre to hand over the case to the CBI, expressing dissatisfaction with the probe of the Meghalaya Police. "My daughter has been abducted and is still in the clutches of her captors. Meghalaya Police are not investigating the matter properly. They have been negligent right from the beginning. I have been seeking the deployment of the Army since the day they went missing. If it was done in time, they would have been found safely," Sonam's father, Devi Singh Raghuvanshi, told PTI. After their marriage on May 11, the couple left for Meghalaya on May 20 for their honeymoon.

They arrived at Mawlakhiat village on May 22 on a rented scooter. On May 24, their scooter was found abandoned at a cafe along the road from Shillong to Sohra, following which the search for them began. A special investigation team (SIT) headed by an SP and assisted by four DSPs was probing the matter. (PTI)

## Assam govt to intensify drive

It implies that the government does not have to go to a tribunal for identifying foreigners and if the DC has prima facie evidence, the illegal resident can be 'evicted' or 'removed', Sarma said. He added that people coming in to escape religious persecution are exempted under the Act. Sarma said another recent Supreme Court ruling that updating NRC and identification of foreigners are not inter-linked has made it clear that the government's 'hands and legs are not tied' with the NRC process and it can go ahead with finding out the illegal residents. He said the process of securing NRC data, as directed by the apex court, was being done and it will be completed within 8-12 months, after which 'acceptance/rejection slips' to the people can be given.

He, however, added that the state government does not consider the final draft of the NRC as the "final one" as ineligible people have got their names included in it through "various means". "Even people declared as foreigners by Foreigners' Tribunals have their names in NRC," he claimed, adding that his government had approached the apex court with the plea for re-verification of 20 per cent of names in border districts and 10 per cent in other districts. He alleged that activists like Harsh Mander had conspired to include foreigners in the NRC and said, "If I would have been the CM then, I would have jailed the likes of him."

"We have documented all evidence showing how about 2,600 Facebook accounts of Islamabad, Riyadh, Saudi Arabia, post on Palestine or Assam only... They don't welcome Rahul Gandhi but do so for one Assam leader," he added. The chief minister said that while the state government has been facing the Supreme Court's criticism for not expelling identified foreigners, it has been doing so for last two-three months now.

He admitted that a few of these expelled or pushed back people had court cases pending and they were brought back using formal and informal diplomatic channels. Sarma said over 303 illegal Bangladeshis have been pushed back in the past couple of months and the drive will be intensified, adding that 35 people are ready to be pushed back once flood waters recede. "There is no way that Pakistani, Bangladeshi fundamentalist elements will be allowed to enter Assam. To save Assam, we have to be more active," the CM asserted. "I am an Assamese first, and then the chief minister... We have cleared the path for deportation and the process will continue," he added. Sarma said a huge number of illegal Bangladeshis picked from other states have been pushed back by BSF with the Assam government as the facilitator, though he did not mention any figure.

"It is necessary to push back these people so that the message goes that they should not try to come here illegally," he added. Responding to AIUDF MLA Rafikul Islam's caution that foreigner detection should be handled carefully because "citizenship is a most valued asset for any individual," Sarma doubled down on his criticism of the Congress. "Rafikul Islam has said citizenship is the most valuable asset, but it may not be so for Congress as they have people in whose family out of four members, three are foreigners," he said. Sarma had been claiming that not only has Congress MP Gaurav Gogoi's wife retained her British citizenship, but their two minor children are also not Indian nationals.

CPI(M) legislator Manoranjan Talukdar and Islam also expressed apprehension that power to DCs to declare foreigners should not be used arbitrarily or on communal lines. Opposition Congress and AIUDF expressed their dissatisfaction with the chief minister's reply and demonstrated in the Well of the House, with the Congress also briefly walking out of the House. The House was adjourned for 30 minutes as AIUDF MLAs were seated on the floor, disrupting proceedings. (PTI)

## Dibrugarh airport to be named

political affiliations during his lifetime. Sarma said the special session was convened as it is mandatory for an Assembly resolution for renaming any airport or railway station. "First, the state Cabinet has to make the decision. It has to be passed by the Assembly and then, the Union cabinet will approve it. This has paved the way for renaming the airport anytime now after September 8," he added.

The year-long birth centenary celebration of the 'Bard of Brahmputra' will commence on September 8, with Prime Minister Narendra Modi to grace the inaugural programme here, Sarma said. Various programmes throughout the year, including in Arunachal Pradesh where he spent his formative years, and Kolkata and Mumbai where he spent his professional time, have been lined up, with the closing ceremony planned at the national capital, Sarma said. He said the Reserve Bank of India has been approached for a commemorative coin.

A 'chair' in Benaras Hindu University in the name of Hazarika for studying folk culture and songs, a book on his life which will be translated into 23 Indian languages and made available in libraries and educational institutions across the country, are among plans in the pipeline during the yearlong celebration, Sarma said.

The book on his life will be presented to 10-12 lakh people in Assam, he added. The chief minister said several proposals have been received during the first meeting of the core committee formed for the centenary celebrations, and steps will be taken to implement these as far as possible. "Bhupen Hazarika was a person of the masses, and the government alone cannot celebrate his life. I urge the MLAs to take this celebration to all levels of society to make it a real success," he added. Sarma also underlined various measures by his government to present before the country and world the rich heritage and history of the state, including celebrations of the 400th birth anniversary of legendary Ahom general Lachit Barphukan, UNESCO world heritage site status to Charaideo Moidam and classical language status to Assamese. (PTI)

## No eviction of tribals under

No eviction of tribals has been carried out by our government," he claimed. Affirming his government's commitment to clear all tribal belts and blocks from illegal occupation, he said, "If the Congress supports keeping tribal belts and blocks for the indigenous people in one place, it should support the same policy throughout the state." Mentioning Rakhyasini hill, which is a proposed reserve forest, the chief minister said, "When I visited, I saw that there is hardly any forest left. People are residing in that place. I had told them that let us save whatever remains of the forest, and the land already under occupation can be settled as per the state's land policy."

He claimed that while the people were initially receptive to the government's proposal, they were later instigated by some Congress leaders and are now seeking to approach the court. "We were willing to give land rights to the eligible people. But if they go to the court, so be it. We were making it easy for them through existing legal provisions, but we will follow the court's order now," he said. (PTI)

## BJP, AGP candidates file

with the second term slated to end later this month. Elections to two Rajya Sabha seats in Assam are scheduled on June 19, with counting of votes to take place the same day. During submission of the nomination papers, both the candidates were accompanied by Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma, Union minister Sarbananda Sonowal, BJP state president Dilip Saikia, AGP president Atul Bora and UPPL leader Urkhao Gwra Brahma.

"Joined Hon'ble Assam CM Shri @himantabiswa, BJP state president Shri @DilipSaikia4Bjp, AGP president Shri @ATULBORA2 and UPPL's Shri @UGBrahma for the nomination filing of Shri Kanad Purkayastha and Shri Birendra Prasad Baishya for the Rajya Sabha elections. My best wishes to them." Sonowal said in a post on X. Bora also extended his best wishes to both the candidates. (PTI)

## AXIOM-4 launch postponed

Soyuz spacecraft in 1984. The Lucknow-born Shukla, who goes by the call sign 'Shuks', is part of an ISRO-NASA supported commercial spaceflight by Axiom Space where all the customers are national governments.

The Axiom-4 (Ax-4) mission comprises Commander Peggy Whitson, pilot Shukla and specialists Tigor Kapu of Hungary and Slawosz Uznanski-Wisniewski of Poland. The 14-day mission will "realise the return" to human spaceflight for India, Poland, and Hungary. (PTI)

## India's heatwaves worsening

The NCRB has recorded heatstroke deaths since 1995, listing them as "accidental deaths from forces of nature" since around 2010. PTI spoke to government officials and healthcare-policy experts to understand the large discrepancies between these datasets. A senior Delhi Police official explained that the NCRB data largely reflects the number of unattended individuals found dead by police at public spaces, homes and elsewhere.

Such bodies are taken to hospitals where doctors conduct autopsies to determine the cause of death. According to the NCRB, 730 people died from "heat/sunstroke" in 2022, 374 in 2021 and 530 in 2020. By contrast, the NCDC data shows just 33 heat-related deaths in 2022, none in 2021 and four in 2020, as many states failed to report their figures. These states included Delhi, Uttar Pradesh, Rajasthan, Punjab, Haryana, Madhya Pradesh, Chhattisgarh, Bihar, Jharkhand, Karnataka, Kerala, Andhra Pradesh, Telangana, West Bengal and Tamil Nadu. A health ministry official, speaking on the condition of anonymity, said the data from the NCRB and the NCDC are "not directly comparable" because they originate from different sources.

"The NCDC reports deaths of patients who come to hospital OPDs or are admitted. But if a person dies and is brought for autopsy, that data goes to the forensic medicine department, which may not always share the information with the NCDC," the official said. He acknowledged the existence of multiple datasets on heat deaths in India and noted that "none of those alone gives the full picture". "While knowing the actual number of heat deaths is important for policy making, confirming such deaths is difficult even with health ministry guidelines," he added. (PTI)



## UPPL forms new district committees in 25<sup>th</sup> CWC Meet

**HT Correspondent**

**KOKRAJHAR, June 9:** The United People's Party Liberal (UPPL), in a strategic move to bolster its presence in newly added areas of the Bodoland Territorial Council (BTC), formed three new district committees during its 25th Central Working Committee (CWC) meeting held at Rowta in Udalguri district on Sunday.

The newly constituted district committees are: Sonitpur District Committee led by Kusum Kumar Swargiary as President, Biswanath District Committee headed by Sangal Goyary, and Gohpur District Committee with Nijwn Basumatary as President.

The meeting was chaired by UPPL President and BTC Chief, Pramod Boro, and attended by several key leaders including Cabinet Minister Urkhao Gwa Brahma, Rajya Sabha MP and UPPL Working President Rungwra Narzary, and General Secretaries Raju Kumar Narzary and Madhab Chandra Chetry.

One of the key resolutions

passed in the meeting was the formation of the Central Election Committee, with MP Rungwra Narzary as its Chairman. The committee also unanimously resolved to support the NDA candidates in the upcoming Rajya Sabha elections, signaling the party's continued alliance with the BJP-led National Democratic Alliance.

Additionally, the CWC resolved to adopt strategic political measures to strengthen UPPL's influence ahead of the BTC elections in 2025. A note of gratitude was extended to Prime Minister Narendra Modi, Union Home Minister Amit Shah, BJP President JP Nadda, and Assam Chief Minister Dr. Himanta Biswa Sarma for their support during UPPL's four-and-a-half-year tenure in the BTR government.

Party sources confirmed that the meeting extensively discussed plans for political outreach and organizational strengthening in light of the upcoming elections and the expanded jurisdiction of the BTC.

*Programme also provided a platform for beneficiaries to interact with officials, share their experiences*

## CEM Boro attends beneficiary meet and socio-economic awareness programme in Kokrajhar



**HT Correspondent**  
**KOKRAJHAR, June 9:** The Government of Bodoland Territorial Region (BTR) on Monday or-

ganized a Beneficiary Meet-cum Socio-Economic Awareness Programme at Silbari Playground under Debargaon BTC con-

stituency in Kokrajhar district. The initiative aimed at connecting with beneficiaries of various government schemes, raising awareness about developmental initiatives, and gathering feedback from grassroots communities.

The event was attended by several senior officials and public representatives, including Chief Executive Member (CEM) of BTR, Pramod Boro, Executive Members Ukil Muchahary and Ranjit Basumatary, and Director of Panchayat & Rural Development, Baskar Rajbongshi, among others.

Addressing a large gathering, CEM Pramod Boro emphasized the achievements of the BTR government since its formation in 2020. "We have made remarkable progress in fostering peace, driving

inclusive development, improving service delivery, and deepening grassroots empowerment across BTR," he said.

He highlighted the government's continued focus on good governance, particularly targeting rural and remote areas to ensure that benefits of welfare schemes reach every deserving citizen.

"In this ongoing journey of transformation, I was pleased to attend this Beneficiary Meet and Socio-Economic Awareness Programme under Debargaon BTC constituency today," he added.

The programme also provided a platform for beneficiaries to interact with officials, share their experiences, and seek clarification on schemes related to rural development, livelihood generation, and social welfare.

## Bike catches fire on Zig Zag Road in Dibrugarh

**HT Correspondent**

**DIBRUGARH, June 9:** A parked motorcycle was completely gutted in a sudden fire on Zig Zag Road in Dibrugarh on Monday, sparking panic among residents in the area.

According to eyewitnesses, the incident occurred near the Kali Temple on Zig Zag Road. Locals rushed out of their homes and tried to extinguish the flames, but were unable to contain the fire before it engulfed the two-wheeler.

"We don't know exactly how the fire started. It might have been due to extreme heat or a battery malfunction," said a local resident, expressing concern over the unexpected incident.

The bike reportedly belonged to a resident of Ashok Path and had been parked in the area for some time before it suddenly caught fire. Fire tenders reached the spot shortly afterward and successfully doused the flames. "We are completely shocked by the incident," said another resident, adding that it was fortunate the fire did not spread to nearby homes or structures.

Authorities have launched an investigation to determine the exact cause of the fire. No casualties or injuries were reported.

*Over 21,000 cases to be taken up*

## Jorhat to host second National Lok Adalat on June 14

**HT Correspondent**

**JORHAT, June 9:** The District Legal Services Authority (DLSA), Jorhat, is set to organize the second National Lok Adalat of the year on June 14, aiming for mass disposal of pending and pre-litigation cases across the district.

According to DLSA officials, a total of 3,758 cases involving compoundable offences under the Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita (BNS), Indian Penal Code (IPC), Negotiable Instruments (NI) Act, family disputes, civil suits, Motor Accident Claim (MAC) cases, violations under the Motor Vehicle (MV) Act, and revenue-related matters will be taken up. These will be heard across nine benches at the Judicial Courts in Jorhat, two benches at the Judicial Courts in Titabar, and two benches at the Executive Magistrate Courts, including the Revenue Branch of the District Administration.

In addition to the court-based matters, a staggering 18,170 pre-litigation cases related to banks, BSNL, and APDCL will also be addressed during the Lok Adalat proceedings.

To ensure smooth and efficient resolution of disputes, pre-Lok Adalat sittings have been underway for the past month in the respective courts and institutions. These sessions involve the active engagement of conciliators, Para Legal Volunteers (PLVs), and law students, facilitating early consensus and possible settlements.

A key highlight of the Lok Adalat is that it offers speedy and cost-effective justice, with refunds of paid court fees for settled cases. Moreover, no appeals can be filed against decisions made in the Lok Adalat, making it a final and binding resolution mechanism that is both efficient and litigant-friendly.

In a public appeal, Kiran Lal Bashinab, Secretary of DLSA, urged all concerned individuals and institutions to actively participate in the upcoming Lok Adalat to enhance access to justice and ensure swift resolution of disputes.

For further information, citizens can contact DLSA Jorhat at 6901281634, email dlsa.jorhat@gmail.com, or visit the DLSA Office in Jorhat.

## CSIR-NEIST Jorhat marks World Environment Day with climate-centric discussions

**HT Correspondent**

**JORHAT, June 9:** In a compelling observance of World Environment Day 2025, the CSIR-North East Institute of Science and Technology (CSIR-NEIST), Jorhat, hosted a day-long programme that underscored the urgency of sustainable development and collective climate action.

The highlight of the event was the keynote address by Prof. Ashok Priyadarshan Dimri, Director of the Indian Institute of Geomagnetism (IIG), Mumbai, who served as the guest of honour. Prof. Dimri raised an alarm over the westward shift of the Indian monsoon, a shift he warned could have drastic environmental and hydrological consequences by 2050. Presenting findings from his study titled "Hydrological Responses to Topography Factors over Indian Himalayan River

Basin," Prof. Dimri stressed the need to address glacier depletion and groundwater loss, urging collaborative scientific and policy efforts.

Delivering the chief guest's address, Padma Shri and Padma Bhushan awardee Dr. Anil Prakash Joshi, founder of HESCO, Dehradun, described climate change as a global crisis requiring united action from individuals, communities, and industries. Criticising deforestation and the unchecked use of plastics in the pursuit of GDP growth, Dr. Joshi warned that economic development would be meaningless if environmental degradation continues. He called for greater public awareness and multi-stakeholder commitment to protect the planet's future.

The programme commenced with a plantation drive, symbolising a shared pledge to ecological

restoration. Addressing the gathering, Dr. V M Tiwari, Director of CSIR-NEIST, expressed gratitude to the dignitaries and emphasised the importance of eco-friendly and sustainable development, especially in the North Eastern Region (NER)—a biodiversity hotspot now facing serious threats from climate change. He also highlighted the issue of plastic pollution, reiterating CSIR-NEIST's role in providing science-based solutions through innovation and research.

The programme concluded with a vote of thanks by Engineer Jayanta Jyoti Bora, Chief Scientist, CSIR-NEIST. As part of the day's outreach, plant saplings were distributed among attendees, further reinforcing the institute's message of environmental stewardship.

## Communal tensions grip Dhubri town following alleged cow meat recovery

**HT Correspondent**

**DHUBRI, June 9:** Communal tension gripped Dhubri town after alleged cow meat and body parts was recovered from multiple locations, including the premises of a Hanuman Mandir in Baluchar, Ward No. 3. The incident, first reported on Sun-



day, sparked widespread unrest, leading to the closure of shops and market establishments across the town.

On Monday, the situation deteriorated further, with riot-like scenes reported in several areas such as Chhatiantola and Baluchar. Police were compelled to use tear gas at certain spots to disperse agitated crowds. The recovery of suspected cow meat and body parts triggered anger among local residents, further intensifying the volatile atmosphere.

In response to the unrest, Dhubri District Commissioner Dibakar Nath, IAS, invoked Section 163(1) of the Bharatiya Nagarik Suraksha Sanhita (BNSS), 2023, and issued prohibitory orders with immediate effect. The order cited potential threats to peace and public tranquillity and sought to prevent any escalation of violence.

Under the order, all shops and commer-

cial establishments within Dhubri town limits have been directed to remain closed until further notice. The assembly of five or more persons in public places for demonstrations, rallies, or meetings has also been prohibited. Only essential services—such as medical facilities, educational institutions, police, SDRF, fire services, APDCL, and security forces—have been exempted.

District Commissioner Nath, warned that any violation of the prohibitory order would attract penal action under Section 188 of the Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita and other relevant laws. The order was passed ex-parte in view of the urgency and remains in effect until further notice.

During a press interaction, the District Commissioner appealed to the public to maintain peace and not fall prey to misinformation. He reassured that law enforcement agencies, along with CRPF and paramilitary forces, have been deployed across the town to ensure safety and prevent further disturbances.

The District Commissioner confirmed that one individual, identified as Ramjan Ali Sheikh, has been arrested in connection with the recovery of the suspected ill elements near the Hanuman Mandir. Investigations are underway to determine the motive and those responsible for the incident.

Authorities have urged all sections of society to cooperate with the administration and help restore normalcy in the town. Security remains tight in all sensitive areas, and additional forces have been kept on standby as a precautionary measure.

## Three-Day Writer's camp by Asom Sahitya Sabha concludes in Nagaon

**HT Correspondent**

**NAGAON, June 9:** The three-day Writer's Camp organised by Asom Sahitya Sabha came to a successful conclusion on Monday at the Nagaon Cultural Complex, with a dedicated session on drama that sparked thought-provoking discussions among eminent playwrights and literary enthusiasts.

The final session, chaired by Dr. Ranjan Kumar Bhattacharya, focused on the significance of drama in literature and its role in shaping societal narratives. Playwright Sapunt Boro, in his inaugural address, underlined drama's ability to convey powerful social messages. He paid tribute to legendary Assamese dramatists and referred to Mahapurush Srimanta Shankardev's "Chihna Yatra" as a groundbreaking moment in the evolution of Assamese drama.

During the discussion, veteran playwright Prasanta Katoky stressed the importance of structured planning and character accuracy in playwriting. Recalling his literary journey from the days of the Assam Movement, he emphasized authenticity in character portrayal.

Playwright Hillol Kumar Pathak traced the evolution of drama and theatre, highlighting how changing times have influenced storytelling styles. He pointed to the significant role of mobile (traveling) theatres in shaping Assamese drama and called for the inclusion of more intellectually inclined actors in the field.

## Manas National Park witnesses significant growth in tourism revenue

*BTR's sustainable tourism initiatives highlighted*

**HT Bureau**

**GUWAHATI, June 9:** Manas National Park, located within the Bodoland Territorial Region (BTR), has recorded a steady and notable increase in tourism revenue over the past three financial years, as per report of the Forest Department. The Tourism Department, in collaboration with the Forest Department and local stakeholders, continues to focus on maintaining this momentum.

For the financial year 2024-25 (up to May 2025), the total revenue collected from tourism activities in the park stands at ₹ 1,73,31,100. A total of 60,921 Indian visitors and 3,426 foreign visitors entered the park during this period. This marks a substantial growth in comparison to the previous year, 2023-24, which recorded over ₹ 1 crore 40 lakh 64 thousand in revenue with 50,515 Indian and 1,816 foreign tourists. In 2022-23, the revenue stood at ₹ 1,35,98,275 from 55,257 Indian and 924 foreign tourists.



The figures demonstrate an encouraging upward trend, particularly in foreign tourist arrivals, which have more than tripled over the last three years. The peace that has prevailed in the re-

gion in recent years, under the leadership of BTC CEM Pramod Boro, has created a stable environment for tourism to flourish. Manas National Park today reflects not only the area's

natural beauty but also the growing sense of stability and progress in the region.

This growth further coincides with ongoing efforts by the Tourism Department of BTR to promote ecotourism and improve the visitor experience through better infrastructure, accessibility, and local engagement. Increased awareness, combined with conservation-based initiatives, appears to have contributed to the park's growing popularity.

As a UNESCO World Heritage Site and a key biodiversity hotspot, Manas National Park plays an important role in conservation and nature-based tourism in Assam. The consistent rise in both footfall and revenue underlines the park's significance in the broader tourism landscape of the region. These developments align with the larger goals of the BTR administration to strengthen sustainable tourism while preserving the ecological balance of the park and supporting the livelihoods of local communities.

No.DTA/EMRS-SOCIETY/1011/2020-21/138/

### Advertisement for Recruitment of Guest Teachers and Hostel Warden at EMRS

The Assam State Level EMRS Society invites applications in Standard Form from the eligible candidates who are permanent residents of Assam for engagement of contractual Guest Teachers and Hostel Warden for the Eklavya Model Residential School (EMRS) at Kharadhar (Dist. Bajali), Howrah (Dist. Karbi Anglong), Jonai (Dist. Dhemajuli), Jalah (Dist. Baksa) and Ardaipur (Dist. Dima Hasao). The nature of engagement is purely contractual for the Academic year 2025-26 or till the appointment of regular Teachers / Hostel wardens, whichever is earlier. The details of the advertisement can be downloaded from <http://directortribalfairsplain.assam.gov.in>.

