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## Border pillars to be erected in 5 'disputed areas'

**Himanta and Conrad hold border talks ● Out of six disputed areas Pilingkata has 'difference of interpretation': CM**

GUWAHATI, June 2: In a definitive step towards resolution of longstanding boundary differences between Assam and Meghalaya, the two states governments on Monday decided to erect border pillars in five of the disputed areas by Independence Day, chief ministers of the two states said.

These are among the six disputed areas, out of the total 12, for resolving which both the two states had signed an agreement in March 2022, they said.

Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma and his Meghalaya counterpart Conrad Sangma were addressing a joint press conference here after a meeting on various inter-state issues. "Out of six areas for which agreement was signed, we will try to erect the border pillars in five of these areas by August 15," Sarma said.

"There is some difference in one



of these five areas. Meghalaya wants a village that had been allotted to us, but they have given the assurance that same amount of land will be transferred to us. We have asked for one week's time to consider and inform them," he added. On the sixth area of dispute, Sarma said it relates to Pilingkata

area and there is some "difference of interpretation". "The deputy commissioners of both the states will sit and discuss it," he added.

Sangma said the small issues are being resolved and border pillars in the five areas are expected to be erected by Independence Day. "The resolution of the border

dispute in a phased manner is a major milestone in our relations," the Meghalaya chief minister said.

Sarma added that both the states have decided on taking forward discussions on the other six disputed sites, but no time frame has been fixed for completing it.

On the 55MW Kulsi multi-purpose project along the inter-state border, they said the two states have decided in principle to work on it together.

"Kulsi is a win-win project for both states. We have decided to work on it together with the condition that people living in that area will be taken into confidence," Sangma said.

Sarma added that both states will work together on the hydel project, while Assam government will take forward the irrigation part of this multi-purpose project which will benefit large (CONTD. ON PAGE-2)

## Met Dept predicts more rains

## State flood situation critical; death toll touches 10

GUWAHATI, June 2: The flood situation in Assam remained grim on Monday with the water levels rising in many parts of the state, officials said.

The India Meteorological Department's Regional Meteorological Centre (RMC) in Guwahati has said that moderate rainfall is very likely to occur at most places of Assam, while heavy to very heavy rainfall has been predicted at a few places and extremely heavy rainfall in isolated places.

A report by the Assam State Disaster Management Authority (ASDMA) on Sunday night said that two more people lost their lives in Cachar and Sribhumi districts, and around four lakh people are reeling under the deluge across 15 districts.

The total number of people losing their lives in this year's flood and landslides has increased to 10.

Cachar is the worst hit with over one lakh people affected, followed by 85,000 people in Sribhumi and 62,000 in Nagaon, it added.

The administration has been operating 155 relief camps and relief distribution centres in 12 districts, taking care of 10,272 displaced people at present.

The authorities have distributed 1,090.08 quintals of rice, 284.63 quintals of dal, 952.76 quintals of salt



and 4,726.26 litres of mustard oil among the flood victims of the state during the last 24 hours.

At present, 764 villages are under water and 3,524.38 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.

At present, the mighty Brahmaputra is flowing above the danger mark at Dibrugarh and Nimaithat. Its tributaries Dhanisiri at Numaligarh and Kopili at Kamrup are flowing above (CONTD. ON PAGE-2)

## 2 killed in wild buffalo attack in Tezpur



TEZPUR, June 2: Two persons died and two others were injured after a wild buffalo attacked them in Tezpur town of Assam's Sonitpur district on Monday, a forest department official said.

Local forest authorities are in touch with personnel from Kaziranga to tranquilise the animal, as it remains confined in a swamp in Tezpur, he said.

Divisional Forest Officer (Tezpur) Champak Deka said the wild buffalo attacked and killed Dharson Das in Jahajghat area in the early hours of Monday.

As it proceeded through the town, the animal attacked three more persons, of whom Bhojon Gope succumbed to injuries at the Tezpur Medical College and Hospital (TMCH), the official said.

The two injured persons, undergoing treatment at the TMCH, are in a critical condition, Deka said.

"We have contacted a rescue team from Kaziranga National Park and sought its help to tranquilise the buffalo," the DFO added. (PTI)

## Gukesh's win pivotal moment for Indian chess: Himanta

GUWAHATI, June 2: Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma on Monday termed world chess champion D Gukesh's win over world number one Magnus Carlsen as a "pivotal moment" for Indian chess.

"We are proud of you @DGukesh! Your taking down of Magnus Carlsen at @Norway-Chess was phenomenal, truly priceless! This is indeed a pivotal moment for Indian chess. Well done," he said in a post on X.

Five-time world champion Carlsen seemed to have the upper hand almost throughout the four-hour-long contest, but a critical mistake in time trouble allowed Gukesh to turn the tables on the Norwegian and secure a remarkable win. (PTI)

## Himanta takes stock of flood situation in Lakhimpur district

HT Bureau

GUWAHATI, June 2: Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma on Monday visited flood-affected areas in Lakhimpur district to take stock of the situation.

During his visit, Sarma inspected the flood-affected areas of Amtala and Barbila, as well as the submerged areas by the Pahumara River, and interacted with affected residents to understand their situation. He also reviewed the measures implemented by the district administration. It may be noted that a significant portion of the area was inundated due to a breach at the Amtala embankment.

During a media interaction, the chief minister stated that the breached section of the embankment would be repaired promptly, and measures would be taken to drain water through a nearby stream to allow residents to return to their homes.

"The reconstruction of the embankment is planned for September-October," he added. The chief minister also inspected the damaged section of the under-construction Pahumara-Dijo connecting road under the Asom Mala (CONTD. ON PAGE-2)



## Over 20,000 people affected in first wave of flood in Dibrugarh



HT Correspondent

DIBRUGARH, June 2: The flood situation in Dibrugarh district remains critical, with 66 villages across six revenue circles submerged as of Monday.

Although the water level of the Brahmaputra has receded due to improved weather conditions, low-lying areas continue to be inundated.

A total of 20,179 people have been affected by floodwaters in the Chabua, Moran, Dibrugarh East, Dibrugarh West, Naharkatia, and Tengakhat revenue circles.

"Three relief camps have been opened, and 149 inmates have taken shelter in camps located in the Naharkatia and Dibrugarh West revenue circles. A total of 20,539 animals have also been affected in

the first wave of flooding in Dibrugarh. Relief materials, including tarpaulins, have been distributed by the district administration," an official said.

While no human or livestock casualties have been reported so far, 14 large animals were rescued on Sunday. The floods have caused damage to schools, health sub-centres, and other public health infrastructure in areas such as Doldhal Forest Village and Gereki Nepali.

Meanwhile, a review meeting was held on Monday at the conference hall of the Deputy Commissioner's office in Dibrugarh to assess the current flood situation.

The meeting was attended by Shantanu Gogoi, deputy secretary of the Revenue and Disaster Management Department, and Mrinal

Jyoti Bora, Project Officer from the Assam State Disaster Management Authority (Irrigation Division).

Additional Deputy Commissioner (Disaster Management) Dr Monika Bora briefed attendees on the ongoing flood scenario in the district.

District Project Officer Dipjyoti Hatikakoti of the DDMA delivered a detailed PowerPoint presentation covering flood-affected areas, rescue operations by the SDRF, NDRF, and Fire & Emergency Services, status of relief camps, and availability of relief materials.

The session also featured an in-depth discussion on urban flooding in Dibrugarh town. Executive Officer of the Dibrugarh Municipal Corporation, Novas Kr Das, outlined the preventive measures taken to avoid a repeat of last year's urban flood crisis. Officials also reviewed the current condition of embankments damaged during last year's floods.

Deputy Secretary Gogoi held additional discussions with representatives from departments such as Public Health Engineering, Health, Water Resources, PWD (Roads), Power, Handloom & Textiles, Housing, (CONTD. ON PAGE-2)

## Nadda asks BJP workers to provide assistance to flood-hit people in NE

NEW DELHI, June 2: BJP president J P Nadda on Monday said he has directed the party workers to provide all possible assistance to those affected by continuous heavy rainfall in parts of the northeastern states.

He also requested the people in the affected areas to take necessary precautions, avoid unnecessary travel and follow the advisories issued by local authorities.

"Deeply concerned for the people affected by the continuous heavy rainfall in parts of the Northeastern states, I have directed BJP state units and Karyakartas to provide all possible assistance in accordance with the issued guidelines," Nadda said in a post on X.

"I urge everyone in the affected areas to take necessary precautions, avoid unnecessary travel and follow the advisories from local authorities," he added.

The flood situation in the northeastern states of Assam, Meghalaya, Manipur, Sikkim and Arunachal Pradesh is grim after heavy rainfall in several parts. (PTI)

## Indore couple missing in M'laya: Man's body found, search for wife continues

INDORE, June 2: The body of an Indore resident who had gone missing along with his wife in Meghalaya last month was found on Monday, while search for his wife continues, a Madhya Pradesh police official said here.

Raja Raghuvanshi and his wife Sonam had gone missing on May 23 in Sohra (also known as Cherrapunji) in Meghalaya's East Khasi Hills district after going there for their honeymoon.

"We have received information that Meghalaya police recovered a body which was identified as that of Raja Raghuvanshi by his brother Vipin Raghuvanshi. The details of the death will be had after we get the post mortem report. The police there have not got any clue so far of Sonam Raghuvanshi," Indore Deputy Commissioner of Police (Crime Prevention Branch) Rajesh Kumar Tripathi told PTI. MP Chief Minister Mohan Yadav, in a post on X, expressed grief.

## 'Water and blood cannot flow together', says all-party Indian delegation in Malaysia

KUALA LUMPUR, June 2: All-party parliamentary delegation visiting Malaysia has emphasised India's zero tolerance to terrorism, asserting that "water and blood cannot flow together", the Indian mission said on Monday.

The delegation, led by JD(U) MP Sanjay Kumar Jha, met with representatives from Democratic Action Party led by YB M. Kula Segaran, Deputy Minister in the Prime Minister's Department (Law and Institutional Reform), and Parti Keadilan Rakyat in Malaysia and conveyed India's perspectives and national resolve against terrorism, the India High Commission in Malaysia posted on X.

"Discussions centred on India's resolute response to terrorism under Operation Sindoor. There was emphasis on India's zero tolerance to terrorism, and the view that 'Water and blood cannot flow together'," it added.

The delegation's remarks were in the context of India suspending the Indus Waters Treaty following

the Pahalgam terror attack. New Delhi has maintained that the treaty will remain in abeyance until Pakistan stops sponsoring terrorism.

Brokered by the World Bank, the 1960 treaty defines a mechanism for water sharing and information exchange between the two nuclear-armed neighbour nations for the use of the Indus River water and its five tributaries -- Sutlej, Beas, Ravi, Jhelum, and Chenab.

The delegation held "constructive talks" with the representatives of Parti Keadilan Rakyat led by YB Sim Tze Tzin.

"India's zero-tolerance approach to terrorism was outlined, reaffirming our national unity against cross-border threats," the mission said in another post.

"KEADILAN representatives appreciated the detailed explanation provided by the delegation and engaged in a constructive discussion on the way forward and responsibilities each nation has in fighting the menace of terrorism," it said. (CONTD. ON PAGE-2)

## 'AI powered camera traps have been installed in forested areas'

## Assam launches 'Gaja Mitra' to defuse growing human-elephant tensions

HT Bureau

GUWAHATI, June 2: Amid rising incidents of human-elephant conflict in Assam, the state has rolled out a new initiative-Gaja Mitra-aimed at safeguarding both rural communities and the region's elephant population, Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma announced on Monday.

According to Sarma, the programme is being implemented in five of the most affected districts-Goalpara, Baksa, Udalguri, Sonitpur, and Nagaon-where encounters between people and elephants frequently lead to crop destruction, property damage, and loss of life on both sides.

Launched as part of a broader

conservation push, the project adopts a holistic strategy to address the crisis. Central to this approach is the restoration of elephant habitats through afforestation and ecological enrichment. By improving forest corridors and ensuring sufficient food availability in the wild, the initiative aims to reduce the need for elephants to stray into human settlements.

A senior forest official noted that technology is also at the heart of Gaja Mitra. Artificial intelligence-powered camera traps have been installed in forested areas, serving as real-time alert systems.

"These high-tech devices detect elephant movement and send in-



stant notifications to nearby villages, giving residents crucial time to act and avoid potentially dan-

gerous encounters," he added.

To support farmers, the initiative has introduced enhanced crop

procurement measures in vulnerable zones, designed to shield cultivators from financial losses caused by elephant raids. Additionally, specially trained community teams-dubbed Gaja Mitras-are being deployed as on-the-ground mediators. These local volunteers will raise awareness, assist during elephant movements, and strengthen coordination between forest officials and villagers, in line with the principle of Jan Bhagidari (people's participation). Assam's forest minister Chandra Mohan Patowary recently revealed that the state records, on average, more than 70 human and 80 elephant deaths annually due to these conflicts. (CONTD. ON PAGE-2)



## India, US desire to give preferential market access to businesses, says Goyal

**PARIS, June 2:** India and the US desire to give preferential market access to each other's businesses and teams of both the countries are working together on the proposed bilateral trade agreement, Commerce Minister Piyush Goyal has said.

In February, US President Donald J Trump and Prime Minister of India Narendra Modi announced plans to negotiate the first tranche or phase of a mutually beneficial, multi-sector Bilateral Trade Agreement (BTA) by fall (September-October) of 2025. It is aimed at more than doubling the bilateral trade to USD 500 billion by 2030 from the current level of USD 191 billion.

"Both countries are committed to work together, both countries desire to give preferential access to each other's businesses and we are working towards the bilateral trade agreement," Goyal told reporters here. Goyal is here on an official visit to hold talks with French leaders and business representatives to boost trade and investments.

When asked about an announcement of Trump to double tariffs on steel and aluminium to 50 per cent, he also said that the two countries will continue to work together to resolve all these issues bilaterally.

"Let us wait and watch...both the US and India share good relations and we will continue to work together to resolve all these issues bilaterally," he said.

Trade experts have stated that the further increase in the import duty by the Trump administration would impact Indian exporters,



particularly those engaged in value-added and finished steel products and auto-components. On May 30, Trump announced that he would double the existing 25 per cent tariffs on steel and aluminium imports from June 4. Trump originally invoked this provision in 2018 to set the 25 per cent tariff on steel and 10 per cent on aluminium. He raised tariffs on aluminium to 25 per cent in February 2025.

In 2024-25, India exported USD 4.56 billion worth of iron, steel, and aluminium products to the US, with key categories, including USD 587.5 million in iron and steel, USD 3.1 billion in articles of iron or steel, and USD 860 million in aluminium and related articles.

India has already issued a formal notice at the World Trade Organization (WTO), reserving its rights to impose retaliatory tariffs on US goods in response to the earlier

steel tariffs.

A team of US officials is visiting India this week for discussions on the proposed interim trade agreement between the two countries.

The visit gains importance as India and the US are likely to agree on an interim trade agreement by the end of June, with New Delhi pushing for full exemption from the 26 per cent reciprocal tariff on domestic goods.

India's chief negotiator, Special Secretary in the Department of Commerce Rajesh Agrawal, last month had concluded his four-day visit to Washington.

He held talks with his US counterpart on the proposed agreement. Goyal too was in Washington to give an impetus to trade talks.

There is a possibility that both sides agree on an interim trade deal before the first tranche.

The US remained India's largest

trading partner for the fourth consecutive year in 2024-25, with bilateral trade valued at USD 131.84 billion. The US accounts for about 18 per cent of India's total goods exports, 6.22 per cent in imports, and 10.73 per cent in the country's total merchandise trade. Talking about India's free trade pact with four-European nation bloc EFTA, Goyal said USD 100 billion FDI (foreign direct investment) commitment under the agreement does not include money coming into stock market through FIIs.

"This is solid FDI coming into the country... This USD 100 billion of FDI comes with technologies... It will (also) catalyse nearly USD 500 billion of investments roughly.

"With this investment, the whole ecosystem gets created, hotels come up, infrastructure comes up, power and water is utilised. The whole ecosystem will add much more to the economy. So it's a massive investments that we are looking coming through this EFTA agreement," he added. The implementation process of this pact is progressing fast and is expected to come into force before the end of this year. The two sides signed the Trade and Economic Partnership Agreement (TEPA) on March 10, 2024. Under the pact, India has received an investment commitment of USD 100 billion in 15 years from the grouping while allowing several products such as Swiss watches, chocolates and cut and polished diamonds at lower or zero duties. (PTI)

## Tata's Gopalpur SEZ joins World Economic Forum for clean energy revolution

**BHUBANESWAR, June 2:** Tata Steel Special Economic Zone's Gopalpur Industrial Park (GIP) has joined the World Economic Forum's (WEF) Transitioning Industrial Clusters Initiative, which brings together public and private sector stakeholders from industrial clusters, to reduce CO2 emissions while driving economic growth and creating jobs.

This global initiative, implemented in collaboration with Accenture and Electric Power Research Institute (EPRI), seeks to accelerate large-scale decarbonisation by fostering industrial ecosystems that promote sustainability, energy efficiency, and green innovation, the Tata Steel Special Economic Zone Limited release said on Monday.

Located in Odisha's Ganjam district, GIP is fast emerging as a hub for green hydrogen/green ammonia and green energy equipment manufacturing.

With a clear focus on sustain-

ability, GIP will bring together its own development goals and India's National Green Hydrogen Mission, which aims to position the country as a global leader in the production, utilisation, and export of green hydrogen and its derivatives. "Gopalpur Industrial Park is proud to be part of this transformative initiative by the World Economic Forum", the Managing Director of Tata Steel Special Economic Zone Limited, Manikanta Naik, said.

"The ongoing rapid industrialisation of Odisha, which includes large clusters like GIP, is also offering new opportunities to dedicate our infrastructure and expertise to create a decarbonised future," Naik said.

He said the GIP by leveraging global best practices and innovative partnerships, aims to contribute significantly to India's clean energy targets.

"We expect a few more projects of similar nature to come up in GIP

shortly," he said.

Stating that around 25 per cent of GIP's available land has been earmarked for green hydrogen/ammonia and renewable energy sectors, Naik said, "The GIP has also signed land leasing and blocking agreements with multiple green hydrogen players, facilitating a total capacity of more than 2 million tonnes per annum of green ammonia with an estimated multi-phased investment of more than Rs 27,000 crore..

With these investments in place, GIP will be able to contribute around 10 per cent of India's green hydrogen/ammonia production target by 2030 under the National Green Hydrogen Mission, he said.

GIP's infrastructure master plan has several key components, including a 2.5 km long, 60 m wide exclusive utility corridor connecting GIP to Gopalpur Port to ensure secured and efficient transportation of green ammonia for global exports, he added. (PTI)

Conid. from Page 1...

## Border pillars to be erected

parts of Kamrup and Golapara districts in the downstream areas.

Assam and Meghalaya have a longstanding dispute in 12 areas along the 884.9-km-long inter-state border. The two states had signed an agreement in March 2022 in the presence of Union Home Minister Amit Shah in New Delhi towards ending the disputes in six areas. Out of 36.79 sq km of disputed areas taken up for settlement in the first phase at six places, Assam got 18.46 sq km and Meghalaya received 18.33 sq km. Meghalaya was carved out of Assam in 1972 and had since then challenged the Assam Reorganisation Act, 1971, which is recognised by Assam as its border. (PTI)

## State flood situation critical;

the danger level. The Barak is flowing above the danger mark at Badarpur Ghat, while its tributary Kushiya at Sribhumi and Katakhal in Matizuri are also flowing above the danger mark, ASDMA said. The situation is likely to worsen for the people living in low-lying and river bank areas due to continued heavy rainfall in the state and neighbouring areas, chief minister Himanta Biswa Sarma cautioned on Sunday evening.

Union Home Minister Amit Shah dialled Sarma to take stock of the situation and assured of all possible assistance, as multiple agencies remained engaged in rescue and relief operations. Fourteen stranded people were evacuated by an IAF helicopter from the Assam-Arunachal Pradesh border. Road, railway and ferry services have been hit in different parts as most parts of the state continued receiving rain over the past few days. (PTI)

## Himanta takes stock of flood

project, which was affected by the overflowing Ranganadi River, and directed the relevant department to take necessary actions. While engaging with flood-affected people, he stated that the state government would provide all possible assistance. Additionally, he visited the eroded section of the Barbila embankment and instructed the Water Resources Department to take measures to prevent further erosion.

Earlier, Sarma held a meeting with NEEPCO officials of the Ranganadi Power Plant to discuss water release procedures, technical protocols, coordination with district administration, and prior public notifications. He reviewed NEEPCO's water release procedures and instructed that water be released gradually in phases rather than all at once.

He emphasized addressing technical aspects and directed officials to maintain coordination with the district administration for timely public alerts. It may be noted that this year's floods have submerged 129 villages across five revenue circles in Lakhimpur district, affecting 46,687 people. Additionally, 454.82 hectares of agricultural land and 22,871 livestock have been impacted. The administration has opened three relief camps sheltering 425 people and established 49 relief distribution centres. For rescue operations, one NDRF team and four SDRF teams have been deployed.

## Petitioner directed to approach

of legal remedies," the plea claimed. It referred to news reports, including one about a retired school teacher who was allegedly "pushed back" into Bangladesh. "These instances reflect a growing pattern of deportations conducted by the Assam Police and administrative machinery through informal 'push back' mechanisms, without any judicial oversight or adherence to the safeguards envisaged by the Constitution of India or this court," it claimed. "The 'push back' policy, as implemented, violates Articles 14 and 21 of the Constitution by deporting individuals without due process, thereby denying them the opportunity to contest their deportation and infringing upon their right to life and personal liberty," the plea claimed. It alleged that the indiscriminate application of deportation directives, coupled with absence of proper identification, verification and notice mechanisms, has resulted in a situation where Indian citizens were being wrongfully incarcerated and threatened with removal to foreign territories without lawful basis. The plea sought a direction that no person shall be deported pursuant to the February 4 order without a prior reasoned declaration by the foreigners tribunal, without adequate opportunity of appeal or review and verification of nationality by the Ministry of External Affairs. It also sought a declaration that the "push back" policy adopted by Assam was violative of Articles 14 (equality before law) and 21 (protection of life and personal liberty) of the Constitution and contrary to binding judicial precedents. (PTI)

## Over 20,000 people affected

and Urban Affairs regarding preparedness to tackle the ongoing crisis. The meeting was attended by Assistant Commissioner Surabhi Srivastava, Moran circle officer Queen Gogoi, Tingkhong circle officer Dr Upasana Duorah, and other departmental officials.

Following the meeting, the two senior officers visited the relief camp at No. 2 Bogibeel Lower Primary School, interacted with inmates, and reviewed conditions on the ground. They also inspected the model flood relief camp at Lezai Higher Secondary School and evaluated available facilities including clean drinking water, separate rooms for men and women, sanitation, medical aid, and child-friendly spaces.

## Assam launches 'Gaja Mitra' to

"With over 5,700 elephants currently residing in Assam and human encroachment steadily increasing, officials warn that such confrontations are becoming unavoidable unless immediate action is taken," he added.

Gaja Mitra represents a timely and much-needed response—blending conservation, innovation, and grassroots engagement to shift the narrative from confrontation to coexistence.

## 'Water and blood cannot flow

It said the delegation also interacted with Deputy Minister of Unity YB Saraswathy Kandasami during the meeting with Parti Keadilan Rakyat. The delegation underscored the country's principled and uncompromising stance of zero tolerance towards terrorism in all its forms and manifestations, a statement said. In an interaction with the Indian diaspora here, the delegation conveyed India's resolute stance against cross-border terrorism and emphasised that Operation Sindoor was a demonstration of India's right to respond, pre-empt, and deter future terrorist attacks. Diaspora members, including voices from the Malaysian Indian Muslim community, unequivocally condemned terrorism, the statement said.

The delegation also visited the Ramakrishna Mission in Kuala Lumpur and paid floral tributes to the statue of Swami Vivekananda. It also visited the Panchavati prayer hall and the Nivedita House. The team also interacted with a 15-member delegation of the National Defence College (NDC), New Delhi, which is currently undertaking a foreign country study tour to Malaysia, it said. The team also visited Torana Gate, a gift from the people of India to Malaysia, which was inaugurated during Prime Minister Narendra Modi's visit to the country in 2015. The Torana Gate in Little India, Kuala Lumpur, symbolises the unity and stands as a mark of strong and continued friendship between India and Malaysia, the embassy said.

Apart from Jha, the delegation includes MPs Aparajita Sarangi, Abhishek Banerjee, Brij Lal, John Brittas, Pradan Baruah, Hemang Joshi, former external affairs minister Salman Khurshid, and former ambassador Mohan Kumar. The delegation to Malaysia is one of the seven multi-party delegations India has tasked to visit 33 global capitals to reach out to the international community to emphasise Pakistan's links to terrorism.