Sd/-  
Director, Tribal Affairs (P), Assam &  
Member Secretary, Assam State Level EMRS Society  
**DIPR /D/HLT/31/10/Jun-25**

No.DWCD(BTC)/277/2025-26/49

Dated Kokrajhar, the 9<sup>th</sup> June, 2025

### NOTICE INVITING TENDER

Joint Director cum CHD, Women & Child Development, B.T.C, Kokrajhar invites Notice Inviting Tender affixing court fee stamp of Rs. 8.25/- only from local Suppliers / Firms for supply of Aids & Appliance for Physically Handicapped persons in BTC area under SOPD-G fund during the year 2025-26 (estimated amount Rs. 10.00 Lakhs only). The Notice Inviting Tender with detail terms & conditions along with the item(s) may be obtained from the office of the undersigned. Intending Suppliers / Firms may obtain NIT documents etc. during Office hours till 1:00 P.M. of the 24<sup>th</sup> day of June '2025. The sealed NIT with all particulars / documents as required as per terms & conditions are to be submitted to the office of the Joint Director cum CHD, Women & Child Development, B.T.C, Kokrajhar on or before 2:00 P.M. of 24<sup>th</sup> day of June '2025. The successful Supplier / Firm will have to submit security deposit 1% only in case of ST / SC and 2% for General Firm / Supplier of the estimated value in the form of Bank Draft / Banker's Cheque in favour of the Joint Director, Women & Child Dev., B.T.C, Kokrajhar. The NIT will be opened on the same day at 3:00 P.M. in presence of Suppliers / Firms or their authorized representative. However, in the event of any Holiday, same time on the next working day shall be taken into account.

The undersigned reserves the right to accept or reject any or all the offers / proposals, without assigning any reason thereof.

Sd/- i/c. Jt. Director cum CHD,  
Women & Child Dev., B.T.C, Kokrajhar

**IPR(BTC)/C/2025-26/710**

NO.TECH/U&BDTD/BLDG/1B/2025-26/754

Dated: -06/06/2025

### PRESENCE NOTICE INVITING FOR BID

The Executive Engineer, PWD (B&NH) Udalguri & Baksa District Territorial Building Division, Udalguri on behalf of Governor of Assam invites bids from approved and eligible Contractors registered with Public Works Department (Buildings), Assam/Contractors registered with Bodoland Territorial Council in the category of Class-I (A, B&C), Class-II, Class-III for 01 (One) no. of work for bids amounting to Rs.40,31,433.00 (approx) (Rupees Forty Lakhs Thirty One Thousand Four Hundred Thirty Three) only.

Details may be seen at in the office of the undersigned during office hours and PWD portal [assamtenders.gov.in](http://assamtenders.gov.in)

Sd/- Executive Engineer P.W.D. (B&NH),  
Udalguri and Baksa District Territorial  
Building Division, Udalguri

**IPR(BTC)/C/2025-26/713**

## BAJAJ FINANCE LIMITED

**Registered Office:** Bajaj Finance Limited, C/o Bajaj Auto Limited Complex Mumbai Pune Road Akurdi Pune 411035  
**Branch Office:** Bajaj Finance Limited, 1st Floor CO Morgaon Medical Store Main Road Near SBI Morgaon Po Dist Morgaon 782105  
**Branch Office:** Bajaj Finance Limited, 1st Floor Vishal Complex, Kali Bari Road, Barpeta Road Near Sani Mandir, Barpeta Road, Assam 781315  
**Branch Office:** Bajaj Finance Limited, 2nd Floor College Road Near BSNL Office Nalbari Assam Nalbari Assam 781335

### POSSESSION NOTICE (FOR IMMOVABLE PROPERTY)

(As per Appendix IV read with rule 8(1) of the Security Interest Enforcement Rules, 2002)  
Whereas, the undersigned being the Authorized Officer of Bajaj Finance Limited (BFL), under the provisions of the Securitisation and Reconstruction of Financial Assets and Enforcement of Security Interest Act, 2002 and exercise of powers conferred under Sec. 13(1)(2) read with Rule 3 of the Security Interest (Enforcement) Rules, 2002 issued demand by registered post ("Notice") calling upon the Borrowers/Co-borrowers mentioned hereunder to repay the amount mentioned in the notice U/s. 13(2) of the said Act within a period of 60 days, from the date of receipt of the said notice.

The Borrowers/Mortgagors/Guarantors named below having failed to repay the said amount, notice is hereby given to the Borrowers/Mortgagors/ Guarantors and public in general that the undersigned has taken possession of the property described herein below in exercise of powers conferred on me under Sec. 13(4) of the said Act read with Rule 8 of the Security Interest (Enforcement) Rules, 2002. The borrowers in particular and public in general are hereby cautioned not to deal with the said property and any dealing with this property will be subject to the charge of the Bajaj Finance Limited. For the amount mentioned herein below along with interest thereon at contracted rate.

The borrower's attention is invited to provisions of sub-section (8) of section 13 of the Act, in respect of time available, to redeem the secured assets.

Loan Account No./Name of the Borrower(s)/Mortgagor(s)/Guarantor(s)	Description of Secured Immovable Property	Date of Notice U/s. 13(2) and U/s. 13(2) Notice Amount and Date of Possession
<b>LAN: P16JPBL7241252</b> 1. Fresh And New Furniture thr its Prop. Ali Murtaza R/o. Chenimari Laharighat. Marigaon Dumkura Bazar B O 04 Assam 91 Nagaon Assam 782127 Also at: R/o. Dag No. 257 (O) 327 (N) Patta No. 77 (O) 214 (N) Vill. Chenimari Mouza Laharighat Circle Laharighat Dist. Marigaon Assam 782127 2. Ambiya Begum C/o Nurul Islam All R/o. Balikuri Bazar Road Balikuri Bazar Marigaon Assam Nagaon 782127 Sr. 2 & 3 R/o. Dhurmukra Chenimari Marigaon Assam Nagaon 782127	All the piece and parcel of Dag No. 257 (O) 327 (N) Patta No. 77 (O) 214 (N) Vill. Chenimari Mouza Laharighat Circle Laharighat Dist. Marigaon Assam 782127 along with proportionate share in common areas (Area adm. 8640 Sq.Ft.) Boundaries: On East- Toimuz Ali; On West- A Salam; On North- Owner's Land; On South- Govt. Road	<b>17.02.2025</b> <b>Rs. 52,82,679/-</b> (Rupees Fifty Two Lakhs Eighty Two Thousand Six Hundred Seventy Nine Only) <b>Possession Date 04.06.2025</b>
<b>LAN: P19JPBL7911715</b> 1. Maa Enterprise thr its Prop. Azizul Hoque 2. Azmina Khatun D/o Ahamed Ali C/o Azizul Hoque 3. Azizul Hoque S/o Rahiz Uddin All R/o. Balikuri Bazar Road Balikuri Bazar Kalgachia Barpeta Assam 781319 Sr. 1 Also at: R/o. Dag No. 15 Patta No. 5 Vill. Balikuri Ke Mouza Jania Circle Bagbar Dist. Barpeta Assam 781319	All the piece and parcel of Dag No. 15 Patta No. 5 Vill. Balikuri Ke Mouza Jania Circle Bagbar Dist. Barpeta Assam 781319 along with proportionate share in common areas (Area adm. 18000 Sq.Ft.) Boundaries: On East- Shah Alam; On West-Azizul Hoque; On North- Hasen Ali; On South- Road	<b>17.02.2025</b> <b>Rs. 25,09,054/-</b> (Rupees Twenty Five Lakhs Nine Thousand Five Hundred Four Only) <b>Possession Date 05.06.2025</b>
<b>LAN: P223PBS11353180</b> 1. Naim Ahmed thr its Prop. Naim Ahmed 2. Rafiquddin Ahmed 3. Naim Ahmed Sr. 1 & 3 R/o. Station Road, Ward No - 2, Rangia, Kamrup, Assam 781354, Also at 1: R/o. Dag No. 74 (O) / 2166 (N) Patta No. 13(O)/33 (N) Rev. Vill. Rangia Town Mouza Panduri Rev Circle Rangia Pin 781354 Dist Kamrup Assam Sr. 2 R/o. Rangia Ward No 2 Station Road Kamrup PO Rangia PS Rangia Rangia Kamrup Assam 781354	All the piece and parcel of Dag No. 74 (O) / 2166 (N) Patta No. 13(O)/33 (N) Rev. Vill. Rangia Town Mouza Panduri Rev Circle Rangia Pin 781354 Dist Kamrup Assam along with proportionate share in common areas (Area adm. 2880 Sq.Ft.) Boundaries: On East: Railway Land; On West: Station Road; On North: Hafijur Rahman; On South: Fajul Haque	<b>10.01.2025</b> <b>Rs 67,69,341/-</b> (Rupees Sixty Seven Lakhs Sixty Nine Thousand Three Hundred Forty One Only) <b>Possession Date 06.06.2025</b>

Place : Assam  
Date : 09.06.2025

Sd/-Authorized Officer  
M/s Bajaj Finance Limited



## QUOTE OF THE DAY

*Life is a long lesson in humility*  
- James M. Barrie

## India's diplomatic outreach

Several days have passed since the temporary truce in the limited four-day war between India and Pakistan taking effect on May 10 this year. Prime Minister Narendra Modi has been talking of his three-point doctrine since then, the most important of which is no dialogue with Pakistan unless the ruling regime of Islamabad shuns terrorism. Pakistan Prime Minister on the other hand is claiming as usual that his government had no role in the Pahalgam massacre of April 22, Pakistan strongly believes in fight against terrorism. Pakistan is ready for bilateral talks to discuss all the pending issues including terror. In this backdrop, fierce campaign has been launched by both India and Pakistan to influence the views of the foreign countries including the permanent and non-permanent members of the United Nations. Seven parliamentary delegations from India are on a visit to 33 nations in their diplomatic outreach. Two delegations have already returned. Congress Lok Sabha member Shashi Tharoor is still staying in the US at the head of the delegation to apprise both the U.S. government officials and the UN members the Indian viewpoint why Pakistan is the fountainhead of terrorist actions on Indian soil and why it is not possible to have any bilateral dialogue with Pakistan. Pakistan Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif has himself visited four countries so far as a part of his government's global outreach. Simultaneously a high powered delegation led by former Pakistan Foreign Minister Bilawal Bhutto Zardari is in USA talking to the Washington administration and the UN members.

Herein lies India's dilemma of positive global diplomatic outreach. So far, the feedback from the Parliamentary delegations talks abroad and the Indian embassies own efforts for outreach is this – all foreign leaders and the diplomats in the course of discussions are mentioning two things. First they are all with India in its fight against terror. They all favour India's fight against terrorists based in Pakistan. But they do not like any war between the two nuclear powers on this issue. They want bilateral talks if India does not agree for a mediator. Even Russian foreign minister has mentioned this, though Russia's statement was strongest in support of India's actions. This in the perception battle or more specifically in information war, Pakistan is getting some advantage as of now vis a vis India. Left to the external affairs ministry officials, they could have done much better job than the visiting Parliamentary delegations but their hands are tied.

Now let us look at some upcoming events which show how challenging will be India's task in the coming two months in the arena of global diplomacy. First, India has not been invited to the G-7 summit at Alberta in Canada scheduled from June 15 to June 17. In the last five years, our Prime Minister made every effort to make himself visible among the World's top leaders. Last year at the G-7 summit in Italy, Italian Prime Minister Giorgia Meloni praised the Indian PM belonging to their own far right clan.

## Elon Musk's Bold Move: The America Party

The relationship between two of the most influential figures in the world U.S. President Donald Trump and billionaire entrepreneur Elon Musk has taken a dramatic turn, sparking a political storm that could reshape the landscape of American governance. What began as a seemingly strong alliance during the 2024 U.S. presidential election has now deteriorated into a public feud, with Elon Musk announcing his intention to form a new political party aimed at representing the interests of America's middle class. This bold move by Musk, a visionary known for revolutionizing industries like electric vehicles and space exploration, has sent shockwaves through the political and business worlds, raising questions about the future of American politics and the potential impact of this rift on both domestic and global stages.

The alliance between Donald Trump and Elon Musk was once a powerful one. During the 2024 presidential election, Musk emerged as one of Trump's most significant financial backers, pouring approximately \$300 million into his campaign through various political action committees, most notably the America PAC, which Musk founded to support Trump and other Republican candidates. This substantial financial support was widely credited with helping Trump secure a victory in the election, marking his return to the White House for a second term. Musk's contributions were not just financial; his public endorsements and use of his massive social media platform, X, amplified Trump's message, reaching millions of voters and shaping public opinion in key battleground states.

Following the election, Trump rewarded Musk's loyalty by appointing him as co-director of a newly created agency called the "Department of Government Efficiency" (DOGE), a nod to Musk's affinity for the cryptocurrency Dogecoin. The mission of DOGE was ambitious: to slash government spending and reduce the federal workforce by a staggering 75 percent. This initiative aligned with Musk's long-standing belief in efficiency and innovation, and it initially appeared that the partnership between Trump and Musk would usher in a new era of government reform. The collaboration was hailed by some as a bold experiment, combining Trump's political influence with Musk's business acumen and technological vision.

However, the honeymoon period was short-lived. By May 2025, just 130 days after his appointment, Musk stepped down from his role at DOGE, citing frustrations with the pace of reform and the direction of Trump's policies. The breaking point came when Musk publicly opposed Trump's "One Big Beautiful Bill Act," a massive domestic policy bill that bundled several of Trump's key initiatives. The bill included significant tax cuts, such as removing taxes on Social Security income, tips, and overtime pay, which Trump touted as relief for the middle class. However, the Congressional Budget Office estimated that while the bill would deliver \$3.7 trillion in tax cuts, it would also increase the national debt by \$2.4 trillion over a decade and necessitate a \$4 trillion increase in the debt ceiling. Musk, a self-proclaimed fiscal conservative, slammed the bill as "exaggerated" and "pork-filled," calling it a "grotesque insult" to fiscal responsibility.

Musk's criticism did not sit well with Trump. The former president took to his social media platform, Truth Social, to lash out at Musk, accusing him of being upset over the abrupt cancellation of electric vehicle (EV) mandates, a policy shift that could cost Tesla billions in potential revenue. Trump went further, threatening to terminate federal contracts and subsidies with Musk's companies, including Tesla and SpaceX, which rely heavily on government partnerships for projects like space exploration and satellite launches. In response, Musk fired back on X, claiming that Trump would not have won the election without his financial and public support, and that Democrats would have retained control of both the House and Senate without his intervention. In a series of heated posts, Musk even called for Trump's impeachment and referenced unverified claims about Trump's alleged ties to Jeffrey Epstein's documents, escalating the personal nature of the feud.

The public spat reached a new level when Musk took to X to conduct a poll, asking his 220 million followers whether America needed a new political party to represent the 80 percent of the population he described as the middle class. The response was overwhelming, with 80 percent of respondents supporting the idea. Emboldened by this feedback, Musk proposed the name "America Party" for his new political venture, a name that echoed the America PAC he had established in 2024 to support Trump and other Republicans. This announcement marked a significant shift, signaling Musk's intent to not only distance himself from Trump but also challenge the dominance of the two major parties—Democrats and Republicans—that have long controlled American politics. Forming a new political party in the United States is no small feat. The American political system is deeply entrenched, with Democrats and Republicans holding a near-monopoly on ballot access, funding, and voter loyalty. New parties face significant hurdles, including navigating complex state-by-state regulations to secure ballot access, building a grassroots organization, and attracting credible candidates. Despite these challenges, Musk's vast wealth, estimated at over \$400 billion, and his ability to leverage X as a platform for political messaging gave him a unique advantage. His vision for the America Party appears to center on fiscal responsibility, government efficiency, and policies that prioritize the middle class, though specific details about the party's platform remain scarce.

Trump, for his part, has downplayed Musk's threat. In a Friday phone interview with Fox News, he dismissed the idea of a new party, stating that his poll numbers remain strong and that Republicans in Congress continue to support his agenda. Trump even jokingly threatened

to sell the red Tesla Model S he purchased in March, a symbolic jab at Musk's business empire. A White House official confirmed that Trump has no plans to reach out to Musk to mend the rift, signaling that the feud is far from over. The tension has already had tangible effects, with Tesla's stock price dropping 14 percent in the wake of the dispute, wiping out \$150 billion in market value and raising concerns among investors about the stability of Musk's business ventures. The feud has also exposed divisions within the Republican Party. Trump's "One Big Beautiful Bill Act" narrowly passed the House by a single vote, but it faces significant opposition in the Senate, where some Republican senators worry about the electoral consequences of supporting a bill that could balloon the national debt. Musk's criticism of the bill has found support among a faction of Republicans, including Representatives Thomas Massie and Warren Davidson, who voted against the bill in the House. These lawmakers share Musk's concerns about fiscal irresponsibility, highlighting a growing rift within the party between Trump loyalists and those who prioritize long-term economic stability.

Democrats, meanwhile, have largely stayed out of the fray, though some quietly hope that Musk's actions will weaken the Republican Party and create opportunities for Democratic gains in future elections. Political analysts are divided on the potential impact of Musk's America Party. Some see it as a long shot, given the structural barriers to third-party success in the U.S. Others argue that Musk's wealth, influence, and ability to mobilize voters through social media could make the party a viable force, particularly if it taps into widespread frustration with the two-party system. The middle class, which Musk claims to champion, has long felt squeezed by rising costs, stagnant wages, and a sense of being overlooked by both Democrats and Republicans. If Musk can craft a compelling

message and deliver on his promises, the America Party could attract a significant following. The broader implications of this feud extend beyond politics. Musk's companies, particularly Tesla and SpaceX, are deeply intertwined with government contracts and subsidies, and any move by Trump to retaliate could have serious consequences for Musk's business empire. Conversely, Musk's criticism of Trump's policies and his potential to disrupt the Republican voter base could undermine Trump's agenda and weaken his grip on the party. The personal nature of the dispute—marked by heated social media exchanges and public insults—has also captivated the public, turning what might have been a policy disagreement into a high-stakes drama.

As of June 08, 2025, the future of this conflict remains uncertain. Musk has noted that Trump's term has 3.5 years left, but he has vowed to remain active in politics for decades to come, leveraging his wealth, influence, and vision to shape the future of America. Whether the America Party will become a serious contender or merely a footnote in political history is unclear, but the rift between Trump and Musk has already introduced new dynamics into American politics. The clash between these two titans, one a political powerhouse, the other a business and technological visionary, has the potential to redefine the priorities and alliances of the nation.

The world is watching as this saga unfolds. Will Musk's America Party gain traction and challenge the dominance of the two-party system? Will Trump's threats against Musk's businesses materialize, and if so, how will Musk respond? And how will this feud affect the millions of Americans who feel caught in the middle, hoping for leadership that addresses their needs and aspirations? Only time will tell, but one thing is certain: the quarrel between Donald Trump and Elon Musk has set the stage for a new chapter in American politics, one that could have far-reaching consequences for the nation and the world.

## DEGREE OF THOUGHT

By: Satyabrata Borah

## Ukraine's drone gambit: Striking Russia's heartland amid stalled peace talks

By: Dipak Kurmi

On the eve of the second round of peace talks between Ukraine and Russia in Istanbul on June 2, 2025, Ukraine executed an audacious drone attack, codenamed "Operation Spiderweb," targeting Russian airfields deep within the country's heartland. This meticulously planned assault, involving 117 drones smuggled into Russia and launched from trucks, struck at least five air bases, including those in the Irkutsk region of Siberia and the Murmansk region in Russia's Far North. The operation, which Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy described as a year-and-a-half in the making, aimed to disrupt Russia's strategic bomber fleet, with Ukraine's Security Service (SBU) claiming damage to 41 aircraft—34% of Russia's strategic cruise missile carriers—at an estimated cost of \$7 billion to the Kremlin. The timing, scale, and depth of the attack have raised critical questions about its implications for ongoing peace negotiations, Russia's investigative priorities, and the political ramifications for President Vladimir Putin. As the war enters its fourth year, this bold Ukrainian maneuver underscores the escalating asymmetry of the conflict and the challenges of achieving a diplomatic resolution.

The Istanbul talks, mediated by Turkish Foreign Minister Hakan Fidan, were the second attempt since May 2025 to broker a ceasefire between Ukraine and Russia, following the first direct negotiations since the early months of Russia's full-scale invasion in February 2022. However, the discussions, which lasted barely an hour, yielded little progress beyond an agreement to exchange 1,000 prisoners of war and the remains of 12,000 fallen soldiers. The Ukrainian delegation, led by Defence Minister Rustem Umerov, and the Russian delegation, headed by Vladimir Medinsky, a former Cultural Minister, lacked the authority to make binding decisions, serving instead to narrow differences for eventual presentation to Zelenskyy and Putin. The absence of a ceasefire agreement reflects deep-seated disagreements, with Ukraine insisting on a 30-day unconditional ceasefire as a prerequisite for talks, backed by European allies, while Russia demands a roadmap addressing its maximalist goals, including Ukrainian neutrality, protection of Russian-speaking populations, and retention of occupied territories, including Crimea and four annexed oblasts. The drone attack, occurring just hours before the talks, was perceived by some as a deliberate signal from Kyiv to demonstrate its military resilience and influence the negotiations, though it may have hardened Russia's stance.

The scale and audacity of Ukraine's drone assault, which targeted airfields thousands of miles from the front lines, marked a significant escalation in its long-range strike capabilities. Unlike previous attacks, which focused on closer targets like oil refineries or border regions, this operation struck deep into Siberia's Irkutsk region and other distant areas, exposing vulnerabilities in Russia's air defenses. The method of deployment—drones concealed in wooden mobile homes attached to long-haul trucks and remotely launched—was unprecedented, highlighting Ukraine's innovation in drone warfare. The SBU described the targets as "completely legitimate," emphasizing that the affected aircraft were used to launch cruise missiles against Ukrainian cities. Videos verified by The New York Times showed strikes at Olenya Air Base in Murmansk and Belaya Air Base in Irkutsk, with at least five aircraft, including four strategic bombers, damaged. Russian military bloggers and hawkish commentators, while downplaying the extent of the damage, expressed outrage at the failure to protect critical assets, with some likening the attack to Russia's "Pearl Harbor." Russia's Defense Ministry confirmed fires at several airfields but claimed minimal impact, asserting that additional attacks on three other bases were thwarted and several arrests made.

Russia's investigation into the drone strikes is likely to focus on two critical angles, as noted by Nandan Unnikrishnan, a Distinguished Fellow at the Observer Research Foundation. First, Moscow will assess whether the attack targeted nuclear-related facilities, such as strategic bombers or storage sites, which could escalate the conflict given Russia's restraint in deploying nuclear weapons absent NATO's direct involvement. The targeting of airfields hosting nuclear-capable assets would be a serious concern, prompting scrutiny of Ukraine's intentions and capabilities. Second, Russia will investigate the role of external support, particularly the United States, as drones require sophisticated navigation systems, potentially reliant on U.S. satellite infrastructure. This raises questions about whether the attack was a unilateral Ukrainian operation to gain leverage in negotiations or a NATO-backed effort to provoke a broader escalation. The Kremlin's suspicion of Western involvement is heightened by previous Ukrainian strikes, such as the attempted drone attack on Moscow during Russia's Victory Day parade on May 9, 2025, attended by over 20 foreign leaders. The depth and coordination of the June attack suggest a level of technological and logistical sophistication that Russia will scrutinize closely.

For President Putin, the drone attack poses both military and political challenges, though its impact on his domestic standing appears limited. Militarily, the loss of strategic bombers, even if exaggerated by Ukrainian claims, could constrain Russia's ability to sustain large-scale cruise missile strikes on Ukraine while maintaining nuclear deterrence patrols against NATO and Japan, as noted by Justin Bronk of the Royal United Services Institute. The attack's penetration of Russia's vast territory undermines the narrative of invulnerability, potentially prompting a reevaluation of air defense priorities. However, politically, Putin's grip on power remains unshaken. Unnikrishnan argues that public support for Putin is "way too solid" for the attack to significantly alter his position, despite criticism from headline bloggers calling for retribution. Putin's response, articulated through spokesman Dmitry Peskov, framed the war as "existential" for Russia's national interests, suggesting that the attack strengthens Moscow's resolve to pursue its objectives. Putin's subsequent warning to U.S. President Donald Trump about retaliatory measures underscores his intent to maintain a hardline stance, even as he engages in peace talks to appease international pressure.

The drone attack complicates an already fragile peace process. Ukraine's strategy, as articulated by Zelenskyy, aims to demonstrate that continuing the war carries significant risks for Moscow, potentially forcing Russia to negotiate in good faith. The operation's symbolic impact—proving Ukraine's ability to strike deep into Russia—bolsters morale in Kyiv and signals to Western allies that Ukraine remains a formidable partner despite battlefield setbacks. However, the timing, just before the Istanbul talks, may have undermined diplomatic progress. Russia's delegation, led by Medinsky, presented maximalist demands, including territorial concessions and Ukrainian demilitarization, which Kyiv rejected as capitulation. The Kremlin's insistence on addressing "root causes," such as Ukraine's NATO aspirations, contrasts with Kyiv's call for an immediate ceasefire to regroup and replenish resources. The U.S., under President Trump, has exerted pressure on both sides to reach a deal, with Trump expressing frustration at the lack of progress and threatening sanctions on Russia. Yet, his simultaneous criticism of Zelenskyy for provocative rhetoric suggests a shift from the Biden administration's unequivocal support for Ukraine, complicating Kyiv's position.

The broader context of escalating tit-for-tat attacks further dims prospects for peace. Russia's response to the drone strikes included a massive aerial assault on Ukraine,

launching over 470 drones and missiles in a single day, described by Ukrainian officials as the war's largest air attack. This barrage killed at least 12 people, including three children in Zhytomyr, and targeted a training unit in Dnipropetrovsk, wounding dozens. Zelenskyy condemned the "silence of America" and called for tighter sanctions to deprive Russia of resources, while European leaders, including Germany's Friedrich Merz and the UK's Keir Starmer, urged stronger measures against Moscow. The intensification of Russian ground offensives in Donetsk and the presence of North Korean troops in Kursk further highlight Russia's strategic advantage, reducing its incentive for a prolonged ceasefire. Ukraine's Kursk incursion in August 2024, aimed at gaining leverage for territorial exchanges, disrupted earlier talks in Doha, and the recent drone attack may similarly derail momentum in Istanbul.

The implications for peace talks hinge on whether Ukraine's demonstration of strength can shift Russia's calculus. Analysts like Mick Ryan of the Lowy Institute argue that while the attack showcases Ukraine's evolving drone capabilities, it is unlikely to alter Putin's determination to achieve his war aims. Russia's slow but steady advances on the ground, coupled with Ukraine's exhaustion and dwindling resources, give Moscow a perceived upper hand. The negotiations, still at a preliminary stage with second-level officials, face the challenge of reconciling irreconcilable positions. Ukraine's push for a 30-day ceasefire, supported by European allies, aims to create space for diplomacy, but Russia's insistence on a comprehensive resolution tied to its geopolitical demands suggests a prolonged stalemate. The drone attack, while a tactical success for Ukraine, risks reinforcing Russia's narrative of Western-backed aggression, potentially escalating retaliatory strikes and further entrenching the conflict.

Ukraine's drone assault on Russian airfields represents a bold escalation, exposing Moscow's vulnerabilities and strengthening Kyiv's negotiating position symbolically. However, it has deepened the divide in peace talks, with Russia's investigation likely focusing on NATO's role and the protection of nuclear assets. For Putin, the attack is a military setback but not a political threat, given his domestic support. As both sides exchange devastating blows, the path to a ceasefire remains elusive, with U.S.-led mediation struggling to bridge fundamental disagreements. The war's trajectory, shaped by Ukraine's innovative warfare and Russia's relentless aggression, underscores the complexity of achieving a just and lasting peace. (The writer can be reached at [dipakkurmipltd@gmail.com](mailto:dipakkurmipltd@gmail.com))

## POST BAG

## Regarding the launch event of the Career Haatputhi

Sir/Ma'am

Many readers have asked me—why was there no formal launch event organized for the book titled Career Haatputhi? In response to this recurring question, I wish to address the matter through this open letter. The Career Haatputhi was first published in 2015 by Anil Anil Baruah, with a total of four editions released by 2018. Thereafter, Pradyut Hazarika of Banalata took over the responsibility of publishing the book. Under Banalata, the first edition was published in June 2023, followed by the second edition in April 2024, and the third edition in December 2024. The book's cover design did by Suman Das, while Ashim Chutia did the layout design. The Career Haatputhi consists of 509 pages and is priced at ₹350.

Generally, book launch events are organized through press conferences or public gatherings to raise awareness among readers. However, it is often observed that such launch events are only covered in city editions or local pages of newspapers. Even if a photo is published, it mostly highlights the dignitaries who launched the book, with little to no mention of the book title or the author. As a result, the main purpose of spreading awareness about the book remains largely unfulfilled despite investing significant time and resources in organizing such events. Considering all these factors, I decided not to organize a conventional launch event for the Career Haatputhi. Instead, I chose to inform the public about the book through platforms like Facebook, WhatsApp, Twitter, Email, YouTube, LinkedIn, Instagram etc.

This book is a compilation of career-related articles previously published in various newspapers and magazines. I take this opportunity to sincerely thank all the editors who provided a platform for these writings. The Career Haatputhi has been specially prepared for students who have completed high school and higher secondary education. It aims to provide them with a clear, organized, and practical understanding of various academic streams and subject relevance, along with future career prospects. I have also come to know that many individuals, institutions, and organizations have gifted this book as a prize in school and college week competitions, added it to institutional libraries, and presented it to students who have successfully passed their high school or higher secondary examinations. I express my deep gratitude to all readers, well-wishers, and organizations for their wholehearted support and acceptance. For the upcoming editions of the Career Haatputhi, I would be grateful to receive suggestions from readers about new topics that should be included to make the book even more useful for students.

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# How does the respiratory system work?

By: Alex Bell

The respiratory system allows air to reach the lungs, from which oxygen enters the blood and circulates to all body cells. This system also removes waste gases from the body and helps prevent disease due to particulate matter.

The respiratory system helps prevent the intake of harmful particles—such as dust, fumes, and mist—through coughing, sneezing, or swallowing.

The respiratory system is made up of the nose, sinuses, lungs, diaphragm and other organs and structures.

This article examines the various parts of the respiratory system, some respiratory conditions, and how a person breathes. It also looks at lung function and the processes of inhalation and exhalation.

## Respiratory system diagram

Click on the interactive Bodymap below to move around the model and read more about the respiratory system.

### Parts of the respiratory system

The respiratory system is divided into an upper and lower respiratory tract. The upper tract comprises:

- the nose and nasal cavity
- the sinuses
- the pharynx
- the larynx

The lower respiratory tract includes:

- the lungs
- the trachea
- the diaphragm

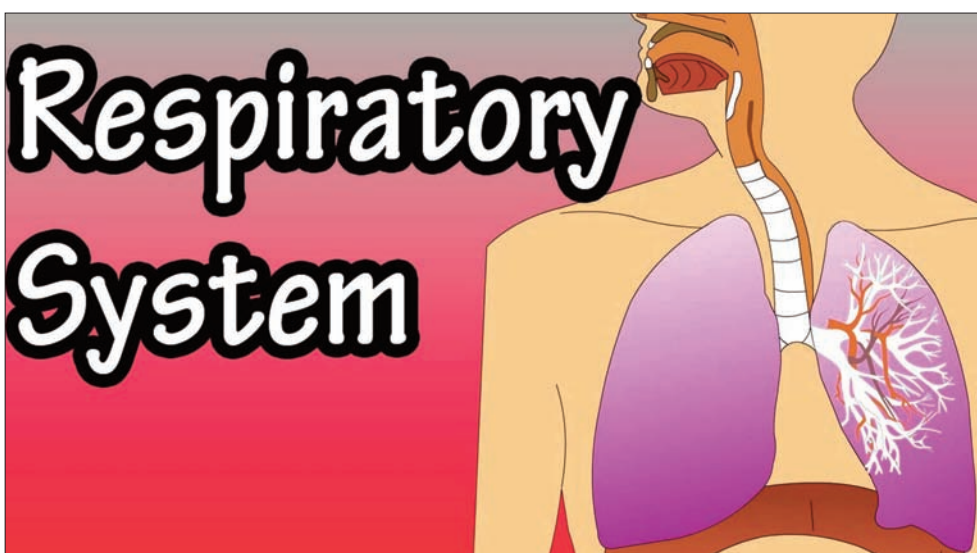
The sections below will look at each part of the respiratory system in more detail.

### Nose and nasal cavity

Forming the main external opening of the respiratory system, the nose protects the anterior portion of the nasal cavity. The nose is also unique, as it is the only part of the system that is externally visible.

The nasal cavity is the uppermost part of the respiratory system, divided into two by the nasal septum. It is the best entrance for outside air, as hairs and mucus line the inside wall and operate as air cleansers.

Within this hollow space, the air is warmed,



moisturized, and filtered before reaching the lungs. The nose prevents dust, mold, and other contaminants from reaching the lungs.

### Sinuses

The paranasal (meaning around the nose) sinuses are four paired, hollow spaces above and below the eyes.

Connected to the nose by small openings, they regulate the temperature and humidity of inhaled air. These cavities also give tone to the voice. Sinuses develop after birth and reach their final size around the age of 20.

### Pharynx

The pharynx, or throat, is a versatile muscular tube, shaped like a funnel, that delivers air from the mouth and nose to the trachea, or windpipe. It also connects the nasal and oral cavities with the larynx and esophagus.

The pharynx is key to the respiratory and digestive systems. It allows inhaled air to pass from the nasal cavity to the larynx, trachea, and lungs.

A section of the pharynx called the nasopharynx hosts the epiglottis. This keeps the passage to the esophagus covered, preventing air from entering the digestive system.

### Larynx

The larynx has a dual function in the respiratory

system: as an air canal to the lungs (while stopping food and drink from blocking the airway) and as the “voice box” (which contains vocal cords for speech).

The larynx is a 2-inch tube made up of nine cartilage pieces. It connects the pharynx with the trachea and is held together by ligaments, membranes, and fibrous tissue.

### Lungs

The lungs are the primary organs of the respiratory system, as they perform a vital role in breathing: gas exchange.

The air that a person breathes in through the nose and mouth contains oxygen and other gases. Oxygen enters the lungs, then the bloodstream, allowing the body to function normally. However, the lungs also take the carbon dioxide from the blood and release it into the air when a person breathes out.

The grape-like sacs called alveoli in each lung allow the exchange of oxygen and carbon dioxide to take place.

### Trachea

The trachea runs down the neck and upper chest. It is a wide, hollow tube that connects the larynx to the bronchi, or airways, of the lungs.

Its most vital function is to enable airflow to and

from the lungs. The fibroelastic membrane expands and contracts during inhalation and exhalation.

### Diaphragm

The diaphragm is a dome-shaped sheet of muscle located below the lungs. It separates the chest from the abdomen.

The diaphragm operates as the major muscle of respiration and aids breathing. The parasympathetic nervous system regulates the contraction and relaxation of the diaphragm and intercostal muscles.

### How does the respiratory system work?

There are two phases of breathing: in and out.

As a person inhales, the diaphragm contracts and moves downward. The space left in the chest allows the lungs to expand. Muscles in the ribs also help enlarge the chest cavity, pulling the rib cage upward and outward.

Once the lungs expand, air moves in through the nose and mouth. The air travels down the trachea and into the lungs, allowing a person to breathe.

The exchange of oxygen and carbon dioxide occurs before exhalation. When a person exhales, the diaphragm relaxes, the lungs recoil, and the air moves out of the lungs.

### Respiratory system diseases

Due to the complex nature of the respiratory system, many health conditions can affect it. The following sections will look at some respiratory conditions in more detail.

### Asthma

Asthma is a chronic, long-term inflammatory condition that affects the airways. Symptoms are variable and recurring, including coughing, chest tightness, and shortness of breath.

Among other medications, doctors may prescribe inhalers containing corticosteroids to treat this condition.

According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), around 7.7% of adults in the United States have asthma.

### Chronic obstructive pulmonary disease

Chronic obstructive pulmonary disease (COPD) is a condition that progresses with time and makes it hard to breathe.

People who smoke heavily may experience inflammation of the airways, which makes it diffi-

cult for the lungs to inhale and exhale enough air. Symptoms of COPD include breathlessness, a persistent cough, and frequent chest infections.

### Bronchitis

A symptom of bronchitis is an inflammation of the lung airways. When the airways are inflamed, they produce too much mucus, which causes coughing, wheezing, and fatigue. The two main types of bronchitis are acute and chronic. Chronic bronchitis is a form of COPD.

A doctor may treat bronchitis with antibiotics and recommend that a person drinks plenty of fluids to dilute the thick mucus in the airways.

### Sinusitis

Sinusitis can cause inflammation of the air cavities within the nose and lead to facial pain, headache, and a blocked or runny nose. It usually develops due to an infection and is treatable with nasal sprays, fluids, pain relievers, and decongestants.

### Pneumonia

Bacteria, viruses, and fungi can all cause pneumonia. Symptoms include a high temperature, a cough, difficulty breathing, and chest pain.

A doctor will usually treat pneumonia with antibiotics. They may also recommend hospitalization for serious cases.

### Lung cancer

Lung cancer begins in the lungs but may spread to the lymph nodes or other areas of the body. There are two types of lung cancer: small cell and non-small cell lung cancer. They require different treatments, which will depend on how far the condition has progressed.

Lung cancer is dangerous because many people do not have any symptoms until the condition is in an advanced stage.

### Summary

On average, people breathe 10–20 times per minute. This means that having an efficient respiratory system is essential to quality of life.

If the lungs do not exchange oxygen and carbon dioxide efficiently, it can lead to health issues such as shortness of breath and fatigue.

With so many working parts, keeping the respiratory system healthy is important. People can do this by avoiding smoking, eating a healthful diet, and exercising regularly. (Courtesy: *Medical News Today*)

# AI for safer food: Promise and challenges



By : Basu Chandola

Access to safe, nutritious, and affordable food is essential to achieving the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development—especially its objective to “end hunger, achieve food security, and improved nutrition.” However, unsafe food has been linked to causing over 200 different types of diseases, with nearly 600 million people succumbing to illness after consuming unsafe food every year.

The theme of this year’s World Food Safety Day—“Food Safety: Science in Action”—highlights the vital role of scientific knowledge in ensuring safe food for all. Against this backdrop, this commentary explores how Artificial Intelligence (AI) can become a powerful tool to strengthen food safety systems globally and address the implementation challenges associated with such apparatus. Conventional food safety systems are struggling to keep up with sophisticated, globalised food systems and the emerging risks they present. While surveillance gaps continue to widen, AI-enabled technology is driving new methodologies in detecting, tracing, and preventing contamination.

## AI in Food Safety

Comprehending the role of AI in enhancing food safety requires an examination of how food moves from farms to our tables. The food supply chain consists of interconnected stages—production, processing, distribution, consumption, and disposal—with each stage dependent on the smooth functioning of the others. Multiple stakeholders participate in this chain, including farmers, seed producers, merchants, transporters, wholesalers, retailers, financial institutions, and insurance providers.

As food moves systematically through the supply chain, it generates vast amounts of data at each stage. AI solutions can be applied to this data

to improve prediction accuracy, maintain quality, and enhance overall supply chain efficiency, making it useful across the supply chain—from agriculture, food production, and retail to delivery.

There are primarily three ways in which AI seeks to enhance food safety: first, by automating routine tasks to boost efficiency and productivity; second, by analysing large data sets to improve decision-making and product quality; and third, by performing advanced functions beyond human capability, such as predictive analytics. With the growth of AI, food safety professionals will play an increasingly important role in shaping AI solutions that are deployed in the food industry. In this context, capacity building through upskilling and cross-disciplinary training becomes imperative. This ensures that regulators, industry personnel, and technologists can collaborate effectively to develop and deploy AI systems that are both safe and contextually relevant.

## Use Cases of AI in Food Safety

AI is currently enhancing food safety through a range of targeted applications. AI-powered sensors enable real-time detection of contaminants, allowing for swift intervention against microbes, chemical residues, and physical adulterants in food products. Integrated AI and blockchain solutions strengthen traceability, making product recalls faster and more accurate. Additionally, AI supports predictive maintenance by identifying potential equipment failures early, resulting in better hygiene and operational efficiency. These technologies also contribute to waste reduction by accurately predicting shelf life and optimising supply chain processes.

AI is also equipped to predict foodborne illness outbreaks and detect anomalies such as mislabelling or adulteration in the supply chain. It improves quality control through ac-

curate defect detection and predicts shelf life and spoilage using classification algorithms. Additionally, AI leverages Natural Language Processing (NLP) to scan ingredient lists and labels for allergen risks, helping manufacturers comply with regulations and prevent recalls.

Use of AI for predictive analysis of food demand is another important use case. By applying machine learning algorithms on historical datasets—including consumer behaviour, past sale trends, seasonality, weather patterns, and other socio-economic factors—AI solutions can produce demand forecasts for various food items. Furthermore, these forecasts also help producers and retailers optimise logistics across the entire supply chain—adjusting production volumes, scheduling timely procurement, and streamlining distribution to ensure that perishable goods reach markets before their expiry. By aligning supply more closely with actual demand, AI can help reduce overproduction and underutilisation—the two major causes of spoilage. Additionally, AI can identify bottlenecks or inefficiencies in logistics and suggest real-time interventions, thereby preserving the freshness and safety of food products throughout their journey.

In addition, AI-powered machines can be implemented to reduce dependence on manual labour in food handling processes. This helps minimise human error and potential contamination. By automating tasks traditionally performed by humans, such systems enhance hygiene and operational consistency. AI-based machines can also enhance real-time monitoring and provide proactive interventions, ensuring a safer and more compliant environment in retail and food services.

India has taken several steps to deploy AI and machine learning based innovative solutions to strengthen the food regulatory system, including the

use of AI for obtaining traceability information. Raman 1.0 was launched by Oak Analytics—a startup mentored by the Food Safety and Standards Authority of India (FSSAI). It is a handheld spectrometer that leverages micro-optics, mobile, and AI to take spectroscopy out of the lab and into the field.

## Challenges in Deploying AI for Food Safety

AI deployment in food safety is constrained by several technical challenges. A primary challenge is the lack of high-quality domain-specific datasets that cover the various food environments. Relevant data is often fragmented across heterogeneous formats and storage systems, limiting accessibility and usability. Lack of interoperability further complicates the integration of various datasets, affecting the efficient development and deployment of AI models. Furthermore, the insufficient participation of food safety professionals in the AI development cycle results in concerns regarding the relevance and effectiveness of the solutions. A lack of domain-specific input during model design often leads to solutions that are poorly adapted to real-world food environments.

Several legacy food safety systems are known to rely on outdated infrastructure, rendering upgrades both costly and resource-intensive. Modernisation requires substantial investment in hardware, software, and specialised expertise, often accompanied by significant operational downtime.

AI solutions deployed in food safety must also adhere to stringent and evolving regulatory frameworks. It is important to ensure that the solutions so developed can comply with and adapt to the regulatory updates without extensive redevelopment. Failure to address these factors not only risks legal penalties but can also undermine stakeholder trust and system reliability in critical safety applications.

## Way forward

Food safety is a critical component in the global effort to end hunger, and AI offers advanced analytical and automation capabilities across the food supply chain to enhance food safety. While it possesses the potential to improve several aspects of food safety, significant challenges hinder its deployment in food safety. It is important to ensure the availability of appropriate datasets and adequate infrastructure. Furthermore, prioritising open data standards to ensure interoperability and accessibility across stakeholders is key to developing successful AI-based food safety solutions. In addition, regulatory sandboxes can be implemented to allow controlled testing of such solutions. AI-based compliance audits can also be used to detect violation of food safety violations. It is also important to take a multi-disciplinary approach in developing such a solution, considering the expertise of experts on food safety. With coordinated efforts and continued innovation, AI can become a cornerstone technology in building safer, more efficient, and sustainable food systems worldwide. (Courtesy: ORF)

# Responsibility of family in child development

By: Himangshu Ranjan Bhuyan

Nowadays, high quality institutions are being established for children’s education. That does not diminish the importance of the old educational responsibilities and roles of the family. Instead, the role of education has become more responsible in view of the changes in the family structure of today’s society. This responsibility of the family in child development is naturally broad and versatile. The family is the oldest and strongest non-formal educational institution. Although the importance of formal educational institutions is increasing day by day; The responsibility of families in the education of their children has not diminished; It’s just increased a lot. “The home is the starting point of education,” says Roseanne Craze, an educator. Before the establishment of schools in the society, the family provided all kinds of social, moral, spiritual and vocational education to the children. The English educator T. Remonte commented on the influence of the home environment as follows: “Two students can study in the same school under the supervision of the same teacher, learn the same things but both speak, behave, and behave differently etc. will reflect the environment in which they grew up.”

Therefore, the family environment should be healthy and the behavior of adults should be exemplary.

The home is the place of children’s true education. Children grow up in the love of their parents. Parents play a significant role in the physical and mental development of their children. The way the family shapes the child during this period determines the child’s future life. With the change of times, the structure of families has also changed. The scope of education has also expanded. In such a context, although the family cannot educate the child in all ways, it can also contribute a lot to making him a social and good citizen. This responsibility of the family in child development is naturally broad and versatile. In short, the family should collectively bear the responsibility for all the education and facilities necessary for the development of the child’s personality. In addition, meeting the physical needs of the child is a major responsibility of the family. Every child feels physical needs such as food and clothing. They have to rely solely on their parents to fulfill it. Important responsibilities include providing nutritious food regularly and keeping children free from diseases. In addition, the need for play for children’s muscle motor skills is undeniable. This helps the child to acquire the physical abilities necessary for the activities of daily life.