Tensions between India and Pakistan escalated after the Pahalgam attack, which claimed 26 lives. India carried out precision strikes on terror infrastructure in Pakistan and Pakistan-occupied Kashmir in the early hours of May 7, following which Pakistan attempted to attack Indian military bases on May 8, 9, and 10. The Indian side responded strongly to the Pakistani actions. The on-ground hostilities ended with an understanding of stopping the military actions following talks between the directors general of military operations of both sides on May 10. (PTI)

## Indore couple missing in M'laya

left for Meghalaya on May 20. As per Meghalaya police, the couple had arrived in Mawlakhat village on May 22 on a rented scooter. They trekked over 3,000 steps down a gorge to visit the famous 'living roots' bridges in Nongriat village, where they stayed the night in a homestay. On May 24, their scooter was found abandoned outside a cafe along the road from Shillong to Sohra, as per police.

Heavy rainfall, landslides and low visibility have been major challenges for the rescue teams, armed with drones, in the last few days, as per police in the north eastern state. Madhya Pradesh MPs Shankar Lalwani and Sumer Singh Solanki had earlier reviewed the rescue operations with Meghalaya DGP I Nongrang and Chief Secretary D P Wahlang, officials said.

Earlier, the deceased's brother Sachin Raghuvanshi had claimed the couple may have been kidnapped and had urged the use of the army to trace them. He had told reporters here that local hotel staff guides and those renting out two-wheelers in the north eastern state may be involved in the disappearance. (PTI)

## MakeMyTrip introduces predictive 'Seat Availability Forecast' to assist train travellers

**HT Bureau**

**GUWAHATI, June 2:** Online travel platform MakeMyTrip has rolled out a new feature, 'Seat Availability Forecast', aimed at easing the travel planning process for Indian railway passengers. The tool leverages historical booking data and real-time demand analytics to predict how long seats on a selected train are likely to remain available, helping users book more strategically.

According to an official statement from the company, the feature is intended to address a key challenge faced by many travellers: the unpredictability of confirmed ticket availability. While train bookings in India open 60 days in advance, a significant number of passengers confirm their travel plans much later—often leading to the booking of waitlisted tickets. MakeMyTrip's internal data suggests that nearly 40% of users engage in multiple booking sessions, and of those, around 70% eventually settle for waitlisted seats due to declining availability. With booking patterns fluctuating weekly, the window for confirmed reservations remains inconsistent.

In April, most high-speed trains were sold out around 13 days prior to departure, while by May, increasing demand pushed that figure to over 20 days. The new feature aims to bring greater predictability to this process. Commenting on the launch, Rajesh Magow, Co-founder and Group CEO of MakeMyTrip, said, "We are focussed on our mission to anticipate and address the nuanced needs of Indian rail passengers. Seat Availability Forecast is a result of that effort, rooted in data science, built to be seamless, and designed to solve a real planning challenge for millions of users."

## Sensex, Nifty end lower as renewed global trade concerns weigh on sentiments

**MUMBAI, June 2:** Benchmark equity indices Sensex and Nifty on Monday ended marginally lower, following sluggish trends in global markets amid renewed global trade concerns.

Besides, the Russian-Ukraine conflict, sharp jump in Brent crude oil prices and foreign fund outflows dented investors' sentiment, experts noted.

After tumbling 796.75 points or 0.97 per cent to 80,654.26 in intraday trade, the 30-share BSE Sensex witnessed volatile trends and later ended 77.26 points or 0.09 per cent lower at 81,373.75.

The NSE Nifty dipped 34.10 points or 0.14 per cent to settle at 24,716.60. During the day, it dropped 224.55 points or 0.90 per cent to 24,526.15.

"Benchmark indices closed lower with marginal losses in a volatile start to June. Markets started the week on a cautious, range-bound note, with Nifty-50 sharply lower at open on fresh trade tensions after the US announced the doubling of steel and aluminium tariffs to 50 per cent. Despite positive domestic cues after surprisingly strong GDP growth in the January-March 2025 quarter, markets were dragged lower in the morning on worsening global headlines ranging from trade to war.

"US and China traded barbs with each other over the weekend while Russia Ukraine conflict worsened after drone attacks. Markets soon staged a strong recovery erasing the sharp morning losses, as investors look forward to RBI meet and widely expected rate cut," Satish Chandra Aluri, Analyst, Lemonn Markets Desk, said.

From the Sensex firms, Tech Mahindra, Tata Steel, Tata Motors, Titan, HDFC Bank, IndusInd

Bank, Infosys and Kotak Mahindra Bank were among the biggest laggards.

On the other hand, Adani Ports, Mahindra & Mahindra, Power Grid, Eternal and Hindustan Unilever were among the gainers.

The BSE midcap gauge jumped 0.58 per cent and smallcap index went up by 0.36 per cent.

Among sectoral indices, BSE Focused IT dropped 0.70 per cent, metal (0.58 per cent), teck (0.45 per cent), consumer durables (0.40 per cent), commodities (0.18 per cent) and oil & gas (0.13 per cent). Realty surged 2.38 per cent, services (1.20 per cent), FMCG (0.65 per cent), utilities (0.57 per cent) and power (0.35 per cent).

In Asian markets, Japan's Nikkei and Hong Kong's Hang Seng settled lower, while South Korea's Kospi ended in positive territory. Markets in China were closed for a holiday. European markets were trading lower in mid-session deals. US markets ended on a mixed note on Friday.

Foreign Institutional Investors (FIIs) offloaded equities worth ₹ 6,449.74 crore on Friday, according to exchange data. US President Donald Trump on Friday said he would double tariffs on steel and aluminium to 50 per cent. "The domestic market continued its consolidation phase for the third consecutive week, influenced by renewed concerns over a potential tariff war and escalating geopolitical tensions between Russia and Ukraine.

"While global uncertainties have led investors to adopt a risk-averse approach, the Indian market has demonstrated resilience, underpinned by robust institutional inflows and selective sectoral strength like FMCG, real estate, and financial stocks," Vinod Nair, Head of Research, Geojit Investments Limited, said.

Meanwhile, India's manufacturing sector growth fell to a three-month low in May, restricted by inflationary pressures, softer demand and heightened geopolitical conditions, a monthly survey said on Monday.

The seasonally adjusted HSBC India Manufacturing Purchasing Managers' Index (PMI) fell from 58.2 in April to 57.6 in May, highlighting the weakest improvement in operating conditions since February.

Supportive domestic macro indicators include a potential RBI rate cut, a better monsoon, Q4 GDP data and better GST collection, Nair added.

Indian economy expanded at a faster pace than expected in the last quarter of the 2024-25 fiscal, helping clock a 6.5 per cent growth rate in the year that elevated its size to USD 3.9 trillion and held promise of crossing the world's fourth-largest economy Japan in FY26.

The Indian economy grew at 7.4 per cent in January-March - the fourth and final quarter of April 2024 to March 2025 fiscal (FY25) - reflecting a strong cyclical rebound that was helped by a rise in private consumption and robust growth in construction and manufacturing.

Gross GST collections remained above the ₹ 2 trillion mark for the second straight month, rising 16.4 per cent in May to over ₹ 2.01 lakh crore. Global oil benchmark Brent crude jumped 3.28 per cent to USD 64.84 a barrel.

On Friday, the BSE Sensex declined by 182.01 points or 0.22 per cent to settle at 81,451.01. The Nifty dipped 82.90 points or 0.33 per cent to 24,750.70. (PTI)

## Legrand India launches 22<sup>nd</sup> Innoval experience centre in Guwahati

**HT Bureau**

**GUWAHATI, June 2:** Legrand India, a leading global specialist in electrical and digital building infrastructure, has launched its 22nd Innoval Experience Centre in Guwahati, further strengthening its presence in the fast-growing Northeast market.

The centre brings together Legrand's full portfolio of advanced electrical and digital solutions, including its latest connected technologies and smart automation systems.

According to an official release, the Guwahati Innoval Experience Centre is designed to serve as both a product showcase and a knowledge hub, providing immersive, real-time demonstrations of solutions spanning user interface, electrical infrastructure, digital building systems, and cable management.

It also marks the introduction of the first KNX-controlled experiential centre in the region.

Part of a global initiative, Innoval centres have been established in countries such as France,



Greece, Brazil, and the UAE.

In India, Guwahati becomes the latest addition following launches in cities like Mumbai, Delhi, Chennai, Hyderabad, Kolkata, and Lucknow.

This expansion reflects Legrand's commitment to enhancing regional accessibility to its products and technical support.

"Innoval Guwahati offers an interactive space for customers and partners to explore our latest inno-

vations," said Tony Berland, CEO & Managing Director, Group Legrand India. "It enables real-time demonstrations and fosters collaboration, helping stakeholders make informed decisions for modern residential and commercial applications. Guwahati is a key strategic market in the Northeast, and this centre reaffirms our long-term investment in the region," he added.

Designed around the concept of 'Designeering', the facility com-

bines technical detail with intuitive displays, enabling easier understanding of complex solutions.

It features interactive setups, automated displays, and educational infographics that cater to a diverse audience—from developers and architects to system integrators and students.

Beyond showcasing products, the centre also serves as a training platform to upskill professionals in the electrical ecosystem.

With the industry witnessing rapid technological advancements, the space aims to promote hands-on learning and foster knowledge-sharing among partners.

Satpal Singh, Sales Director, Group Legrand India, noted that the Guwahati centre not only helps deepen market penetration in Eastern India but also serves as a gateway to connect with customers across the broader Northeastern region. The launch underscores Legrand India's continued commitment to innovation, regional engagement, and the development of smarter, more efficient infrastructure solutions across India.



# Health minister Ashok Singhal reviews departmental performance

*Issues key directives to strengthen services in flood-affected areas*

**HT Bureau**

**GUWAHATI, June 2:** Health and Family Welfare Minister Ashok Singhal on Monday reviewed the functioning of the Health and Family Welfare Department during a meeting held at the National Health Mission office in Guwahati.

The meeting was attended by senior officials including Commissioner & Secretaries P Ashok Babu and Barnali Sharma, Commissioner & Secretary of Medical Education and Research Dr Siddharth Singh, Director of Health Services Dr Umesh Phangcho, Director of Health Services (Family Welfare) Kamaljit Talukdar and Executive Director of the National Health Mission, Assam, Dr Manoj Choudhury.

The meeting reviewed various aspects of the department's work, including implementation of schemes, infrastructure development and the delivery of health services, particularly in flood-affected areas.

Minister Singhal emphasized the need for continuous health check-ups and timely distribution of essential medicines in relief shelters. He instructed doctors, nurses and health workers to remain fully



alert to tackle the rise in waterborne and other infectious diseases during and after the floods.

He also reviewed the department's efforts to control the spread of malaria in the Indo-Bhutan border areas of Kokrajhar and Chirang districts.

During the meeting, the Minister identified several priority areas and issued directions for immediate action.

He directed the department to establish a Fast Referral Unit (FRU) in each Assembly constituency to provide maternal, pediatric and emergency health services.

He also instructed the Director of Ayush, Assam, to arrange regular yoga training sessions at every Ayushman Aranya Mandir as part of the Fit India Movement and to encourage community participation in health awareness initia-

tives.

Minister Singhal stressed the importance of fully digitizing the administrative and information systems of the department to enhance efficiency and transparency. He asked officials to ensure the availability of essential medicines in every government hospital across the state.

Additionally, he directed the department to conduct regular training and personality development programs for doctors, nurses, ASHA workers and all healthcare staff to improve the quality of service delivery.

The meeting also included a detailed review of the current status of blood banks in the state, the progress of Ayushman Bharat-Pradhan Mantri Jan Arogya Yojana (AB-PMJAY) and Ayushman Assam-Mukhya Mantri Jan Arogya Yojana (AA-MMJAY) and precautionary measures to be taken in light of the recent rise in COVID-19 infections.

Minister Singhal emphasized the need for a proactive and people-centric approach in delivering healthcare services, especially in times of crisis like the ongoing floods.

## Margherita admin intensifies flood relief and rehabilitation operations

**HT Correspondent**

**MARGHERITA, June 2:** In the wake of severe floods impacting more than 15 villages under the Margherita Revenue Circle, the Margherita Co-District Administration, in close coordination with the Tinsukia District Administration, has launched and sustained a comprehensive relief and rehabilitation mission to support affected communities.

As of now, 21 relief camps have been established across the affected areas, providing temporary shelter and essential supplies to displaced families. "Relief materials, including food, drinking water, and basic necessities, have been adequately supplied to all camps to ensure immediate sustenance," officials confirmed.

To support the nutritional needs of children, the ICDS Project Margherita has been actively distributing nutritional food supplements, with dedicated Anganwadi workers ensuring timely and adequate coverage.

In an effort to safeguard public health and hygiene, the Public Health Engineering Department (PHED) has installed temporary toilets and is distributing bleaching powder in flood-affected areas to prevent the outbreak of waterborne diseases.

Medical teams from the Margherita Urban Primary Health Centre (UPHC) and Ketetong Block Primary Health Centre (BPHC) are conducting regular health camps in the relief sites. These teams are monitoring health conditions, offering immediate medical assistance, and helping mitigate the risks of communicable diseases during this emergency.



In recognition of the needs of livestock owners, animal fodder has already been distributed in over 12 villages, with distribution ongoing to ensure comprehensive coverage.

Circle Officer of Margherita, along with assigned Magistrates and Land Revenue Assistants (LRAs), are carrying out on-site visits to the camps to supervise operations, ensure the efficient delivery of services, and interact directly with affected residents.

The administration also acknowledged the crucial role played by gaon pradhans, police personnel, and local volunteers, who have been working round-the-clock to support operations, provide logistics assistance, and maintain public order.

According to the latest bulletin from the Water Resources Department, the water levels of both the Buridihing and Tirap rivers are receding, providing a positive outlook and raising hope for a return to normalcy in the days ahead. The district administration assures that all necessary steps will continue to be taken to support the affected population and restore livelihoods and infrastructure in the aftermath of the floods.

## Minor boy drowns in Jamuna River at Manja

**HT Bureau**

**DIPHU, June 2:** In a heartbreaking incident, a minor boy drowned in the Jamuna River at Manja, Karbi Anglong, on Sunday afternoon. The child's body, which had gone missing, was recovered today (June 2) after a tireless search operation.

The rescue effort was jointly carried out by the State Disaster Response Force (SDRF), Kuki Students' Organisation (Manja Unit), and the Kuki Colony Village Authority.

As per reports, the child was at the riverbank with his mother when he accidentally slipped into the water. In a desperate attempt to save him, the mother also entered the river but was unable to rescue her son. She narrowly escaped drowning and was saved by a local youth, Thangminhao Lhouvum, son of Pastor Thangkhojjang Lhouvum.

The mother is currently undergoing treatment at the Diphu Medical College & Hospital (DMC&H) in Karbi Anglong.

The tragic incident has cast a pall of grief over the community, and local leaders have extended their condolences to the bereaved family.

## Massive crowd welcomes Gaurav Gogoi in Morigaon

**HT Correspondent**

**MORIGAON, June 2:** In a show of strength and renewed enthusiasm, over 10,000 Congress supporters welcomed newly appointed Assam Pradesh Congress Committee (APCC) President Gaurav Gogoi during his visit to Morigaon on Monday.

Gogoi, on his maiden visit to the district after assuming charge, was given a grand reception by the Morigaon District Congress Committee, led by Ramesh Ch. Bordoloi and senior party leader Sachin Mohan Biswas. Traditional Bihu and Tiwa dance performances at Morigaon Police Point set a vibrant tone for the occasion, celebrating the leader's arrival.

Earlier in the day, the APCC President was greeted by Congress workers at Barapujia, from where a massive rally—comprising thousands of supporters—escorted him to Morigaon town.

Upon arrival, Gaurav Gogoi paid a courtesy visit to the family of former MLA late Jununali Barua at her residence, offering his respects and acknowledging her contributions to the party and the region.

Speaking to media persons, Gogoi expressed his heartfelt gratitude for the overwhelming response.



"I didn't expect such a large turnout, especially considering the bad weather conditions. The people's participation is a positive sign for the Congress party," said Gogoi. "I am committed to strengthening the party's organizational structure starting from the grassroots. Reviving and energizing the base is essential."

He was accompanied by APCC spokesperson Imdad Hussain and several other senior leaders during the visit.

Chants and slogans in support of the new APCC President echoed through the streets, as party workers and citizens of Morigaon enthusiastically rallied to mark the occasion, reflecting hopes for a renewed push for Congress in Assam's political landscape.

## Mass protest erupts in Margherita over suspension of coal workers

**HT Correspondent**

**MARGHERITA, June 2:** In a powerful show of solidarity and outrage, hundreds of coal workers from North Eastern Coalfields (NECL) Margherita and ANE Mining Private Limited staged a mass protest on Saturday morning at the Tikak weight bridge area, voicing strong opposition to a controversial directive allegedly issued by ANE Mining Pvt. Ltd. to suspend contract-based workers effective June 1.

The announcement has sparked widespread panic and anger among the more than 400 affected employees and has raised alarm bells across the local business community.

According to Pallav Shyam Wailung, General Secretary and Spokesperson of the Tirap Autonomous District Council Demand Committee, the abrupt suspension not only jeopardizes livelihoods but also threatens to destabilize the entire socio-economic fabric of Margherita region, which heavily relies on coal operations for survival.

"A few years ago, six major collieries—Bargolai, Tikak East and West, Ledo OCP, Tirap, and Tipong—were operational under NEC CIL. Over time, due to environmental and other concerns, only Tikak East Colliery (Expansion) remained functional. Now, even that has come under threat," said Wailung.

He lamented that the 200-year-old Northeast Coalfields (a subsidiary of Coal India Ltd.), once a symbol of industrial legacy in Assam, has

been reduced to ruins due to mismanagement and lack of long-term vision.

"NEC is not just a company. It is a lifeline for Margherita. From rickshaw pullers to shopkeepers, from educational institutions to hospitals, everyone is connected. Shutting down coal production is not just shutting jobs—it's shutting down lives," he said.

Wailung drew a sharp contrast between colonial-era governance and the present-day handling of the coal industry.

"The White Sahabs (British-era officials) laid the foundation of industrial growth here. The Black Sahabs (modern-day officials), instead of strengthening it, have looted, exploited, and destroyed this legacy. This is not an accusation; it's a lived reality," he remarked.

The closure of all six collieries under NEC CIL has triggered grave concerns, especially given their contributions to local CSR initiatives—supplying electricity and water, operating the VKV School in Bargolai, running the Central Hospital in Margherita, and constructing public infrastructure like latrines and toilets.

"We are now entering dark days in the Margherita region," Wailung warned, referring to the current industrial stagnation.

The Tirap Autonomous District Council Demand Committee has called for the immediate reopening of Tikak East, Tikak West, and Tirap Collieries, utilizing the existing dumping grounds to resume operations.

## Cattle feed distributed

**HT Bureau**

**GUWAHATI, June 2:** In response to the recent floods, the Kamrup district administration distributed approximately 700 quintals of cattle feed across 10 flood-affected villages under the Jalukbari Legislative Assembly constituency. The affected villages include Dharapur, Majirgaon, Kendukuchi, Agchia, Garal, and Mirzapur.

The cattle feed distribution drive saw the presence of Jibon Krishna Goswami, Sub-Divisional Officer (Civil) of Jalukbari, along with Apratim Goswami, Circle Officer of Azara Revenue Circle, and Ranjit Bhattacharya, General Secretary of the BJP's State Kisan Morcha. Several government officials and local residents also participated in the initiative.

## CEM Boro chairs 43rd executive council meeting of BTC

**HT Bureau**

**KOKRAJHAR, June 2:** The 43rd Executive Council (EC) meeting of the Bodoland Territorial Council (BTC) was held on Monday at the BTC Secretariat Conference Hall, Bodofa Nwgr, Kokrajhar. The meeting was chaired by BTR Chief Executive Member (CEM) Pramod Boro.

The session focused on expediting the implementation of government schemes, strengthening public service delivery, and promoting inclusive and holistic development across the Bodoland Territorial Region (BTR).

Senior members of the Executive Council and heads of various departments attended the meeting, which featured a comprehensive review of ongoing projects and deliberations on strategic measures to ensure effective governance.

Speaking after the meeting, CEM Pramod Boro stated: "I'm delighted to have chaired the Executive Council meeting at the BTC Secretariat today. The meeting emphasized accelerating the pace of scheme implementation, enhancing delivery of public services, and driving the holistic development of the BTR."

He also underscored the importance of coordination among departments and timely execution to fulfill the aspirations of the region's people.

The meeting reaffirmed the Council's commitment to good governance, transparency, and people-centric development across the BTC-administered areas.

## Prof Amarjyoti Choudhury to lead Dr Bhupen Hazarika Centre for Creativity at RGU

*The Centre is envisioned as a beacon for cross disciplinary creativity, inspired by the values and legacy of the cultural titan*

**HT Bureau**

**GUWAHATI, June 2:** In a historic and emotionally resonant announcement that bridges the past and the future, The Assam Royal Global University on Monday proudly welcomed Amarjyoti Choudhury,

renowned scholar, scientist, artist and visionary thinker as Emeritus Prof and Chair of the newly instituted 'Dr Bhupen Hazarika Centre for Creativity'.

The significance of the occasion was deeply amplified by Prof. Amarjyoti Choudhury's heartfelt recitation of "Eta Gaan Xex Hol," a moving tribute to Dr. Bhupen Hazarika.

Addressing the gathering, Amarjyoti Choudhury said, "I am humbled and inspired to lead a Centre that bears the name of one of our greatest cultural voices—Bhupen Hazarika."

To awaken creativity in all its forms and make education speak the language of the heart and creativity, that is our calling now."

Speaking on the occasion, Mr PJ Baruah, writer and former Editor, The Assam Tribune said that the Dr Bhupen Hazarika Centre for Creativity will serve as a vibrant crucible for innovation and imagination, weaving together music, art, culture, literature, science, philosophy, social ideologies and sustainability.

The Centre's core philosophy is simple but powerful: creativity must reach the soul of society to spark true transformation. AK Pansari, Chancellor of Assam Royal Global University stated, "Prof. Choudhury who stands tall among the rare minds to seamlessly bridge the domains of science, literature, philosophy and the arts, brings with him an unmatched depth of experience and insight. His accept-

ance of this pivotal role is a profound moment for the University and the larger cultural fabric of Assam."

In his address, Alak Kumar Buragohain, Chairperson, (Academic) RGU stated, "The beginning of the Dr Bhupen Hazarika Centre for Creativity and the appointment of Dr Amarjyoti Choudhury reaffirm RGU's commitment to nurturing liberal art education that is rooted in society and elevated by imagination, creativity and critical thinking."

"The centre is envisioned as a beacon for cross disciplinary creativity, inspired by the values and legacy of the cultural titan, Dr Bhupen Hazarika," he added.

In a special note of endorsement, music legend and cultural icon Lou Majaw expressed his delight at the development.

"Dr Amarjyoti Choudhury and Bhupen Hazarika...what a combination! One sang with the sky in his voice, the other walks with poetry in his mind. The centre is going to light up the spirit of the youth like never before," said Lou Majaw in his landmark lyrical style.

As Assam and the world prepare to celebrate the birth centenary of Dr Bhupen Hazarika, this initiative brings the university ever closer to society, echoing the bard's own mission of blending intellect with empathy, knowledge with melody, and education with expression within the larger framework of Dr Hazarika's humanism.

The university extends its heartfelt gratitude to Choudhury for taking on this meaningful journey and invites students, artists, thinkers and dreamers to be part of this new chapter, where creativity becomes both compass and companion.

## AASAA stages protest in Dibrugarh over various demands

**HT Correspondent**

**DIBRUGARH, June 2:** The All Adivasi Students' Association of Assam (AASAA) held a sit-in protest at Chowkidinghee in Dibrugarh on Monday advocating for longstanding issues related to the rights and welfare of Adivasi communities in Assam.

The demonstrators called for several key demands, including recognition of Scheduled Tribe (ST) status, fair wages for tea garden workers, land rights, and healthcare benefits for retired tea workers.

The protesters urged the immediate recognition of Adivasi communities in the state including the Oraon, Munda, Santhal, Kharia, and Garh on the Scheduled Tribes (ST) list.

Furthermore, the organisation called for the issuance of Other Backward Class (OBC) certificates to Tea Tribes using the designation "Adivasi," instead of the broad term "Tea Tribes," asserting that the generic label undermines the unique identities of individual tribal communities.

Another prominent demand focused on raising the minimum daily wage for tea garden workers to Rs 550. The protesters noted that the last increase in minimum wages occurred in 2016, with workers receiving only temporary wage hikes since then.

AASAA also sought land pattas for Adivasis who have lived on surplus ceiling land, government land, and forest areas for generations.