As soon as the senses become active, the child’s mental life begins. Parents should help their children’s intellectual development by taking into account their natural playfulness and curiosity. In terms of emotional life, children also need a warm environment of affection and love at this time. Children should be kept as far away from painful emotional situations as sadness, fear, anger, violence, jealousy, boredom, frustration, etc. that they should feel safe in

the family. As children become socially oriented and socially conscious, they want to gain personal freedom, self-esteem, dignity, recognition, praise, etc. In the home environment, they seek assurance of responsible personality, personal freedom to perform actions and recognition and praise from family members for achievement. These needs of the child’s personal mental life should be met by the home authorities. Therefore, it is important to instill a sense of self-confidence and self-confidence in the minds of children and develop a strong personality.

During childhood, a person’s emotional life becomes even more fragile. He is particularly responsive to the pleasant and painful feelings of emotion. It is important to note that the physical, mental and emotional needs of children during this period are not met as expected by the home authorities. This suppression is an unhealthy mental state that leads to abnormalities in a person’s behavior and mental complexity. In view of this harm, special attention should be paid to childhood repression freedom.

Childhood is a time to form good habits for the future. During this time, the child’s body organs, muscles, nerves, etc. are very useful for developing physical activity habits. Home authorities should provide special facilities to children to acquire various skills of hands and feet, special muscle movement ability for play, etc. In addition, care should be taken to maintain regularity in daily physical activities such as eating and dressing. Parents should be careful that imitative children avoid bad habits of unhealthy behavior and practice good habits. In addition, the family plays a significant role in improving the quality of a person’s moral life. Parents can instill in their

children a sense of moral consciousness of sin and virtue, justice and injustice, right and wrong, etc. towards various actions and behaviours. Moral behaviors such as speaking the truth, being humble and modest, and being kind to the poor are the result of practice in the home environment. In order to develop such moral consciousness, it is essential to create a moral environment in the family. Every family reflects its own religion, culture, etc. Everyone in the family grows up with such characteristics. Therefore, it is the duty of the family to introduce the child to this cultural lifestyle of the past acquired as a social heredity

Different stages of child development have their own characteristics, problems, needs, etc. Children develop according to the characteristics of different stages. It is essential that family authorities cooperate well with teachers on the nature of such development and its problems and seek their necessary advice. With the cooperation of teachers and parents, various family and school problems of children can be solved. (The writer is CRCC of Nalbari Cluster, Biswanath Education Block, Education Department, Government of Assam)



# Israeli forces seize Gaza-bound aid boat

*Forces detain Greta Thunberg, other activists*

**JERUSALEM, June 9:** Israeli forces seized a Gaza-bound aid boat and detained Greta Thunberg and other activists who were on board early Monday, enforcing a longstanding blockade of the Palestinian territory that has been tightened during the war with Hamas.

The activists had set out to protest Israel's ongoing military campaign in the Gaza Strip, which is among the deadliest and most destructive since World War II, and its restrictions on the entry of humanitarian aid, both of which have put the territory of some 2 million Palestinians at risk of famine.

The Freedom Flotilla Coalition, which had organized the voyage, said the activists were "kidnapped by Israeli forces" while trying to deliver desperately needed aid to the territory.

"The ship was unlawfully boarded, its unarmed civilian crew abducted, and its life-saving cargo — including baby formula, food and medical supplies — confiscated," it said in a statement. It said the ship was seized in international waters some 200 kilometres from Gaza.

Israel's Foreign Ministry portrayed the voyage as a pub-

lic relations stunt, saying in a post on X that "the selfie yacht of the celebrities is safely making its way to the shores of Israel".

It said the activists would return to their home countries and the aid would be sent to Gaza through established channels. It circulated footage of what appeared to be Israeli military personnel handing out sandwiches and water to the activists, who were wearing orange life vests.

Lt. Col. Nadav Shoshani, an Israeli military spokesperson, said the ship was still en route to Israel around midday Monday. It was expected to dock at the port of Ashdod.

Thunberg, a climate campaigner, was among 12 activists aboard the Madleen, which set sail from Sicily a week ago.

Along the way, it had stopped on Thursday to rescue four migrants who had jumped overboard to avoid being detained by the Libyan coast guard.

"I urge all my friends, family and comrades to put pressure on the Swedish government to release me and the others as soon as possible," Thunberg



said in a pre-recorded message released after the ship was halted.

Rima Hassan, a French member of the European Parliament who is of Palestinian descent, was also among the volunteers on board.

She has been barred from entering Israel because of her opposition to Israeli policies toward the Palestinians.

She was among six French citizens aboard the boat. French President Emmanuel Macron asked Israel to allow them to return to France as soon as possible, his office said in a statement.

Adalah, a rights group in Is-

rael that said it was representing the activists, said Israel had "no legal authority" to take over the ship because it was in international waters and because it was headed not to Israel but to the "territorial waters of the state of Palestine".

"The arrest of the unarmed activists, who operated in a civilian manner to provide humanitarian aid, amounts to a serious breach of international law," Adalah said in a statement.

After a 2½-month total blockade aimed at pressuring Hamas, Israel started allowing some basic aid into Gaza last

month, but humanitarian workers and experts have warned of famine unless the blockade is lifted and Israel ends its military offensive.

An attempt last month by Freedom Flotilla to reach Gaza by sea failed after another of the group's vessels was attacked by two drones while sailing in international waters off Malta, organisers said.

The group blamed Israel for the attack, which damaged the front section of the ship.

Israel and Egypt have imposed varying degrees of blockade on Gaza since Hamas seized power from rival Palestinian forces in 2007.

Israel says the blockade is needed to prevent Hamas from importing arms, while critics say it amounts to collective punishment of Gaza's Palestinian population.

Israel sealed Gaza off from all aid in the early days of the war ignited by the Hamas-led attack on southern Israel on October 7, 2023, but later relented under US pressure.

In early March, shortly before Israel ended a ceasefire with Hamas, the country again blocked all imports, including food, fuel and medicine.

Hamas-led militants killed around 1,200 people, mostly civilians, in the October 7 attack and abducted 251 hostages, most of whom have since been released in ceasefire agreements or other deals. Hamas is still holding 55 hostages, more than half of them believed to be dead.

Israel's military campaign has killed more than 54,000 Palestinians, according to the Gaza Health Ministry, which doesn't distinguish between civilians and combatants but has said women and children make up most of the dead.

The war has destroyed vast areas of Gaza and displaced around 90 per cent of the territory's population, leaving people there almost completely dependent on international aid.

Efforts to broker another truce have been deadlocked for months.

Hamas says it will only release the remaining hostages in exchange for a lasting ceasefire and an Israeli withdrawal, while Israel has vowed to continue the war until all the captives are returned and Hamas is defeated or disarmed and exiled. (AP)

## Italians head to polls in referendum on citizenship, labour, but vote risks sinking on low turnout

**ROME, June 9:** Italians headed to the polls Monday on the second and final day of referendums that would make it easier for children born in Italy to foreigners to obtain citizenship, and on providing more job protections.

But partial data showed a low turnout, well below the required 50 per cent plus one threshold, risking to invalidate the vote.

Campaigners for the change in the citizenship law say it will help second-generation Italians born in the country to non-European Union parents better integrate into a culture they already see as theirs.

Partial data from Italy's Interior Ministry published at 2100 GMT on Sunday showed that national turnout stood at 22.7 per cent, just over half of the 41 per cent registered at the same time of the day in the latest comparable referendum held in 2011. The polling stations close later Monday at 1300 GMT.

The new rules, if passed, could affect about 2.5 million foreign nationals who still struggle to be recognised as citizens.

The measures were proposed by Italy's main union and left-wing opposition parties. Premier Giorgia Meloni showed up at the polls on Sunday evening but didn't cast a ballot — an action widely criticised by the left as antidemocratic, since it won't contribute to reaching the necessary threshold to make the vote valid.

"While some members of her ruling coalition have openly called for abstention, Meloni has opted for a more subtle approach," said analyst Wolfgang Piccoli of the Teneo consultancy based in London. "It's yet another example of her trademark fence-sitting."

Supporters say this reform would bring Italy's citizenship law in line with many other European countries, promoting greater social integration for long-term residents.

It would also allow faster access to civil and political rights, such as the right to vote, eligibility for public employment and freedom of movement within the EU.

"The real drama is that neither people who will vote 'yes' nor those who intend to vote 'no' or abstain have an idea of what (an) ordeal children born from foreigners have to face in this country to obtain a residence permit," said Selam Tesfaye, an activist and campaigner with the Milan-based human rights group Il Cantiere.

Activists and opposition parties also denounced the lack of public debate on the measures, accusing the governing centre-right coalition of trying to dampen interest in sensitive issues that directly impact immigrants and workers.

In May, Italy's AGCOM communications authority lodged a complaint against RAI state television and other broadcasters over a lack of adequate and balanced coverage.

Opinion polls published in mid-May showed that only 46 per cent of Italians were aware of the issues driving the referendums. Turnout projections were even weaker for a vote scheduled for the first weekend of Italy's school holidays, at around 35 per cent of around 50 million electors, well below the required quorum.

"Many believe that the referendum institution should be reviewed in light of the high levels of abstention (that) emerged in recent elections and the turnout threshold should be lowered," said Lorenzo Pregliasco, political analyst and pollster at YouTrend.

Some analysts note, however, that the center-left opposition could claim a victory even if the referendum fails on condition that the turnout surpasses the 12.3 million voters who backed the winning centre-right coalition in the 2022 general election. (AP)

## Explosion at US air base in southern Japan injures 4 Japanese soldiers

**TOKYO, June 9:** An explosion at a storage site for unexploded ordnance at a US military base on Japan's southern island of Okinawa injured four Japanese soldiers, though the injuries are not life threatening, officials said on Monday.

The four soldiers sustained finger injuries while working at a facility that belongs to Okinawa prefecture and temporarily stores unexploded ordnance, mostly from wartime and found on the island, local officials said. One of the harshest battles of World War II was fought on Okinawa.

Prefectural officials said the injuries were not life threatening, but no other details were immediately known.

The US Air Force said in a statement that the explosion occurred inside the facility managed by the Okinawa prefectural government at Kadena Air Base's munitions storage area. It said no US servicemembers were involved in

the incident.

The Self Defence Force's joint staff said one of the ordinances suddenly exploded when the soldiers were inspecting it at the facility.

The blast occurred when the soldiers were trying to remove rust to examine details of the unexploded ordnance, NHK television reported.

The SDF said they are trying to confirm what caused the accident. Hundreds of tons of unexploded wartime bombs, many of them dropped by the US military, remain buried around Japan and are sometimes dug up at construction sites and elsewhere.

Many of them are still found on Okinawa, where about 1,856 tons of unexploded US bombs are believed to remain.

In October, an unexploded wartime US bomb exploded at a commercial airport in southern Japan, causing a large crater and suspending dozens of flights. (AP)

## Pak delegation in UK following talks in US over conflict with India

**ISLAMABAD, June 9:** Pakistan's high-level delegation led by former foreign minister Bilawal Bhutto Zardari has arrived in the UK following diplomatic engagements in New York over the recent military conflict with India, a media report said.

The nine-member group on Sunday held talks with United Nations representatives, diplomats from member states, and senior US officials to present Pakistan's narrative on the conflict following the Pahalgalam terror attack that claimed 26 lives, The Express Tribune reported.

In response to the Pahalgalam terror attack, India targeted terror infrastructure in Pakistan and Pakistan-occupied Kashmir, following which Islamabad resorted to military action, leading to clashes between the two countries' military.

"Our message was clear — Pakistan seeks peace," former foreign secretary Jilil Abbas Jilani, a member of the delegation,



said here.

Jilani said Islamabad sought the resolution of all issues, including the Indus Waters Treaty, through dialogue.

Speaking to the media, lawmaker Khuram Dastgir highlighted the regional impact of the water dispute and called for the restoration of the 1960 World Bank-mediated treaty, which India said remained in abeyance until Islamabad ended its support for cross-border terrorism.

"We explained to US officials that India's suspension of the

treaty endangers the livelihood of 240 million people and undermines the region's stability," he said. Dastgir stressed the water dispute was a matter of survival for Pakistan, asserting the country would not compromise on it.

He pointed out that the Americans initially assumed the ceasefire brokered by US President Donald Trump required no further involvement. "Our mission was to make them understand that intervention is necessary as India wants neither a neutral inquiry nor talks,"

Dastgir said.

Trump claimed to have played a role in stopping hostilities between India and Pakistan following the Pahalgalam attack, a claim rejected by India.

New Delhi has rejected a third-party intervention on bilateral issues with Islamabad.

Senator Sherry Rehman, another member of the group, said the mission was focused on advocating for peace and ensuring the water treaty and Kashmir issue remained on the international agenda.

In the UK, the delegation is expected to meet senior British officials to highlight Pakistan's stance on the conflict and its broader implications.

British Foreign Secretary David Lammy recently visited both Islamabad and New Delhi.

"We want stability, but recognise the fragility of the situation, particularly in the context of terrorism," Lammy had said in Pakistan. (PTI)

## Trump's new travel ban takes effect amid escalating tension over immigration enforcement

**WASHINGTON, June 9:** President Donald Trump's new ban on travel to the US by citizens from 12 mainly African and Middle Eastern countries took effect on Monday amid rising tension over the president's escalating campaign of immigration enforcement.

The new proclamation, which Trump signed on Wednesday, applies to citizens of Afghanistan, Myanmar, Chad, the Republic of Congo, Equatorial Guinea, Eritrea, Haiti, Iran, Libya, Somalia, Sudan and Yemen. It also imposes heightened restrictions on people from Burundi, Cuba, Laos, Sierra Leone, Togo, Turkmenistan and Venezuela who are outside the US and don't hold a valid visa.

The new ban does not revoke visas previously issued to people from countries on the list, according to guidance issued Friday to all US diplomatic missions.

However, unless an applicant meets narrow criteria for an exemption to the ban, his or her application will be rejected starting Monday.

Travellers with previously issued visas should still be able to enter the US even after the ban takes effect. Haitian-American Elvanise Louis-Juste, who was at the airport Sunday in Newark, New Jersey, awaiting a flight to her home state of

Florida, said many Haitians wanting to come to the US are simply seeking to escape violence and unrest in their country.

"I have family in Haiti, so it's pretty upsetting to see and hear," Louis-Juste, 23, said of the travel ban. "I don't think it's a good thing. I think it's very upsetting."

Many immigration experts say the new ban is designed to beat any court challenge by focusing on the visa application process and appears more carefully crafted than a hastily written executive order during Trump's first term that denied entry to citizens of mainly Muslim countries.

In a video posted Wednesday on social media, Trump said nationals of countries included in the ban pose "terrorism-related" and "public-safety" risks, as well as risks of overstaying their visas.

He also said some of these countries had "deficient" screening and vetting or have historically refused to take back their citizens.

His findings rely extensively on an annual Homeland Security report about tourists, businesspeople and students who overstay US visas and arrive by air or sea, singling out countries with high percentages of nationals who remain after their visas expired. (AP)

## No letter received from UK MP Tulip, says B'Desh CA's Press Secretary on her meeting with Yunus

**DHAKA, June 9:** The Bangladesh Chief Advisor's Office has yet to receive the letter that former UK minister Tulip Siddiq sent, requesting a meeting with interim government head Muhammad Yunus.

"We have received no letter from her so far," BD News quoted Chief Advisor's Press Secretary Shafiqul Alam as saying on Sunday. "We have been on Eid-ul-Azha holiday since June 5. We will depart for the United Kingdom at 7:30 pm on Monday. Since we have yet to receive the letter, there is no opportunity to comment on the matter," the press secretary said.

British MP Siddiq, in the letter, has sought a meeting with Yunus in London to clear up a "misunderstanding" over corruption allegations against her. In the June 4 letter to Yunus, Siddiq asked for an opportunity to discuss the ongoing controversy during the chief adviser's visit to London next week.

Yunus will meet King Charles and see Keir Starmer in Downing Street during his four-day visit to the UK from June 10-13.

Siddiq said she hopes a meeting might "help clear up the misunderstanding perpetuated by the anti-corruption committee in

Dhaka that I have questions to answer about my mother's sister, the former prime minister of Bangladesh, Sheikh Hasina".

"I am a UK citizen, born in London and representing the people of Hampstead and Highgate in parliament for the last decade. I have no property nor any business interests whatsoever in Bangladesh," she said.

"I have sought to clarify this to the ACC, but they refuse to engage with my lawyers in London and apparently keep sending correspondence to a random address in Dhaka," she said. Bangladesh's anti-corruption committee (ACC) claimed Hasina's niece, Siddiq, or her mother received a 7,200 sq ft plot of land through "abuse of power and influence". Siddiq has denied the allegations, with her lawyers describing them as "politically motivated" and without foundation. She further claimed not to have been contacted by the authorities over any of the allegations, Prothom Alo reported. She was cleared of any wrongdoing by the adviser on ministerial standards, Laurie Magnus, but resigned as economic secretary to the Treasury and city minister over the "distraction" being caused for Keir Starmer's new government. (PTI)

## China says its exports to US fell 35 per cent in May, as trade talks are due to start in London

**BEIJING, June 9:** China's exports to the United States fell 35 per cent in May from a year earlier, new customs data show, adding to pressure on the world's second largest economy as a new round of trade talks with Washington was due to start later Monday in London.

China's total exports rose 4.8 per cent last month, slowing from an 8.1 per cent year-on-year increase in April. Imports declined 3.4 per cent year-on-year, leaving a trade surplus of USD 103.2 billion.

China exported USD 28.8 billion to the United States in May, compared with USD 44 billion a year earlier. Its imports from the US fell to USD 10.8 billion, the report said. Still, exports to Southeast Asia and the European Union remained robust, growing 14.8 per cent and 12 per cent, year-on-year.

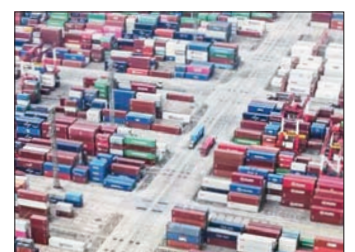
Exports to Thailand, Vietnam and Indonesia were sharply higher, and exports to Germany jumped more than 12 per cent.

"The acceleration of exports to other economies has helped China's exports to remain relatively buoyant in the face of the trade war," Lynne Song of ING Economics said in a commentary.

Many businesses had rushed orders earlier in the year to try to beat higher tariffs. Once new import duties took effect, shipments slowed. Exports will likely rebound somewhat in June thanks to a 90-day suspension of most of the tariffs China and the US imposed on each other in their escalating trade war, Zichun Huang of Capital Economics said in a report.

"But with tariffs likely to remain elevated and Chinese manufacturers facing broader constraints on their ability to sustain rapid gains in global market share, we think export growth will slow further by year-end," Huang said.

Despite the tariffs truce, rancor between Beijing and Washington has persisted, with angry exchanges over advanced semiconductors, "rare earths" that are vital to many industries and visas for Chinese students at American universities.



The round of negotiations due to take place later Monday in London follow a phone call last week between Trump and Chinese leader Xi Jinping.

It's unclear if that exchange will lead to any significant progress during the talks this week.

Speaking to reporters on Air Force One on Friday, Trump said Xi had agreed to restart exports of rare earth minerals and magnets to the US which China had slowed, threatening a range of US manufacturers that relied on the critical materials.

There was no immediate confirmation from China. The trade data released on Monday showed a nearly 21 per cent plunge in the value of China's rare earths exports in January to May compared with a year earlier. In terms of volume, those exports rose 2.3 per cent.

Similar trends can be seen in exports of other products and commodities, such as shoes, ceramics and cell phones, as slowing demand causes prices to fall.

Other data released Monday highlighted the pressure on China's own economy from slowing exports. Imports have faltered since manufacturers import many of the components and materials needed for the goods they assemble for the world.

At the same time, China's own domestic markets are suffering. The government reported that consumer prices fell 0.1 per cent in May, evidence of sluggish demand. The persisting deflation partly reflects lower food prices, economists said.

Producer price deflation was worse, contracting 3.3 per cent in May, its lowest level in almost two years, after falling 2.7 per cent in April. (AP)

## Contractor in Syria uncovers surprise beneath rubble: Ancient tomb complex

**MARAAT AL-NUMAN (SYRIA), June 9:** A contractor digging into the earth where the rubble of a destroyed house had been cleared away in northern Syria stumbled across a surprise: the remains of an underground Byzantine tomb complex believed to be more than 1,500 years old.

The discovery emerged last month in the town of Maarat al-Numan in Idlib province, which is strategically located on the route between the cities of Aleppo and Damascus.

The community became a touchpoint in the nearly 14-year Syrian civil war that ended with the fall of former President Bashar Assad in a lightning rebel offensive in December.

Assad's forces seized the area back from opposition control in 2020. Houses were looted and demolished. Aerial images of the area show many houses still standing but without roofs.

Now residents are beginning to return and rebuild. In the course of a reconstruction project, stone openings were uncovered indicating the presence of ancient graves.

Residents notified the directorate of antiquities, which dispatched a specialised team to inspect and secure the site.

Aboveground, it's a residential neighbourhood with rows of cinder-block buildings, many of them damaged in the war. Next to one of those buildings, a pit leads down to the openings of two burial chambers, each containing six stone tombs. The sign of the cross is etched into the top of one stone column.

"Based on the presence of the cross and the pottery and glass



pieces that were found, this tomb dates back to the Byzantine era," said Hassan al-Isma'il, director of antiquities in Idlib.

He noted that the discovery adds to an already rich collection of archaeological sites in the area.

Idlib "has a third of the monuments of Syria, containing 800 archaeological sites in addition to an ancient city," al-Isma'il said.

The Byzantine Empire, which began in the 4th century AD, was a continuation of the Roman empire with its capital in Constantinople — today's Istanbul — and Christianity as its official



*Manish Gupta acknowledged the seriousness of the issues raised*

## MLA Rotom Tebin appeals to CS for intervention over illegal bombing and encroachment in Dollungmukh

**HT Bureau**

**NAMSAL, June 9:** In a significant development underscoring the escalating tensions and deep-seated concerns of residents in the Dollungmukh Sub-Division, 25 Raga (ST) Assembly Constituency MLA Rotom Tebin, along with a delegation of local panchayat leaders, senior citizens, and concerned community representatives, submitted a memorandum to Shri Manish Gupta, Chief Secretary of Arunachal Pradesh, during his two-day official visit to Dollungmukh.

The Chief Secretary's visit was primarily to assess the final stages of work on the Lower Subansiri Hydroelectric Project (LSHP), a 2000 MW mega-infrastructure initiative nearing its commissioning phase. However, the visit also served as a critical opportunity for local stakeholders to raise pressing grievances that have been causing widespread anxiety and discontent among the populace.

During a serious and focused interaction, MLA Tebin led the delegation in presenting a comprehensive memorandum that drew attention to two particularly grave issues — ongoing illegal bombing exercises by the Indian Air Force (IAF) at the Dolum firing range, and persistent border encroachment activities allegedly being carried out by the Forest Department of neighboring Assam.

The memorandum, submitted on behalf of the people of Dollungmukh, expressed deep concern over the continued use of the Dolum firing range by the IAF despite the expiration of the lease agreement on January 31, 2025. The lease had been conditionally extended earlier, but locals allege that further activities are now being carried out without proper authorization, violating both the spirit and the letter of existing understandings.

Termining the ongoing air force bombing activities as "illegal and hazardous," MLA Tebin emphasized that such exercises pose a direct threat to the lives and property of villagers. The proximity of inhabited areas to the bombing range, particularly with three out of six villages in the subdivision falling partially within the affected zone, has heightened fears of accidental casualties and long-term environmental damage.

"This is not merely a matter of military exercises — it is a humanitarian concern," stated MLA Tebin during the meeting. "Our people are living under constant fear. Every time the bombs fall, families are gripped by anxiety. If any tragedy occurs, who will shoulder the responsibility — the Indian Air Force, or the Government of Arunachal Pradesh?"

The memorandum also pointed out a critical jurisdictional issue. It expressed strong dissatisfaction over the IAF's continued coordination with Assam authorities in matters concerning the Dolum firing range, despite the signing of a historic Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) on April 20, 2023, between the Governments of Assam and Arunachal Pradesh, in the presence of Union Home Minister Amit Shah. The MoU clearly demarcated administrative boundaries, affirming that all six villages under the Dollungmukh Sub-Division lie within Arunachal Pradesh's territorial jurisdiction.



"It is not only a matter of legality but of respect for federal arrangements," the memorandum noted, urging that any decisions regarding the area be taken jointly by the Arunachal Pradesh government, Government of India, and the IAF — without the involvement of Assamese state authorities.

Further amplifying local grievances, the delegation raised serious concerns about alleged encroachment by the Assam Forest Department in forested areas of Dollungmukh. Despite the 2023 MoU that was intended to settle long-standing boundary disputes, there have been repeated complaints of Assam officials carrying out activities in disputed areas, including unauthorized tree felling and erection of border posts. Such acts have been described as provocations that undermine peace and cooperative federalism.

The delegation submitted three key demands to the Chief Secretary including immediate and unconditional cessation of all illegal bombing operations by the Indian Air Force at the Dolum firing range, until legal and safety procedures are fully re-examined and followed, transparent and accountable dialogue with the IAF regarding any future lease extensions, ensuring that public safety and community concerns are addressed beforehand and formal communication with the Government of Assam, urging it to instruct its forest department to

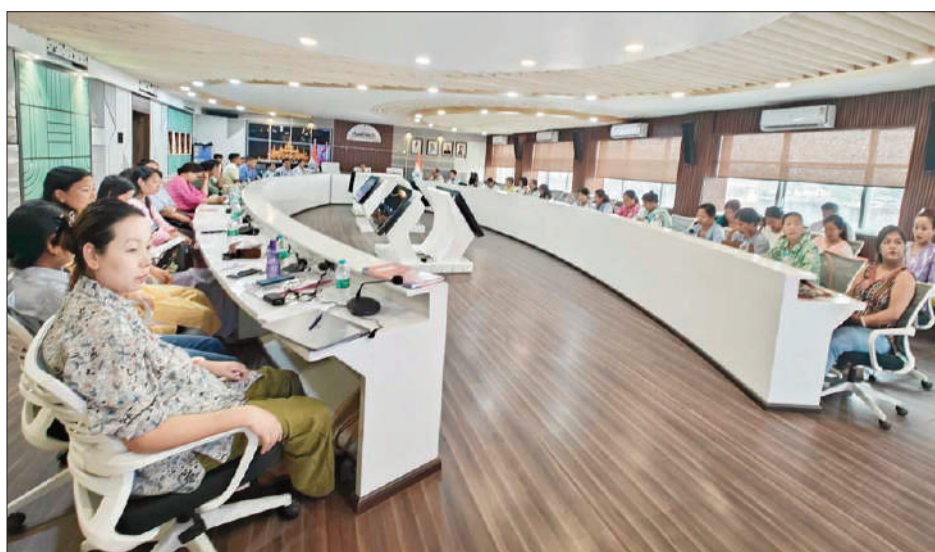
fully comply with the boundary demarcations and terms laid out in the 2023 MoU.

In response, Chief Secretary Manish Gupta acknowledged the seriousness of the issues raised and assured the delegation that the government would examine the memorandum with the utmost urgency and sincerity. He conveyed that the concerns of the people of Dollungmukh would not go unheard and that appropriate channels would be activated to initiate a dialogue with all concerned stakeholders, including the Ministry of Defence, the Indian Air Force, and the Government of Assam.

The Chief Secretary also emphasized the state government's commitment to maintaining peace and safeguarding the rights and welfare of its citizens, particularly in sensitive border areas like Dollungmukh. He assured that necessary steps would be taken to uphold the integrity of the MoU and to address any administrative oversights that may have led to the current situation.

The visit of the Chief Secretary and the proactive submission of the memorandum by MLA Rotom Tebin and his delegation have reignited hope among the residents of Dollungmukh for swift and just resolution of their concerns. The people now look to the state leadership for tangible actions that will restore a sense of security, legal clarity, and governance in this strategically important frontier region.

## Namsai hosts 3<sup>rd</sup> District Task Force on Immunization (DTFI) Meeting for 2025-26



**HT Bureau**

**NAMSAL, June 9:** The 3<sup>rd</sup> District Task Force on Immunization (DTFI) Meeting for 2025-26, coupled with an Orientation Workshop on the Stop Diarrhoea Campaign, a reorientation session on Ragi Kalyan Samiti (RKS)/Jan Arogya Samiti (JAS), and an extensive review of various National Health Mission (NHM) and vertical programme activities, was successfully conducted on Monday at the District Secretariat in Namsai.

The meeting was chaired by CR Khampa, Deputy Commissioner of Namsai, who emphasized the importance of integrated and sustained efforts across departments to strengthen the district's public health system. In his address, the DC reiterated the need for accountability, data-driven action, and community-level health outreach to improve health outcomes.

A key agenda of the meeting was the comprehensive review of major health indicators, which included Antenatal Care (ANC) registration rates, institutional delivery rates, distribution of Iron and Folic Acid (IFA) supplements

to pregnant women and children, Bacillus Calmette-Guérin (BCG) vaccination coverage, and daily Outpatient Department (OPD) reporting across health facilities in the district. Officials discussed the current gaps, achievements, and the necessary interventions required to achieve the district's annual health targets.

As part of the ongoing Stop Diarrhoea Campaign, an orientation session was conducted focusing on capacity building and preventive strategies. The campaign aims to reduce morbidity and mortality caused by diarrhoeal diseases, particularly among children under five. The orientation paid special attention to the setup of Zinc-ORS Corners in all health institutions, which are expected to play a crucial role in managing and controlling diarrhoea cases during peak seasons. Additionally, the meeting stressed the importance of Information, Education, and Communication (IEC) activities to raise public awareness regarding hygiene, sanitation, and the timely use of ORS and Zinc.

Participants were also briefed on the functioning, roles, and responsibilities of Ragi

Kalyan Samiti (RKS) and Jan Arogya Samiti (JAS), with an emphasis on ensuring participatory governance and decentralization in health-care service delivery. The reorientation aimed to re-energize the functioning of these samitis in aligning with the core goals of responsive and accountable health management at the facility level. The session also featured a detailed review of the status of Non-Communicable Disease (NCD) programmes and the Ayushman Bharat Health Account (ABHA) registrations and service delivery status. District programme officers presented data on screening, diagnosis, referral, and follow-up mechanisms related to prevalent NCDs such as hypertension, diabetes, and common cancers. The ABHA component was reviewed to ensure that digital health records and services are efficiently integrated and accessible to the citizens.

Towards the conclusion of the meeting, officials were urged to gear up preparedness levels across all health facilities in light of the possible resurgence of COVID-19 or any other public health emergency. Emphasis was laid on adequate stockpiling of medicines, protective equipment, and other emergency resources, as well as reactivating district-level COVID-19 response teams as a precautionary measure.

The meeting witnessed the active participation of District Medical Officer (DMO), District Reproductive and Child Health Officer (DRCHO), District Programme Officer (DISP/NCD), Medical Superintendent (MS), Medical Officers-in-Charge (MO/ICs), Child Development Project Officer (CDPO), Health and Wellness Officers (HWOs), and a representative from the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP).

The convergence of multiple programmes in a single platform underscored the district administration's commitment to holistic health system strengthening and inter-departmental coordination. The collaborative and consultative nature of the session is expected to translate into more responsive and inclusive health service delivery for the people of Namsai.

## Fisheries Secretary conducts extensive visit to Sangdupota Circle, interacts with fish farmers

**HT Bureau**

**NAMSAL, June 9:** In a proactive move to understand the grassroots realities of fish farming in Arunachal Pradesh, Secretary of Fisheries, Tayi Kaye, undertook a detailed inspection visit to the Sangdupota circle on Sunday. This marks his first official field visit to the region after assuming charge of the Fisheries Department and highlights his commitment to promoting sustainable aquaculture and addressing the challenges faced by fish farmers.

During the visit, Secretary Kaye extensively toured several villages across the Sangdupota circle, inspecting numerous fish ponds and interacting closely with local fish farmers. The inspection was aimed at gaining first-hand insights into the existing fish farming infrastructure, techniques employed by farmers, and the practical challenges they face on the ground. His engagement with the farming community was also intended to encourage them and assess their level of interest and enthusiasm in aquaculture as a viable livelihood option.

Speaking to media persons after the visit, Secretary Kaye stated, "I have visited several villages in the Sangdupota circle to understand the various issues that fish farmers are currently grappling with. It was also important for me to gauge their level of involvement, passion, and long-term vision for fish farming." He added that he was particularly impressed by the dedication shown by local farmers and expressed optimism about the future of fish farming in the state.

He further observed that fish available in the local markets is often sourced from far-off states, despite Arunachal Pradesh having favorable conditions for fish farming. "It is my firm belief that our farmers have the potential to meet the local demand and even supply surplus fish to nearby regions. This would not only reduce dependency on outside sources but also help achieve economic sustainability, self-sufficiency, and generate local employment opportunities," said Secretary Kaye.

During the visit, the team, under the leadership of Secretary Kaye, also took note of the grievances and concerns raised by the fish farmers. These included issues related to infrastructure, access to quality feed, technical support, and lack of proper market linkages. In response, Secretary Kaye encouraged the farmers to formally present their demands and suggestions to higher authorities for timely redressal. He also mooted the idea of forming a Sangdupota Circle Fish Farmers Association to ensure collective representation, better coordination, and a platform to voice their concerns effectively. In a significant assurance to the farmers, Secretary Kaye promised that the department would take initiatives to provide better marketing avenues, especially at key urban centers like Itanagar and Naharlagun, thereby ensuring that fish produced locally can be sold in larger markets and fetch better prices for the farmers.

The Secretary was accompanied by Papum Pare District Fishery Development Officer (DFDO) Kipa Taja, Chairperson of the Papum Pare Biodiversity Management Committee (PPBMC) Nabam Regum, and several local leaders. Their presence underscored the importance of community participation and inter-departmental collaboration in realizing the vision of a thriving fisheries sector in the region.

## Khandu hails 11 years of transformative governance under PM Modi's leadership

**ITANAGAR, June 9:** As the BJP-led NDA government at the Centre marks one year of its third consecutive term, Arunachal Pradesh Chief Minister Pema Khandu on Monday lauded its commitment to inclusive development and national transformation over the last 11 years.

Reflecting on the Narendra Modi government's journey since 2014, Khandu described it as a saga of "Seva, Samarpan, and Sankalp" (service, dedication, and resolve) to build a 'viksit Bharat' (developed India).

"For 11 years, it has been a journey dedicated to serving the poor and marginalised, empowering the last person in the queue with dignity, opportunity, and hope," the chief minister said in a series of posts on X.

He highlighted the government's focus on shifting the country from a welfare-driven model to one of self-reliance, where transformative policies have redefined the socio-economic landscape.

The 11 years of service, he said, exemplifies a vision rooted in justice and empowerment for all sections of society.

Underscoring the youth-centric policies of the Modi government, Khandu emphasised the efforts to nurture the "Amrit Peedhi", the young generation of new India, through education, innovation, and entrepreneurship.

"From Start-Up India to Digital India, NEP to PM Vishwakarma, every step is shaping a confident, self-reliant generation ready to lead the future," he noted, reaffirming that the government's long-term investments are aimed at preparing the youth to become the drivers of India's growth story.

On the economic front, the chief minister praised the transformation of India into a hub of Ease of Doing Business, powered by resilient reforms and digital innovation.

He pointed to simplified compliance systems, the implementation of GST, and startup-friendly policies as evidence of a bold, forward-thinking economic strategy. "11 Years of Seva has been about empowering enterprises, boosting investments, and unlocking India's economic potential," he said in one of the posts.

Khandu also acknowledged the support extended to India's middle class under the Modi administration.

From lower income tax rates and interest subsidies for homebuyers to digital payments through UPI and improved urban mobility through smart cities and Vande Bharat trains, the chief minister said the reforms have touched everyday lives in meaningful ways.

"The honest taxpayer is finally being respected, supported, and heard," he added.

The chief minister's reflections came as the nation observed the first anniversary of NDA 3.0, with party leaders across the country highlighting the milestones achieved under Prime Minister Narendra Modi's leadership. (PTI)

## Arunachal farmers encouraged to adopt scientific and sustainable agriculture practices

**HT Bureau**

**NAMSAL, June 9:** The nationwide pre-Kharif campaign "Viksit Krishi Sankalp Abhiyan", which entered its 10th day, was conducted with great enthusiasm and active participation at Mimey, Nongtaw, and Nongkhon villages in the Chowkham, Namsai, and Lekang blocks respectively of Namsai district.

The campaign, aimed at sensitizing farmers on improved agricultural practices, government schemes, and scientific farming techniques, witnessed the active involvement of agricultural scientists, experts, and departmental officials from Agriculture, Horticulture, Fisheries, and allied sectors.

At Nongtaw, the event was spearheaded by Mrs. Rupa Mannow, District Agriculture Officer (DAO), Namsai, who addressed the assembled farmers. She highlighted the importance of adopting modern, scientific, and technology-driven agricultural practices to increase farm productivity and farmer incomes. Encouraging the farmers to keep pace with changing agricultural trends, she underscored the role of innovation and knowledge dissemination in shaping a prosperous agricultural landscape.

A representative from the Horticulture Department elaborated on the advantages of multi-cropping systems by utilizing optimal crop spacing and farm planning.

Farmers were urged to consider cultivating high-value horticultural crops such as watermelon and cocoa, which offer substantial market potential. They were also guided to make effective use of subsidy-based machinery, especially for weed management, which continues to be a significant challenge for many smallholders.

In addition, the Assistant Director of Fisheries held an interactive session with local farmers, focusing on scientific fish culture. He discussed supplementary feeding techniques, pond management practices, and government schemes that can help augment income through pisciculture. Farmers were encouraged to incorporate fisheries into their farming system as part of an integrated model.

A representative from the Department of Agriculture explained the relevance and application of the Soil Health Card, urging farmers to test their soil regularly to ensure balanced nutrient management. He also briefed the audience about several central and state-sponsored schemes designed to support farmers with inputs, training, insurance, and subsidies.

The event also featured participation from Krishi Vigyan Kendra (KVK) experts, who shared valuable knowledge on several critical areas of agriculture. They emphasized scientific soil preparation, the use of region-specific crop varieties, Integrated Nutrient Management (INM) and



Integrated Pest Management (IPM), legume-based crop rotation, mulching techniques, and systematic farm planning. The importance of animal vaccination for livestock health and organic and natural farming methods was also underlined. Farmers were advised to take up crop

diversification and consider the integrated farming system, which combines crops, livestock, fisheries, and other components to maximize resource utilization and income. The experts encouraged the community to take advantage of the government subsidies and welfare

schemes to enhance their productivity and ensure sustainable livelihoods.

At Mimey, Dr. Theja Angami, Scientist from ICAR-AP Centre, Basar, participated in the program and urged farmers to adopt scientific vegetable cultivation. He introduced the benefits of low-cost poly-house technology, which enables off-season and climate-resilient farming practices, significantly boosting productivity and farmer profitability.

Throughout the program, participating farmers actively engaged in question-and-answer sessions with the visiting experts. They sought guidance on various issues such as organic pest control, mushroom cultivation techniques, and efficient mulching practices. The interactive format not only built confidence among the farmers but also enabled two-way learning, with many expressing a keen interest in applying the knowledge gained during the campaign to their own fields.

The successful conduct of the "Viksit Krishi Sankalp Abhiyan" in Namsai district reflects the collaborative effort of government departments, research institutions, and grassroots stakeholders in transforming the agricultural sector through knowledge, technology, and policy support. The initiative continues to serve as a catalyst for rural empowerment and agricultural development across the region.



# Four dead after falling off local trains near Mumbai

## Railway mulls automatic doors

**MUMBAI, June 9:** Four commuters died and nine were injured after falling off two overcrowded local trains in Maharashtra's Thane district during the morning rush hour on Monday, officials said.

The incident occurred near Numbra railway station when the trains were passing each other on a steep turn.

Chief Public Relations Officer of the Central Railway, Swapnil Dhanraj Nila, said the victims were travelling on the footboard of the two trains, one travelling towards Kasara and another travelling towards Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj Terminus Mumbai.

The commuters were hanging from the doors of the crowded trains and their backpacks brushed against each other as the trains passed in opposite directions, police said.

The guard of a train going towards Kasara alerted the railway authorities about the incident. Those who fell off the trains were rushed to nearby hospitals, where four were declared dead on arrival, police said.

The Railway Board has decided that all new suburban trains in Mumbai will have automatic door closing facility and the existing ones will also be retrofitted to have the mechanism, an official said.

Around 75 lakh commuters travel daily by suburban trains in Mumbai, the official said.

Chief Minister Devendra Fadnis said the railway administration was probing the cause of the accident. Deputy CM Eknath Shinde said steps were being taken to help the victims and their families.

The incident highlights the need to pay serious attention to overcrowding and passenger safety in the suburban railway system, Deputy CM Ajit Pawar said.



The deceased were identified as Ketan Saroj, Rahul Gupta, Mayur Shah and Thane Government Railway Police (GRP) constable Vicky Mukhyad.

Nila said an injured person informed that commuters fell from local trains travelling in opposite directions after some of those standing on the footboards collided with each other.

Responding to concerns over inadequate facilities for Mumbai commuters despite their significant contribution to the Railways' revenue, Shinde said, "A high-powered Railways committee will investigate the matter. The truth will come out, and if

anyone is found guilty, strict action will be taken."

Congress leader Rahul Gandhi expressed his condolences to the families of the deceased and wished the injured a speedy recovery.

"While the Modi Government is celebrating 11 years of 'service', the reality of the country is reflected in the tragic news coming from Mumbai — several people died after falling from a train."

"Indian Railways is the backbone of the lives of crores of people, but today it has become a symbol of insecurity, congestion and chaos," Gandhi posted on X.

"11 years of Modi government = no accountability, no change, only propaganda. The government has stopped talking about 2025 and is now selling dreams of 2047. Who will see what the country is facing today?" he added.

NCP (SP) president Sharad Pawar said the Central Railway should implement measures like installing automatic doors in suburban trains in view of overcrowding.

"The Central Railway should increase local trains on important routes. Necessary measures should be implemented immediately for the safety of passengers," he posted on X.

"It is well known that the increased crowding in local trains is the main reason. After such accidents, it is not right to blame the passengers for their deaths," Pawar said.

Shiv Sena (UBT) MP Priyanka Chaturvedi said, "The Railways should just shut up about what they are planning to do because none of them have been delivered as far as Mumbai local trains are concerned."

"These are not deaths by overcrowding but murders executed by an apathetic Reel Minister and the government of Maharashtra," Chaturvedi posted on X.

Mumbai Congress president Varsha Gaikwad said Railway Minister Ashwini Vaishnaw should own responsibility for the tragedy and resign.

MNS president Raj Thackeray said the railways infrastructure in Mumbai has collapsed due to the "hordes" of migrants.

NCP (SP) leader Jitendra Awhad ridiculed the proposal for installing automatic doors in suburban trains, claiming commuters will suffocate due to this facility. (PTI)

# PM Modi changed country's political culture: Nadda

**NEW DELHI, June 9:** BJP president J P Nadda on Monday hailed Prime Minister Narendra Modi's 11 years in office, saying the work done by the government under his leadership should be written in "golden letters".

Addressing a press conference at the BJP headquarters here, he said Prime Minister Modi changed the country's political culture and started politics of performance and good governance by providing a responsible and accountable government, while the Congress-led UPA regime was marked by "corruption, scams and appeasement" politics.

Work done by the government under the leadership of Prime Minister Modi in the past 11 years were extraordinary, and should be written in golden letters, he asserted.

Nadda slammed Leader of Opposition in Lok Sabha Rahul Gandhi over his recent remarks on Operation Sindoor and 2024 Maharashtra assembly elections, accusing him of playing a role of an "irresponsible" opposition leader by asking baseless questions.

"May God bless him with good sense," the BJP chief told a press

conference, when asked for a comment on the Congress leader's remarks.

To a question about the opposition raising questions about the BJP-led government's stability after the party lost majority on its own in the 2024 polls, Nadda quipped that

the Modi government will not only complete its term in this tenure but also in the next.

The BJP chief said Prime Minister Modi provided a responsive and a strong government, and cited repealing of Article 370, abolition of triple talaq, Waqf

amendment, demonetisation, women quota bill among the bold decisions taken by his government.

"Before 2014, the previous government was full of corruption and there was a sense of negativity that prevailed across the country... But after 2014, under the leadership of Prime Minister Modi, that sentiment changed. Now people proudly say, 'Modi hai to mumin hai'", Nadda added.

Prime Minister Modi took oath for a third term on June 9, 2024. The Modi government marks its first anniversary in the third term and 11th overall on Monday. (PTI)



# Tribal family ostracised for not serving liquor in last rites feast in Odisha

**BARIPADA (ODISHA), June 9:** A tribal couple and its three children have allegedly been ostracised by the villagers for not serving 'handia' (traditional rice beer) in the last rites feast held after the death of a 67-year-old man of the family in Odisha's Mayurbhanj district, police said on Monday.

It is a practice in various tribal societies to serve 'handia' to people attending the feast organised as part of the last rites.

It is alleged that the villagers are not allowing the family members to take water from village ponds or tubewells or purchase groceries from shops.

Following a complaint lodged by the deceased man's son, a police team went to their village and asked the villagers to sort out the matter within two days or face legal action.

Ram Soren of Kesapada village under Sarat Police Station limit died on March 27 and the members of the Santhal community observed the rituals according to

tradition. Soren's son Sangram organised a community feast a month later as per tradition on April 27.

However, he did not serve 'handia' in the feast to the villagers following which he, his wife Lachha and their children have allegedly been socially boycotted.

In a complaint lodged at Sarat Police Station, Sangram and his wife charged the villagers with denying them access to resources like water from ponds or tubewells, and even to village grocery shops.