Moreover, AASAA called for healthcare benefits for retired tea workers, including lifelong free medical care and transportation, placing the responsibility on tea garden management.

After the demonstration, AASAA submitted a formal memorandum containing their demands to Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma through Dibrugarh District Commissioner Bikram Kairi.

Discipline of Political Science of Krishna Kanta Handiqui State Open University (KKHSOU), Guwahati, organised a seminar titled "Constitution of India – Defender of Democracy" at the University's City Office, Khanapara on May 29.

The event was held to celebrate 75 years of the Indian Constitution under the banner of Samvidhan Ka Amrit Mahotsav.

At the outset, Abhijit Bhuyan, the seminar coordinator, outlined the seminar's objectives, linking it to a national initiative by the Government.

Professor Joydeep Baruah, Director of Surya Kumar Bhuyan School of Social Sciences, KKHSOU delivered the welcome address wherein he emphasized that the Constitution envisioned political equality as a pathway to social and economic justice, assigning liberal democratic rights to individuals on the one hand and socio-economic responsibilities to the state through the Directive Principles of State Policy on the

other.

Citing Ambedkar, he called for renewed engagement with the Constitution's foundational commitment to true equality.

The keynote speaker of the seminar was Professor Shantanu Chakravarty, Dean, Humanities and Social Sciences and Head of the Department of Political Science at Girijananda Choudhury University.

In his keynote address, Professor Chakravarty praised the Constitution's enduring role in sustaining democracy in a diverse and unequal society.

He discussed key constitutional features such as Fundamental Rights, Directive Principles, federalism, secularism, linguistic and cultural inclusivity, and judicial review as pillars of democratic resilience.

Significantly, the seminar carried a segment for paper presenta-



tions by KKHSOU doctoral scholars on themes like Fundamental Rights, Directive Principles, federalism, and the Sixth Schedule.

In his presidential address, Vice Chancellor of KKHSOU, Professor Rajendra Prasad Das emphasized the importance of organizing such an event and appreciated the Government's initiative to celebrate the historic milestone of 75 years of the Constitution.

He highlighted the value of such commemorative efforts in sensitizing people, especially the youth, about the Constitution.

The Vice Chancellor noted that beyond remembering a historic document, events like this reaffirm our collective commitment to the core democratic ideals of liberty, equality, justice, and fraternity.

The seminar which saw the participation of faculty members, officials, research scholars and staff members of the University, concluded with a formal vote of thanks delivered by Dr. Jahnavi Devi, Assistant Professor (Political Science) at KKHSOU.

**CONSTRUCTION OF GOODS CIRCULATING AREA, APPROACH ROAD ETC.**

**Tender Notice No.: SCL/Engg/45 of 2025, Dated: 26-05-2025.**  
E-Tender are invited by the undersigned for the following work: **Brief Description of Item** : Construction of Goods circulating area, Approach Road, Merchant Room and Labour shed at Bhanga goods yard under ADEN/Karimganj.

**Tender Value:** ₹14,06,62,167.43/-  
**Earnest Money:** ₹8,53,300/-  
Date & time of closing of above tender at 15:00 hrs. on **23-06-2025** and opening at 15:00 hrs. on **24-06-2025**. The complete information with the tender document of above e-tender will be available up to 15:00 hrs. on **23-06-2025** in the website **www.ireps.gov.in**

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



## QUOTE OF THE DAY

*If you want a thing done well, do it yourself  
- Napoleon Bonaparte*

## Kerala oil spill disaster

Keralites woke up on May 24 last to the horrifying news of a Liberian-flagged cargo ship, MSC Elsa 3, sinking just 27 km away from the State's coast, spilling hazardous cargo of calcium carbide, diesel and furnace oil. The 184-metre-long container vessel had sailed from the Vizhinjam port near Thiruvananthapuram on May 23 for Kochi, with entry and docking scheduled for Saturday. It developed what was described as significant 'list', a technical term for a sideways tilt - towards the starboard side en route to Kochi. Apart from a Dornier aircraft, Coast Guard fast petrol vessel, Arnavesh, two merchant ships in the vicinity - MV Han Yi and MSC Silver 2 - participated in the rescue operation. INS Sujatha joined the operation on Sunday. While the scale of leakage is being assessed, experts are of the view that its impact can cause serious damage to sensitive marine eco-systems. It could also disrupt fishing activities, affecting fishermen in coastal regions. Marine productivity, especially during the monsoon - a crucial period for pelagic fish breeding and growth - is also under serious threat. MSC Elsa 3, 28 years of age, reportedly had on board 640 containers, triggering speculation about its being overweight and the vessel being un-portworthy. Some containers have been washed ashore. But the extent of damage must await a detailed inspection.

Preliminary reports say that there has been significant oil leak from the vessel. A statewide alert has been issued. Fishers have been advised against venturing into the sea. Fishing activities are strictly prohibited within a 20-nautical-mile radius of the sunken vessel. According to an official advisory, the leaking fuel was drifting at a speed of approximately 3kmp/h, posing serious environmental and navigational threats. A Dornier aircraft which sprays dispersant to break up the oil has been deployed. The Director-General of Coast Guard, who heads the National Oil Spill Disaster Contingency Plan, is directly overseeing the response efforts. Removing oil spills from sea is difficult even under normal circumstances and in calm waters. But quick damage-control measures have been initiated. Indian Navy vessel INS Sujatha managed to rescue three crew members of MSC Elsa 3, who had remained aboard to assist in salvage operations. The Kochi-based Central Marine Fisheries Research Institute (CMFRI) will conduct field surveys, collect samples and track the spill's movement. Meanwhile, the Union Government is said to be working on a proposal to fix the lifespan of vessels operating in Indian waters. The Kerala oil spill underlines the need to enhance the inspection regime to ensure that vessels operating in Indian waters comply with maritime norms. The Director-General of Shipping has voiced fears about some old vessels operating in Indian waters. He also hinted at a proposal to fix the lifespan of vessels.

Experts say old vessels can have operational problems because of outdated technology, wear and tear, and corrosion. While it is mandatory for vessels to undergo dry docking every five years to ensure seaworthiness, improper maintenance can pose challenges. If maintained properly, the lifespan of a cargo ship may extend to 30 years. However, corrosion, wear and tear of mechanical parts and absence of modern navigational equipment raise questions about their fitness.

## America's role in navigating the India-Pakistan faultline

The India-Pakistan crisis of May 2025, a 65-hour conflagration from 1 a.m. on May 7 to 5 p.m. on May 10, marked a perilous chapter in the fraught history of South Asia's nuclear-armed neighbors. Triggered by a horrific terrorist attack on April 22, 2025, in Pahalgam, Indian-administered Kashmir, which claimed 26 lives, India's retaliatory Operation Sindoor targeted alleged terrorist sites in Pakistan and Pakistan-administered Kashmir. Pakistan's response, though described as ineffectual, escalated tensions, drawing global attention to the ever-present specter of nuclear conflict. The crisis culminated in a U.S.-brokered ceasefire, announced by President Donald Trump on May 10, 2025, via his Truth Social platform: "After a long night of talks mediated by the United States, I am pleased to announce that India and Pakistan have agreed to a FULL AND IMMEDIATE CEASEFIRE." Yet, the cryptic tweet by former Indian Chief of the Army Staff, Gen. V.P. Malik, posted on the same day, posed a sobering question: "Ceasefire 10 May 25: We have left India's future history to ask what politico-strategic advantages, if any, were gained after its kinetic and non-kinetic actions post Pakistani horrific terror strike in Pahalgam on 22 April." Malik's reflection invites a deeper examination of the lessons from this brief but intense episode, revealing enduring truths about the India-Pakistan dynamic, the limits of conventional deterrence, and the evolving role of third-party back-channeling in crisis management.

The first lesson is the undeniable reality of third-party back-channeling in mitigating India-Pakistan crises. Unlike formal mediation, which involves structured arbitration with defined issues and binding resolutions, back-channeling is fluid and informal, characterized by discreet messages relayed through intermediaries to de-escalate tensions. The May 2025 crisis saw robust U.S. involvement, with Secretary of State Marco Rubio and Vice President J.D. Vance engaging senior officials, including Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Pakistani Prime Minister She-



hbaz Sharif. Rubio's statement on May 10 underscored this effort, announcing that both nations had agreed to an immediate ceasefire and to initiate talks on a "broad set of issues at a neutral site." This mirrored the 2021 ceasefire agreement, where the Directors General of Military Operations (DGMOs) committed to addressing "core issues and concerns which have the propensity to disturb peace and lead to violence." The United Arab Emirates also played a pivotal role, continuing its history of facilitating discreet talks, as seen in the 2023 ceasefire negotiations. This back-channeling, while effective in halting immediate hostilities, contrasts with India's traditional rejection of third-party mediation, particularly on Kashmir, highlighting a tension between bilateral rhetoric and the practical necessity of external intervention.

The second lesson concerns the intrinsic limitations of conventional deterrence against semi-state actors. India's Operation Sindoor, launched on May 7, 2025, aimed to dismantle terrorist infrastructure linked to groups like Lashkar-e-Taiba, which India accused of orchestrating the Pahalgam attack. The operation, backed by advanced weaponry like the BrahMos missile, sought to project strength and deter future attacks. However, Pakistan's retaliatory strikes, including the downing of Indian aircraft, exposed the vulnerabilities of such strategies. Pakistan claimed its response restored conventional deterrence, preventing India from expanding the conflict under the nuclear overhang. Yet, the question remains: can kinetic strikes deter non-state actors who operate with plausible deniability from

Pakistani soil? The unclear results of Operation Sindoor, coupled with Pakistan's unchanged support for militant groups, suggest that conventional deterrence struggles to address the root causes of terrorism, leaving the threat of future attacks unresolved.

Third, the crisis underscored Pakistan's persistent attempts to hyphenate itself with India on the global stage, a strategy that seeks to frame the two nations as equal rivals despite their economic and strategic disparities. Pakistan's military response and nuclear signaling during the crisis, including convening its National Command Authority, aimed to reassert its relevance and draw international focus to Kashmir. While India's economic rise has shifted global perceptions, Pakistan's alignment with China and its nuclear arsenal ensure it remains a strategic concern for the West. This hyphenation, though less successful than in previous decades, complicates India's efforts to isolate Pakistan diplomatically, particularly when global attention shifts from terrorism to the risks of nuclear escalation.

The fourth lesson is the absence of institutional off-ramps to de-escalate India-Pakistan crises. Unlike the Cuban Missile Crisis, which established clear red lines between nuclear powers, the May 2025 episode revealed a dangerous lack of shared strategic understanding. The 2019 Balakot crisis and the 2025 conflict both demonstrated that once escalation begins, there are few mechanisms to halt the spiral. The South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC) remains paralyzed, of-

fering no platform for regional mediation. The reliance on ad-hoc back-channeling, while effective in this instance, underscores the fragility of crisis management in a region where domestic pressures—Modi's need to project strength and Pakistan's military asserting its resolve—can override restraint.

Fifth, Pakistan's status as a strategic project of the West, despite its tactical convergence with China, remains evident. The U.S. designation of Pakistan as a Major Non-NATO Ally (MNNA), contrasted with India's lack of similar status, sends mixed signals. While the U.S. urged Pakistan to curb terrorism, its diplomatic engagement with Islamabad during the crisis, including Rubio's call to General Asim Munir on May 9, reinforced Pakistan's geopolitical relevance. China's intelligence support during the crisis, including aiding Pakistan in downing Indian aircraft, further complicated the strategic landscape, highlighting the interplay of great-power politics in South Asia.

The sixth lesson is the United States' enduring role as the principal actor in de-escalating India-Pakistan tensions. The American back-

channeling tradition, dating back to Robert Gates' 1990 mission to avert nuclear escalation, was evident in 2025. Gates' visit, prompted by intelligence about Pakistan mating nuclear weapons with delivery systems, set a precedent for U.S. intervention. Similar efforts occurred during the 1999 Kargil War, the 2001–2002 Operation Parakram, and the 2008 Mumbai attacks, where discreet diplomacy tempered Indian responses. The 2016 Uri surgical strikes also saw quiet U.S. efforts to maintain restraint. However, the 2025 crisis marked a shift: unlike earlier interventions, where mediators avoided public credit, Trump's announcement and Rubio's statement openly claimed U.S. leadership. This contrasted with India's insistence, articulated by Foreign Secretary Vikram Misri, that the ceasefire was a bilateral decision, reflecting domestic sensitivities about perceived external pressure. The distinction between back-

channeling and third-party mediation is critical. Mediation, as defined in international law, involves formalized arbitration with agreed-upon mediators resolving specific disputes. Back-channeling, as practiced in May 2025, is less structured, relying on intermediaries to convey messages and urge restraint. This informality allows flexibility but lacks the binding commitments of mediation, making it a pragmatic but imperfect tool for crisis management. India's rejection of mediation, particularly on Kashmir, stems from its view that bilateral dialogue is sufficient, yet the reliance on U.S. and UAE back-channeling suggests otherwise.

The politico-strategic outcomes of Operation Sindoor remain ambiguous, as Gen. Malik's tweet implied. India's strikes aimed to signal a "new normal" in responding to terrorism, with Modi declaring that any future attack would be treated as an act of war. However, the loss of Indian aircraft, including Rafales, and Pakistan's ability to retaliate exposed strategic limits. Diplomatically, India faced setbacks, with global attention shifting to Kashmir and Trump's mediation offer challenging India's stance against third-party involvement. Pakistan, meanwhile, bolstered its military's domestic standing and secured U.S. intervention, reinforcing its strategic relevance despite economic woes.

The May 2025 crisis reveals a volatile India-Pakistan dynamic, where nuclear risks, domestic pressures, and global interventions shape outcomes. The reliance on back-channeling, while effective in averting catastrophe, underscores the absence of durable mechanisms to prevent future escalations. As Modi navigates domestic criticism and Pakistan balances its alliances, the ceasefire remains a tactical pause, not a strategic resolution. The lessons of those 65 hours—back-channeling's necessity, deterrence's limits, Pakistan's hyphenation efforts, the lack of off-ramps, Western strategic interests, and U.S. primacy—highlight the need for sustained dialogue and regional frameworks to address the root causes of conflict, lest South Asia remain perpetually on the brink. *(The writer can be reached at dipakurmigpltd@gmail.com)*

## Agriculture sector's schemes for farmers in India

By: Diganta Barooah

Agriculture is a State subject and Government of India supports the efforts of States through appropriate policy measures, budgetary allocation and various schemes/programmes. The various schemes/programmes of the Government of India are meant for the welfare of farmers by increasing production, remunerative returns and income support to farmers. The Government has substantially enhanced the budget allocation of Department of Agriculture & Farmers' Welfare (DA&FW) from ₹ 21,933.50 crore BE during 2013-14 to ₹ 1,22,528.77 crore BE during 2024-25. Schemes/programmes initiated by DA&FW are conceptualised and implemented taken in consideration of improving the economic condition of farmers owning small handholdings, access to credit and to enhance overall income of farmers and remunerative returns in the agriculture sector. Central Sector Schemes

## Pradhan Mantri Kisan Samman Nidhi (PM-KISAN) Scheme :

PM-KISAN is a central sector scheme launched on 24th February 2019 to supplement financial needs of land holding farmers, subject to exclusions. Under the scheme, financial benefit of ₹ 6000 per year is transferred in three equal four-monthly instalments into the bank accounts of farmers' families across the country, through Direct Benefit Transfer (DBT) mode. Till now, ₹ 2.81 lakh crores have been transferred through Direct Benefit Transfer (DBT) to more than 11 crores beneficiaries (Farmers) through various instalments.

## Pradhan Mantri Kisan Maandhan Yojana (PM-KMY) :

Pradhan Mantri Kisan Maandhan Yojana (PMKMY) is a central sector scheme launched on 12th September 2019 to provide security to the most vulnerable farmer families. PM-KMY is a contributory scheme, small and marginal farmers (SMFs), subject to exclusion criteria, can opt to become member of the scheme by paying monthly subscription to the Pension Fund. Similar, amount will be contributed by the Central Government. The applicants between the age group of 18 to 40 years will have to contribute between ₹ 55 to ₹ 200 per month till they attain the age of 60. PMKMY is taking care of the farmers during their old age and provides ₹ 3,000 monthly pension to the enrolled farmers once they attain 60 years of age, subject to exclusion criteria. Life Insurance Corporation (LIC) is pension fund manager and registration of beneficiaries is done through CSC and State Govts. So far 23.38 lakh farmers have enrolled under the scheme.

## Pradhan Mantri Fasal Bima Yojana (PMFBY) :

PMFBY was launched in 2016 in order to provide a simple and affordable crop insurance product to ensure comprehensive risk cover for crops to farmers against all non-preventable natural risks from pre-sowing to post-harvest and to provide adequate claim amount. The scheme is demand driven and available for all farmers. A total of 5549.40 lakh farmer applications were insured under the scheme since 2016-17 and ₹ 1,50,589.10 crore has been paid as claim.

## Modified Interest Subvention Scheme (MISS) :

The Interest Subvention Scheme (ISS) provides concessional short term agri-loans to the farmers practicing crop husbandry and other allied activities like animal husbandry, dairying and fisheries. ISS is available to farmers availing short term crop loans up to ₹ 3.00 lakh at an interest rate of 7% per annum for one year. Additional 3% subvention is also given to the farmers for prompt and timely repayment of loans thus reducing the effective rate of interest to 4% per annum. The benefit of ISS is also available for post-harvest loans against Negotiable Warehouse Receipts (NWRs) on crop loans for a further period of six months post-harvest to small and marginal farmers having Kisan Credit Cards (KCCs), on occurrence of natural calamities and severe natural calamities. As on 5th January, 2024, 465.42 lakh new KCC applications have been sanctioned with a sanctioned credit limit of ₹ 5,69,974 crore as part of the drive.

## Agriculture Infrastructure Fund (AIF) :

In order to address the existing infrastructure gaps and mobilize investment in agriculture infrastructure, Agri Infra Fund was launched under Aatmanirbhar Bharat Package. AIF was introduced with a vision to transform the agriculture infrastructure landscape of the country. The Agriculture Infrastructure Fund is a medium - long term debt financing facility for investment in viable projects for post-harvest management infrastructure and community farming assets through interest subvention and credit guarantee support. The Fund of ₹ 1 lakh crore under the scheme will be disbursed from FY 2020-21 to FY2025-26 and the support under the scheme will be provided for the duration of FY2020-21 to FY2032-33. Under the scheme, ₹ 1 Lakh Crore will be provided by banks and financial institutions as loans with interest subvention of 3% per annum and credit guarantee coverage under CGTMSE for loans up to ₹ 2 Crores. Further, each entity is eligible to get the benefit of the scheme for up to 25 projects located in different LGD codes. Eligible beneficiaries include Farmers, Agri-entrepreneurs, Start-ups, Primary Agricultural Credit Societies (PACS), Marketing Cooperative Societies, Farmer Producers Organizations (FPOs), Self Help

Group (SHG), Joint Liability Groups (JLG), Multipurpose Cooperative Societies, Central/State agency or Local Body sponsored Public Private Partnership Projects, State Agencies, Agricultural Produce Market Committees (Mandis), National & State Federations of Cooperatives, Federations of FPOs (Farmer Produce Organizations) and Federations of Self Help Groups (SHGs). As on 31-12-2023, ₹ 33,209 Crores have been sanctioned for 44,912 projects under AIF, out of this total sanctioned amount, ₹ 25,504 Crores is covered under scheme benefits. These sanctioned projects have mobilized an investment of ₹ 56,471 Crores in agriculture sector.

## Formation &amp; Promotion of new 10,000 FPOs :

The Government of India launched the Central Sector Scheme (CSS) for "Formation and Promotion of 10,000 Farmer Producer Organizations (FPOs)" in the year 2020. The scheme has a total budgetary outlay of ₹ 6865 crores. Formation & promotion of FPOs are to be done through Implementing Agencies (IAs), which further engage Cluster Based Business Organizations (CBBOs) to form & provide professional handholding support to FPOs for a period of 5 years. FPOs get a financial assistance upto ₹ 18.00 lakh per FPO for a period of 03 years. In addition to this, provision has been made for matching equity grant upto ₹ 2,000 per farmer member of FPO with a limit of ₹ 15.00 lakh per FPO and a credit guarantee facility upto ₹ 2 crore of project loan per FPO from eligible lending institution to ensure institutional credit accessibility to FPOs. Suitable provisions have been made for training and skill development of FPOs. Further, FPOs are onboarded on National Agriculture Market (e-NAM) platform which facilitate online trading of their agricultural commodities through transparent price discovery method to enable FPOs to realize better remunerative prices for their produce. As on 31st December, 2023, total 7,774 FPOs were registered under the scheme in the country. National beekeeping and Honey Mission (NBHM) : Keeping in view the importance of beekeeping, a new Central Sector Scheme entitled National Beekeeping & Honey Mission (NBHM) was launched in 2020 under Atma Nirbhar Bharat Abhiyan for its implementation in the field for overall promotion and development of scientific beekeeping & to achieve the goal of "Sweet Revolution". Some of the achievements include;

- ✓ Honeybees/ beekeeping have been approved as 5th Input for Agriculture.
- ✓ 4 World Class State of the Art Honey Testing Labs and 35 Mini Honey Testing Labs have been sanctioned under National Beekeeping & Honey Mission (NBHM) for testing of honey.
- ✓ Madhukranti portal has been launched

for online registration of Beekeepers/ Honey Societies/ Firms/ Companies.

Till date 23 lakhs bee colonies registered on Portal.

✓ 100 Honey FPOs targeted under 10,000 FPOs scheme in the country. 88 FPOs have been registered by NAFED, NDDB & TRIFED.

✓ 25 States/UTs have been covered under NBHM under MM-I, II & III.

✓ 160 Projects sanctioned under MM- I, II & III of ₹ 202.00 crores.

## Market Intervention Scheme and Price Support Scheme (MIS-PSS) :

Ministry of Agriculture & Farmers Welfare implements the Price Support Scheme (PSS) for procurement of pulses, oilseeds and copra. Market Intervention Scheme (MIS) for procurement of agricultural and horticultural commodities which are perishable in nature and are not covered under the Price Support Scheme (PSS). The objective of intervention is to protect the growers of these commodities from making distress sale in the event of a bumper crop during the peak arrival period when the prices tend to fall below economic levels and cost of production.

## Nano Drone Didi :

The Government has recently approved a Central Sector Scheme for providing drones to the Women Self Help Group (SHGs) for the period from 2024-25 to 2025-26 with an outlay of ₹ 1261 Crores. The scheme aims to provide drones to 15000 selected Women Self Help Group (SHGs) for providing rental services to farmers for agriculture purpose (application of fertilizers and pesticides). Under this Scheme, Central Financial Assistance @ 80% of the cost of drone and accessories/ancillary charges upto a maximum of ₹ 8.0 Lakhs will be provided to the women SHGs for purchase of drones. The Cluster Level Federations (CLFs) of SHGs may raise the balance amount (total cost of procurement minus subsidy) as loan under National Agriculture Infra Financing Facility (AIF). Interest subvention @ 3% on the AIF loan will be provided to the CLFs. The scheme will also provide sustainable business and livelihood support to SHGs and they would be able to earn additional income of at least ₹ 1.0 lakh per annum.

## Centrally Sponsored Schemes : Rastriya Krishi Vikas Yojana- Detailed Project Report based schemes (RKVY-DPR) :

The scheme focuses on creation of pre & post-harvest infrastructure in agriculture and allied sectors that help in supply of quality inputs, market facilities, etc to farmers. It provides flexibility and autonomy to states to implement projects as per the local farmers' needs and priorities from a bouquet of activities in agriculture and allied sectors. The scheme aims to fill the resources gap of agri-

culture and allied sectors by providing financial support to states for undertaking various activities to increase in overall growth of agriculture and allied sectors and farmers' income. Under RKVY Agri-startup Programme, since 2019-20, 1524 Start-ups have been selected and ₹ 106.25 crore released as grants-in-aid for funding the Start-ups.

## Soil Health Card (SHC) :

Soil health card provides information to farmers on nutrient status of their soil along with recommendation on appropriate dosage of nutrients to be applied for improving soil health and its fertility. The indicators are typically based on farmers' practical experience and knowledge of local natural resources. The card lists soil health indicators that can be assessed without the aid of technical or laboratory equipment. The Scheme rolls out a decentralized system of soil testing which will help in developing a nationwide soil fertility map on a GIS platform that can easily be integrated with the real time decision support systems being developed. In order to develop the soil fertility map, Government of India has decided to conduct 5 Crore Soil Samples across the country during year 2023-24 to 2025-26.