"This is not all, the villagers also do not speak to us including my children. We are not even given work by the villagers making our life miserable," Sangram's wife Lachha Soren told reporters.

The couple has three children - a 13-year-old daughter and two sons aged 8 and 5 years.

She claimed that a person spoke to them and has been told to pay a penalty of Rs 2,000 for violating the community's social boycott order.

Asked about the reason behind not going by the tradition of serving liquor at the feast, Sangram said, "My father was a habitual alcoholic for which he died early. We have seen tribal families getting ruined due to alcoholism. Therefore, I decided not to serve Handia in the feast."

Sangram in his police complaint named three village seniors for ostracising his family.

When contacted, a priest of the Santhal community said, "We have the tradition of offering Handia to the departed soul during funeral rituals. But there is no religious norm to serve it to people in the community feast. It all depends on the economic condition of the deceased person's family. They may serve Handia if they desire, but they cannot be forced."

Handia is a traditional alcoholic rice beer popular among tribal communities in Eastern and North-Eastern India, particularly in states like Odisha, Jharkhand, and West Bengal. (PTI)

# Left parties condemn Israel for intercepting Gaza-bound aid boat with Greta Thunberg onboard

**NEW DELHI, June 9:** Left parties on Monday condemned Israel for intercepting the yacht carrying Greta Thunberg and others with humanitarian aid for Gaza.

Communist Party of India (Marxist) General Secretary M A Baby said the safety of the yacht should be ensured, and aid should be allowed to Gaza.

"CPIM condemns the Israeli govt for intercepting the yacht carrying Greta Thunberg and 12 others with humanitarian aid to Gaza," Baby said in a post on X.

"The safety of the yacht has to be ensured and aid allowed to Gaza," he said.

Communist Party of India (Marxist-Leninist) Liberation, in a statement, said attacking a civilian humanitarian mission in international waters is a blatant violation of international law.

"Attacking a civilian humanitarian mission in international waters is a blatant violation of international law, including the principles protecting freedom of navigation and the delivery of humanitarian aid during armed conflict. This illegal act is part of Israel's ongoing genocidal policy of collective punishment and siege against the Palestinian people," CPI (ML) said.

The CPI (ML) said it was not an isolated incident, and in 2010, Israel attacked the ship Mavi Marmara, killing 10 aid workers.

"Again and again, Israel has responded to peaceful humanitarian efforts with military force. Earlier in May this year, another humanitarian ship, Handala, part of the flotilla, was attacked by an explosive drone near Malta in international waters," the Left party said.

They demanded the immediate release

of all those detained.

"Communist Party of India (Marxist-Leninist) Liberation stands in full solidarity with the people of Gaza and with the brave international volunteers who risked their lives to break the blockade. We demand the immediate release of all those detained and an end to the genocidal war and inhuman siege of Gaza," they said.

Enforcing a longstanding blockade of the Palestinian territory, Israeli forces stopped the Gaza-bound aid boat early Monday and detained Thunberg and other activists onboard.

The Freedom Flotilla Coalition, which had organised the voyage to deliver aid to the Gaza Strip and protest Israel's blockade and wartime conduct, said the activists had been "kidnapped by Israeli forces" and released pre-recorded messages from them. (PTI)

# Goa minister apologises as GMCH doctors stage protest

**PANAJI, June 9:** Amid protests by senior doctors of the Goa Medical College and Hospital (GMCH), Goa Health Minister Vishwajit Rane on Monday apologised for his behaviour towards a doctor whose suspension he ordered in public view and said medical services should not be disrupted.

Doctors of the Goa Medical College and Hospital (GMCH) are holding a protest against the minister, while the opposition Congress has demanded his ouster over the incident that occurred at the GMCH on Saturday.

Rane is facing severe backlash from organisations, including the Indian Medical Association (IMA) and Goa Association of Resident Doctors (GARD), which has threatened a strike.

He had lashed out at GMCH's chief medical officer (CMO), Dr Rudresh Kuttikar, for allegedly misbehaving with patients during his surprise visit to the premier facility on Saturday and ordered his suspension.

Chief Minister Pramod Sawant on Sunday tried to control the damage by overruling the controversial decision. Several medical unions, including the IMA Goa, condemned his behaviour, with GARD on Sunday setting a 48-hour deadline for the minister to apologise for his conduct.

In a social media post, Rane wrote, "My heartfelt apology to Dr Kuttikar for the harsh words I spoke during my visit to GMCH."

"In the heat of the moment, my emotions overtook my expression, and I deeply regret the manner in which I addressed the situation," the minister said.

He stated that it was never his intention to undermine or disrespect the dignity of any medical professional. "Doctors hold a sacred and noble position in our society. They work tirelessly to heal, to comfort, and to save lives," he said.

The minister said while he may have erred in his communication, his intent was always to ensure that no patient is denied timely care and that the public health system remains responsive and compassionate. "However, I am equally concerned about the disruption in

services at Goa Medical College, which is now impacting thousands of innocent patients," the minister wrote.

"The public is bearing the brunt of this situation, and I urge all our doctors to reflect on the larger responsibility we share for the welfare of our people," the minister said. Speaking to reporters earlier in the day, Rane had apologised for his behaviour and clarified that he never moved a file to suspend a doctor.

"I did not move the file. The issue has become a national one now," he said, adding that the matter has been churning into a different kind of scenario.

Several doctors, including members of the IMA's Goa unit, heads of departments of the GMCH, consultants, students and medical interns, staged a protest against Rane in front of the hospital in Bambolim. The protesting doctors demanded a public apology from the minister and called to end the VIP culture at the GMCH.

Doctors also demanded that news cameras and media should not be allowed inside sensitive places such as the casualty ward.

A delegation of doctors also met GMCH's dean, Dr Shivanand Bandekar. AAP leader Ramrao Wagh, who was at the protest site, said doctors are demanding a public apology from Rane.

"I have heard that he (Rane) has apologised, but doctors are not happy with that kind of apology," he said. The Congress has voiced support for the protesting doctors, demanding Rane's ouster.

Goa Pradesh Congress Committee President Amit Patkar, in a post on X, said the party has unwavering solidarity with the state's doctors.

"When those who save lives are forced to hang up their stethoscopes and take to the streets, it's not just a strike — it's a cry for dignity, justice, and safety," he said.

He said the real disease plaguing Goa is the BJP's intoxicated arrogance. "Vishwajit Rane's abuse of power has crossed all limits," he said. Patkar demanded action from Chief Minister Pramod Sawant, saying, "Sack him now or face a mass revolt." (PTI)

# ASP killed, 2 other cops injured in IED blast in Chhattisgarh's Sukma

**SUKMA, June 9:** An additional superintendent was killed and two other police officers were injured when an Improvised Explosive Device (IED) planted by Naxalites exploded in Chhattisgarh's Sukma district on Monday, police said.

Chief Minister Vishnu Deo Sai expressed grief over the death of Additional Superintendent of Police (Konta Division) Akash Rao Girepunje in the blast and said Naxalites will have to face its consequences.

State's Deputy Chief Minister Vijay Sharma, who also holds the home portfolio, said Girepunje, a 2013-batch state police service officer, was martyred in the blast. Naxalites should shun violence, join the mainstream and contribute to the development of the society, he said. The incident took place near Dondra village on Konta-Errarod road when the ASP and other personnel were out on foot patrolling after receiving inputs that an earth-mover machine was torched by Naxalites in the area, an official said.

When police personnel reached the spot, an IED exploded, causing injuries to ASP Girepunje, Sub Divisional Officer of Police (SDOP- Konta area) Bhanupratap Chandrakar and Station House Officer of Konta police station Inspector Sonal Gwala, he said.

All the injured personnel were shifted to Konta Hospital for initial treatment, he said.

"Girepunje had sustained serious injuries after coming under direct impact of the blast. He succumbed to his injuries during treatment," the official said.

# World's largest container ship MSC IRINA docks at Vizhinjam port

**THIRUVANANTHAPURAM, June 9:** The MSC IRINA, currently the world's largest container ship by capacity, arrived at the Vizhinjam International Seaport here on Monday morning, port officials said.

The vessel, with a length of 399.9 metres and a width of 61.3 metres—approximately four times longer than a standard FIFA-designated football pitch — is expected to remain berthed until Tuesday.

The vessel arrived at Vizhinjam at 8 am on Monday, receiving a traditional water salute on arrival.

The arrival of the MSC IRINA marks a major step forward for the new deepwater port, which was formally inaugurated by Prime Minister Narendra Modi on May 2.

With a carrying capacity of 24,346 TEUs (twenty-foot equivalent units), the massive ship is a striking symbol of the growing scale of global trade and India's rising role in it.

Kerala Chief Minister Pinarayi Vijayan hailed the arrival of MSC IRINA at Vizhinjam International Seaport as a proud and historic moment for the state.

"Kerala welcomes MSC IRINA, the largest container ship to call at any South Asian port, with immense pride," he said in a post on X.

"Measuring 399.9m in length and 61.3m in width, with a capacity of 24,346 TEUs,



her arrival at @PortOfVizhinjam marks a historic moment. A proud milestone that underscores our port's strategic global role and galvanises our collective dream of growth," Vijayan said.

Designed specifically to facilitate the transportation of large volumes of containers between Asia and Europe, the MSC IRINA is pivotal in enhancing trade routes and logistics efficiency, according to a port release.

This vessel makes its maiden visit to a South Asian port, highlighting Vizhinjam's capabilities in handling Ultra-Large Container Vessels (ULCVs), it said.

In a post on X, Karan Adani, Managing Director of Adani ports and SEZ Ltd, said, "Proud to welcome MSC IRINA, the world's largest container ship with a capacity of 24,346 TEUs, to our Vizhinjam port. This marks the vessel's maiden visit to the South

Asian shores, making it a milestone not just for Vizhinjam but for India's emergence as a key player in global transshipment. A bold vision now in motion."

The port has recently welcomed other Icon-class vessels, including MSC Türkiye and MSC Michel Cappellini, further establishing its reputation as a key hub in maritime trade.

The MSC IRINA was launched in March 2023 and embarked on its maiden voyage in April of the same year.

It is engineered to stack containers up to 26 tiers high, offering unparalleled capacity in container stacking.

Notably, the MSC IRINA surpasses its predecessor, OOCL Spain, by a margin of 150 TEUs.

In alignment with contemporary environmental standards, the vessel is equipped with energy-saving features that contribute to a reduction in carbon emissions by up to 4 per cent, significantly lowering its carbon footprint while maintaining operational efficiency.

The docking of the MSC IRINA at Vizhinjam International Seaport not only underscores the port's strategic importance in global shipping but also represents a leap forward in sustainable maritime practices, setting a benchmark for future developments in the industry, the release added. (PTI)

# 4 mazars demolished in UP's Katarniaghat forest

**BAHRAICH (UP), June 9:** Four "illegal" mazars, including the prominent Lakkar Shah Baba mazar, located in the core area of the Katarniaghat Wildlife Sanctuary in Bahraich district, were demolished, an official said on Monday.

Divisional Forest Officer (DFO) B Shivshanker told reporters that the action was taken on Sunday under provisions of the Forest Conservation Act, 1980.

"The shrines of Lakkar Shah, Bhawar Shah, Chaman Shah, and Shahn Shah were situated in beat number 20 of the Murthi Range. These mazars lie within forest land.

Though the mazar committee submitted a copy of a 1986 Waqf Board registration, they failed to provide any legal evidence of ownership or land rights," he said.

The press briefing was held at the Collectorate auditorium, with District Magistrate Monika Rani and the Superintendent of Police in at-

tendance.

Shivshanker said that under the Forest Conservation Act, an approval from the Centre is mandatory for non-forestry use of forest land, which was not obtained in this case. "Hence, the structures were declared encroachments and demolished accordingly," he said.

The DFO said that the mazar committee had earlier moved the high court against the department's actions, but could secure no relief.

Forest staff, Special Tiger Protection Force, local police, and Provincial Armed Constabulary have been deployed at the site to prevent any confrontation leading to law and order breakdown, he said.

Asked why the media was kept off the demolished site, Shivshanker said, "The area falls in a jungle zone where the presence of wild animals could lead to human-wildlife conflict, hence access was restricted." (PTI)



## Arrested Arambai Tenggol leader ex-head constable, terminated from service in March: Manipur Police



**IMPHAL, June 9:** Manipur Police on Monday said Ashem Kanan Singh, arrested by the CBI a day before, was a former head constable in the state police and was terminated from service in March due to involvement in criminal activities.

The CBI arrested Singh, a member of Meitei outfit Arambai Tenggol (AT), on Sunday for his alleged involvement in various criminal activities related to the 2023 Manipur violence, officials said.

In a post on X, police said, "Ashem Kanan Singh (46) was arrested by CBI in Imphal. He was a Head Constable in Manipur Police till he was terminated from service on 3rd March 2025 for his involvement in various criminal activities, including cross-border smuggling of arms."

"He was arrested for his criminal activities which include several acts of grave nature and involvement in unlawful activities and criminal cases registered against him," police said, adding, "following his arrest, protests erupted from the evening of June 7 in the valley areas of the state with Manipur Police and security forces bringing the situation under control."

Earlier, NIA arrested three insurgents in a case related to a deadly attack on security forces that had killed two police commandos and injured several others in Moreh, Tengenoual district, on January 17, 2024.

"One Thangminlen Mate, a member of Kuki Inpi Tengenoual (KIT) insurgent outfit, was arrested on May 19, 2025, in Assam's Silchar. Two other accused, part of the team which executed the deadly attack, namely Kamgintang Gangte, a member of the Kuki National Army (KNA), and Hentinthang Kipgen @ Thangneo Kipgen, associated with the Village Volunteers group in Churachandpur district, were arrested by the NIA on June 6 from Manipur," police said.

Following the arrests, protests and rallies were held, and a shutdown was imposed by some civil society organisations in Tengenoual and Moreh and Tengenoual districts on June 6 and 7.

In its appeal, police urged the public not to support such protests in connection with the arrests of people involved in unlawful and criminal activities. (PTI)

## Youth leader's house, family members attacked by BJP for criticising Tripura CM, alleges Congress

**AGARTALA, June 9:** The Congress on Monday alleged that BJP workers have ransacked the house of its youth wing leader Sahajan Islam and beat up his family members in West Tripura district for allegedly criticising Chief Minister Manik Saha on social media.

The BJP accused the youth Congress leader of making derogatory remarks against the CM in a Facebook post and lodged an FIR against him. "Over 100 BJP and Yuva Morcha supporters armed with weapons entered the house of Sahajan at Shantipara on Sunday around 11 pm and ransacked the property. His parents were beaten up and his wife was physically assaulted," Tripura Pradesh Congress Committee (TPCC) president Asish Kumar Saha told the reporters.

Congress leader Sudip Roy Barman rushed to the spot but faced strong protests by the Yuva Morcha supporters, another party leader said.

As the tension gripped the locality, where the chief minister's ancestral house is situated, a strong contingent of police personnel rushed to the spot and brought the situation under control.

Sahajan, a popular Youth Congress leader, in a Facebook live, lashed out at the chief minister after a vehicle carrying cattle was detained by a mob in front of the West Agartala Police Station, and a few untoward incidents occurred during Eid Al-Adha on Saturday.

"A man, who had been extracting teeth in his entire career in exchange of money, has been made the chief minister. The police have been working in favour of a particular community," the Youth Congress leader claimed, referring to the CM's medical profession.

"The attack on the political leader's house and his family members shows that mafia raj is prevailing in the state. We are under an autocratic rule. His outburst on the chief minister was a reaction to what had happened across the state during Eid on Saturday. Instead of handling the issue politically, the BJP chose the path of violence," Roy Barman told the reporters.

The Congress demanded the arrest of those involved in the attack on Sahajan's residence and his family members.

The BJP on Monday strongly reacted to the Facebook post, claiming that it "defamed the chief minister" and lodged an FIR against the Congress leader.

"The Congress leader has insulted our chief minister. The way he attacked the chief minister is highly objectionable. We lodged an FIR against him and demand his arrest," Ashim Bhattacharjee, the BJP sadar (Urban) district president, said. (PTI)

## Schemes should be implemented in a such a way that the people receive the services Tura MP, Saleng Sangma hosts DISHA Meet in NGH

### HT Bureau

**GUWAHATI, June 9:** Taking stock of the on-going centrally sponsored schemes in North Garo Hills district, Member of Parliament 2-Tura, Saleng A Sangma and Chairman District Development Coordination & Monitoring Committee (DISHA) met the heads of key line departments at the DC, Conference Hall, Resubelpara on Monday.

MP Saleng Sangma during the meeting underscored the effective implementation of centrally sponsored schemes at the grass root level and asserted that the schemes should be implemented in a such a way that the people receive the services.

He pressed upon the officials to stick by the rules while dealing with the completion status reports of schemes.

"Status report of schemes successfully implemented



should not only reflect on paper but the people at the ground should actually reap the benefits", added MP Saleng Sangma.

After a threadbare discussion of the on-going schemes presented by line departments, MP Saleng Sangma urged of-

ficials to provide better service delivery to the people by ensuring schemes are implemented effectively.

DISHA members who accompanied the MP during the meeting raised certain issues and queries pertaining to schemes being imple-

## Sikkim landslide: Body of army man recovered, search underway for 5 others

**GANGTOK, June 9:** The body of an army man, one of the six people who went missing after a landslide hit a military camp at Chaten in north Sikkim earlier this month, was recovered on Monday in Mangan district, police said.

The deceased was identified as Sainuddin PK, a senior officer said. The search operation is underway to trace other missing persons, Mangan Superintendent of Police (SP) Sonam Detchu Bhutia said.

"The rescue teams have recovered the body of army man Sainuddin PK, who was among the six missing personnel after the June 1 landslide at a military camp in Chaten," the SP said.

Apart from the missing persons, three army personnel had lost their lives, and four others were injured in the landslide. North Sikkim has been hit by multiple landslides triggered by heavy rain, disrupting road and telecommunication connectivity.

Around 2,000 tourists had also been stranded in north Sikkim's Lachen, Lachung and Chungthang towns due to inclement weather conditions for days before being evacuated by road and air in rescue operations earlier this week. (PTI)

## Technology adoption key focus in Viksit Krishi Sankalp Abhiyan: Tripura Agri Minister

### HT Correspondent

**AGARTALA, June 9:** Agriculture Minister Ratan Lal Nath on Monday reaffirmed the state government's commitment to empowering farmers through modern technology and increased awareness of agricultural schemes under the Viksit Krishi Sankalp Abhiyan.

Addressing a gathering on the 9th day of the campaign at the historic Old Town Hall in Sabroom, South Tripura district, the minister said the nationwide initiative, launched on May 29, aims to bridge the knowledge gap among farmers regarding both state and central government welfare schemes.

"In Tripura, we have already reached out to 1.20 lakh farmers, excluding today's turnout. Our target is to engage with 1.70 lakh farmers, and we are confident of surpassing it," Nath said, lauding the overwhelming response to the campaign. "Just today, 72 awareness meetings were conducted across the state. In total, 864 meetings are scheduled to be held under this ambitious programme."

The minister emphasized the dual objective of the campaign — to equip farmers with cutting-edge agricultural technology and to provide them with training and support to improve productivity. He noted that many farmers remain unaware of key government initiatives designed for their benefit.

"Through the Viksit Krishi Sankalp Yatra, we are ensuring that farmers can make informed decisions, access subsidies, and adopt best practices. This will ultimately lead to higher yields and better income. No such extensive campaign has ever been undertaken before," he added.

Highlighting the scientific approach being taken, Nath also mentioned that soil health testing is being carried out across the state as part of the campaign. "By understanding the condition of their soil, farmers can make precise decisions about crop patterns and fertilizer use, thereby enhancing overall agricultural output."

The campaign will continue till June 12, covering every corner of the state and bringing critical resources and information to the grassroots level.

mented in local areas. Later, the DISHA members inspected various sites to understand the ground work of the schemes.

North Garo Hills Deputy Commissioner, Dr Abhishek Saini while highlighting the objective of the meeting informed the gathering that the District Administration ensures that every schemes is being implemented in both letter and spirit and therefore implementation departments were being instructed to monitor and regularly submit status reports of respective schemes.

Key departments whose schemes were reviewed today were PMGSY, PWD, MGN-REGS, Social Welfare, Development Branch (DC office), PHE, Water Resources, AH& Vety, Health, Soil & Water Conservation and Education department.

## Meitei leader's arrest

# Protests continue overnight in Manipur defying prohibitory orders



Women's groups joined the protests and held torchlight processions in Khurai, demanding the immediate formation of a government in the state, which is now under the President's rule.

Protests erupted across Manipur since Saturday over the arrests of Meitei outfit Arambai Tenggol leader Kanan Singh and four others.

The Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI) said it has arrested a member of Arambai Tenggol at Imphal Airport on Sunday for his alleged involvement in various criminal activities related to Manipur violence in 2023, while the police did not disclose details of the four others.

Prohibitory orders have been

clamped in Imphal West, Imphal East, Thoubal, Bishnupur and Kakching districts, while internet and mobile data services, including VSAT and VPN facilities, have been suspended in these valley areas since Saturday night after violent protests erupted across the state. Manipur Governor Ajay Kumar Bhalla on Sunday held a security review meeting with senior officials in the wake of the demonstrations across the state.

More than 260 people have been killed and thousands rendered homeless in the ethnic violence between Meiteis and Kuki-Zo groups since May 2023.

The Centre had on February 13 imposed the President's rule in the northeastern state after Chief Minister N Biren Singh resigned.

The state assembly, which has a tenure till 2027, has been put under suspended animation. (PTI)

## AIIMS Delhi evaluates Tripura's healthcare infrastructure, Assures support, training initiatives

### HT Correspondent

**AGARTALA, June 9:** A four-member delegation from AIIMS New Delhi recently concluded a three-day visit to Tripura to assess the state's healthcare infrastructure.

The team, led by AIIMS Director Prof. (Dr.) M. Srinivas, will soon submit a detailed report to Tripura Chief Minister Dr. Manik Saha. Based on their findings, AIIMS will extend support through training initiatives aimed at improving the skills of doctors, nurses, and lab technicians in the state.

Speaking at a press conference on Monday, Dr. Srinivas said that while Tripura already has a robust healthcare system, the state government is seeking further assistance from AIIMS to upgrade and expand its services. "The state government has asked AIIMS for guidance on strengthening healthcare delivery. We will advise on improving medical infrastructure and services at

Agartala Government Medical College (AGMC) and GB Pant Hospital," he said.

The delegation, which arrived in the state on June 7, met with Chief Minister Dr. Manik Saha and held in-depth discussions on key aspects of healthcare development—including infrastructure, health education, service delivery, and super-specialty facilities. They also visited AGMC, GBP Hospital, IGM Hospital, and Tripura Medical College to review operations across various departments.

Dr. Srinivas noted that their visit included direct interactions with medical professionals, healthcare staff, and patients. "We will compile all our observations into a comprehensive report to be submitted in Delhi. Based on this, a detailed action plan will be prepared. We are committed to arranging training through AIIMS to enhance healthcare delivery in Tripura," he added.