## Rainfed Area Development (RAD) Scheme :

RAD is being implemented since 2014-15. RAD adopts an area based approach in cluster mode for promoting Integrated Farming System (IFS) which focuses on multi-cropping, rotational cropping, inter-cropping, mixed cropping practices with allied activities like horticulture, livestock, fishery, apiculture etc. to enable farmers not only in maximizing the farm returns for sustaining livelihood, but also to mitigate the impacts of drought, flood or other extreme weather events. An amount of ₹ 1673.58 crores has been released and an area of 7.13 lakh hectare has been covered under RAD programme from the year 2014-15 to till date.

## Per Drop More Crop (PDMC) Scheme :

In order to increase water use efficiency at the farm level through Micro Irrigation technologies i.e. drip and sprinkler irrigation systems, Per Drop More Crop (PDMC) scheme was launched during 2015-16. The Micro Irrigation helps in water saving as well as reduced fertilizer usage through fertigation, labour expenses, other input costs and overall income enhancement of farmers. It also supports micro level water harvesting, storage, management etc. activities as Other Interventions (OI) to supplement source creation for Micro Irrigation. OI activities allowed on need basis up to 40% of the total allocation for North East States, Himalayan States, Jammu & Kashmir, Ladakh and up to 20% for other States. An area of 78 lakh hectare has been covered under Micro irrigation through the PDMC scheme from 2015-16 to 2022-23. *(... to be continued)*



# Parent-child communication: A growing concern in families

By: Himangshu Ranjan Bhuyan

The relationship between parents and children is one of the most crucial aspects of family dynamics. It shapes how children view the world and influences their emotional and psychological development. Effective communication is the bedrock of a healthy parent-child relationship, fostering trust, understanding, and empathy. However, in recent years, a growing concern has emerged: the widening communication gap between parents and children. This gap is not only affecting family relationships but also contributing to various social and psychological issues in children and adolescents. The evolution of technology, changes in societal norms, and shifting family structures are playing significant roles in this phenomenon, making it imperative for families to reassess how they engage with one another.

At the core of this communication gap lies a simple yet often overlooked truth—communication is a two-way street. It involves both speaking and listening, as well as understanding and responding with empathy. However, in many modern households, the dialogue between parents and children has become increasingly one-sided, with children either remaining silent or expressing themselves in ways that parents struggle to comprehend. The causes of this breakdown in communication are manifold, stemming from both generational differences and external pressures. As the pace of life quickens and societal expectations change, families are finding it more difficult to maintain the open channels of communication that are essential for emotional connection.

One of the most significant factors contributing to this communication gap is the advent of technology. Children today are digital natives, growing up in a world saturated with smartphones, social media, and instant messaging. These technologies have transformed the way children communicate with their peers, often replacing face-to-face interaction with text messages, social media posts, and online gaming. For many parents, these digital platforms are unfamiliar territory. The rapid rise of technology has created a cultural divide between parents, who may struggle to understand the digital landscape, and children, who are immersed in it. This divide can lead to misunderstandings, with parents viewing their children's screen time as excessive or even detrimental, while children may perceive their parents as out of touch with their realities.



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Moreover, the constant presence of digital devices can disrupt family interactions, with family members, including children, becoming absorbed in their screens rather than engaging in meaningful conversations. Dinner tables, once a place for sharing experiences and bonding, are often now occupied by phones, tablets, and televisions. Parents may feel disconnected from their children, while children may feel that their parents are not paying enough attention to their lives. This lack of attention can foster feelings of neglect or misunderstanding, leading children to withdraw emotionally or seek validation from their peers or the online world.

Beyond technology, changing societal norms and family structures have also contributed to the communication breakdown. In today's fast-paced world, many parents juggle full-time jobs, household responsibilities, and social obligations, leaving little time for meaningful interaction with their children. The demands of work and life often leave parents exhausted and distracted, which can prevent them from fully engaging with their children. As a result, conversations between parents and children often revolve around logistics—what to eat for dinner, when homework is due, or when the next soccer practice is—rather than deeper, more personal topics. These transactional conversations may meet the functional needs of the family but fail to address the emotional and psychological needs of children.

The impact of this communication gap can be particularly pronounced during adolescence, a critical period of identity formation and emotional development. Adolescence is a time when children begin to seek independence and establish their own identities. It is also a time of heightened emotional sensitivity, as teenagers navigate the complexities of relationships, self-esteem, and personal growth. During this tumultuous period, open communication with parents is essential. However, many teenagers find it difficult to express themselves to their parents, particularly if they feel their parents are too focused on academic success or behavior management. The pressure to meet parental expectations can create a sense of isolation and alienation, leading teenagers to retreat into themselves or turn to their peers for support.

When parents fail to create a safe and open space for their children to express themselves, they inadvertently contribute to the emotional distance between them. Children who feel that they are not understood or heard may withdraw from family life and seek validation from external sources, such as friends, social media, or even unhealthy coping mechanisms. This sense of isolation can exacerbate feelings of anxiety, depression, and low self-worth. In some cases, it can even lead to risky behaviors such as substance abuse or self-harm. In contrast, when parents take the time to listen, validate their children's emotions, and engage in thoughtful conversations, they can help their children navigate the challenges of adolescence with confidence and resilience.

Another contributing factor to the communication gap is the generational divide between parents and children. Each generation grows up in a unique socio-cultural environment that shapes their values, beliefs, and perspectives. As society evolves, so do the concerns and experiences of children. Parents who grew up in a different era may have difficulty understanding the challenges their children face today. Issues such as cyberbullying, social media pressures, and the impact of climate change may seem distant or irrelevant to parents, even though they are of utmost importance to their children. This generational disconnect can create a sense of misunderstanding, with parents perceiving their children's concerns as trivial or exaggerated, while children feel that their parents are not in tune with their realities.

In some cases, cultural expectations also play a role in the communication gap. In many cultures, there is an expectation that children will respect and obey their parents without question. While respect for elders is an important value, it can sometimes stifle open dialogue. When children are not encouraged to voice their opinions or express their emotions, they may feel constrained and unable to communicate freely. In such environments, parents may believe they are providing guidance and structure, while children may feel suffocated by the lack of autonomy.

Despite these challenges, there is hope for bridging the communication gap between parents and children. The first step is for parents to recognize the importance of listening actively to their children. Instead of focusing solely on directing their children's behavior or correcting mistakes, parents must create an environment where children feel safe to express themselves without fear of judgment or criticism. Active listening involves paying full attention to what the child is saying, asking open-ended questions, and validating their feelings. When children feel heard, they are more likely to open up and engage in meaningful conversations.

Another crucial aspect of improving communi-

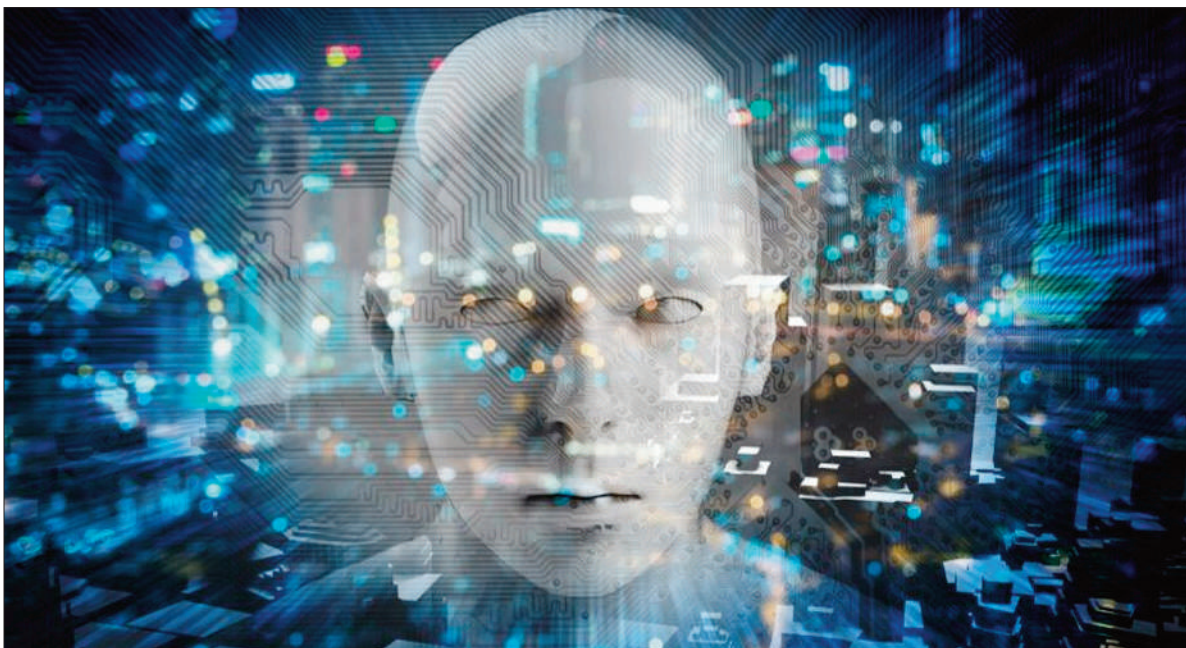
cation is for parents to model healthy communication behaviors. Children learn by observing their parents, and if they see their parents engaging in open, respectful, and empathetic conversations, they are more likely to adopt these behaviors themselves. Parents can set the tone for family communication by being transparent about their own feelings, sharing their experiences, and being willing to admit when they do not have all the answers. This openness fosters trust and encourages children to be honest and vulnerable.

It is also important for parents to recognize the value of spending quality time with their children. In today's busy world, it can be easy to overlook the importance of simply being present with one another. Whether it is through family dinners, weekend outings, or quiet moments of reflection, carving out time for meaningful connection can help strengthen the bond between parents and children. These moments provide opportunities for open conversations, allowing both parents and children to share their thoughts and feelings in a relaxed and supportive environment.

Finally, parents should make an effort to stay informed about the issues and challenges that their children face. By understanding the pressures of modern life—such as social media, academic stress, and peer relationships—parents can better empathize with their children's experiences and offer guidance that is relevant and meaningful. Engaging in conversations about these topics, rather than avoiding them, can help bridge the generational divide and foster mutual understanding.

The parent-child communication gap is a complex issue that requires intentional effort and patience to address. However, by prioritizing active listening, modeling healthy communication behaviors, spending quality time together, and staying informed about their children's experiences, parents can build stronger, more meaningful relationships with their children. In turn, this will not only enhance family dynamics but also contribute to the emotional well-being and development of the next generation. The growing concern surrounding the communication gap is a call to action for parents and families to reflect on their communication habits and make the necessary changes to foster deeper connections. The future of healthy parent-child relationships depends on it. (The author can be reached at himangshur1989@gmail.com or 9954812261, 9864000260)

## The future of luxury: Blending AI with human connection



By: Satvabrat Borah

The rapid ascent of artificial intelligence (AI) has ushered in a transformative wave across every facet of human life. No longer confined to automating mundane tasks, AI is now redefining decision-making, reshaping customer experiences, and unlocking new realms of creativity. In the world of luxury, where every detail is paramount, where the experience is as vital as the product itself, and where personalization has always been the gold standard, AI emerges as a powerful enabler. Yet, as machines learn to mimic emotions and algorithms tailor every interaction, a profound question arises: how far can AI truly understand empathy? And in a world increasingly curated by code, where do we draw the line between simulated care and genuine human connection?

In the luxury sector, AI's role is nothing short of revolutionary. Algorithms meticulously analyze customer preferences, map their choices, and learn the rhythms of their lives—from the fragrances they gravitate toward to the travel destinations that ignite their sense of adventure. By processing vast datasets, AI delivers hyper-personalized experiences that align with individual tastes and lifestyles. For instance, based on a customer's purchase history or expressed preferences, AI can suggest a bespoke piece of jewelry or a tailored outfit that resonates with their unique style. Beyond service, AI is making significant inroads into design. By studying decades of creative work, algorithms identify patterns, propose innovative silhouettes, and recommend color palettes for one-of-a-kind creations, whether it's a silk scarf or a custom evening coat. This ability to anticipate and cater to individual desires has elevated the luxury experience, making it more seamless and intuitive than ever before.

However, the essence of luxury lies not in data or algorithms but in the human touch. The skilled artisan who adjusts a needle based on instinct rather than a pattern, or the perfumer who captures a fleeting memory in a scent, brings an emotional depth that no dataset

can replicate. These acts of craftsmanship carry a weight that transcends the capabilities of technology. True empathy, the cornerstone of meaningful human connection, is not data-driven—it is instinctual, nuanced, and deeply rooted in lived experience. Consider the seasoned concierge who senses a guest's discomfort without a single word being spoken, or the host who intuitively adjusts the ambiance to suit a visitor's mood. These subtleties, born of emotional intelligence and an innate understanding of people, are what elevate an experience from transactional to transformative.

In a conversation with Indiatoday, Manoj Adlaka, Founder & CEO of RedBeryl, offered valuable insights into this dynamic. He emphasized that while AI is a powerful tool in the luxury industry, it should serve as a complement to human artistry, not a replacement. AI can analyze customer data to deliver highly personalized recommendations, but the soul of luxury lies in the creativity and emotional resonance that only humans can provide. This balance gives rise to a new form of bespoke luxury—one that is informed by data but perfected through human devotion. The commercial potential of this approach is undeniable. According to a McKinsey report, luxury brands that adopt AI could see revenue growth of up to 30% by 2025. Yet, while the business case is compelling, it is the human element that defines the true essence of luxury.

Despite AI's remarkable capabilities, its limitations are evident when it comes to replicating the depth of human emotion. Algorithms can process vast amounts of data to generate precise recommendations, but they cannot fully grasp the spontaneity or emotional complexity of human interactions. For example, AI might suggest a gift for a customer's birthday based on their past purchases, but it cannot craft a heartfelt message that connects with a specific moment in their life. Such gestures require an understanding of context, sentiment, and personal history—qualities that are uniquely human. This is where the line between simulated care and genuine connection becomes apparent.

While AI can mimic certain aspects of empathy by analyzing behavioral patterns, it lacks the intuitive depth that allows humans to forge authentic emotional bonds.

The luxury industry thrives on creating moments of emotional resonance—those unscripted, spontaneous interactions that leave a lasting impact. A machine can predict what a customer might want, but it cannot replicate the warmth of a genuine smile or the sincerity of a thoughtful gesture. These moments, which no algorithm can anticipate, are what make luxury experiences memorable. In an era where digital interfaces dominate, this human core becomes even more critical. Digital fatigue is a growing reality, as consumers increasingly crave authenticity in a world saturated with automated interactions. The more our lives are curated by code, the more we value experiences that feel real, unfiltered, and deeply personal.

The future of luxury, therefore, lies not in choosing between AI and empathy but in harmonizing the two. AI excels at handling scale and precision, processing vast amounts of data to deliver tailored solutions at unprecedented speed. Humans, on the other hand, bring soul, creativity, and emotional depth to the table. By leveraging AI to manage the technical aspects of personalization—such as analyzing customer preferences or optimizing supply chains—brands can free up human talent to focus on what truly matters: crafting experiences that resonate on a profound level. This synergy creates a new paradigm of luxury, where technology enhances efficiency while human artistry infuses meaning.

Consider a luxury hotel as an example. AI can analyze a guest's preferences to recommend room decor, dining options, or spa treatments tailored to their tastes. But it is the warmth of a staff member's greeting, the thoughtful placement of a handwritten note, or the intuitive adjustment of a room's ambiance that transforms a stay into an unforgettable experience. These human touches, grounded in empathy and intuition, elevate the ordinary into the extraordinary. Similarly, in fashion, AI can suggest de-

signs based on market trends or customer data, but it is the designer's vision, honed by years of experience and emotional insight, that breathes life into a garment. The result is a creation that not only fits perfectly but also tells a story—one that resonates with the wearer's identity and aspirations.

This balance between technology and humanity is not just a theoretical ideal; it is already shaping the luxury landscape. Brands that embrace this approach are redefining what it means to deliver bespoke experiences. They use AI to streamline operations and anticipate customer needs, while relying on human creativity to add the emotional depth that defines true luxury. This model is not about man versus machine but about how one can elevate the other. Data may inform, but it is people who inspire. The brands that succeed in the future will be those that recognize this distinction and invest in both technological innovation and human artistry.

The implications of this approach extend beyond luxury. As AI continues to permeate every aspect of our lives, from healthcare to education to entertainment, the need to preserve human connection becomes increasingly urgent. In healthcare, for instance, AI can diagnose conditions with remarkable accuracy, but it is the doctor's empathy that reassures a patient and fosters trust. In education, AI can personalize learning plans, but it is the teacher's encouragement that inspires a student to persevere. The same principle applies to luxury: technology can enhance the experience, but it is the human element that makes it meaningful.

In a world where algorithms are omnipresent, authenticity is becoming a rare and precious commodity. The luxury industry, with its emphasis on exclusivity and emotional resonance, is uniquely positioned to lead the way in balancing AI and empathy. By embracing technology as a tool to amplify human potential, rather than replace it, luxury brands can create experiences that are both highly personalized and deeply human. This approach not only meets the demands of today's discerning consumers but also sets a precedent for other industries navigating the intersection of technology and humanity.

Ultimately, the future of luxury—and indeed, the future of human interaction—lies in this delicate balance. AI will continue to evolve, becoming ever more sophisticated in its ability to analyze data and predict behavior. But it is the human capacity for empathy, creativity, and emotional connection that will remain irreplaceable. The luxury brands that thrive will be those that harness the power of AI to handle the complexities of scale and precision while empowering their people to deliver the soulful, authentic experiences that define true luxury. In this harmony, the essence of luxury not only survives but evolves, creating a future where technology and humanity work hand in hand to inspire, delight, and connect. This is not a battle between man and machine but a collaboration that elevates both, ensuring that the heart of luxury—and the heart of human connection—remains vibrant in an AI-driven world.

## Think before you click

By Mowsam Hazarika

In today's fast-paced digital world, cybercriminals are constantly evolving their tactics, blending tech-savvy methods with psychological tricks. While antivirus software and firewalls are helpful, the most effective way to stay safe online is through awareness. Knowing how scams operate helps you sidestep them before damage is done. This brief guide outlines common digital threats and offers practical tips to help you steer clear of danger.

**1. KYC Scam**  
Be alert: Your bank will never ask for sensitive details via SMS or unknown numbers.

Fraudsters pose as bank representatives, requesting personal data under the pretense of KYC updates. Always use your bank's verified contact channels to confirm such messages. Never share OTPs or documents over calls or links from unknown sources.

**2. Fake Job Offers**  
If a job offer seems too good to be true, it probably is.

Scammers lure jobseekers with promises of high-paying roles, often demanding payment for registration or documents. Verify job listings on official websites and avoid offers sent through unofficial channels like WhatsApp or Telegram.

**3. Online Shopping Scams**  
Scammers love to bait with unbelievable deals. Always shop on trusted platforms. Do not pay in advance on unknown sites. Cross-check seller details, read reviews, and be cautious of QR codes for payment.

**4. Digital Arrest Hoaxes**  
No police officer will arrest you through a video call. Con artists impersonate officials, threatening legal action to extort money. Stay calm, don't respond to threats, and report such calls to cybercrime.gov.in.

**5. Investment Frauds**  
Guaranteed returns are a red flag. Stick to investment platforms regulated by SEBI. Avoid shady apps or links promoting quick returns and always verify schemes before putting in your money.

**6. Online Gaming Risks**  
Entertainment can turn into exploitation. Limit the use of real-money gaming apps. Keep a watchful eye on children's gaming habits and avoid oversharing in-game or granting excessive permissions.

**7. Lottery Scams**  
You can't win a prize for a contest you never entered.

Don't fall for messages claiming you've won a lottery—especially if you're asked to pay to claim the reward. Report and delete such communications.

**8. Phishing Emails**  
Urgent messages asking for your details? Take a pause. Always double-check email addresses and links. Avoid clicking suspicious attachments and keep your device security up to date.

**9. Vishing and Spam Calls**  
Caller ID can be faked—don't trust blindly. Avoid giving away personal details over the phone. Be skeptical of unsolicited calls and report suspicious numbers.

**10. Quishing (QR Code Scams)**  
A QR code can be a digital trap. Scan codes only from sources you trust. Don't scan QR codes sent by strangers or embedded in shady websites.

**11. Search Engine Fraud**  
Top search results aren't always safe. Manually enter official URLs rather than relying on search engine suggestions. Confirm customer care numbers via trusted sources.

**12. Social Media Impersonation**

Not every familiar face online is real. Be cautious of messages from fake accounts impersonating your friends or influencers. Confirm requests and report fakes immediately.

**13. Scam Messages & Calls**

Scammers prey on urgency and panic. Take your time to verify before acting on messages that demand money or promise rewards. Avoid clicking random links or sharing personal details.

**14. Card-Related Fraud**  
Even one moment of carelessness is enough. Only use cards on secure platforms. Protect your PIN, review transaction alerts, and don't save card details unnecessarily.

**15. Malicious APKs**  
If it's not from an official app store, it's not worth the risk.

Download apps only from the Play Store or App Store. Read reviews, and avoid apps demanding unnecessary permissions.

**16. Cyber Slavery Scams**  
Not all overseas jobs are genuine.

Steer clear of job offers that lack transparency or ask for upfront payment. Confirm legitimacy before considering overseas opportunities.

**17. SIM Swap Attacks**  
Sudden network loss could signal trouble. Secure your SIM with strong PINs, enable two-factor authentication, and report suspicious behavior to your mobile operator immediately.

**18. Money Mule Traps**  
Your account could be used in a crime without your knowledge.

Never agree to transfer funds on someone else's behalf. Sharing your bank account for such purposes is risky and illegal.

**19. Juice Jacking**  
Free charging can come with a hidden cost. Avoid using public USB charging stations. Carry your own charger and use standard power outlets.

**20. Deepfake Deception**  
Don't trust everything you see or hear online. Cross-check sensational content and videos. Report manipulated media to the platform and alert others.

**21. Remote Access Frauds**  
Your screen is private—treat it that way. Allow remote access only through verified apps and to people you trust. Keep passwords strong and unique.

**22. Safe Browsing Practices**  
Don't ignore browser security alerts.

Use updated browsers, avoid unsecured websites, and install reliable antivirus software to enhance your online protection.

**23. Ransomware Threats**  
The best defense is preparation.

Back up important data regularly, avoid unknown links, and educate team members on cybersecurity best practices.

**24. Smartphone Scams**  
Your phone is your digital lifeline—protect it accordingly.

Be cautious with third-party apps, report lost devices quickly, and register for DND to avoid telemarketing spam.

Stay Smart, Stay Safe  
Online threats can affect anyone, but staying informed makes a huge difference. Your best defense is awareness. If you come across any suspicious activity, report it immediately at cybercrime.gov.in or call 1930. The more you know, the better you can protect yourself and others in this ever-evolving digital world. (The writer is a Poet, Science Journalist, Sustainability Advocate, Former Director, Assam Seed & Organic Certification Agency and Ex-Joint Director of Agriculture, Assam)



# FBI says 8 injured in Colorado attack by man with makeshift flamethrower who yelled 'Free Palestine'

## Attack leads to increased security elsewhere

**BOULDER (US), June 2:** A man with a makeshift flamethrower yelled "Free Palestine" and hurled an incendiary device into a group that had assembled to raise attention for Israeli hostages in Gaza, law enforcement officials said Sunday. Eight people were injured, some with burns.

The suspect, Mohamed Sabry Soliman, 45, was booked into the Boulder County jail north of Denver and expected to face charges in connection with the attack the FBI was investigating as a terrorist act. Online records did not immediately show when he would make a court appearance.

The burst of violence at the popular Pearl Street pedestrian mall, a four-block area in downtown Boulder, unfolded against the backdrop of a war between Israel and Hamas that continues to inflame global tensions and has contributed to a spike in antisemitic violence in the United States.

The attack happened on the beginning of the Jewish holiday of Shavuot, which is marked with the reading of the Torah and barely a week after a man who also yelled "Free Palestine" was charged with fatally shooting two Israeli embassy staffers outside of a Jewish museum in Washington.

Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu issued a statement Monday saying he, his wife and the entire nation of Israel were praying for the full recovery of the people wounded in the "vicious terror attack" in Colorado.

"This attack was aimed against peaceful people who wished to express their solidarity with the hostages held by Hamas, simply because they were Jews," Netanyahu said.

Across the US, the New York Police Department said it has upped its presence at religious sites throughout the city for Shavuot.

"Sadly, attacks like this are becoming too common across the country," said Mark Michalek, the special agent in charge of the FBI's Denver field office, which encompasses Boulder. "This is an example of how perpetrators of violence continue to threaten communities across the nation."



The eight victims who were wounded range in age from 52 to 88 and the injuries spanned from serious to minor, officials said.

The attack occurred as people with a volunteer group called Run For Their Lives was concluding their weekly demonstration to raise visibility for the hostages who remain in Gaza.

Video from the scene shows a witness shouting, "He's right there. He's throwing Molotov cocktails," as a police officer with his gun drawn advances on a bare-chested suspect who is holding containers in each hand.

Alex Osante of San Diego said he was having lunch on a restaurant patio across the pedestrian mall when he heard the crash of a bottle breaking on the ground, a "boom" sound followed by people yelling and screaming.

In video of the scene captured by Osante, people could be seen pouring water on a woman lying on the ground who Osante said had caught on fire during the attack. A man, who later identified himself as an Israeli visiting Boulder who decided

to join the group that day, ran up to Osante on the video asking for some water to help.

**Suspect reemerged after initial attack before being arrested**

After the initial attack, Osante said the suspect went behind some bushes and then reemerged and threw a Molotov cocktail but apparently accidentally caught himself on fire as he threw it.

The man then took off his shirt and what appeared to be a bulletproof vest before the police arrived. The man dropped to the ground and was arrested without any apparent resistance in the video that Osante filmed.

As people tried to help the woman on the ground, another woman who appeared to be a participant in the event yelled to others out of the camera's view, defending their cause, saying they don't talk about the government but just talk about the hostages.

Lynn Segal, 72, was among about 20 people who gathered Sunday. They had finished their march in front of the courthouse when a "rope of fire" shot in front of her and then "two big flares."

She said the scene quickly turned chaotic as people worked to find water to put out flames and find help.

Segal, who said she is Jewish on her father's side and has supported the Palestinian cause for more than 40 years, was concerned that she might be accused of helping the suspect because she was wearing a pro-Palestinian shirt.

"There were people who were burning, I wanted to help," she said. "But I didn't want to be associated with the perpetrator."

**Authorities say they believe the suspect acted alone**

Authorities did not disclose details about Soliman but said they believe that he acted alone and that no other suspect was being sought. No criminal charges were immediately announced but officials said they would move to hold Soliman

accountable. He was also injured and was taken to the hospital to be treated, but authorities didn't elaborate on the nature of his injuries.

FBI leaders immediately declared the attack an act of terrorism and the Justice Department denounced it as a "needless act of violence, which follows recent attacks against Jewish Americans."

"This act of terror is being investigated as an act of ideologically motivated violence based on the early information, the evidence, and witness accounts. We will speak clearly on these incidents when the facts warrant it," FBI Deputy Director Dan Bongino said in a post on X.

Israel's war in Gaza began when Hamas-led militants stormed into southern Israel on October 7, 2023, killing some 1,200 people, mostly civilians, and abducting about 250 others. They are still holding 58 hostages, around a third believed to be alive, after most of the rest were released in ceasefire agreements or other deals.

Israel's military campaign has killed over 54,000 people in Hamas-run Gaza, mostly women and children, according to Gaza's Health Ministry, which does not say how many of the dead were civilians or combatants. The offensive has destroyed vast areas, displaced around 90 per cent of the population and left people almost completely reliant on international aid.

The violence comes four years after a shooting rampage at a grocery store in Boulder, about 25 miles (40 kilometres) northwest of Denver, that killed 10 people. The gunman was sentenced to life in prison for murder after a jury rejected his attempt to avoid prison time by pleading not guilty by reason of insanity.

Multiple blocks of the pedestrian mall area were evacuated by police. The scene shortly after the attack was tense, as law enforcement agents with a police dog walked through the streets looking for threats and instructed the public to stay clear of the mall. (AP)

# Macron, US senators warn: Putin 'is preparing for more war'

**PARIS, June 2:** Russian President Vladimir Putin is stalling at the peace table while preparing a new military offensive in Ukraine, two senior US senators warned on Sunday, arguing that the next two weeks could shape the future of a war that has already smashed cities, displaced millions and redrawn Europe's security map.

Republican Sen. Lindsey Graham and Democratic Sen. Richard Blumenthal spoke to The Associated Press in Paris after meeting President Volodymyr Zelenskyy and touring neighbourhoods shattered by what they called the worst Russian bombardments since the full-scale invasion began.

In Paris for talks with French President Emmanuel Macron — who they say is "100 per cent aligned" with them on the war — the senators warned the window to prevent a renewed assault is closing.

A sweeping US sanctions bill could be the West's last chance to choke off the Kremlin's war economy, they said — adding that they hope their first-hand findings will shift momentum in Washington and help bring a sceptical President Donald Trump on board.

"What I learned on this trip was he's preparing for more war," Graham said of Putin. Blumenthal called the sanc-



tions proposed in legislation "bone-crushing" and said it would place Russia's economy "on a trade island".

"It is crunch time for Putin and for the world because Russia is mounting a new offensive," he said. At the heart of their push is a bipartisan sanctions bill, backed by nearly the entire US Senate but still facing uncertain odds in Washington. It would impose 500 per cent tariffs on countries that continue buying Russian oil, gas, uranium and other exports — targeting nations like China and India that account for roughly 70 per cent of Russia's energy trade and bankroll much of its war effort. Graham called it "the most draconian bill I've ever seen in my life in the Senate".

"The world has a lot of cards to play against Putin," he said. "We're going to hit China and India for propping up

his war machine."

**Peace talks or stalling tactic?**

With peace talks yielding little and Trump's approach to Ukraine highly uncertain, Graham and Blumenthal have stepped into the breach — blunt emissaries on a lonely mission. Political opposites moving in lockstep, they're crossing Europe, and the aisle, with the moral urgency of two men trying to forestall another Russian offensive before it's too late. Peace talks are scheduled to resume Monday in Istanbul. But Ukrainian officials say Moscow has yet to submit a serious proposal — a delay both senators described as deliberate and dangerous.

"Putin is playing President Trump," Blumenthal said. "He's taking him for a sucker." The senator said Putin "is, in effect, stalling and stonewalling, prolonging the conversation so that he can mount this offensive and take control of more territory on the ground." Graham added: "We saw credible evidence of a summer or early fall invasion, a new offensive by Putin. ... He's preparing for more war."

Trump has yet to endorse the sanctions bill, telling reporters Friday: "I don't know. I'll have to see it." Graham said the legislation was drafted in consultation with Trump's advisers.

Graham backed the president's

diplomatic instincts but said, "By trying to engage Putin — by being friendly and enticing — it's become painfully clear he's not interested in ending this war." Blumenthal hoped the bipartisan support for Ukraine at least in the Senate — and the personal testimonies they plan to bring home to Congress and the Oval Office — may help shift the conversation.

"He needs to see and hear that message as well from us, from the American people," he said of Putin.

**A moral reckoning**

In Kyiv, the senators said, the war's human toll was impossible to ignore. Graham pointed to what Ukrainian officials and Yale researchers estimate are nearly 20,000 children forcibly deported to Russia — calling their return a matter of justice, not diplomacy. Blumenthal described standing at mass grave sites in Bucha, where civilians were executed with shots to the head. The destruction, he said, and the stories of those who survived, made clear the stakes of delay. "Putin is a thug. He's a murderer."

Both said that failing to act now could pull the US deeper into conflict later. If Putin isn't stopped in Ukraine, Blumenthal said, NATO treaty obligations could one day compel American troops into battle. (AP)

# Sweden faces call to halt international adoptions after inquiry finds abuses, fraud

**STOCKHOLM, June 2:** A Swedish commission recommended on Monday that international adoptions be stopped after an investigation found a series of abuses and fraud dating back decades. Sweden is the latest country to examine its international adoption policies after allegations of unethical practices, particularly in South Korea. The commission was formed in 2021 following a report by Swedish newspaper Dagens Nyheter detailing the Scandinavian country's problematic international adoption system. Monday's recommendations were sent to Minister of Social Services Camilla Waltersson Grönvall. "The assignment was to investigate whether there had been irregularities that the Swedish actors knew about, could have done and actually did," Anna Singer, a legal expert and the head of the commission, told a press conference.

"And actors include everyone who has had anything to do with international adoption activities."

"It includes the government, the supervisory authority, organisation, municipalities and courts. The conclusion is that there have been irregularities in the international adoptions to Sweden." The commission called on the government to formally apologise to adoptees and their families. Investigators found confirmed cases of child trafficking in every decade from the 1970s to the 2000s, including from Sri Lanka, Colombia, Poland and China. Singer said a public apology, besides being important for those who are personally affected, can help raise awareness about the violations because there is a tendency to download the exis-

tence and significance of the abuses.

An Associated Press investigation, also documented by Frontline (PBS), last year reported dubious child-gathering practices and fraudulent paperwork involving South Korea's foreign adoption program, which peaked in the 1970s and '80s amid huge Western demands for babies. The AP and Frontline spoke with more than 80 adoptees in the US, Australia and Europe and examined thousands of pages of documents to reveal evidence of kidnapped or missing children ending up abroad, fabricated child origins, babies switched with one another and parents told their newborns were gravely sick or dead, only to discover decades later they'd been sent to new parents overseas.

The findings are challenging the international adoption industry, which was built on the model created in South Korea.

The Netherlands last year announced it would no longer allow its citizens to adopt from abroad. Denmark's only international adoption agency said it was shutting down and Switzerland apologised for failing to prevent illegal adoptions. France released a scathing assessment of its own culpability. South Korea sent around 200,000 children to the West for adoptions in the past six decades, with more than half of them placed in the US.

Along with France and Denmark, Sweden was a major European destination of South Korean children, adopting nearly 10,000 of them since the 1960s. (AP)

# Pak despatches two delegations to key capitals to present its perspective on recent conflict with India

**ISLAMABAD, June 2:** Pakistan on Monday unveiled the details of its global diplomatic push to seek international support following the recent conflict with India and highlight the importance of dialogue to tackle problems between the two countries.

The diplomatic outreach comprises two delegations marching towards different directions to garner support for the country, the Foreign Office said in a statement.

The move comes after India sent seven multi-party delegations to 33 global capitals as part of its diplomatic outreach following the terrorist attack in Pahalgam that claimed 26 lives.

On Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif's directive, a high-level multi-party delegation will visit New York, Washington DC, London and Brussels from 2 June 2025, the Foreign Office (FO) said.

The nine-member delegation is led by the Pakistan People's Party Chairman and former Foreign Minister Bilawal Bhutto Zardari.

The other members of the delegation include federal minister Mudasir Malik, former foreign ministers Hina Rabbani Khar and Khur-

ram Dasgiri Khan, former ministers Syed Faisal Ali Subzwari and Sherry Rehman, Senator Bushra Anjum Butt. It also includes two former foreign secretaries - Jilil Abbas Jilani and Tehmina Janjua.

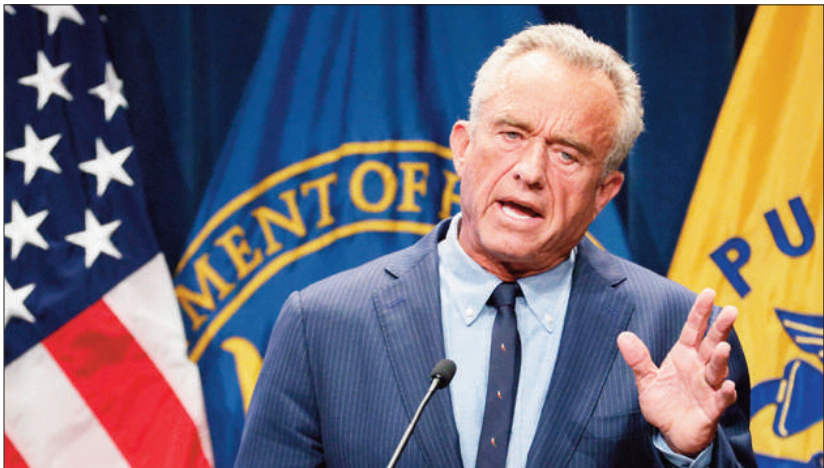
Another delegation, led by Special Assistant to the Prime Minister, Syed Tariq Fatemi, will visit Moscow from June 2. The details of its composition were not shared.

The two delegations would engage in a series of meetings with the leadership of international bodies, public office holders, senior officials, parliamentarians, think tanks, media and diaspora, the FO said.

"The visits of these delegations are aimed at projecting Pakistan's perspective on the recent Indian aggression," it said, adding that they would also "highlight that dialogue and diplomacy should take precedence over conflict and confrontation".

The need for immediate resumption of the normal functioning of the Indus Waters Treaty will also be a key theme of the delegations' outreach, according to FO. (PTI)

# RFK Jr says autism 'destroys' families



**WASHINGTON, June 2:** Emery Eversoll and her mother shared a good laugh when Health and Human Services Secretary Robert F. Kennedy Jr. said that some autistic children will never write poems.

The 16-year-old's bedroom is full of notebooks featuring her prose. Sometimes, she quietly recites poetry to get through an outburst of anger. Her mother began suspecting she may have autism, in part, because she had memorised every word from a favourite book by age 2.

Still, this Kansas family is optimistic about Kennedy's plans to launch a broad-based study of what causes autism, the complex developmental disorder that impacts the brain and causes delays in language or learning, social withdrawal and an unusual need for routine.

Kennedy has vowed to identify some of the causes of autism, which has been studied for decades, by September.

Kennedy has said autism "destroys families". He said children with autism "will never pay taxes, they'll never hold a job, they'll never play baseball, they'll never write a poem, they'll never go out on a date. Many of them will never use a toilet unassisted".

His comments and his plan to swiftly study its causes, have splintered a community of millions of people living with autism. For some, they were an overdue recognition of the day-to-day difficulties for families with autistic loved ones. To others, Kennedy deeply misrepresented the realities of their disability, provoking concern about his ability to handle a sweeping assessment

of the disorder.

Some worry, too, that Kennedy has spent years suggesting that vaccines might cause autism, despite decades of scientific research that shows no such link.

Ohio father Scott Copeland, himself autistic and a parent to two autistic children, does not trust that Kennedy will conduct a legitimate study.

"It'd be like standing up and saying you're going to have the cure for cancer in six months," said Copeland, who's 56. "Angry isn't a sufficient word."

**Life with autism can be a daily struggle**

While announcing plans to study the causes of autism, Kennedy described a grim life for those who have to cope with it.

For Kelly Van Den Bergh, Kennedy's comments reflect a painful reality for the son she loves. The Massachusetts mom of five has an 18-year-old son, Daniel, who has profound autism.

Daniel cannot speak, although a tablet helps him communicate. He frequently punches himself so hard that he's at risk for fracture or concussion. About a decade ago, doctors recommended he enter a full-time residential facility for his safety. It took years for his mother to agree to that, and, even now, tears well up in her eyes as she talks about that decision. "My child, I do truly believe, that if he were able to tell us, he would not want autism because this has not affected him in a positive way," Van Den Bergh said. "So, for me, having someone finally recognize my son and his population is amazing." (AP)

## GOVERNMENT OF ASSAM OFFICE OF THE ASST. DIRECTOR, DAIRY EXTENSION SERVICE DAIRY DEVELOPMENT DEPARTMENT DIPHU, KARBI ANGLONG **TENDER NOTICE**

Sealed Tender/Quotation affixing council court fee stamp of Rs.- 10/- (Ten) only, are inviting from the interested local contractor for the developmental work. The tenders will be received from 11:00 am of Dated: - 03/06/2025 to 17/06/2025 upto 2:00 pm, and will be opened on the same date. In case of any unavoidable case/ bandh, arise the next official date will be considered for received and opening of the tender. The details of the tender quotation can be seen in the notice board of the following offices:-

1. Office of the Asstt. Director, Dairy Extension Service, Diphu.
2. Office of the Asstt. Dairy Development Officer, TMSS, Mania.

• Tender/Quotation should be accompany the following documents along with the

• Earnest money of 2% for general and 1% in case of ST/SC/OBC in the form of call deposit/Bank draft.

• P/Tax up to date clearance.

• I/Tax up to date clearance.

• Pan Card Copy.

• Bank account details (Name as per Bank pass-book, Name of the Bank, Branch Name, Account Number, IFSC Code).

The authority of Karbi Anglong Autonomous Council, Diphu is the sole authority for acceptance of tender quotation and rate therein and allotment of works.

Sd/-

Asstt. Director,  
Dairy Extension Service,  
Dairy Dev. Department  
Diphu, Karbi Anglong



## Several areas in Miao subdivision have been inundated Arunachal flood, landslide toll rises to 10



**ITANAGAR, June 2:** With one more death reported from Lohit district, the toll in landslides and floods in Arunachal Pradesh rose to 10 even as incessant monsoon rains lashed the state on Monday, officials said.

According to the State Emergency Operation Centre (SEOC), 938 people in 156 villages in 23 districts have been affected by the monsoon deluge.

The body of Gupitaj Bharali, swept away by flooded Sukha Nallah in Upper Digaru was recovered downstream at Lasa Pani in Lohit district on Sunday.

Governor Lt General K T Pariaik (Retd) has expressed deep sorrow over the loss of lives and extended heartfelt condolences to the bereaved families. He urged

residents to remain alert, especially in vulnerable and landslide-prone areas. Calling on district administrations to remain vigilant, the governor emphasised the importance of night time movement restrictions in risky zones and advocated proactive communication to keep citizens informed and safe.

With major rivers and their tributaries flowing above danger levels, flood-like conditions and landslides have also been reported in West Kameng, Kamle, Lower and Upper Subansiri, Papum Pare, Dibang Valley, Lower Dibang Valley, Lohit, Changlang, Kra Daadi, Kurung Kumey, and Longding districts of the state.

In East Kameng district, a devastating landslide on the Bana-Seppa stretch of National Highway

13 late on Friday night swept away a vehicle carrying two families, killing all seven occupants.

In another incident, two labourers were buried under debris while working on a cabbage farm near Pine Grove in Lower Subansiri district. Two others were rescued.

Two persons, one from Assam's Dispur at Parshuram Kund in Lohit district and another in Anjaw district, have gone missing in separate incidents, the report said, adding, search operations are currently underway.

In Kamle district's Pamuk village, a man was injured in a landslide and is receiving medical treatment.

In Changlang district, flash floods from the Buri-Dihing River washed away 50 per cent of the

Makantong bridge at the Trans Arunachal Highway, on Saturday, severing vital road connectivity between Miao and Bordumsa.

Several areas in Miao subdivision have been inundated, causing significant losses to livestock and horticultural property.

Tourist resorts such as Zupra and River Cafe, located along the Noa-Dehing River in Miao, have been submerged. The Industrial Training Institute at Balinong near Namchick, under Kharsang circle, suffered massive losses, with floodwaters destroying hostels, staff quarters, water tanks, and other key facilities.

The Noa-Dehing River has also eroded large swathes of agricultural and horticultural land in Dharmapur block under Namphai circle. The M'pen and Deban areas are now under water, officials said.

In Upper Subansiri district, the water supply system has been severely disrupted due to multiple breaches in the Hangkar pipeline following heavy rainfall on Friday. Public Health Engineering Department (PHED) teams are working to restore the supply, while tankers have been deployed to ensure interim relief.

Deputy Commissioner Tasso Gambo, along with PHED Executive Engineer Tago Dulom and other officials, visited the damaged site on Sunday. The DC directed immediate repairs and urged rapid water tanker distribution to affected areas.

In Namsai district, authorities have set up a relief camp at Alubari Government Secondary School, where 59 displaced people are currently taking shelter. (PTI)

## We are all part of team Arunachal, committed to state's development: NCP President Toko Tatung

**HT Bureau**

**NAMSAL, June 2:** Yachuli MLA and newly appointed NCP State President Toko Tatung reaffirmed his party's commitment to the collective development of Arunachal Pradesh, stating that all legislators, regardless of party affiliation, are united under Team Arunachal. He emphasized that under the leadership of Chief Minister Pema Khandu and Deputy Chief Minister Chowna Mein, every MLA shares equal responsibility for ensuring peace, progress, and development in the state.

"We are all part of Team Arunachal, and though we belong to different political parties, our goal remains the same — the welfare and development of our state," said Tatung during a press interaction in Itanagar.

Reflecting on his first year as a legislator, Tatung expressed satisfaction over the changes witnessed and was optimistic about more transformative developments in the future. However, he stressed that

such progress can only be achieved through the collective efforts of the people of Arunachal.

Tatung noted the support extended by the NCP central leadership, including Ajit Pawar and Praful Patel, and reaffirmed his commitment to fulfilling the responsibilities entrusted to him. He cited the recent Investment Summit held in New Delhi as a milestone, calling it a major achievement that opened vast economic opportunities for Arunachal Pradesh.

"The state's budget has expanded significantly, which is a positive sign for our developmental aspirations and potential for investment," he added.

Reiterating unity among all 60 MLAs in the state, Tatung said,

"We are all in the same train. Over the past year, there has been no conflict—be it in fund distribution or otherwise. If issues arise, we are committed to resolving them together through discussion."

Tatung also addressed internal party matters, confirming a smooth

transition of leadership with prior discussions held with former NCP State President Likha Saaya. He outlined plans to strengthen the party at the grassroots level and announced a statewide membership drive to begin shortly.

On the upcoming local body elections, Tatung said the NCP is prepared to contest and will finalize modalities in consultation with alliance partner BJP.

"Being part of the NDA alliance at the Centre, our guiding principle remains: nation first, state first," he said, calling for public support to strengthen the party's presence in Arunachal.

Lekang MLA Likha Soni, along with state executive members, district presidents, and NCP leaders from Keyi Panyor, Namsai, and other districts, were present at the event. Tatung received a warm welcome at Donyi Polo Airport, Holongi, upon his return, accompanied by MLA Likha Soni and senior party members following his appointment.

## Doimukh ZPM and youth leader Techi Rakap passes away

**HT Bureau**

**NAMSAL, June 2:** In a moment of profound grief, Techi Rakap, Zilla Parishad Member (ZPM) of II Doimukh and prominent youth leader, passed away at TRIHMS, Naharlagun, around midnight on May 31 after prolonged illness. He had been under medical treatment for the past several months.

A committed public servant and grassroots leader, Late Techi Rakap was deeply admired for his tireless service, particularly during the COVID-19 pandemic, and on numerous public occasions where his leadership and dedication stood out. He joined the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) in 2022, along with other JD(U) leaders, marking a new chapter in his political journey.

Itanagar MLA Techi Kaso, speaking to media, said, "Late Rakap's funeral rites and last journey will begin at 12:00 PM on Monday. Relatives, family members, and well-wishers from across the state are arriving to join the final ceremony." He described Rakap as a grassroots icon, especially popular among the youth. "He dedicated his life to public service, and his absence is an irreparable loss for Doimukh," Kaso added.

Itanagar ZPM Taro Tagia remembered Rakap as a leader with a deep commitment to rural development and social welfare. "He had earned widespread respect in the region through consistent work and community engagement. Today, grassroots leaders and colleagues have gathered to pay their respects."

Among those who visited his Sopo residence to offer condolences were IGP Chukhu Appa, Itanagar Capital Deputy Commissioner Toko Babu, Papum Pare SP Taru Gusar, along with numerous community leaders, student and youth leaders, social workers, and members of the public.

Son of Techi Tath, Rakap was born in Rakap village under Sangdipota Circle. He completed his early education at Government Middle School, Jote, and later attended Government Higher Secondary School, Balijan.

A devoted family man, he is survived by his wife Smt. Chukhu Mariam Techi, sons Techi Kunung and Techi Kakkin, and daughter Miss Techi Anung (Ompu). He cherished his family and often credited them as the foundation of his strength.

In 2000, following his marriage, he relocated to Sopo village, where he immersed himself in local governance and social development. His political journey began in 2010 as a Gram Panchayat Member, followed by his election as Anchal Samiti Member in 2013. In November 2019, the people of II Doimukh elected him as Zilla Parishad Member, a role he served with sincerity and dedication until his demise. Known for his peace-loving nature, humility, and commitment to progress, Techi Rakap was a firm believer in unity and hard work. His life was a shining example of selfless public service, and his legacy will continue to inspire future generations. He will be deeply missed by his family, friends, and all whose lives were touched by his noble spirit.

## APCC appoints new block leaders in Siang to strengthen grassroots presence

**HT Bureau**

**NAMSAL, June 2:** The Arunachal Pradesh Congress Committee (APCC) has appointed several block-level leaders from Pangin, Boleng, and Kebang. The appointments were made to strengthen the Congress party's foundation in the state, particularly following recent electoral setbacks.

The new appointments were carried out under the guidance of APCC Siang District in-charge General Secretary Tarh Monika, APCC Working President Bosiram Siram, and former MLA Tapang Taloh. The formal induction was administered by APCC Vice President Mina Toko, who also welcomed the leaders into the party fold. The newly appointed grassroots leaders include Bhait Mingki (Pangin Block, Siang District),

Takot Pajing (Pangin Block, Siang District), Tom Tali (Boleng Block, Siang District) and Kamang Dupak (Kebang Block, East Siang District).

These leaders expressed unwavering loyalty and commitment to the Congress party and its values, vowing to strengthen its presence across their respective blocks and panchayats. They affirmed their trust in the leadership of Congress President Mallikarjun Kharge, Leader of the Opposition Rahul Gandhi, and APCC President Nabam Tuki.