Delegation member Dr. Ramesh Agarwal praised the state's performance on key health indicators.

"We had meaningful discussions with the Health Secretary and senior officials. Notably, Tripura's infant mortality rate is significantly lower than the national average, which reflects the strength of its healthcare system," he said.

He also highlighted the advantage of having a doctor as the state's Chief Minister in driving forward health sector reforms.

Assuring continued support, Dr. Agarwal emphasized that AIIMS will actively assist in the future development of Tripura's healthcare system.

Also present at the press briefing were AIIMS officials Dr. Laxmitej Undavalli and Dr. Aruna Kumari, Tripura Health Director Dr. Tapan Majumder, GBP Hospital Medical Superintendent Dr. Shankar Chakraborty, and AGMC Principal Prof. (Dr.) Anup Saha.

## GOVERNMENT OF ASSAM OFFICE OF THE DY. DIRECTOR OF INFORMATION AND PUBLIC RELATION (HILLS) KARBI ANGLONG:: DIPHU

No. KAD.1/DDIPR/Estt-1/2022/130

Dated Diphu, the 9<sup>th</sup> June, 2025

### NOTICE

The candidates bearing the following Roll Numbers, who appeared in the Written Examination, held at Diphu Govt. Boys' Higher Secondary School, Diphu, on 18<sup>th</sup> May, 2025, for recruitment to the post of LDA under the establishment of the Information and Public Relations (Hills), Karbi Anglong, Diphu, have qualified to appear before the Selection Committee for the viva-voce and computer test which will be conducted along with the viva-voce for the post of Chowkidar as per the schedule below.

#### ➤ Schedule for viva-voce of shortlisted candidates for the post of LDA

Roll Numbers of shortlisted candidates	Venue	Time and Date
1, 2, 3, 4, 8, 10, 11, 12, 14, 16, 17, 18, 19, 20, 22, 23, 24, 25, 26, 28, 29, 33, 34.	Office of the District Information and Public Relations Officer, Karbi Anglong, Rongkimi, Lumding Road, Diphu PM	18 <sup>th</sup> June, 2025, at 10.30 AM to 12.30 PM

#### ➤ Schedule for Viva-Voce for the post of Chowkidar

Candidates	Venue	Time and Date
All candidates who have applied for the post of Chowkidar under the establishment of Information and Public Relations (Hills), Karbi Anglong, Diphu.	Office of the District Information and Public Relations Officer, Karbi Anglong, Rongkimi, Lumding Road, Diphu	18 <sup>th</sup> June, 2025, at 1.00 PM to 3.00 PM

#### ➤ Instructions for candidates:

- The shortlisted candidates for the post of LDA, including those for the post Chowkidar, must bring their original documents along with self-attested photocopies for verification.
- Any candidates found to have submitted false information at any stage will be disqualified.
- Candidates for both the LDA and Chowkidar posts who fail to appear for the viva-voce on the above mentioned date and time shall forfeit their candidature.
- Candidates must carry a valid Government-issued Photo ID for verification.
- No TA/DA will be admissible.

Sd/-

Member Secretary, Selection Committee cum  
Deputy Director of information and Public  
Relations (Hills), Karbi Anglong, Diphu



# NOT SEEN ANYTHING BRING THE WORLD TOGETHER MORE THAN 'HARRY POTTER': TOM FELTON

LOS ANGELES, June 9: Hollywood actor Tom Felton believes nothing brings the world together more than "Harry Potter", whose fandom is relevant even now. Felton, best known for starring in "Harry Potter" films, is set to reprise his role of Draco Malfoy in Broadway's "Harry Potter and the Cursed Child". The actor will make his Broadway debut with the stage show, which will run for a limited 19-week engagement starting November 11.

The 37-year-old actor said he thought the fandom of "Harry Potter" would disappear over time, but it didn't. "I think we all thought that the fandom flame might be doused over the years, but clearly it's not. The most exciting part is to do it live. It took nine months, more or less, to shoot a film, and this is all compact. This is all reimagined into a very loving, new type of story. And I get to be a dad, which is really fun," he told entertainment news outlet Variety.

The franchise is also being revived into a series at HBO. The series will be a full adaptation of J K Rowling's books.

Felton was asked if he feels Rowling's recent anti-trans comments have any effect on the upcoming "Harry Potter" projects. He said he "can't say it does."

"The only thing I always remind myself is that I've been lucky enough to travel the world here I am in New York and I have not seen anything bring the world together more than 'Potter'. And she's responsible for that, so I'm incredibly grateful," he added.

"Harry Potter and the Cursed Child" follows the next generation of wizards, focusing on the children of the original characters, including Draco's son, Scorpius Malfoy. It will also mark the first time an original cast member from the film series will perform in the stage adaptation. (PTI)



# Navjot Singh Sidhu back in 'The Great Indian Kapil Show 3': Feels like coming home again

NEW DELHI, June 9: Former cricketer Navjot Singh Sidhu is set to make his comeback to Kapil Sharma's comedy show with its third season, the makers announced on Monday.

Sidhu was a permanent guest at "Comedy Nights with Kapil" between 2013 and 2016. He also appeared in the first two seasons of "The Kapil Sharma Show" and "Family Time with Kapil Sharma".

"The Great Indian Kapil Show 3" will stream on Netflix from June 21. The streaming platform shared the announcement with a video on its Instagram handle.

"Ek kursi paaji ke liye please. Har Funnyvaar Badhega Humara Parivaar with the comeback of Navjot Singh Sidhu & Archana Puran Singh. Watch them in the new season of The Great Indian Kapil Show, streaming from 21st June, at 8 PM only on Netflix," the caption on the streamer's X read.

Sidhu said returning to the show feels like coming back

home. "Coming to 'The Great Indian Kapil Show' feels like I'm coming home again. It is a home run for me. We heard the voice of the people, so many fans and well-wishers who loved our interactions and wanted to see more," he said in a statement.

"A smile doesn't cost you a cent, but it is worth millions of dollars and 'The Great Indian Kapil Show' is an instrument of god's goodwill to bring happiness to mankind - honoured to be part of it again," he added.

Sharma said, "Humne promise kiya tha ki Har funnyvaar badhega Humaara parivaar and I'm so excited to have Sidhu paaji part of the family along with Archana ji to enjoy all the chutkules (jokes), the shayaris (poetry) and masti (fun). The mahaul (mood) is set, so stay tuned because this season jokes aur laughter dono ho gayein hain triple."

The upcoming season also features Sunil Grover, Krushna Abhishek and Kiku Sharda. (PTI)

# People will choose theatres over OTT in the long run: dir Tejas Prabha Vijay Deoskar

NEW DELHI, June 9: "Ground Zero" director Tejas Prabha Vijay Deoskar says OTT releases have impacted theatrical business but people will eventually go back to cinema screens.

The director, also known for movies such as "Bucket List", "Chhatriwali" and "Ajinkya", said nothing compares to watching films in a movie theatre.

"We have to accept that people are aware of OTT and definitely watching a film in your house is comfortable... And there are multiple people who are opting for that. It has definitely impacted the theatre business.

"But in the longer run, it will change again because the experience that we get in theatres is nowhere compared to what we get on OTT. It is a phase when people are opting for OTT but eventually they will go back to cinemas," Deoskar told PTI.

The director's new film "Ground Zero", featuring Emraan Hashmi in the lead role of Border Security Force (BSF) officer Narendra Nath Dhar Dubey, released in theatres in April this year.

Asked if Hashmi was the first choice for the project, the director said he has always tried to cast people against their popular image.

"When you do this odd casting, there's

some sort of novelty that you are bringing to the table and Emraan is such a fine actor. He has already proven in other films that he can raise the bar to a different level. Though he is known for his romantic roles, as an actor he can bring much more to the table."

Deoskar said his biggest learning while making the movie was that one needs to understand the subject emotionally and logically.

"I am improving my craft, I am improving my technical knowledge, but more than this is what I feel as a filmmaker. You need to understand the subject emotionally and also logically. I have learnt on my way that when you look at a story, it is not only from the point of view of making it a commercial film. Emotions are the most important thing," he said.

Deoskar is happy with the way people have connected with the story of "Ground Zero".

"The film that I wanted to make and the impact I wanted to have on the audience, I have actually been able to do that. People like that the film is not over the top."

Also starring Sai Tamhankar, "Ground Zero" released on April 25. It is produced by Excel Entertainment of Farhan Akhtar and Ritesh Sidhwani. (PTI)



# Kim Novak to receive Golden Lion lifetime achievement award at Venice Film Fest

NEW DELHI, June 9: Hollywood golden era star Kim Novak, known for her roles in Alfred Hitchcock's "Vertigo" and films like "Picnic" and "Man with the Golden Arm", has been awarded the Golden Lion for Lifetime Achievement at the 82nd Venice International Film Festival, to be held from August 27 to September 6.

Novak, who is 92, is counted among the last of the great glamorous movie stars of the golden era, who was the No. 1 box office star in the world in '58, '59' and '60.

Her best known role internationally is in Hitchcock's 1958 hit "Vertigo", which saw her in a double role opposite James Stewart.

Novak's other movies that are counted among classics are "Picnic" (1955), "The Man with the Golden Arm" (1955), "Pal Joey" (1957), and "Bell, Book and Candle" (1958).

The decision to honour Novak was made by the Board of Directors of La Biennale, upon recommendation of the Artistic Director of the Festival, Alberto Barbera, according to a press release on the festival's official website.

In a statement Novak said she is "deeply, deeply touched" to receive the prestigious Golden Lion Award from the "enormously respected" film festival.

"To be recognized for my body of work at this time in my life is a dream come true. I will treasure every moment I spend in Venice. It will fill my heart with joy," she said.

Barbera called Novak one of the most beloved icons of an entire era of Hollywood films.

"She never refrained from criticizing the studio system, choosing her roles, who she let into her private life and even her name... Independent and nonconformist, she created her own production company and went on strike to renegotiate a salary that was much lower than that of her male co-stars," Barbera said. (PTI)

# 'Ocean' is David Attenborough's greatest, most personal account yet: team behind Nat Geo documentary

NEW DELHI, June 9: Veteran British broadcaster David Attenborough is the world's most trusted storyteller, bringing not only passion and truth but also a rare personal connection to everything he touches -- something that is evident in his latest documentary, "Ocean with David Attenborough", say the filmmakers behind the project.

The National Geographic film, described by the team as Attenborough's most personal yet, explores the story of the ocean through the lens of a man whose life has paralleled the rise of marine science.

For directors Keith Scholey, Colin Butfield, and Toby Nowlan, and executive producer Enric Sala, one thing is clear -- the documentary wouldn't exist without the 99-year-old legend.

"Without David, there's no film. There's no two ways about it. This is a challenging subject which has to happen. David has always told people the truth and he has universal trust."

"To have a person of his stature to be able to tell this story, it is so important to get it funded in the first place, and then get it on cinema screens, and then to the world," Scholey told PTI in an interview.

The documentary special, which explores diverse and vital marine ecosystems, highlighting their connection to preventing climate disaster and the threats posed by harmful fishing practices, will premiere on National Geographic and stream on JioHotstar at 7 pm on Sunday on World Oceans Day.

As a broadcaster, Scholey said Attenborough possesses the quality of creating a passionate narration, and delivering it in an effective way that reaches the audience.

"Thank heavens we've got him, because otherwise, we couldn't make films like this, we just could not reach so many people, so he is a great gift," said Scholey, who has been collaborating and working with the British legend consistently for the past 40 years.

Butfield, who besides co-directing the documentary also wrote the book "Ocean: Earth's Last Wilderness" with Attenborough, believes the British broadcaster's life closely mirrors the ocean's journey of exploration and discovery.

"He's (Attenborough) had such a long life, he's seen so much of the natural world... When he was a boy,



we knew very little, and then as he started to dive and film and travel, we gradually uncovered more and more.

"Also the large-scale destruction of the ocean started to happen in his lifetime, and it's happening off the coast of the country he, Keith and I live in (the UK) as well as many other parts of the world. And then the recovery has happened during his lifetime in certain places. So he's got that phenomenal span of it," he added.

Nowlan, who has worked on BBC's "A Perfect Planet", and Emmy-win-

ning series "Planet Earth II" and "Our Planet", all with Attenborough, added that he brings not only authority but also unwavering enthusiasm to his work. "Even at 99 years old, when he narrates something, when he lends himself to something, he says it with such presence and passion. It's as if someone's just seen it for the first time. When David says something, it's never about the David Attenborough show. It's all about the subject, and this subject is the ocean. It's his greatest message yet, the most impor-

tant story he's ever told," he said.

And for Sala, a marine biologist and National Geographic explorer-in-residence, Attenborough is the "opposite of fake news".

"David was extremely passionate about this project and this idea that after 100 years, he's come to this big conclusion that there's nowhere more important on Earth than the ocean. And so that lent himself to being very personally involved in everything in the film. It's very unique and might be the most personal account from David on screen," he added.

According to the makers, "Ocean with David Attenborough" features never-before-seen footage of bottom trawling, the act of dragging weighted fishing nets along the Ocean floor, exposing its severe impact on the ocean.

While Attenborough highlights these urgent threats in the documentary, he also shares inspiring global stories, showing that if the world acts now, marine life can recover faster than expected.

Scholey said climate change in the 1990s was widely dismissed by many.

"I just remember then, just talking about climate change, everyone sort

of said, Oh, it's all made up.' And, of course, no one would dream of saying that now," he said.

Butfield said the film is timely as many countries worldwide are seriously considering how to protect their coastlines.

"You can really show it at a moment when the global political infrastructure is starting to think, Yeah, maybe there's a win-win here.' Maybe by protecting the ocean, we get more jobs, better livelihoods, food security, we also help tackle climate change."

"It's good for us, nature, climate, and it felt like it's the right optimistic story coming at the right moment," he added.

Sala believes ocean recovery is possible because many protected areas worldwide have already shown miraculous signs of healing and replenishing themselves.

"Many countries have done it. India is one of the countries that agreed to protect at least 30 per cent of the ocean by 2030, (it) still has a long way to go, but the commitment is there. So, we believe it's possible because it's already happening in many places around the world," he said. (PTI)



### Shooting League of India will help develop sport in India: Olympic medallist Tucker

**NEW DELHI, June 9:** Tokyo Olympics silver medallist Mary Tucker feels the Shooting League of India will provide huge opportunity to develop the sport both within India and across the world.

The 23-year-old, who won silver in the mixed 10m air rifle team event during Tokyo2020, has earlier competed for the University of Kentucky and West Virginia University in the NCAA competitions, and also represented Saltendorf in Germany's Bundesliga.

Tucker said she enjoys competing in team format tournaments. "I really like leagues. I have experience with the NCAA and with the Bundesliga, and I really like being on a team and having that atmosphere of being able to have spectators rooting for an entire team. I really like the format of having top athletes and junior athletes competing together. I feel like that's a huge opportunity to develop shooting sports both within India and all around the world," Tucker was quoted as saying in a media release.

The ISSF has allocated the window between November 20 and December 2 for the first season of the SLI, and the tournament will feature mixed team events in pistol (10m, 25m), rifle (10m, 50m 3 positions), and shotgun (Trap & Skeet).

"India is at a really high level in the sport, so it's really a good opportunity for the Indian athletes to compete with people from outside, but also it's a great opportunity for international athletes because we get to compete with the really high-level Indian shooters. (PTI)

### Saptak Talwar struggles in final round, finishes 44<sup>th</sup>

**LUCERNE (SWITZERLAND), June 9:** India's Saptak Talwar struggled in windy conditions to card a 7-over 78 in the final round, finishing tied 44<sup>th</sup> at the Swiss Challenge here.

After three steady under-par rounds had positioned him for a strong finish, the Indian golfer struggled on the final day and slipped out of contention. Talwar, who was inside the top 20 heading into the last round, tumbled down the leader board to end the tournament tied for 44<sup>th</sup>.

He began his round on the front nine and had already dropped five shots halfway through the round. He had a double bogey on the third followed by a bogey on the fourth and another two bogeys on the sixth and seventh holes.

On the back nine, he picked up a shot on the 14<sup>th</sup> only to make three consecutive bogeys between the 15<sup>th</sup> and 17<sup>th</sup> holes and ended the week at a total score of even par.

Felix Mory became a two-time winner on the HotelPlaner Tour after holding his nerve in a play-off to claim the Swiss Challenge title.

The Frenchman signed for a two under par round of 69 on the final day to reach 12 under par for the week alongside Spaniard Santiago Tarrío, before Mory birdied the first extra hole to secure victory. Mory, who eagled the 17<sup>th</sup> hole to force his way into a play-off, climbs 43 places to sixth in the Road to Mallorca Rankings with the win. It's his first victory since 2021. (PTI)

## THE BLUES ARE PLACED IN POT 1 FOR THE QUALIFIERS

# India gear up for Hong Kong test in Asian Cup Qualifiers

**KOWLOON (HONG KONG), June 9:** Seeking its first win in the tournament, the Indian football team will face another acid test when it takes on Hong Kong in a crucial AFC Asian Cup 2027 round three qualifier match here on Tuesday. As per reports in the local media, all 50,000 tickets for the match have been sold out, setting a new attendance record for Hong Kong football.

Manolo Marquez's men will have their task cut out as they face a Hong Kong side that has been revitalised under the guidance of manager Ashley Westwood, who knows a lot about Indian football and will certainly look to use his knowledge to the home side's advantage.

Placed in Pot 1 for the qualifiers, India, ranked 127<sup>th</sup>, got off to a slow start with a draw against Bangladesh in March.

Meanwhile, Pot 2 side Hong Kong, ranked 153, also managed only a point in Singapore, meaning there is still nothing to separate the four sides in Group C after the first matchday.

For Hong Kong, the day will be a historic. The game is not only a crucial qualifier in their search for only a second AFC Asian Cup berth in 59 years, but also the inaugural football match at the 50,000 seater Kai Tak Stadium, part of the Kai Tak Sports Park, the largest sports complex in Hong Kong.

Featuring a retractable roof and constructed at a cost of HKD 30 billion at the site of the city's former airport, the stadium even features a flexible pitch system for other sports and entertainment



events.

It will be India and Hong Kong's 25<sup>th</sup> meeting since their first in 1951. India lead the head-to-head with nine wins, Hong Kong have eight, while seven have been draws. However, the Blue Tigers have won only once on Hong Kong soil, a 2-1 friendly victory in 1957.

The previous meeting in 2022 is still fresh in the memories of many — a 4-0 drubbing in a rain-lashed Asian Cup qualifier in Kolkata.

Defender Sandesh Jhingam, however, reiterated that it's "all about now".

"It was quite a comfortable scoreline but since then, Hong Kong have changed a lot. They have a new coach and a lot of new players. So, it's not going to be as easy, and you cannot get complacent or take things lightly.

"Every game on the international

stage is tough, especially on away soil. We are preparing in the best way, and we will go for the maximum points on Tuesday," said the 31-year-old Jhingam.

Since August 2024, Hong Kong have been coached by Westwood, a familiar name in Indian football.

The Englishman led Bengaluru FC from 2013 to 2016 and also took charge of ATK and RoundGlass Punjab FC later.

He also coached the Afghanistan side that defeated India in the FIFA World Cup Qualifiers last year.

Under Westwood, Hong Kong have only lost once in 12 matches — 0-1 to Liechtenstein in a friendly. But only two wins have come against higher-ranked opponents, Solomon Islands and Philippines (both friendlies).

In preparation for the match against India, Hong Kong played a

non-official friendly against Manchester United FC that they lost 1-3 on May 30, then a FIFA friendly against Nepal on June 5, which was a scoreless affair.

Lallianzuala Chhangte shared his thoughts on the opponents.

"Playing against Hong Kong is a significant challenge because they have a good defensive setup, and we know their coach as well. He has a lot of experience in India," Chhangte said.

"Hong Kong are a good counter-attacking team as well, and we have to be well aware of that. We have a plan, and it's all about executing. If we go into the game with the right mindset, attitude and hunger, we can win this game," said the winger, who celebrated his 28<sup>th</sup> birthday on Sunday.

Apart from the new coach, the Hong Kong squad also features many new naturalised and foreign-born players. Among them are forwards Juninho and Stefan Pereira, midfielder Fernando, and defender Dudu — all born in Brazil.

Spain-born forward Manolo Bleda and Japan-born midfielder Sohgo Ichikawa also made their Hong Kong debuts recently.

Among the experienced lot are goalkeeper Yapp Hung Fai, who has over a century of caps, defenders Sun Ming Him, Yue Tze Nam and Tsui Wang Kit, all of whom ply their trade in the Chinese Super League, and midfielder Tan Chun Lok.

The majority of the squad, however, play their club football in the Hong Kong Premier League for Kitchee SC, Southern District, Lee Man FC, Eastern FC and current champions Tai Po FC. (PTI)

## Elavenil eyes podium as three Indian shooters make WC debut in Munich

**MUNICH, June 9:** Two-time medallist Elavenil Valarivan will fancy her chances on the first competition day of ISSF World Cup here on Tuesday as three shooters from the country make their tournament debut, in the women's 10m air rifle and men's 10m air pistol events respectively.

The first two finals — the women's 10m air rifle and the men's 10m air pistol — are lined up on the opening day of the season's third World Cup (Rifle/Pistol) stage at the Olympic Shooting Range.

The National Rifle Association of India (NRAI) had sent a 22-member team for the tournament with double Olympic medallist Manu Bhaker and Kiran Ankush Jadhav shooting in two individual events.

Elimination and qualifications to four of the 10 events on the roster begin from Tuesday afternoon besides the two finals.

India will field as many as three World Cup debutants in the two medal events on the opening day, with national champion Ananya Naidu in the women's event and Aditya Malra and Nishant Rawat in the men's event, starting for the first time at this level.

Arya Borse, the second Indian air rifle shooter, is also in her first senior year but has been in great form, making one individual final and winning two mixed team silvers in the year's first two World Cup stages in Buenos Aires and Lima respectively.

That leaves two-time Olympian and two-time individual World Cup gold medallist Elavenil and Asian Championships winner and four-time World Cup medallist



Varun Tomar to don the senior's mantle in the two events.

"The thing is the Munich range is familiar to most of the shooters and they have all come here several times for other events on the European circuit also, so that should not be a problem.

"They have all settled down well and are shooting well in training... so let's see," quipped national rifle coach Deepali Deshpande during pre-event training on Monday morning.

India have done very well in the first two World Cup stages in South America earlier this year and will look to replicate their performance in the Germany city.

National pistol coach Samaresh Jung said, "The scores are good, all are fit and fine, so we are confident enough. The thing about Munich is, it always attracts a big and quality field but if we are able to perform at our best, we should be in the reckoning."

The women's air rifle qualifications will be spread over two relays with a 150 plus field entered and around 118 contending for medals including the three Indians. (PTI)

## Saudi Arabia's WC hopes hinge on a near-impossible task against Australia

**JEDDAH, June 9:** A Saudi squad that has scored six goals through nine qualifying games needs to beat Australia by a five-goal margin to earn a direct spot at the 2026 World Cup.