In a statement, APCC acknowledged the party's underwhelming performance in the 2024 Assembly and Lok Sabha elections, where it secured only one seat. However, the party emphasized that it remains undeterred.

"We are disappointed but not demoralized. Our leaders and workers will continue to fight for the ideals of the Congress and the rights of Arunachal's people," said Vice President Mina Toko.

Toko lauded Nabam Tuki as a "stalwart of Arunachal politics," who continues to guide and inspire the party through challenging times. He also noted that many grassroots workers and leaders have rejoined the party at various levels, signaling a renewed determination to reconnect with the public.

APCC called upon the people of Arunachal Pradesh to support these dedicated leaders in their mission to restore the party's legacy of inclusive governance, social justice, and economic progress.

## Congress asks Centre to provide funds for northeastern states grappling with floods

**NEW DELHI, June 2:** Congress president Mallikarjun Kharge on Monday attacked the Modi government over the flood situation in the northeastern states, and hoped Prime Minister Narendra Modi will open the floodgates of his PM CARES Fund, where he claimed crores lie without any audit.

Referring to Assam, he said PM Modi had promised in 2016 to make the state flood-free but it seems the BJP's double engine governments have betrayed the state. In a post on X, he noted that the northeast is reeling under devastating floods, landslides and heavy rains.

Assam, Arunachal, Manipur, Sikkim and Meghalaya are among the worst affected states, where many lives have been lost and lakhs of people have been affected, he observed. Congress leaders and workers must do everything to provide assistance to the people, he said.

"In 2016, BJP had promised to make a 'Flood-Free' Assam. In 2022, Home Minister Amit Shah repeated this promise.

"Looking at the visuals from the so-called 'SMART CITY' Guwahati, one is reminded how Modi ji and his double engine governments have betrayed Assam," Kharge said in his post.

"Diversion, Distraction and Digression from basic developmental issues to emotive and polarising subjects has been the hallmark of BJP's politics," the Congress chief said. (PTI)

## IMA-AP launches month-long celebration with social service drive



**HT Bureau**

**NAMSAL, June 2:** The Indian Medical Association – Arunachal Pradesh (IMA-AP) kicked off its month-long celebrations with a social service activity along National Highway-415 on Saturday, June 1. The drive marked the beginning of a series of programs commemorating Doctor's Month, which traditionally culminates with National Doctors' Day on July 1.

Speaking to the media, IMA-AP State President Dr Kesang D. Thongdok said, "Every year, we observe the month of June as Doctors' Month, leading up to Doctors' Day on July 1. Today's event is not just a social service effort—it is part of a nationwide campaign to raise awareness about cleanliness, health, and hygiene." Dr Thongdok emphasized

that the initiative aligns with the vision of the Swachh Bharat Abhiyan, launched by the Prime Minister, and underlined the importance of cleanliness in maintaining a healthy body and sound mind.

"Cleanliness is not just a civic responsibility; it's a way of life. A clean and green environment contributes to a healthier society. Our motto is to promote cleanliness, health, and hygiene for a better state and nation. Cleanliness is next to godliness, and it's essential that we all motivate one another to uphold this value," he said.

This year, the IMA-AP also chose the theme "Donate Organ, Save Life" to raise awareness on the importance of organ and tissue donation. Dr Thongdok informed that the State Organ and Tissue Trans-

plant Organization (SOTTO) will soon begin functioning in Arunachal Pradesh, and public participation and awareness will play a crucial role in its success.

"Organ donation is a noble act that can save multiple lives. Through this campaign, we aim to educate people on the importance of donation and the functioning of SOTTO in the state," he added.

As part of the month-long celebration, IMA-AP has planned a wide range of activities involving the entire medical fraternity, including sports events, cultural programs, literary competitions, and community outreach initiatives. These events aim to foster camaraderie among healthcare professionals and promote community welfare through medical advocacy and service.

## Emerges as 1<sup>st</sup> runner-up nationally AAPAWA felicitates medal winners of 47<sup>th</sup> National Arm Wrestling Championship

**HT Bureau**

**NAMSAL, June 2:** The All Arunachal Pradesh Arm Wrestling Association (AAPAWA) on Sunday felicitated the medal winners and all participants of the 47th National Arm Wrestling Championship, recognizing their outstanding achievements and contribution to the state. The felicitation ceremony was held at a city hotel in the presence of AAPAWA members and proud



parents of the athletes.

AAPAWA President Pakjar Taipodia, while addressing the media, expressed his satisfaction with the team's improved performance. "Our players performed better than in previous years, and the progress will continue as they are being guided properly," she said.

The 47th National Arm Wrestling Championship was held from May 25 to 28, 2025, at LNCT University Auditorium, Bhopal, Madhya Pradesh. It was one of the premier events in the Indian arm wrestling calendar, attracting top athletes from across the country. "Our players competed in several events and won

numerous medals. Impressively, some athletes even bagged multiple medals, and several won the prestigious 'Champion of Champions' titles," she added.

A strong contingent of 49 players represented Arunachal Pradesh, competing across various age and weight categories. The team delivered an exceptional performance, securing a total of 89 medals — 54 gold, 28 silver, and 7 bronze — which led AAPAWA to emerge as the 1st runner-up in the overall standings. Uttar Pradesh claimed the overall championship title.

Seven Arunachal athletes won the coveted Champion of Champions (CoC) titles: Nanang Giri – CoC in both Senior (Men) and Youth (Men) categories; Phutong Wangsu – CoC in Junior (Boys); Mousami Pakam Ete – CoC in Senior (Women); Pate Yasuk – CoC in Youth (Girls); Kipa Yayum – CoC in Junior (Girls); Jumbi Yomcha – CoC in Sub-Junior (Girls).

In category-wise results, the AAPAWA women's team was declared overall champions, while the men's team finished as 1st runner-up. The collective performance showcases the growing strength and rising standards of arm wrestling in Arunachal Pradesh.

"We expect even greater success in the future," Taipodia said. She extended gratitude to the state government for its motivation and support but also urged for more robust assistance and infrastructure for the athletes who represent the state — and have the potential to represent the nation in the future.

## PGCIL commissions Kathalguri-Namsai line ahead of schedule in Arunachal Pradesh

Deputy Chief Minister Chowna Mein praised the accomplishment



**ITANAGAR, June 2:** In a significant step toward strengthening the power network in Arunachal Pradesh, Power Grid Corporation of India Limited (PGCIL) has

completed the 220 kV double circuit Kathalguri-Namsai transmission system five months before its scheduled deadline.

The line was energised late on

Saturday night, a PGCIL statement said here on Monday.

The project, carried out under the Tariff-Based Competitive Bidding (TBCB) model, enhances the

reliability of electricity supply across the region. Stretching 71 km, the new line connects the

Assam gas-based power plant operated by NEEPCO at Kathalguri to a modern 220 kV gas-insulated substation (GIS) at Namsai in Arunachal Pradesh.

A bay extension at the Kathalguri end has also been completed to improve system operations.

The infrastructure upgrade allows smoother power flow from the national grid into Arunachal Pradesh, while also improving voltage stability and providing critical system backup, essential for a dependable year-round electricity supply.

It is expected to significantly support the region's development initiatives, the statement said.

Arunachal Pradesh Deputy Chief Minister Chowna Mein praised the accomplishment.

"Kudos to PGCIL for their exemplary execution and unwavering commitment to the Northeast. This project is a cornerstone in our journey toward robust and reliable energy infrastructure," he said in a social media post. (PTI)



## India to get remaining S-400 missile systems by 2026, says Russia



**NEW DELHI, June 2:** Russia is committed to delivering the remaining units of the S-400 air defence system to India by 2025-2026, the country's Deputy Chief of Mission in India, Roman Babushkin, said on Monday, highlighting that the system performed "very efficiently" during the recent India-Pakistan tensions.

Babushkin also hinted at expanding bilateral cooperation with India in air defence and anti-drone systems.

"We heard that the S-400 performed very efficiently during the recent clashes between India and Pakistan. We have a long history of collaboration. The air defence systems, according to what we are experi-

encing, the situation in Europe and here, this is one of the promising topics of our partnership in defence preparation in general," Babushkin told PTI Videos.

Babushkin confirmed that the contract for the remaining two S-400 units is on track, with deliveries expected to be completed by 2025-26, in line with publicly announced timelines.

India signed a USD 5.43 billion deal with Russia in 2018 for five squadrons of the S-400 Triumf missile system, a state-of-the-art air defence platform capable of engaging multiple aerial threats at long ranges. Three squadrons have already been delivered.

On the potential expansion of defence collaboration, Babushkin expressed openness to further dialogue.

"We are open for promotion of this partnership for the discussion of the expansion of dialogue on air defence systems," he said, noting the strategic importance of such cooperation in the current global security environment.

Commenting on the growing threat of drones, particularly in light of their extensive use during the India-Pakistan clash, the deputy chief of mission highlighted Russia's experience in countering such challenges.

"We are facing this threat for several years already, and I think that our systems are being modernised constantly. I think it would be a joint interest from both sides how to counter this threat and lead to some other cooperation," he said, adding that anti-drone systems are already part of the ongoing India-Russia defence dialogue.

Babushkin also provided an update on a possible visit by Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov to India.

"The exact dates are not yet finalised, but it can happen anytime soon. We expect this month," he said. (PTI)

## India-born restaurateur Asma Khan among 195 women features in record-setting song

**NEW DELHI, June 2:** India-born British restaurateur Asma Khan is among women from 195 countries who have featured in the "195" song which has entered the Guinness World Records for most nationalities to contribute vocals to a musical recording.

The song has been produced to raise awareness about gender equality and to ignite a global movement to uplift people through the transformative power of sound healing frequencies.

The Frequency School, co-founded by US Grammy-nominated and multi-platinum music producer Maejor, Martina Fuchs, Kingsley M, Brandon Lee and Aaron Dawson, has produced the powerful and universal campaign which premiered during the 55th Annual Meeting of the World Economic Forum (WEF) in Davos-Klosters, Switzerland, from January 20 to 24.

"It has always been my dream to produce the first song in history featuring every country on the planet. Our vision was to unite 195 ordinary women from all walks of life in this pioneering and groundbreaking initiative to advocate for gender equality and the rights of women and girls, and to help people struggling with mental health issues," said Fuchs, who is also the executive producer of "195".

"Breaking this record is only the beginning, we are on a global mission to make our world a more peaceful place," she said.

Asma Khan, an immigrant to the UK and star of Netflix's Chef's Table, is one of the UK's most prominent female chefs. (PTI)

## 16 Naxalites surrender in Chhattisgarh

*Kerlapenda village becomes Maoist-free, say police*

**SUKMA, June 2:** Sixteen Naxalites, including six carrying a collective cash reward of ₹ 25 lakh, surrendered in Chhattisgarh's Sukma district on Monday, police said.

Of them, nine cadres belonged to Kerlapenda village panchayat under Chintalanar police station limits.

With this surrender, the village has become Naxalite-free, making it eligible for development projects of ₹ 1 crore as per a new scheme of the state government, an official said.

All 16 cadres, including a woman, turned themselves in before senior police and CRPF officials, here citing disappointment with the "hol-low" and "inhuman" Maoist ideology and atrocities by ultras on local tribals, Sukma Superintendent of Police Kiran Chavan said.

The cadres were also impressed by the Chhattisgarh government's 'Niyad Nella-nar' (your good village) scheme, aimed at facilitating development works in remote villages, and the state's new surrender and rehabilitation policy, he said.

Among those who surrendered, Rita alias Dodi Sukki (36), a woman who was active as member of the central regional committee (CRC) company number 2 of Maoists, and Rahul Punem (18), a party member within PLGA battalion no. 1 of Maoists, carried a reward of ₹ 8 lakh each, he said.

Besides, Lekam Lakhma (28) carried a bounty of ₹ 3

lakh, while three more cadres carried a reward of ₹ 2 lakh each, the official said.

Out of the surrendered cadres, nine belonged to the Kerlapenda village panchayat. With their surrender, the place has become Naxal-free, the official said.

As per the Elvad Panchayat Yojna of the state government, the village will be provided an incentive of ₹ 1 crore for development works, he said.

The scheme has been introduced under the new Chhattisgarh Naxal Surrender/Victim Relief and Rehabilitation Policy-2025.

It provides for a sanction of development works of ₹ 1 crore for those village panchayats which facilitate in the surrender of Naxalites active in their area and to pass a resolution declaring them as Maoist-free.

This is the second such village panchayat in the district to get rid of the Naxal menace after the state government recently introduced the scheme.

In April, Badesatti was declared Naxal-free after all 11 lower-rung Naxalites from there surrendered before police.

All the Naxalites who surrendered were provided an assistance of ₹ 50,000 each, and will be further rehabilitated as per the government's policy, the SP said.

Last year, 792 Naxalites surrendered in the state's Bastar region, which comprises seven districts including Sukma. (PTI)

## 'State-sponsored repression': BJP intensifies attack on Mamata govt over arrest of influencer

**NEW DELHI, June 2:** The BJP on Monday upped the ante against the TMC government in West Bengal over the arrest of influencer Sharmishta Panoli, calling the action "state-sponsored repression" and "violation" of her right to freedom of speech and expression.

BJP spokesperson Gaurav Bhatia also took on West Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee over the issue, calling her "ruthless".

Panoli, who hails from Kolkata and studies in Pune's Law University, was arrested by the Kolkata police in Gurugram late on May 30 for allegedly uploading a video on Instagram with communal comments claiming Bollywood actors were silent on Operation Sindoor.

She was later produced before a Kolkata court, which sent her to judicial custody till June 13.

Condemning the Panoli's arrest, Bhatia wrote on X, "Shameful". "This is not governance, this is political vendetta. This is not compliance with the law, but state-sponsored repression. Shame on 'ruthlessness' Banerjee. This is a brutal murder of democracy," he said, adding, "I strongly condemn this misuse of power".

Bhatia said the arrest of the influencer was a violation of her right to freedom of speech and expression provided under Article 19 of the Constitution.

"This is a violation of Article 19 of the Constitution.



Today, the country is asking where has the gang that beat the drum of "freedom of expression" gone?" he asked. Attacking the TMC government, the BJP leader said Banerjee's police travelled "nearly 1,500 kilometres" from Kolkata to arrest the law student "just because she had expressed her opinion, for which she had publicly apologised".

"But, the same police did not arrest the accused in the Sandeshkhali case until the high court reprimanded them. In the Murshidabad violence, they worked to protect the accused," he charged.

Bhatia said lawyers' community and the entire "justice loving society" stand with Panoli and her family. "If Sharmishta and her family need any legal help, I

am personally committed to provide all possible legal help," he added. Panoli's arrest has evoked sharp reactions and criticism from various sections.

Bar Council of India chairman Manan Kumar Mishra on Sunday called for immediate release and fair trial for Panoli. The senior advocate and Rajya Sabha member said that he was standing firmly with Panoli, whose arrest and judicial custody for a now-deleted social media video despite her immediate apology represented "an absolute failure of justice and a blatant assault on freedom of expression".

On Monday, the Bar Council of Delhi condemned the influencer's arrest and demanded her "immediate release to uphold the scale of justice".

The Kolkata police has dismissed criticisms that they have "unlawfully" arrested the Instagram influencer and claimed that all legal procedures were followed.

They defended Panoli's arrest saying that the case was "duly investigated and adhering to legal procedures". "Kolkata Police acted lawfully according to the procedure established by law. The accused was not arrested for expressing patriotism or for personal belief; legal actions were taken for sharing offensive content which promotes hatred among the communities," Kolkata Police said in a post on Facebook on Sunday. (PTI)

### GOVERNMENT OF ASSAM

#### OFFICE OF THE EXECUTIVE ENGINEER (PHE),

#### HOWRAGHAT DIVISION, HOWRAGHAT

#### KARBI ANGLONG AUTONOMOUS COUNCIL, DIPHU

No. PHEE/HOW/TND-1/2025-26/ 01

Dated: 02/06/2025

NIT NO-01 for 2025-26

Notice Inviting Tender

Separate sealed tenders for separate works in plain paper affixing non-refundable KAAC cash receipt worth Rs 10.00 (Rupees Ten) only eventually to be drawn in PWD F-2 form are hereby invited from registered contractors/ Firms of PHE Department under Karbi Anglong Autonomous Council for the works mentioned in **Annexure A** as per approved **A/A of SOPD 2025-26** accorded by the authority of KAAC vide **No. KAAC/PHE/AA/2024-25/4886-(A) dt. 27/05/2025**. Detailed tender papers, terms and conditions etc. may be obtained from the office of the undersigned on all working days from **10.00 AM to 3.00 PM from 03/06/2025 till 3.00 PM of 25/06/2025** and will be opened in the same date i.e. **25/06/2025 at 3.30 PM** in presence of the intending tenderer or their authorized agents who like to remain present. In case the last date and time for receipt and opening of tender happens to be holiday, the tenders so invited will be received and opened on the same time of the next working day.

The tender paper will be available in the office of the undersigned on payment of **Rs. 100.00** either in cash or demand draft pledged in favour of "Executive Engineer, PHE, Howraghat Division, Howraghat.

Name of the works: -As per Annexure- "A"

#### Annexure - A

Sl. No.	Name of work	Estimated Amount (Rs. in Lakh)	Remarks		Period of Completion
			SC/ST	Gen	
1.	DTW at Rensing Rongpi PWSS	₹ 14.50	1%	2%	30 days
2.	DTW at Sampathar PWSS	₹ 14.50	1%	2%	30 days
3.	DTW at Manikpur Zone-I PWSS	₹ 9.86	1%	2%	30 days
4.	Dedicated Transformer at Centre Bazar PWSS	₹ 3.50	1%	2%	30 days
5.	Construction of chemical store house at Howraghat	₹ 5.00	1%	2%	60 days
6.	Supply and installation of dedicated transformer at Dokmoka Sub-Division office	₹ 5.00	1%	2%	30 days
7.	Power connection for Jaroplangso PWSS at Kania Engti village	₹ 3.00	1%	2%	30 days
8.	Refurbishing of SO Qtr. at Dengaon	₹ 3.00	1%	2%	30 days
9.	Laying of pipelines at Dengkimo Aklam	₹ 3.00	1%	2%	30 days

#### TERMS AND CONDITION.

1. Tenderer should quote their rate distinctly both in figure and in words on percentage basis at per/ below/above on the estimated rates
2. The Tenderer should furnish their full name and address distinctly in the tender papers.
3. Class I, II, III contractors are only invited as intending tenderer.
4. Earnest money in the form of NSC/KVP DULY pledged in favour of the "Executive Engineer (PHE), Howraghat Division, Karbi Anglong" should invariably be enclosed with the tender papers.
5. GST, Professional Tax, Income Tax Clearance Certificate should be enclosed with the tender papers.
6. The work must be completed within stipulated time as stated in Annexure A.
7. The work should be started after signing necessary agreement and in consultation with A.E.E. in charge.
8. Payment will be made after completion of the work, subject to availability of fund.
9. No advance payment will be made for the work.
10. Non-tribal tenderer must produce up to date KAAC trading license along with tender documents.
11. All other terms and conditions will be following as per APWD, F-2 form of tender
12. The undersigned reserves the right to accept/reject any or all tender in part or in full without assigning any reason thereof and does not bind himself to accept the lowest quoted tender rate.

Sd/-

Executive Engineer (PHE)  
Howraghat Division, Howraghat

## Chain-link, solar fencing installed in UP's forest areas to mitigate human-wildlife conflicts

**LUCKNOW, June 2:** The Uttar Pradesh government has installed over 231 km of chain-link fencing and 41 km of solar fencing across forest areas to mitigate human-wildlife conflicts, an official statement issued here on Monday said.

The forest department has introduced several innovative measures to protect both wildlife and the lives and livelihoods of villagers residing near forest zones. Among these, the large-scale construction of chain-link fencing stands out as a highly effective intervention, it added.

Forest officials said chain link fencing is a type of fence made from metal wire or steel woven together to create a diamond-shaped mesh pattern and used due to its durability and cost-effectiveness.

Solar fencing forms a secure perimeter protection system that uses solar power to energise an electric fence. It is used in high-risk areas where the movement of wild animals is more, they said.

Solar fencing works by using solar panels to generate electricity, which is then stored in a battery and used to power the energiser. When an animal (or person) comes into contact with the fence, it completes the circuit, delivering a brief and non-lethal shock as a deterrent, the officials said.

These barriers have proven successful in deterring wildlife from straying into human settlements, thereby reducing crop damage, human casualties and incidents involving domestic animals entering forest areas and falling prey to wild predators, the statement said.

These efforts have significantly enhanced the safety of both wildlife and rural communities,

including their livestock, which live near forest boundaries. A key part of this strategy involves the deployment of department-trained 'Bagh Mitras', who are playing a vital role in bridging the gap between local communities and forest management, it said.

These volunteers not only promote wildlife conservation but also support conflict prevention through awareness programmes and real-time response coordination.

"Between 2023 and 2025, approximately 231 kilometres of chain-link fencing and 41 kilometres of solar fencing were installed across forest areas," it said.

Between 2023 and 2024, about 125 km of chain-link fencing and 21 km of solar fencing were installed, followed by 106 km of chain-link and 20 km of solar fencing between 2024 and 2025, the statement said.

The selection and training of 'Bagh Mitras' for villages bordering tiger reserves as well as the Lion Safari in Etawah has emerged as an effective initiative.

These community volunteers help foster a sense of trust between villagers and the Forest Department by conducting regular awareness meetings that cover wildlife safety measures, animal behavioural patterns and emergency response protocols, it said.

To strengthen these initiatives, the State Disaster Mitigation Fund has facilitated the procurement of advanced surveillance and tracking equipment including drones, GPS devices, camera traps and other modern tools that are instrumental in monitoring wildlife movements and preventing incursions into inhabited areas. (PTI)



## Forty-seven landslides too have been reported in different parts of the state during the last four days

# Manipur floods: 19,811 people affected, 3,365 houses damaged

**IMPHAL, June 2:** More than 19,000 people have been affected by floods in Manipur caused by overflowing rivers and breaches in embankments, officials said on Monday.

They said 3,365 houses have been damaged and 19,811 people affected by floods triggered by incessant torrential rains during the last four days.

Thirty-one relief camps have been opened mostly in Imphal East district to mitigate the hardships of the people who have been evacuated from their homes and localities.

Heingang, Wangkhei and Khurai assembly constituencies in Imphal East district are worst affected along with Senapati district.

Forty-seven landslides too have been reported in different parts of the state during the last four days. Several localities in the state's capital Imphal, and many parts of Imphal East district have been inundated after a swollen river breached embankments and overflowed in Khurai, Heingang and Checkon areas, they said.

Waterlogging was reported on the premises of several offices, health facilities, and establishments, including All India Radio Imphal complex, and state-run Jawaharlal Nehru Institute of Medical Sciences, after the Imphal river overflowed in the Checkon area, one of the officials said.

Several patients, who have been undergoing treatment at Jawaharlal Nehru Institute of Medical Sciences at Porompat in Imphal East district, were shifted to other hospitals on Sunday evening as floodwaters entered the premises of the health facility, he said.



Local clubs, volunteers, SDRF and NDRF personnel joined hands to shift the patients after floodwaters entered the female orthopaedic and surgery wards, located on the ground floor, the official said.

Manipur Governor Ajay Kumar Bhalla visited several inundated areas of Imphal town even as the army and Assam Rifles personnel rescued nearly 800 people from submerged localities in Imphal East, the worst-affected district, they said.

Bhalla, accompanied by Chief Secretary PK Singh and other senior officials, visited Kangla Nongpok Thong, Lairikyengbam Leikai, and Singamei Bridge in Imphal and

assessed the overall situation, a Raj Bhavan statement said.

The water level of the Iril river in Imphal East district crossed the danger mark on Sunday but is yet to breach the embankments, he said. In view of the incessant rain, the governor announced the extension of the summer vacation in schools in Imphal East and West districts and the Senapati sub-division of Senapati district until further orders.

Parts of the Senapati district have been affected after the Senapati river overflowed near Viewland colony, the officials said.

The Indian army and Assam Rifles rescued approximately 800 civilians on Saturday, a

statement said.

Troops of Assam Rifles were deployed with quick reaction teams to the most affected locations in Porompat, Wankhei, Sanjen-thong, Palace Compound, New Checkon, Khurai Heikrumakhong Heingang, Soibam Leikai, Wangkhei Angom Leikai, Nongmeibung Raj Bari in Imphal East district and adjoining areas.

"The total number of people rescued reached approximately 800 people, including 10 to 20 differently abled and aged individuals," the statement said.

The authorities are coordinating with all relevant departments and agencies to ensure timely relief and rehabilitation efforts, another statement said.