Head coach Herve Renard knows it's an extremely unlikely outcome for his Saudi team, but he's urging his players to go all in Tuesday in the last game of the third round of Asian qualifying for next year's global tournament.

"The door is closed but we have to try to qualify even if it is through the window," Renard said after his team's 2-0 win over Bahrain last week kept Saudi.

"Everything must go very well for us if we are to qualify; we have to score goals."

Anything less than a five-goal deficit means Australia — in second spot in Group C — qualifies for a seventh World Cup. The last time the Socceroos lost by such a margin was in successive 6-0 defeats against Brazil and France in 2013. The Australians have scored 14 goals and conceded six through nine qualifiers.

After successive World Cup qualifications through the playoffs, Australia is close to securing a direct route but coach Tony Popovic is taking nothing for granted.

"We need to do a job in Saudi,"

Popovic said. "We're in a great position, but we need to finish it off."

Popovic has only been in the job since September, stepping in after Graham Arnold resigned after collecting just one point in the group's first two qualification games.

"It's been a really intense period since I've come in but everyone's embraced what we're aiming to do," he said. "And we're very close now to achieving our goal."

Asia has been allocated eight places at the 48-team World Cup in the United States, Canada and Mexico. The top two teams in each of the three groups in this round advance directly. The third- and fourth-place teams in each group go into another round vying for two more places.

Japan was the first to qualify and will top Group C regardless of the outcome between Australia and third-placed Saudi Arabia. Iran and Uzbekistan have qualified from Group A, and South Korea and Jordan have qualified from Group B.

If Saudi Arabia fails to win by five, it will join United Arab Emirates, Qatar, Indonesia and Iraq in the next stage of qualifying in October. Oman, meanwhile, is fourth in Group B, a point ahead of the Palestinian team in fifth place, with the two teams meeting in Amman on Tuesday. (AP)

## Sinner's run at French Open ends in heartbreak

**PARIS, June 9:** After a flawless fortnight in Paris, Jannik Sinner was on the brink of capturing his first French Open title after a dominant run on the clay courts of Roland-Garros.

Facing defending champion Carlos Alcaraz, the top-ranked Italian was firmly in control.

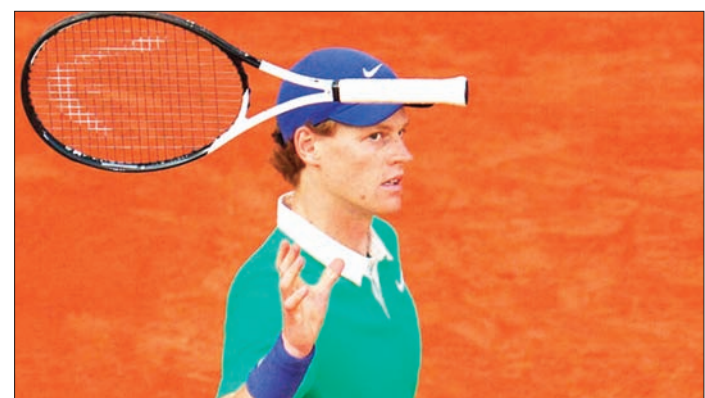
Sinner's deep groundstrokes, excellent service, heavy top spin, and subtle variations had worn down Alcaraz, who found himself 5-3 down and trailing 0-40 in the fourth set, and facing three match points.

At that moment, it felt like the best of all possible worlds for the 23-year-old Sinner.

But then the momentum swung. Alcaraz fought back, saved the first match point when Sinner sent a forehand long. On the second, Sinner missed a return. The third ended with Alcaraz winning a short baseline exchange.

Sinner had just let his chance slip away. From there, Alcaraz produced one of the greatest comebacks in Roland-Garros history to win the longest final ever played on the Parisian dirt — 5 hours and 29 minutes — 4-6, 6-7 (4), 6-4, 7-6 (3), 7-6 (10-2). It's an amazing trophy, so I won't sleep tonight very well, but it's okay," Sinner said during the trophy ceremony.

There is hardly anything between the two best players in tennis at the moment, who have now combined to win the last six Grand Slam titles and appear poised to



build one of the sport's most compelling rivalries in the years ahead.

Sunday's duel delivered a match of rare intensity, filled with punishing baseline rallies, exquisite drop shots, and brilliant passing shots — thrilling a packed Court Philippe-Chatrier. Reflecting on the match in his post-final press conference, Sinner tried to draw positives from a devastating loss.

"Obviously, this one hurts," he said. "There's not so much to say right now. But again, I'm happy with how we're trying to improve every day and put myself in these kinds of positions. It was a very high-level match, that's for sure. I'm happy to be part of it. But yeah, the final result hurts."

It was a particularly tough ending for Sinner, who had not dropped a set on his way to the final, including a dominant semifinal win over three-time French

Open champion Novak Djokovic.

Before facing Alcaraz, Sinner had never lost a Grand Slam final, winning his first three. A victory would have made him just the fifth man in the Open Era to win three consecutive major titles.

"I'm pretty sure you are going to be a champion, not once but many, many times," Alcaraz told him during the trophy ceremony. "It is a privilege to share the court with you in every tournament, making history with you." Sinner, who will remain world No. 1, said he'll lean on his family and loved ones to recover from the loss. "Now it's my time to take something from the close people I have," he said. "As I've always said, before my career started, I never would've imagined finding myself in this position. It wasn't even a dream because it felt so far away — I wasn't even thinking about it." (AP)

## Germany reassesses World Cup prospects after being taught lessons by France and Portugal

**BERLIN, June 9:** Two defeats and last place in a mini-tournament it expected to win have dealt Germany a cold dose of reality ahead of the 2026 World Cup.

The Nations League final four in Germany was supposed to show Julian Nagelsmann's team can count itself among Europe's best, but a 2-1 loss to Portugal in Munich followed by a 2-0 defeat to France in Stuttgart instead revealed a gulf in class. It showed that tournament-winning Portugal, beaten finalist Spain — the European champion — and a talent-packed France team are among the favorites with defending champion Argentina to win soccer's biggest prize next year.

Nagelsmann was keen to highlight the positives, noting that Germany dominated and created a host of chances in the first half against France on Sunday — but counterpart Didier Deschamps had already said what little importance he gave the third-place decider, and it was clear which side was more motivated in

front of the Stuttgart fans.

Kylian Mbappé scored before the break and set up Michael Olise for the second goal as Les Bleus shook off their apathy in the second half and might have scored more.

"If you look at the first half, honestly, they were not bothered about winning. But they still won," Germany captain Joshua Kimmich said. Germany's forwards were simply not as clinical as France's.

It was a similar tale against Portugal, which rallied to beat Germany on Wednesday.

Portugal coach Roberto Martinez changed the game when he introduced substitutes Vitinha, Francisco Conceição and Nelson Semedo in the second half, and Germany needed goalkeeper Marc-André ter Stegen at his best to stop the visitors scoring any more.

Coach Nagelsmann pointed to the injury-enforced absences from his team — Jamal Musiala, Angelo Stiller, Kai Havertz, Antonio Rüdiger, Nico Schlotterbeck, Tim Klein-



dienst, Jonathan Burkardt and Yann Aurel Bisseck.

But France was also without key players like Ousmane Dembélé and Eduardo Camavinga while Deschamps had to do without three of his preferred four-man backline — William Saliba, Dayot Upamecano and Jules Koundé.

Even with a full-strength squad, it's debatable whether Germany can

match its rivals' strength in depth when it comes to player development and the quality of youngsters coming through.

Nine players in Spain coach Luis de la Fuente's Nations League squad are young enough to play at the Under-21 European Championship starting Wednesday in Slovakia. Star player Lamine Yamal is just 17 while Real Madrid's new

signing Dean Huijsen looked like he'd been playing for Spain for years. The final was just his fourth appearance.

"It's quite clear, when it comes to the depth of the squad, that we have to abandon the illusion of getting it sorted out in a year," Nagelsmann said. "We have a few positions in German soccer that are given too little attention."

Nagelsmann pointed to Spain's use of wide players in attack — like Yamal or Nico Williams — and said Germany's dearth of wing backs had been a problem for years. Kimmich has been deployed at right back when his favored position is in midfield. "Right now we're looking at what's important to see where we are in the world, what we need for the future, and to learn the right lessons from that," Nagelsmann said. "It would be nice if we could get one or two of the players up to speed by next year, but of course that's a limited window of opportunity." (AP)

## Teqball training cum selection camp concludes in Guwahati



HT Bureau

**GUWAHATI, June 9:** The week-long Teqball Training cum selection camp, held from June 3 to 9 at Nehru Stadium, R.G. Baruah Sports Complex, here, concluded on a high note with a closing ceremony. The camp was organised by the Teqball Association of Assam to prepare and select players for the Open National, Youth and Sub-Junior Teqball Championship 2025, scheduled to be held in Nashik from June 12 to 16. The closing ceremony was graced by Dr. Bishnu Ram Nunisa, general secretary of the Assam Sepak Takraw Association (ASTA), as the chief guest. In his address, Dr. Nunisa appreciated the efforts of the association in nurturing young talent and promoting the sport of Teqball in Assam. He encouraged the players to remain focused and give their best at the national championship. Secretary of Teqball Association of Assam, Devajit Gogoi along with other dedicated members of the association, was present and played a key role in the successful conduct of the camp. They expressed their pride in the selected team and extended full support as the athletes prepare to represent Assam on the national stage. The selected players now head to Nashik with confidence, training, and the hopes of the state behind them.



## India A lead by 289 runs at lunch on Day Four of 2<sup>nd</sup> unofficial Test



**NORTHAMPTON, June 9:** India A lost three wickets but its lead surged to 289 against England Lions on the fourth and final day of the second unofficial Test, here on Monday.

India lost Dhruv Jurel (28), Nitish Kumar Reddy (42) and Shardul Thakur (34) in the opening session before taking the lunch break at 268 for seven at the County Ground.

Thakur fell at the stroke of lunch, cleaned up by George Hill (3/39) while Tanush Kotian (7) was at the other end.

Resuming at 163/4, Jurel hit a couple of fours off Chris Woakes in mid-wicket region to start the proceedings but he could not convert it into a big score.

Jurel perished for a 51-ball 28 with three fours. He was caught behind off an outswinger from Eddie Jack as the ball shaped away from the batter.

He put on 46 runs for the fifth wicket with Reddy, who missed the personal milestone of a half-century. Reddy had his middle stump flattened when a nip-backer from Hill found its way between his bat and pads, ending the all-rounder's innings for 42 off 78 balls with four fours and a six.

Thakur (34, 47 balls, 3x4s, 2x6s) struck a four down the ground before launching consecutive sixes off Farhan Ahmed.

Earlier in the first innings, India A took slender lead of 21 runs after putting on 348 in the first innings and bowling England Lions out for 327.

**Brief Scores:**  
**India A:** 348 & 268/7 in 62.2 overs (KL Rahul 51, Abhimanyu Easwaran 80, Nitish Kumar Reddy 42, George Hill 3/39, Chris Woakes 2/43)

England Lions 1st innings: 327 all out. (PTI)

## Australia's champion pedigree faces South Africa's gritty ambition in cricket's WTC final

**LONDON, June 9:** When it comes to major cricket finals, Australia is in a league of its own.

Only Australia has won all four men's global trophies. It is hard to beat in finals, having won 10 of 13 across the 50-over World Cup, 20-over World Cup, Champions Trophy, and World Test Championship. And let's not get started on the women's team, which is even more dominant.

The men go for world title No. 11 from Wednesday in the WTC final against South Africa at neutral Lord's.

That ruthless focus Australia brings on the biggest stages is in marked contrast to South Africa, a perennial underachiever. The Proteas have won just one of cricket's major international titles, the Champions Trophy's inaugural predecessor in 1998, when most of the current Proteas were toddlers.

An experienced squad — average age 29 1/2 — compensates with a bond that can't be underestimated, a determination to have each other's backs.

That showed often in the 2023-25 WTC cycle as the Proteas, who used 30 players — more than any other team — found a run-scorer or wicket-taker at just the right time. They won their last seven tests and were first to qualify for the final.

"We haven't been super dominant in our performances," South Africa captain Temba Bavuma said when the team qualified in December.

"We definitely haven't been clinical or ruthless when the opportunity or the situation is called upon. But I think what we've done is that we've found ways to make sure that the result is on our side."

Australia already had a veteran team when it won the 2023 final by crushing India by 209 runs at the Oval. Ten of that 11 are back. Only David Warner is missing, retired from the test format.

Medium-pace bowler Josh Hazlewood was injured and didn't play, but he's ex-



pected to replace one of the 2023 stars, Scott Boland. Hazlewood overcame a shoulder injury to spearhead Royal Challengers Bengaluru to a first Indian Premier League title last week with 22 wickets in 12 innings.

Warner's permanent replacement at opener still hasn't been settled. Sam Konstas made an audacious debut at age 19 in December against India, but Travis Head was preferred in Sri Lanka in February. They seem to be the main candidates.

Marnus Labuschagne has opened only once since 2016, and his form has dropped to the point of concern. He averaged just 28.33 in the WTC cycle and attempts last month to spark form at Glamorgan in the second tier of the English County Championship fell flat.

In the same division, allrounder Cameron Green scored three hundreds for Gloucestershire in a comeback from lower spine surgery which sidelined him for six months. But he's not ready to bowl.

It may not matter. Australia has four of its top 10 all-time leading wicket-takers in Nathan Lyon (553, third), Mitchell Starc (382, fourth), captain Pat Cummins (294, eighth), and Hazlewood (279, 10th).

Steve Smith is locked in at No. 4 in the batting order. He turned 36 last week and hasn't played in the top flight since March, just like Konstas, opener Usman Khawaja, Lyon, Boland, and wicketkeeper Alex Carey. But they're entrusted with the knowhow to switch on when it counts.

Smith has four hundreds in his last five tests, and passed 10,000 career runs, almost as many as the South Africans. At Lord's he averages 58.

Whoever opens with Khawaja will likely

immediately face fearsome South Africa pacer Kagiso Rabada. Khawaja will have his hands full. He's fallen to Rabada five times in 10 matches.

Rabada, with 327 wickets, is three away from tying Allan Donald for fourth place on South Africa's all-time list. Rabada will have the company of left-armers Marco Jansen, who took 29 wickets in six matches in the cycle.

The third seamer will be either Lungi Ngidi, who was one of eight South Africans at the IPL, or Dane Paterson, who has been nipping the ball around for Middlesex in county division two.

South Africa has confirmed Aiden Markram and Ryan Rickelton as the openers and captain Bavuma at No. 4. They played in the IPL, too.

Middle-order batter David Bedingham, South Africa's leading scorer in the cycle, proved in a warmup game against Zimbabwe that he's recovered from a broken toe sustained in April.

The finalists didn't meet in this cycle. Their last series was in January 2023, when Australia won 2-0 at home and dominated.

South Africa didn't play England either. It topped the standings with eight wins from 12 tests despite forfeiting a series in New Zealand to focus on its domestic Twenty20 league.

Australia also didn't play last-place Bangladesh. With 13 wins in 19 tests, Australia clinched its spot in the final by beating India in January. It lost only twice away from home.

Lord's, the home of cricket, holds no demons for both teams.

South Africa has lost only once there in seven post-apartheid tests. The last appearance resulted in an innings victory inside three days in 2022.

Australia has not lost at Lord's for 10 years. (AP)

## I love to lead because it brings a lot of responsibility: Iyer

**MUMBAI, June 9:** Having guided Kolkata Knight Riders to their third title last year and led Punjab Kings to the IPL final this year, star India cricketer Shreyas Iyer says he "loves" leadership role as it helps to bring out the best in him.

Iyer was pivotal in guiding PBKS to the IPL final against Royal Challengers Bengaluru this year, scoring 604 runs, including six half-centuries. But, as luck would have it, he missed out on a Test spot for the five-Test away series against England beginning later this month. He also led Delhi Capitals in the past.

"It (captaincy) brings in a lot of maturity and responsibility. You are always expected to perform and contribute in the best way possible for the team because whenever there is a hurdle or some kind of adversity you face as a team, they always come to the captain," Iyer told the T20 Mumbai League after leading Sobto Mumbai Falcons to the semifinal here on Sunday.

"I think I have got a lot of experience as I have been captaining since I was 22. I have enjoyed the moments and also embraced it. I love the fact to come out and lead," added Iyer.

Iyer, 30, is among the top Indian stars, alongside Suryakumar Yadav and Shivam Dube, featuring in the T20 Mumbai League, a domestic franchise-based tournament. (PTI)

## India's home season: Kolkata, Delhi swap Tests against Windies and SA



**NEW DELHI, June 9:** Kolkata's Eden Gardens and Delhi's Arun Jaitley Stadium will swap their allocated Test matches against West Indies and South Africa respectively during India's upcoming home season, the BCCI announced on Monday.

While Delhi was set to host the opening Test against South Africa from November 14-18, it will now host the second Test against West Indies starting October 10.

Though the BCCI release doesn't state the reason for the venue swap, it is understood that air pollution levels in mid-November in the National Capital Region become a health hazard like it happened during a Test match against Sri Lanka few years back.

The Sri Lankan fielders were wear-

ing masks and a few reportedly suffered from breathing problems.

It is understood that BCCI's Cricket Operations team collated the AQI data over the past few years and decided that venue swap is a viable option.

India's home season starts with two WTC Tests against West Indies, starting October 2 in Ahmedabad, followed by the Delhi Test.

India then play a full three format series against South Africa starting with two Tests, followed by three ODIs and five T20 Internationals across various Indian venues.

While Kolkata hosts the opening Test against the Proteas, Guwahati's Baraspara Stadium will become the latest Test venue as the second Test will be played from November 22 to 26.

The ODIs will be held at Ranchi (November 30), Raipur (December 3) and Visakhapatnam (December 6). The five T20Is will be held at Cuttack (December 9), New Chandigarh (December 11), Dharamsala (December 14), Lucknow (December 17) and Ahmedabad (December 19).

Meanwhile Tamil Nadu Cricket Association (TNCA) has expressed its inability to host the women's ODI series against Australia starting September 14, which was supposed to serve as a precursor to the 50-over World Cup starting September 30.

The first two matches of the series will now be played in Mullanpur (New Chandigarh) and the third match in New Delhi.

The fringe players in Indian men's team set-up will have their hands full with BCCI hosting both Australia A and South Africa A for four "unofficial Tests" and six List A games.

Both the touring sides will play two 'Tests' and three List A games each. Australia A series will happen in Lucknow and Kanpur while Bengaluru's COE will host the Proteas A team for the 'unofficial Tests'. Rajkot will host three ODIs.

Australia A Tests will be in Lucknow from September 16-19 and 23-26 giving chance to the Test specialists to get into groove for the West Indies games. Ditto for SAA series, which will be a shadow tour before the main event. (PTI)

## Harry Brook celebrates England's second series win in 11 days with T20 victory over West Indies

**BRISTOL (ENGLAND), June 9:** England cricket captain Harry Brook praised the unity of his "group of mates" Sunday after sealing his second series win in just 11 days.

England won the second Twenty20 cricket international against West Indies by four wickets with nine balls remaining to take an insurmountable 2-0 lead in the three-match series. England scored 199-6 in 18.3 overs after West Indies lost the toss and posted 196.

Brook has won five in a row against the West Indies since taking over from Jos Buttler, including a 3-0 sweep in the ODI matches.

England didn't have it easy at Bristol, with the asking rate climbing past 11 per over at one stage as it chased down West Indies' target.

But the team stuck together to get over the line, with five of the top six batters making handy contributions before Jacob Bethell (26) and Tom Banton (30 not out) hammered 56 off just 21 deliveries between them to puncture the West Indian resistance. Buttler again top scored for England with 47 off 36 deliveries. He hit 96 when England beat West Indies by 21 runs in the series opener on Friday. It was the kind of game England was tending to lose in the difficult final days under Buttler,

whose captaincy ended with eight straight defeats across both white ball formats.

After dominating the West Indies in three one-day internationals, England was expected to receive a tougher contest from the visitors, who are higher-rated in T20s than ODIs.

West Indies smashed 47 runs off the last two overs of its innings, including 31 runs in the 19th over against spinner Adil Rashid, with his six deliveries going for 6-6-6-1-6-6. Jason Holder (29 not out) hit the first three sixes and Romario Shephard added the last two.

Skipper Shai Hope was top scorer for West Indies with a 38-ball 49, including four sixes. He shared an 89-run partnership for the second wicket with Johnson Charles after opener Evin Lewis was trapped lbw to Luke Wood (2-25 in four overs) on the first ball of the match. Charles hit three sixes and three fours in his 39-ball 47 before he was bowled by Wood.

West Indies had No. 2-ranked T20 bowler Akeal Hosein (1-33) back with them on Sunday. Hosein missed the first T20 as he was unable to travel to England in time because of recent changes to Britain's visa entry requirements for Trinidad and Tobago citizens. (AP)

## India must nail the conditions to do well in England: Former cricketers

**NEW DELHI, June 9:** Former Indian cricketers on Monday advised the Shubman-Gill led side to ace the conditions in England for a successful tour while Michael Vaughan believes that the five-Test series could be a start of "something special" for the visitors.

India are going through a transitional phase following retirements of Rohit Sharma, Virat Kohli and spin ace Ravichandran Ashwin, while fast bowler Mohammed Shami was not picked in the touring party.

Cheteshwar Pujara said each and every player will have to contribute for the team to come up trumps.

"India's team to England must adapt quickly and play (according) to the conditions. As someone who understands batting in English conditions and team dynamics, I believe discipline, patience and support for each other are crucial," said Pujara.

"Every player will need to contribute and respect the challenges that lay ahead. I am sure this tour will be a great opportunity for the growth and success of each player and the team as a whole," Pujara told Sony Sports, the official broadcaster of India's tour to England.

Former left-arm pacer Ashish Nehra also echoed the same sentiment.

"To me, England tour is always



challenging but it's great fun as well. Adapting to the conditions will be the key and I am sure our players are capable of doing that. Bowling wise we have the experience and stability."

Former India all-rounder Irfan Pathan said the sooner Indians adapt, the better it is for them.

"India's new squad faces a tough challenge in England, but as an all-

rounder, I know adaptability is key. Gill's leadership, Pant's energy, and India's young talent must step up.

"England's conditions test every skill — swing, seam, and temperament. If India's players adapt quickly and stay united, they can surprise England, just as we've seen in the past with new teams rising to the occasion," he said.

India are starting a new era under the leadership of Gill and Vaughan, who led England to many memorable Test wins, said appointing the 25-year-old as their Test captain was a "bold move" and it could be a defining tour for them.

"Well, it's official — Shubman Gill is the new face of Indian Test cricket, stepping up as captain for the England series. It's a bold move, trusting a young leader with a new-look team after the retirements of giants like Rohit and Kohli," Vaughan said.

"Gill has got plenty to prove, especially away from home, but he has shown (that) he has got the temperament for big moments. With Rishabh Pant as his deputy and a squad hungry to make their mark, this England tour could be the start of something special for India's next generation. Don't be surprised if these youngsters rise to the occasion," he added. (PTI)

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