Meanwhile, Lok Sabha MP Angomcha Bimol Akojiam has urged the governor to declare the flood situation a "state calamity".

In a letter to Bhalla, Akojiam said the declaration would enable the activation of institutional measures to deal with the present situation.

Manipur Congress President Keisham Meghachandra Singh on Sunday alleged that the water resources department has failed to control floods in various vulnerable areas of the state. He made the remarks during a visit to flood-affected areas of the Heingang constituency of former chief minister N Birren Singh. The Congress leader stressed that residential and agricultural areas have been submerged by overflowing rivers as the construction of various retaining walls remained incomplete. (PTI)

## Three army personnel dead, 6 soldiers missing as landslide hits military camp in Sikkim



**GANGTOK, June 2:** Three army personnel died and six soldiers went missing after a landslide hit a military camp at Chhaten in Sikkim, a defence official said on Monday.

The landslide, which occurred at 7 pm on Sunday near Lachen town in Mangan district, was triggered by heavy rainfall in the area, he said.

"... A catastrophic landslide occurred following intense and continuous rainfall in the region causing death of three combatants, identified as Havaldar Lakhwinder

Singh, Lance Naik Munish Thakur, and Porter Abhishek Lakhada," the official said in a statement.

Bodies of the personnel have been recovered, while four other soldiers were rescued with minor injuries, the official said in a statement.

"Rescue teams are working round-the-clock under challenging conditions to locate the six missing personnel," he said. The army has expressed deep condolences to the families of the deceased and assured all necessary support, the defence official added. (PTI)

## All schools remain shut in Mizoram for third day due to rain

**AIZAWL, June 2:** All schools across Mizoram remained shut on Monday due to heavy rain that triggered landslides, mudslides, rockfalls and waterlogging in different parts of the state, an official said.

School Education Department Director Angela Zothanpuui said that all the 11 district administrations announced the closure of schools on Monday as a precautionary measure to ensure the safety of the students.

The notifications issued by the district administrations said that the school closure directive comes following alarming weather forecasts issued by the India Meteorological Department (IMD), which predicted further heavy rainfall and possible natural hazards, including

been reported in different parts of the state till Sunday, and highways have been blocked at 83 locations, they said.

Officials of the state power department said that at least seven 33 KV sub-stations have been damaged and more than one-third area of the entire state is facing power outages due to rain.

Restoration works are underway and power is expected to be restored in such areas within the next two-three days if there is no further rain, they said.

The State Public Health Engineering Department also said that water supply has been disrupted in around 50 places and water pumping machines, which feed Kolasib and Hnahthial towns and Keitum village in Serchhip district, have been submerged under water. An IMD report said that Serchhip district received the highest amount of rainfall in the last 24 hours at 10.46 cm, followed by Kolasib (9.83 cm) and Aizawl (9.74 cm).

Isolated heavy to very heavy rainfall is likely in the state on Monday, it said.

Chief Minister Lal-duhoma on Sunday held an emergency meeting with ministers and senior officials in the wake of landslides and waterlogging, triggered by heavy rains.

The meeting agreed to take stringent measures regarding construction and building plans as it was observed that several incidents were caused due to human error.

The meeting decided to facilitate the immediate release of funds to district disaster management authorities to enable them to expedite various work. Detailed reports of calamities and the challenges faced by the state government in the wake of heavy rain would be submitted to the Centre as soon as possible.

They also agreed to give priority to highways connecting district headquarters and Lengpui airport to ensure that connectivity was not disrupted. (PTI)



landslides, mudflows, and rock-falls across several parts of the state.

Earlier, schools were closed across the state for two days on May 29 and May 30.

Although there was no rain, the state capital Aizawl experienced cloudy weather on Monday morning.

At least five people, including three Myanmarese refugees, have been killed so far due to landslides, house collapses and other calamities triggered by heavy rain that lashed the state since May 24.

Officials of the state Disaster Management and Rehabilitation Department said that 60 houses have collapsed or have been damaged, and 69 others have been vacated due to landslides or mudslides and floods across the state so far.

A total of 211 landslides have

## Over 10,600 in relief camps, West District hit hardest; 201 homes damaged

**HT Correspondent**

**AGARTALA, June 1:** Continuous heavy rainfall has triggered severe flooding across Tripura, prompting the state government to open 60 relief camps accommodating over 10,600 people from nearly 2,800 families. West Tripura district remains the worst affected, according to officials.

Tripura Revenue Secretary Brijesh Pandey today addressing a press conference, said that widespread heavy to very heavy rainfall on May 31 and June 1 was caused by active monsoon conditions and significant moisture incursion, as reported by the India Meteorological Department (IMD), Agartala Centre.

"In response to the prevailing and anticipated weather conditions, a Red Alert has been issued for all districts, warning of heavy to extremely heavy rainfall in some areas today and tomorrow. The Chief Minister is personally monitoring the situation, and all District Magistrates have been instructed to remain on high alert," Pandey said.

### NHIDCL puts restrictions on movement of vehicles on NH 10 due to emergency work

**GANGTOK, June 2:** The National Highways & Infrastructure Development Corporation Ltd (NHIDCL) has issued a traffic advisory restricting vehicular movement along the NH-10 (Sevoke to Rangpo) section in the light of ongoing emergency works due to sharp rise in the Teesta River's water level, an official said on Monday.

An official order issued by the DGM(P) PMU-Siliguri issued on Sunday said on June 2 and 3 traffic will be fully closed from 8 am to 2 pm at four key locations - near Sungle (km 14.45), near Likhuvor (km 26 to 28), near Melli (km 33 to 34) and km 49.98.

The 52 km stretch of NH 10 from Sevoke to Rangpo connects Sikkim with Siliguri town in West Bengal.

The traffic regulation will be further coordinated with the respective district administrations of Darjeeling, Kalimpong, Namchi, Pakyong, and Gangtok for smooth execution, it said. (PTI)



In the past 24 hours alone, Agartala recorded 140 mm of rainfall, while Kailashahar in Unakoti district witnessed 192.2 mm. To tackle the crisis, 14 rescue teams have been deployed in key locations across West Tripura and Unakoti.

Of the 14 rescue teams, 11 are operating in West Tripura—including personnel from NDRF, SDRF, Assam Rifles, Fire & Emergency Services, Civil Defence, Aapda Mitra, and Bharat Scouts & Guides—while 3 are stationed in Unakoti.

Relief camps have been estab-

lished across the flood-hit areas: 48 in West Tripura, 3 each in Khowai and Unakoti, and 6 in North Tripura. These camps are currently housing around 2,800 displaced families.

Several roads in North Tripura, Unakoti, Dhalai, and West Tripura were temporarily blocked due to landslides and uprooted trees. Prompt response from community volunteers, SDRF, PWD, Forest Department, and Quick Response Teams has helped restore connectivity in many areas, with efforts still ongoing.

According to preliminary as-

## Tamang expresses gratitude to people of Sikkim for giving SKM a second term in office

**GANGTOK, June 2:** Sikkim Chief Minister and SKM president Prem Singh Tamang on Monday thanked the people of the Himalayan state for giving his party a thumping mandate last year to serve them for another term.

The Sikkim Krantikari Morcha (SKM) returned to power for the second time by winning 31 of the 32 seats in the state Assembly elections last year, the results of which were announced on June 2, 2024. The lone opposition Sikkim Democratic Front (SDF) MLA Tenzing Norbu Lamtha had switched over to the SKM last year.

"On this significant day last year, the people of Sikkim placed their trust in the SKM and voted for our government, giving us a renewed mandate for a second term," he said in a social media post.

Observing that it has been a remarkable year for the state government, Tamang said that he will remain deeply grateful to the people for reposing faith in the ruling party and propelling it to the position of strength to serve the state with

dedication and renewed vigour.

The Sikkim chief minister said that the milestone of extending the SKM's rule to 6th consecutive year in power coincides with 50 years of statehood which makes our shared journey sweeter. The tireless efforts and unwavering dedication of all those involved in the party and government have been instrumental in driving progress and delivering transformative results for the people of our beloved state, Tamang said and urged everyone to reflect on what all has been achieved together.

"I thank you all for your perseverance, unity, and steadfast commitment. Your contributions have brought positive change across every sector of our society," the SKM supremo said.

"Let us continue to move forward together in the spirit of Team Sikkim by working towards our collective vision of Sunaulo Sikkim, Samridhdha Sikkim, and Saamarth Sikkim as we strive for even greater accomplishments in the days ahead," he said. (PTI)

## More than 100 stranded tourists evacuated safely from Lachung: Officials

**GANGTOK, June 2:** The first batch of 18 tourist vehicles from North Sikkim's Lachung, carrying more than 100 stranded tourists, have reached Phidang in Lower Dzongu, officials said on Monday.

Mangan District Collector Anant Jain led the convoy to ensure that the tourists are safely transported back. From Phidang the tourists will move to Gangtok.

The evacuation of the stranded tourists from Lachung began this morning with coordinated effort from the local administration and police, Army, BRO, ITBP, Forest Department, Lachung Dzumsa, TAAS, SHRA, Drivers' Associations, other tourism stakeholders and local public, officials said.

As per the latest update, another tourist convoy comprising 284 vehicles, 16 bikes with 1,678 tourists (Male 737, Female 561, Child 380) has crossed Theng Check Post and

is heading towards Phidang.

Lauding everyone involved in the evacuation process, Jain said that all the tourists from Lachung will be transported back safely today from the Lachung-Chungthang-Siphgyer-Phidang route and onwards to Gangtok.

Jain further said that efforts are underway to restore road connectivity to Lachen and added that once the road is ready, tourists stranded in Lachen will also be evacuated.

The tourists were stranded in north Sikkim as heavy rains battered Mangan district. Two bridges were partially damaged due to inclement weather conditions, they said.

The BRO said that a sudden cloudburst followed by incessant heavy rains on May 30 caused havoc in North Sikkim.

Meanwhile, Sikkim DGP Akshay Sachdeva personally received all

tourists evacuated from Lachung.

Sachdeva, along with IGP Law and Order Tashi Wangyal, DIG Range Gangtok Pratap Pradhan, and SP Mangan Sonam Detchu Bhutia were present at Phidang to receive the tourists.

The tourists expressed their gratitude to the Government of Sikkim and all the agencies involved in the evacuation process.

In another development, the Tourism and Civil Aviation Department, in a statement, advised all tourists to exercise caution while travelling and to plan their trips based on the latest road and weather updates from official sources.

With the monsoon season approaching, heavy rainfall in the region may lead to landslides and road blockages, particularly on routes leading to remote tourist destinations.

"Your safety remains our utmost

priority. In the event of road blockages or any unforeseen circumstances, necessary relief and evacuation support will be promptly provided to the stranded tourists," it said. Mangan district authorities have also resumed search and rescue operations for nine missing tourists (including the driver) when their vehicle plunged into the Teesta river in Mangan district on May 29, following improvement in weather conditions.

The operation is being carried out under the close supervision of the district police, district administration, ITBP, Army, Tourism and Civil Aviation department, BRO, NDRF, GREP, Fire and medical teams and other stakeholders. The two tourists who were rescued and had been receiving medical treatment at STNM Hospital, Gangtok are now in stable condition and recovering well, officials said. (PTI)

Steps have been taken to take the state's tourism to a new height in the next two or three years

## Tripura tea estate to be developed as eco Tourism Park

**AGARTALA, June 2:** The Tripura government has decided to develop Ludhua tea estate in South Tripura's Sabroom as an eco tourism spot as part of promoting tourism in a big way, an official said on Monday.

The tea estate raised in an area covering 22 acres of land produces substantial quality of tea including black and green tea.

State's Tourism minister Sushanta Chowdhury accompanied by Tourism director Prashant Badal Negi and former MLA Sankar Roy visited the tea estate on Monday and held a meeting with local officials.

Sub-Divisional Magistrate (SDM), Sabroom and Executive Engineer, Sunil Poddar were also present in the meeting.

"To promote tourism in a big way, the government has decided to develop it as an attractive eco-tourism park. For the first phase, a



detailed project report amounting to ₹ 32 crore has almost been prepared for the proposed eco tourism park", Negi told PTI.

He said a boating facility, cafeteria, ropeway on the slopes of the tea estate, footbridge, sitting arrangement, log huts and various medicinal plants will be included in the DPR.

Steps have been taken to take the state's tourism to a new height in the next two or three years, he said, adding the tourists will get all necessary facilities in the tourist spots.

Negi added the Ludhua tea estate will become a preferred tourist destination once the project is implemented. (PTI)



# Jackie Chan didn't train for 'Karate Kid: Legends': Been doing for 64 years, don't need it anymore

LOS ANGELES, June 2: Action icon Jackie Chan says he didn't require any training for his latest film "Karate Kid: Legends", as he has been practicing for the last 64 years.

Directed by Jonathan Entwistle, the New York-set movie stars Chan alongside Ralph Macchio and Ben Wang. It has Chan reprising his role from the 2010 "The Karate Kid" remake.

Chan, known for performing the stunts on his own throughout the years, said all he has been doing is "fighting".

"I don't need to anymore. I've been training every day for 64 years. I've been fighting, fighting, fighting," he told entertainment news outlet Variety.

The 71-year-old actor admitted he isn't the same as he was back then, but still continues to execute stunts on his own.

"I'm not liked I used to be when I was 20, and could do a triple kick in the sky. Now, I do one kick," he quipped.

"Karate Kid: Legends" released in theatres of India on May 30.

The film follows Kung Fu prodigy Li Fong (Wang) as he adjusts to life in a new school, forges unexpected bonds, and is drawn into an intense showdown with a local karate champion. (PTI)



## Akshay Kumar urges crowd to calm down during 'Housefull 5' promotions in Pune



NEW DELHI, June 2: Bollywood actor Akshay Kumar had to intervene and calm down the crowd during the promotions of his upcoming film "Housefull 5" in Pune.

Kumar visited a mall in the city alongside co-stars Nana Patekar, Jacqueline Fernandez, Sonam Bajwa, Nargis Fakhri, Soundarya Sharma, and Fardeen Khan on Sunday for an event. But the situation soon went out of control as the excited crowd gathered around to catch a glimpse of the actors.

In videos that have surfaced online, a lady can be seen crying, while another individual complained of breathlessness while trying to make his way out of the crowd.

Kumar took over the microphone to address the situation and requested the public not to push and stay calm. "Aap log ko yahan se jana padega. Aap dhakka dhukki mat kariye. Haath jod ke vinanti karta hoon, yaha auratein hai, bacche hai (You will have to leave. Don't push... I am requesting with folded hands as women and children are present here). I request everyone," he is heard saying in the video.

Produced by Sajid Nadiadwala's production banner Nadiadwala Grandson Entertainment, the upcoming film is the fifth installment of the "Housefull" franchise.

It is directed by Tarun Mansukhani of "Dostana" fame and is slated to hit the big screen on Friday. (PTI)

## Let Kamal Haasan go to court, but no theatres in Karnataka will screen 'Thug Life': KFCC

BENGALURU, June 2: Let actor Kamal Haasan go to court, but no theatres in Karnataka will screen "Thug Life", Karnataka Film Chamber of Commerce president M Narasimhalu said on Monday.

He was reacting to the news that the co-producer of the film, Raaj Kamal International, had approached the court for protection. Speaking to PTI Videos, Narasimhalu said they only knew about Haasan's production house approaching the Karnataka High Court after it was reported in the media.

"We will also talk to our legal team. This is not just a film industry issue; this has become a state and language issue. We have received a letter from the government regarding this. So everyone, including pro-Kannada organisations, politicians and the people of the state, has demanded an apology. Let them go to court. We have not done anything against the law. Here, none of our theatres will screen it," said Narasimhalu.

He said the distributors had informed him that they would arrive at a decision on Tuesday after speaking to Haasan, who is right now in Dubai, promoting the film.

"So, after talking to him, they will tell us their decision. We will also discuss the court protection move and take a decision," said Narasimhalu, adding that even the South Indian Film Chamber of Commerce has tried reaching out to Haasan.

The actor moved the Karnataka High Court on Monday requesting

protection to ensure the smooth release of film 'Thug Life' in the state.

The move comes in response to the KFCC recent announcement that it would not permit the screening of the film in Karnataka unless Haasan issues a public apology for his comment suggesting that Kan-



nada evolved from Tamil. The actor-politician had clarified that his remarks on Kannada were said out of love and that "love will never apologise". (PTI)

## INDIA-BORN RESTAURATEUR ASMA KHAN AMONG 195 WOMEN FEATURES IN RECORD-SETTING SONG



NEW DELHI, June 2: India-born British restaurateur Asma Khan is among women from 195 countries who have featured in the "195" song which has entered the Guinness World Records for most nationalities to contribute vocals to a musical recording.

The song has been produced to raise awareness about gender equality and to ignite a global movement to uplift people through the transformative power of sound healing frequencies.

The Frequency School, co-founded by US Grammy-nominated and multi-platinum music producer Maejor, Martina Fuchs, Kingsley M, Brandon Lee and Aaron Dawson, has produced the powerful and universal campaign which premiered during the 55th Annual Meeting of the World Economic Forum in Davos-Klosters, Switzerland, from January 20 to 24. "It has always been my dream to produce the first song in history featuring every country on the planet. Our vision was to unite 195 ordinary women from all walks of life in this pioneering and groundbreaking initiative to advocate for

gender equality and the rights of women and girls, and to help people struggling with mental health issues," said Fuchs, who is also the executive producer of "195".

"Breaking this record is only the beginning, we are on a global mission to make our world a more peaceful place," she said.

Asma Khan, an immigrant to the UK and star of Netflix's Chef's Table, is one of the UK's most prominent female chefs.

She is the founder and owner of Darjeeling Express, a well-known London-based Indian restaurant known for its all-female kitchen and homestyle Indian cuisine. The restaurant features dishes from Khan's family recipes and the cooking traditions of her upbringing in Kolkata.

In 2024, TIME magazine named her one of the world's 100 most influential people. She is a chef advocate for the UN World Food Programme and holds honorary fellowships from Queen's College, Oxford, and King's College, London, where she earned a PhD in British Constitutional Law. (PTI)

## Mark Hamill won't essay Luke Skywalker again: I had my time

LOS ANGELES, June 2: Hollywood actor Mark Hamill, known for portraying Luke Skywalker in the first three franchise-spawning "Star Wars" films, said he is done with the character and has no plans to essay him anymore.

In an interview with 'ComicBook', the actor said he is grateful to the director, George Lucas, for letting him be a part of the franchise. But he "had his time" with the role. "I am so grateful to George (Lucas) for letting me be a part of that back in the day, the humble days when George called 'Star Wars' 'the most expensive low-budget movie ever made,'" Hamill said. "We never expected it to become a permanent franchise and a part of pop culture like that. But my deal is, I had my time. I'm appreciative of that, but I think they should focus on the future and all the new characters."

The 73-year-old actor played Skywalker for the first time in the 1977 "Star Wars" film. He later reprised his role in "The Empire Strikes Back" (1980) and "Return of the Jedi" (1983). The last film where he essayed the role was "Star Wars: The Last Jedi" (2017). But he also did a cameo in "Star Wars: The Rise of Skywalker" (2019). "And by the way... When I disappeared in (The Last Jedi), I left my robes behind. And there's no way I'm gonna appear as a naked force ghost. I'm just letting you know that right now," the actor jokingly added. Hamill will next feature in "The Long Walk". Directed by Francis Lawrence, the film also stars Ben Wang and Cooper Hoffman. It is slated to release in September and is based on the novel by Stephen King. (PTI)

## Many myths around C-section being easy option: Gauhar Khan on Suniel Shetty's comments

NEW DELHI, June 2: Gauhar Khan, known for her films such as "Rocket Singh: Salesman of the Year" and "Ishaqzaade", has criticised actor Suniel Shetty for calling C-section an easier option compared to natural childbirth.

Shetty recently praised daughter Athiya for opting to have a natural delivery at a time when "everybody wants the comfort of having a caesarean baby", a comment that led to a lot of criticism on social media. In the first episode of her podcast "MaaaNoraanjan", Gauhar spoke about Shetty's remarks and myths revolving around

the caesarean child birth.

"I want to like scream at the top of my voice and say, 'How could you say that? Like how?' There are so many myths around this topic, that if someone is having a C-section, it's the easier option. How can there be so much misinformation? And for a male celebrity to say that, who didn't go through pregnancy, didn't carry a child, doesn't know how painful C-section is," she said while responding to Shetty's comments.

In the podcast, Gauhar also revealed that she had a miscarriage before the birth of son Zehaan in 2023.

"There's one thing I never told everyone. I did have a miscarriage before Zehaan. What should I tell you about that feeling? It's impossible to describe it. It was a pregnancy, I lost the baby after almost 9 weeks. That loss was extremely difficult," she said.

The actor, who is married to Zaid Darbar, son of noted music composer Ismail Darbar, announced earlier this year that she is expecting her second child.

In an interview last month, Shetty praised daughter Athiya's decision to opt for a natural delivery.

"In a world where every-

body wants the comfort of having a caesarean baby, she chose not to do that and had a natural delivery. I remember how every nurse and paediatrician in the hospital said that it's unbelievable how she went through the whole process," Shetty said.

The actor, who faced a lot of criticism for his remarks, later told PTI that his words were "misrepresented" "If I am wrong, I have always been ready to say 'sorry' to the world, I have no ego... But, I know how I treat women... I am a responsible citizen of this country, I know what I say," he said. (PTI)





# SATWIK-CHIRAG LEAD CHARGE AS INDIAN SHUTTLERS EYE GLORY IN INDONESIA

**JAKARTA, June 2:** Former champions Satwiksairaj Rankireddy and Chirag Shetty will look to keep their comeback story on track as they spearhead India's challenge at the USD 1,450,000 Indonesia Open Super 1000 badminton tournament, beginning here on Tuesday.

The former world No. 1 pair, who returned to action after regaining fitness with a creditable semifinal finish at the Singapore Open last week, will be eager to go the distance this week and reclaim the trophy they won in 2023.

Currently ranked 27th, Satwik and Chirag are expected to inch closer to the top 20 following their exploits in Singapore. They will open their campaign against the Indonesian duo of Leo Rolly Candano and Bagas Maulana at Istora Senayan arena, the spiritual home of badminton. The conditions at Istora suit the Indians and a win could set up a potential clash with their nemesis, Malaysia's Aaron Chia and Soh Wooi Yik, who ended their run last week and enjoy a dominant



record against the Indian duo.

The two had missed last few weeks of action due to Satwik's health issues and Chirag's lingering back injury, which took time to heal.

However, the star pair displayed their trademark brilliance last week when they outclassed the world No. 1 Malaysian duo of Goh Sze Fei and Nur Izzuddin with a tactical masterclass en route to the semifinals. Two-time Olympic medallist P. V. Sindhu will also aim for a deep run following a string of underwhelming performances this year.

The 29-year-old suffered a hamstring injury during training in Guwahati in February, which ruled her out of the Asia Team Championships. Since returning, she has lost matches to players such as Thuy Linh Nguyen, Putri Kusuma Wardani, and Kim Ga Eun to make early exit from tournaments. Last week, the 2022 Commonwealth Games champion showed glimpses of her former self before narrowly going down to Tokyo Olympic champion Chen Yu Fei of China in

the second round.

With new Indonesian coach Irwansyah Adi Pratama in her corner, Sindhu will hope to rediscover her rhythm when she faces a familiar foe in former world champion Nozomi Okuhara of Japan.

The duo has shared several nail-biting encounters over the years, with a close head-to-head record reflecting their fierce rivalry. Tuesday's match promises to be another gripping contest as both players attempt to reclaim their stature in world badminton. A win could pit Sindhu, the 2019 World Champion, against Thailand's Pornpawee Chochuwong in the second round.

Among others in women's singles, Anupama Upadhyaya will take on Korea's Kim Ga Eun, Rakshittha Sree Ramraj faces Thailand's left-hander Supanida Katethong, while Malvika Bansod meets Indonesia's Putri Kusuma Wardani.

In the men's singles, HS Prannoy, a 2023 World Championships bronze medallist, will look to regain form when he takes on Indonesia's Alwi Farhan. (PTI)

*Coach Ram Kumar Samanta's students shine at Int'l Ring Fight C'ship*



**HT Bureau**

**GUWAHATI, June 2:** Ram Kumar Samanta, a black belt holder in IAKO Kickboxing and a Kung Fu master, is a dedicated martial arts instructor based in Namsai and trains 25 students of various age groups and skill levels at the Satsanagar Football Field. His commitment to martial arts and his students has earned him widespread respect in the local community.

In 2022, he earned his black belt at the National Kickboxing Championship held in Odisha, cementing his status as a seasoned martial artist.

Recently, six of his students participated in the 1st International Ring Fight Championship 2025, held from May 23 to 26 at G.C.P.E. College, Domaguda, Telangana. The prestigious event featured participants from several countries, including Nepal and Bhutan, promoting international sportsmanship. The championship was sponsored by Matta Venkataiah Goud.

Four of Samanta's students brought home silver medals in their respective categories - Gorav Samanta secured 2nd place, Silver medal (Under 35-40 years); Chou Dhamma Raja Hopak, secured 2nd place, silver medal (Under 31-35 years); Nipul Bora, secured 2nd place, silver medal (Under 61-65 years); Gidion Bhengra, secured 2nd place, silver medal (Under 65-69 years). This achievement reflects the students' dedication and the outstanding mentorship of Ram Kumar Samanta.

*Bishnu Ram Nunisa honoured with Kriya Saurabh Bota*

**HT Bureau**

**GUWAHATI, June 2:** Celebrated sports organiser Dr. Bishnu Ram Nunisa was conferred with the Kriya Saurabh Bota by Abhinandan Sanskritik Goshti at Kalakshetra, here, on May 31. This prestigious honour was bestowed in the esteemed presence of eminent dignitaries and stalwarts from Assam's cultural and intellectual spheres.

The event was graced by Dr. B. Kalyan Chakraborty, IAS, Additional Chief Secretary to the Government of Assam; Padma Shri Dr. Surjya Kanta Hazarika, former President of the Assam Sahitya Sabha; Nuruddin Ahmed, Sangeet Natak Akademi Awardee; celebrated Assamese novelist and Sahitya Akademi Awardee Jayanta Madhab Bora; renowned singer Dr. Anjan Jyoti Choudhury; another awardee, eminent litterateur and educationist Dr. Dayananda Pathak; and distinguished Assamese artist Dipen Baruah.

*Gukesh turns tables; Carlsen bangs one after Indian triumphs in Norway Chess showdown*



**STAVANGER, June 2:** World champion D Gukesh got his revenge on Magnus Carlsen as he pounced on a blunder by the world no.1 to defeat him for the first time in a classical game, leaving the Norwegian superstar so frustrated that he banged his fist on the board after Round 6 of Norway Chess Tournament here.

The win on Sunday propelled 19-year-old Gukesh to third position with 8.5 points and he is just one point shy of joint leaders Carlsen and American Grandmaster Fabiano Caruana. "There wasn't much I could do. It was just clearly lost (his position)...luckily he (Carlsen) got into a time scramble," the reticent Chennai-lad said after the eagerly-watched contest.

"First Classical win over Magnus, not the way I expected (or) wanted it to be but I will take it. I was just trying to make moves (today) which kind of were tricky for him," he explained. "...99 out of 100 times I would lose... just a lucky day," Gukesh later told the tournament broadcasters. Five-time world champion Carlsen seemed to have the upper-hand almost throughout the four-hour-long contest but a critical mistake allowed Gukesh to turn the tables on the Norwegian and secure a remarkable win.

Carlsen realised his mistake but by then it was too late. The Norwegian superstar vented his frustration by banging his fist on the table, causing the chess board to be dis-

shevelled.

Disbelief and frustration was writ large on his face as he shook hands with Gukesh before placing all the pieces back on the board and walking away patting the winner on the back. Gukesh was calm personified amid all this. He closed his eyes for a moment after the rather tense handshake with a clearly upset Carlsen. The victory had come after a crushing Round 1 loss to iconic player which had cast a shadow on whether Gukesh would be able to overcome Carlsen's challenge in the reverse game.

Arjun Erigaisi, following an Armageddon tie-break win against China's Wei Yi, is tied fourth with Hikaru Nakamura on 7.5 points in a tournament where virtually all the six players have a chance of winning the prestigious title.

Carlsen, playing with black pieces, had earlier outplayed Gukesh with a near-perfect game. But the Indian kept prolonging the proceedings by finding the right moves to survive.

Eventually, Carlsen dropped his knight, and Gukesh pounced on his opponent's error to go for the kill.

"One thing I learned from this tournament was time scrambles can go out of control," said Gukesh.

On his loss in Round 1 despite being in an advantageous position, Gukesh said, "I don't know, I'm still kind of shaken from that game. I don't know what happened, basically. (PTI)

## Joe Root hits 166 not out to lead England to series win against WI

**CARDIFF, June 2:** Joe Root hit a stunning 166 not out as England beat West Indies by three wickets at Sophia Gardens in the second ODI on Sunday to clinch the series.

England scored 312-7 with seven balls remaining in reply to West Indies' 308 all out in 47.4 overs — led by Keacy Carty's 103.

After winning the toss and putting on a ragged display in the field with four dropped catches and two missed runouts, England was reeling in its chase on 2-2 and 133-5.

But Root thumped two sixes and 21 fours, putting on 143 in 121 balls alongside Will Jacks, who made a vital 49, to lift England into an unassailable 2-0 lead in the three-match series.

Root leapfrogged Eoin Morgan to become England's all-time leading ODI run-scorer during his 139-ball innings. Root has 7,082 runs, passing Morgan's tally of 6,957.



"I want to give as much as I can for England for as long as I can," Root said. "I've still got a lot to give and a lot more runs in there and, hopefully, an innings like that shows that."

England's Harry Brook, who scored 47, enjoyed his first series win since becoming full-time white-ball captain.

Brandon King (59) and Shai

Hope (78) backed up Carty but England fought back thanks to 4-63 from Adil Rashid and Saqib Mahmood's 3-37 as the Windies lost its last eight wickets for 103.

It seemed that total would be enough to set up a decider at the Oval on Tuesday but Root's 18th ODI hundred and his highest score in the format got England over the line.

## Iyer took his time in middle and we knew that was a danger: Mahela Jayawardene

**AHMEDABAD, June 2:** Mumbai Indians knew Shreyas Iyer giving himself time in the middle to bat long was a sign of "danger", said head coach Mahela Jayawardene after his side failed to execute in the knockout clash against Punjab Kings. Iyer struck as many as eight sixes and five fours to make 87 not out from only 41 balls to power Punjab Kings into the IPL final for the first time in 11 years.

"He took his time. He knew they would be a bit under pressure, so he was taking his time. We knew that was a danger," Jayawardene told the media after the after wicket loss on Sunday night.

"As long as we didn't give him that partnership with Nehal (Wadhwa), we would have been able to squeeze through because he would have had to go (out to at-

tack) early, not wait that long."

"He got Nehal to do the bulk of the work at that point, so that shows the experience, and he knew he had to take the game deep and he did. We were trying those options with the wickets, but it just didn't work for us today," Jayawardene added.

A former Mumbai Indians player, Wadhwa (48 off 29 balls) consolidated for Punjab Kings with a robust 84-run stand for the fourth wicket to turn the tables with Iyer at the helm, while also making the most of two lifelines he got in form of dropped catches.

Jayawardene said MI had a good campaign after a poor start to this season. "It was a good campaign for us, the way we started, and how we regrouped as a team and had played some really, really good cricket," he said.

"We had our opportunities getting to the playoffs and we had a really good game first up (Eliminator) and even today I thought we played some good cricket, except for Kings playing better cricket than us, especially with the bat."

Jayawardene heaped praise on their batting mainstay Suryakumar Yadav who showed remarkable consistency throughout the tournament to finish with 717 runs. His tally marked the first time any MI batter scored 700 or more runs in an IPL season. "Sky has been brilliant, very consistent," Jayawardene said.

"Reading the game, especially in those situations. He was very, very good in many different conditions as well, that's where quality of the player stands out."

"For him to be that consistent in playing in different surfaces,

different bowling attacks, shows what a quality T20 batsman he is, especially a lot of the times it took the spinners down pretty well and that role was pretty crucial for us," he added.

The head coach's assessed that MI did not get as many runs as they could probably have got which was also among the reasons for their defeat. "We probably left a bit of runs on the park as well with the bat. We lost our way after having that start. It was (losing) back to back wickets probably (which) slowed us down a little bit," he said.

"But I thought 200 was still a good score in a qualifier... the pressure. We picked up those wickets as well up front and a few mistakes cost us the game and the bowling also, the execution wasn't up to the standards as well," he added. (PTI)

## French Open: Carlos Alcaraz shows sportsmanship by conceding a point in win over Ben Shelton

**PARIS, June 2:** Carlos Alcaraz conjured up what initially appeared — to the chair umpire, to everyone watching in the stands or on TV and to his opponent, Ben Shelton — a remarkable lunging volley to win a point at the French Open.

But Alcaraz knew it shouldn't count. So after briefly thinking about it, the defending champion at Roland-Garros fessed up and called himself for breaking the rules, handing the point to Shelton during what would become a 7-6 (8), 6-3, 4-6, 6-4 victory for Alcaraz in the fourth round.

"It's a shame, because it was the Hot Shot of the day," Alcaraz said later with a smile.

"Crazy shot," Shelton said. Here's what happened: Early in the second set, Shelton whipped a passing shot well out of Alcaraz's reach up at the net.

So Alcaraz flung his racket — and, as his equipment flipped through the air, its strings somehow not only made contact with the ball but sent it back over the net and onto the other side of the court.

Initially, the second-seeded Alcaraz was awarded the point. But he went over to the chair umpire to admit that he wasn't holding his racket when it touched the ball.

That's not allowed, so he conceded the point to Shelton, an American seeded 13th.

When the official informed the Court Philippe-Chatrier crowd what had happened, Alcaraz was given a round of applause.

"I thought, 'OK, I could not say anything.' But I would have felt guilty if I didn't say anything," Alcaraz explained. "It's just about if I know that

I didn't (do), or I did, a wrong thing. ... I have to say: I have to be honest with myself. I have to be honest with Ben, with everyone. ... It's just about the respect we have against each other, and I think that sports, in general, should be like this."

It came at what could have been a critical moment, because instead of leading 40-30 on his serve, Alcaraz was now down 30-40, giving Shelton his first break point of the match.

But Alcaraz saved that one — and five others in that 20-point game — along the way to taking a two-set lead in an entertaining matchup between a pair of 22-year-olds who hit the ball hard.

"I thought it was clean, you know? I thought he hit the volley, and (then) the racket flew out of his hand," Shelton said. "I was kind of surprised that he



was, like, No, I let go of the racket and threw it." ... Obviously a guy with a lot of sportsmanship."

Shelton, twice a semifinalist at majors, delivered serves at up to 143 mph (230 kph) and forehands at up to 116 mph (187 kph). Alcaraz, already a four-time Grand Slam champion, showed off various parts of his repertoire.

It was tighter than the score might indicate: Shelton held three opportunities to own the opening set, leading in the tiebreaker at 6-4, 6-5 and 7-6. Take any of the subsequent points, and Shelton would own that set.

But Alcaraz — who meets No. 12 Tommy Paul of the U.S. in the quarterfinals Tuesday — saved the first with a service winner. Shelton netted a backhand on the next.

And the last ended with Shelton smacking a backhand right at the body of Alcaraz, who was up at the net and contorted himself in order to chop a drop volley winner.

Alcaraz then converted his second set point, closing a 15-stroke exchange with a down-the-line forehand that drew a mistake from Shelton.

The third set went to Shelton when Alcaraz put a forehand into the net, and the big-swinging American punched the air, then his chest, and screamed: "Let's go, baby! Come on!"

The fourth swung Alcaraz's way when he used a drop shot winner to set up a break point that he claimed for a 2-1 edge and, after a total of 3 hours, 19 minutes, he was able to finish off an 11th consecutive win at Roland-Garros. (AP)



## Don't want to play for selfish reasons: Maxwell retires from ODIs to focus on T20 cricket



**MELBOURNE, June 2:** Australian all-rounder Glenn Maxwell, on Monday retired from ODIs to focus on next year's T20 World Cup in India and Sri Lanka, saying that he did not want to "play for selfish reasons" given how his body has been struggling to hold up.

The 36-year-old explosive batter and often underestimated off-spin bowler played 149 ODI matches for Australia including what is regarded by many the greatest one-day innings of all-time.

Maxwell came in against Afghanistan at the 2023 World Cup with his side reeling at 7-91. In a high-pressure situation and battling severe cramps in searing heat, he smashed 201 off just 128 balls to snatch victory from jaws of defeat. Australia went on to win the World Cup, beating favourites India in Ahmedabad.

"I felt like I was letting the team down a little bit with how body was reacting to the conditions. I had a good chat with (Chair of Selectors) George Bailey and I asked him what his thoughts were going forward," he told the 'Final Word Podcast'.

"We talked about the 2027 World Cup and I said to him 'I don't think I am going to make that, it's time to start planning for people in my position to have a crack at it and make the position their own'."

Maxwell had recently returned from an IPL stint with Punjab Kings that was cut short by a broken finger.

"I always said I wasn't going to hand my position over if I felt like I was still good enough to play. I didn't want to just hold on for a couple of series and almost play for selfish reasons," said the explosive batter.

Maxwell's strike rate of 126 is the second highest in ODI

cricket, behind only the West Indian heavy hitter Andre Russell. He has four hundreds and 23 half centuries along with 77 wickets.

"Maxwell has made the decision to prioritise his preparation for the 2026 ICC Men's T20 World Cup in India and Sri Lanka, the Big Bash League and his other global commitments," Cricket Australia said in a statement.

Maxwell played many incredible games across his decorated one-day career which included two ODI World Cup wins. The announcement marks second significant retirement of an Australian team member following Marcus Stoinis' decision to quit ODI cricket earlier this year.

"I think back to right at the start I was picked ahead of my time and out of the blue. I was just proud just to be playing a couple of games for Australia. I thought I was just going to have that," said Maxwell reflecting on his ODI career.

"Since then, I have been able to go through the up and downs of being dropped, being brought back, playing in a few World Cups and being a part of some great teams."

Todd Greenberg, CA Chief Executive congratulated Maxwell an exciting and influential one day international career.

"Glenn's ballistic batting has lit up the cricket world and been one of the cornerstones of Australia's continued success in the 50 over game, including his heroic role in the 2023 World Cup triumph," he said.

"As with other greats of the game, crowds have flocked to grounds just to watch Glenn bat and children have been inspired to pick up a bat after seeing him put opposition attacks to the sword with a breathtaking array of shots."

Former Australia captain and current chief selector George Bailey too spoke glowingly of Maxwell.

"Glenn will be known as one of the one-day game's most dynamic players, who had key roles in two ODI World Cup victories."

"His level of natural talent and skill is remarkable. Fortunately, he still has much to offer Australia in the T20 format. All things going well he will be pivotal in the next 12 months as we build toward the World Cup early next year," said Bailey. (PTI)

## RCB and Virat Kohli's 18-year wait meets Punjab Kings' tenacity as IPL set to crown new winner

**AHMEDABAD, June 2:** Virat Kohli's nearly two-decade long agonising wait to lay hands on an IPL Trophy with Royal Challengers Bengaluru will be up against Shreyas Iyer's resolve to make first-time winners out of the tenacious Punjab Kings when the 18th season finale of the world's biggest T20 league unfolds here on Tuesday.

The summit clash here at the Narendra Modi Stadium could witness a thousands of fans donning jersey No.18 to support Kohli, who is in an IPL final for a fourth time overall.

The sentiments of the fans would indeed run high given it will be Kohli's last appearance on the cricket field for a while, having recently retired from Test cricket and India's next ODI assignment a few months away.

Parting ways with issues that plagued their previous campaigns, RCB have been clinical all the way through, coming into the final with an eight-wicket hammering of Punjab in a one-sided Qualifier 1.

Kohli (614 runs) has gone about his business like every other year, piling up runs at the top and continuing to lay platforms but where it has made the difference for RCB is that there's a lot more substance to their batting beyond the superstar.

Kohli has not been the only one to carry the focus and attention this year, rather he has quietly gone about his business in fortifying for RCB. Phil Salt is a perfect foil for the Indian superstar who goes all-out in his attack, while Mayank Agarwal, skipper Rajat Patidar and Jitesh Sharma are the trusted lieutenants of that batting line-up.

Since he has missed RCB's last two games, it remains to be seen if Tim David is fit for this contest as he forms a vital death overs batting pair with another burly hitter in Romario Shepherd.

Like Kohli in their batting, the calm and



composed Josh Hazlewood (21 wickets) has been at the helm of RCB's rise and the fourth highest wicket-taker and the Australian would want to add more to move up the ladder in one last game.

On their part, stung by that crushing defeat in their homeground at Mullanpur, Iyer's Kings showed no scars from that defeat as they knocked out five-time winners Mumbai Indians in Qualifier 2 to reach their first final after 11 years.

It's only fitting that PBKS and RCB, who finished at the top two positions respectively after a gruelling 70-match league round, have a crack at the trophy which has eluded them from the time the competition began.

Perennial finishers in the second half of the 10-team points table, Punjab Kings have staged a sensational turnaround with two

dogged personalities in captain Iyer and coach Ricky Ponting at the helm.

For Iyer (603 runs), a second consecutive appearance in an IPL final after winning it last year with Kolkata Knight Riders speaks volumes about his capabilities as a leader who marshals his troops as good as any other in the format.

It is, therefore, not a surprise to see Iyer being the only cricketer in the 18-year history of the tournament to have led three different teams in IPL finals, with Delhi Capitals being the third.

Iyer's perseverance is not the only quality that stands out for the 30-year-old Punjab captain but also the fact that he remains as hungry to win this IPL as he was when he began the journey with the franchise a few months ago.

In Prabhsimran Singh, Josh Inglis, Priyansh Arya and Shashank Singh, Iyer has adequate support to hold his fort staunchly and even lead aggressive attacks on the opposition camp.

Punjab's bowling, without Marcus Jansen, did look a little depleted but having managed to keep a lid on Mumbai Indians' for the entirety of an innings on a batting-friendly wicket tells that there is more to it than what has been perceived.

Yuzvendra Chahal is still dealing with a hand injury and was not at his absolute best in the Qualifier 2 but Punjab would need him to fire against his former franchise.

While there are no predictions of rains impacting the contest, an additional hour to the playtime extending the duration to 120 minutes and having a reserve day in the final are the measures in place to ensure the contest is completed.

**Teams:**

**Royal Challengers Bengaluru:** Rajat Patidar (c), Virat Kohli, Phil Salt (wk), Jitesh Sharma (wk), Devdutt Padikkal, Swastik Chhikara, Liam Livingstone, Krunal Pandya, Swapnil Singh, Tim David, Romario Shepherd, Manoj Bhandage, Josh Hazlewood, Rasikh Salam Dar, Suyash Sharma, Bhuvneshwar Kumar, Nuwan Thushara, Lungi Ngidi, Abhinandan Singh, Mohit Rathore, Yash Dayal.

**Punjab Kings:** Shreyas Iyer (c), Nehal Wadhwa, Vishnu Vinod (wk), Josh Inglis (wk), Harnoor Pannu, Pyla Avinash, Prabhsimran Singh (wk), Shashank Singh, Marcus Stoinis, Harpreet Brar, Azmatullah Omarzai, Priyansh Arya, Aaron Hardie, Musheer Khan, Suryansh Shedge, Mitch Owen, Arshdeep Singh, Yuzvendra Chahal, Vyshak Vijaykumar, Yash Thakur, Kudeep Sen, Xavier Bartlett, Pravin Dubey, Kyle Jamieson.

Match starts at 7:30pm IST. (PTI)

## Klaasen announces retirement from international cricket

**CAPE TOWN, June 2:** South African power-hitter Heinrich Klaasen on Monday announced his retirement from all forms of international cricket with immediate effect as he aims to strike a work-life balance, prioritising his commitments in franchise leagues across the globe.

The 33-year-old Klaasen had announced his retirement from Test cricket in January last year and has now also decided to quit the white ball formats having represented the Proteas in 4 Tests, 60 ODIs and 58 T20Is in which he scored 2764 runs.

"It is a sad day for me as I announce that I have decided to step away from international cricket. It took me a long time to decide what's best for me and my family for the future. It was truly a very difficult decision but also one that I have absolute peace with," Klaasen announced on his Instagram.

One of the most sought after batters in the T20 leagues, Klaasen had recently represented Sunrisers Hyderabad in the IPL and scored a ton in the concluding league game. His next assignment will be Major League Cricket in the United States for Seattle Orcas later this month. Klaasen, who played in the T20 World Cup final against India, termed playing for the national team as his "biggest privilege".

"From the first day, it was the biggest privilege representing my country and it was everything that I have worked for

and dreamed about as a young boy," Klaasen said in his emotional statement.

Someone who is known for his towering sixes and game-changing knocks as a finisher in the T20 universe, the decision is hardly surprising as the hectic international calendar is taking a toll on physical and mental health of the players.

There has been multiple surveys that have pointed at this trend where barring India whose active male cricketers are not allowed to ply their trade in other leagues, top players from other countries would explore options of turning full-fledged freelancers.

"I look forward to spending more time with my family as this decision will allow me to do so."

Klaasen fondly remembered the friendships forged on a day when another white ball exponent Glenn Maxwell quit ODIs.

"I have made great friendships and relationships that I will treasure for life. Playing for the Proteas gave me the opportunity to meet great people that changed my life, and to those people I can't say thank you enough. My road to wearing the Proteas shirt was different than most and there were certain coaches in my career that kept believing in me - to them I will always be grateful."

"To have played with the Proteas badge on my chest was and will always be the biggest honour in my career," he concluded. (PTI)



## PCB makes it mandatory for contracted players to compete in one domestic event

**LAHORE, June 2:** The Pakistan Cricket Board (PCB) on Monday made it mandatory for all centrally-contracted and international players to play at least one domestic event during the season when free from national commitments.

The PCB felt that the only way to improve the quality of players was to make the domestic structure more competitive.

PCB Chairman Mohsin Naqvi, who chaired the meeting, said it would allow domestic players and youngsters to play alongside international players and share dressing room with them.

"It will benefit the domestic players in the long run and be prepared for what to expect at the International level," he said.

The meeting was attended by national team's new white-ball head coach, Mike Hesson, Salman Ali Agha, the captain of the T20 side, Usman Wahla, the head of international cricket affairs and Aaqib Javed the Director National Cricket Academy. The PCB also decided to start work on issuance of new central contracts for 2025-26 and meet the July 30 deadline, having missed it in last two years.

The PCB last year introduced new first class, ODI and T20 competitions known as the Champions Cup and even hired five mentors for all five teams at hefty salaries but decided to scrap the Champions Cup for the coming domestic season.

Usman Wahla also confirmed the international commitments for the next six months including home series against South Africa and Sri Lanka and tours to West Indies and Bangladesh. (PTI)

## Kohli's aggression, Hardik's resilience inspiring young TT player Ankur



**AHMEDABAD, June 2:** An ardent fan of Virat Kohli and Hardik Pandya, rising Indian paddler Ankur Bhattacharjee once aspired to be a cricketer before shifting to table tennis, but his love for cricket still remains.

The 18-year-old is big admirer of Kohli's aggression and Hardik's mental strength and wants to imbibe those qualities into his game.

"There is a lot of aggression in my game, so I admire Virat Kohli sir's aggressive attitude. I also love Hardik Pandya sir's mental strength. I follow both a lot and try to bring their qualities into my game," Ankur told PTI.

Despite turning pro in table tennis, his love for cricket still remains and he doesn't miss a single India match.

But after taking up table tennis, his only goal was to fulfil his parents' dream.

"I love cricket a lot and try not to miss a single India match. I wanted to be a cricketer but my father and mother both were table tennis players and they are my personal coach too," Ankur said.

"My mother pressured me by saying everyone plays cricket, you play table tennis. Then I started playing and I loved it."

"Both my father (Angshuman Bhattacharjee) and mother (Kuntali Bhattacharjee) were national level players."

Ankur is currently participating in the sixth season of the Ultimate Table Tennis League for Kolkata Thunder Blades.

"This year I feel our team is stronger

than last year. My form is also better than last year, so I feel we can win the title this year," he said.

"UTT is a big platform for youngsters, I feel more such tournaments like UTT should happen. Like last year before playing UTT my India ranking was out of 10, but now I am India ranking 2 in singles."

"I have just returned after playing World Championships and had a decent performance there."

Ankur had already stamped his authority at the junior level, having won the under-19 boys singles title at the Youth National Championships for three years in a row. He has also won three consecutive bronze medals at the Junior Asian Championships.

"I played 6 tournaments at youth level this year and won all of them. This is my first year at senior level and till now I feel I am performing well but I need to take this to the next level," he said.

Just like any other athlete, Ankur's target is to finish on the podium in big international tournaments in future.

"Just came back after playing World Championships, so the next target is to win a medal for India at Asian Championships in Bhubaneswar this year," he said.

"Just like everyone, my future goal is to win Olympic gold but it is easier said than done. I am not thinking about it now. I am taking one step at a time."

Besides being a table tennis player, Ankur also writes poems in Bengali, a quality which he got from his grandfather.

"I used to write a lot earlier and even written for some books as well. I got inspired to write from my grandfather who was a poet. Now I don't get much time to write but do try as and when I can," he said. (PTI)

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