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Flood situation critical, 7 lakh affected

Death toll mounts to 19 ● Train services in southern Assam affected

GUWAHATI, June 5: Assam's flood situation remained critical on Thursday, with nearly seven lakh people affected in 21 districts and the water level of major rivers showing a rising trend, officials said.

The death toll in the first wave of the floods and landslides rose to 19, with two deaths reported on Wednesday. One person went missing in the Cachar district.

Nine major rivers, including the Brahmaputra at three places, were flowing above the danger level across the state, while River Barak was flowing above the danger mark in the Cachar district, and its tributaries were also showing a rising trend, with some rivers flowing above the red mark.

The current wave of floods has affected 1,494 villages in 66 revenue circles, the highest of 339 villages in Sribhum, 189 in Nagaon, 166 in Cachar and 156 in Hailakandi districts. Sribhum is

the worst affected since a population of 2,59,601 reeling under flood water, followed by Hailakandi with 1,72,439 and Nagaon with 1,02,716, according to the bulletin of the Assam State Disaster Management Authority (ASDMA). The total crop area under flood water till now is 14977.99 hectares.

Around 5,15,737 animals have been affected.

The district authorities have opened 405 relief camps where 41,317 inmates have taken shelter. They have also opened 1,12,324 relief distribution centres. Damage to roads, bridges, educational institutions, Anganwadi centres, electricity poles and other infrastructure was reported from various parts of the state.

The affected districts are Hailakandi, Dibrugarh, Morigaon, Hojai, Kamrup, Nagaon, Golaghat, Biwanath, Cachar, Sribhum, Sonitpur, Lakhimpur, Darrang,



Barpeta, Goalpara, South Salmara, Karbi Anglong West, Dima Hasao, Sivasagar, Kamrup (Metro) and Dhemajai.

A Northeast Frontier Railway (NFR) spokesperson said train services in various parts of southern Assam have been affected due to the rising water level at the rail-

way tracks and waterlogging at washing pits, particularly in Silchar.

Railway personnel are working round-the-clock to clear the tracks, the spokesperson said. Some short-distance passenger trains have been cancelled. But long-distance trains are operating, the spokesper-

son added.

The rising water of the Brahmaputra and River Kohora has inundated vast tracts of Kaziranga National Park, the UNESCO World Heritage site, an official said. Flood water has inundated 23 camps so far, with animals taking shelter in elevated areas. In some areas, it is showing a receding trend.

Some animals, particularly deer, are moving towards the highlands in Karbi Anglong by crossing the NH-37.

Barricades have been set up at several places along the highway with traffic regulated and vehicles directed to maintain the speed limit below 40 km per hour, the official said. Patrolling by forest personnel has been intensified both inside and outside the Park. Three revenue circles in Kamrup and Kamrup (Metro) are reeling under flood with 1,637 people affected in six villages. (CONTD. ON PAGE-2)

Himanta slams Rahul over 'surrender Modi' remark

HT Bureau

GUWAHATI, June 5: Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma launched a blistering attack on Congress leader Rahul Gandhi on Thursday, criticising what he called the "audacity" of mocking Prime Minister Narendra Modi as "Surrender Modi."

The BJP leader's sharp response followed Gandhi's jibe amid ongoing political debates on national security and foreign policy, particularly after the successful Operation Sindoor.

Taking to the social media platform X, Sarma accused the Congress party of a longstanding history of compromising India's territorial and strategic interests. In a detailed post, he offered what he described as a "reality check" on the Congress legacy, citing decisions by leaders ranging from Jawaharlal Nehru during the 1947-48 Kashmir conflict and the 1962 war with China, to the release of

93,000 Pakistani POWs after the 1971 Bangladesh Liberation War under Indira Gandhi.

"Let's jog Rahul Gandhi's memory as to which party and family surrendered India's interests and backstabbed its people," Sarma wrote, asserting that Nehru "gifted away" what is now Pakistan-occupied Kashmir by halting military operations and turning to the United Nations.

Sarma's post also criticised other Congress-era decisions, such as the delay of nuclear tests under US pressure in the 1990s, the lack of retaliation after the 26/11 Mumbai attacks, and the 2009 Sharm El-Sheikh joint statement referencing Baluchistan—a move widely seen as a diplomatic misstep.

He further alleged that the UPA government attempted territorial concessions, including a plan to hand over Sir Creek to Pakistan, which he claimed was blocked only due to (CONTD. ON PAGE-2)

Guwahati important healthcare hub for NE, ASEAN bloc: Himanta

GUWAHATI, June 5: Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma on Thursday asserted that Guwahati is an important healthcare hub for the northeast and the ASEAN bloc, and it presents an opportunity to strengthen the region's medical infrastructure.

The state government has a deep focus on creating healthcare facilities as well as more accessible medical education, and it will set up 24 medical colleges across the state, Sarma said, while inaugurating the Neotia Bhagirathi Woman and Childcare Centre here.

Considering the ever-increasing medical needs of people, the Assam government has decided to augment the existing facilities of Gauhati Medical College and Hospital and transform it into a 5,000-bed healthcare unit, he said.

The Woman and Childcare Centre will be a state-of-the-art facility, and attempts have been made to bring advanced clinical care, cutting-edge technology, and specialised services to women and children — not only in Assam but across the neighbouring states — he said. "This 100-bed facility, dedi-

cated to women and children, is expected to provide specialised, high-quality care across obstetrics, gynaecology, neonatology, infertility and paediatrics," the CM said.

Sarma said Assam holds immense potential for growth in the healthcare sector, with a significant need for accessible, advanced medical services.

Chairman of Ambuja Neotia Group, Harshavardhan Neotia, said the inauguration of the centre in Guwahati marks a significant milestone for the company, as it expands (CONTD. ON PAGE-2)

Caste census to benefit Assam's indigenous Muslim community: CM

GUWAHATI, June 5: Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma on Thursday said that the caste census will greatly benefit the indigenous Muslim community living in both the Brahmaputra and Barak Valley in the state.

The Centre on Wednesday announced that India's 16th Census with caste enumeration will be carried out in 2027. The indigenous Muslim communities of Assam have been demanding for a long time, a caste-based census to assert their distinct socio-cultural identities, the chief minister said on the sidelines of the World Environment Day programme here.

"The proposed caste enumeration in the upcoming national census is expected to fulfil their decades-old aspiration for formal recognition of their independent identity—distinct from broader religious classifica-



tions and migratory groupings," he said.

Communities such as the Goria, Moria, Deshi, Syed, and Jolha (Julha) Muslims of the Brahmaputra Valley, along with the (CONTD. ON PAGE-2)

59 tourists airlifted from north Sikkim as rescue ops resume

GANGTOK, June 5: Fifty-nine tourists were brought back to Gangtok from the rain-ravaged north Sikkim on Thursday morning as the rescue operations resumed after the weather cleared, officials said. They were among the 109 tourists stranded in north Sikkim's Lachung for nearly a week.

Two Mi-17V5 helicopters left for Chaten in north Sikkim from Pakyong airport near state capital Gangtok in the early morning after the weather cleared. While 39 tourists returned on one copter, 20 returned (CONTD. ON PAGE-2)

Himanta inaugurates Lovlina Boxing Academy in Guwahati

GUWAHATI, June 5: Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma on Thursday said that Olympic bronze medalist boxer Lovlina Borgohain is an icon for the youth, and hoped she will inspire many more to take up boxing as a viable career.

"Assam's emerging pugilists have a new destination to pursue their dreams - the Lovlina Boxing Academy - equipped with modern training facilities and it will prepare our youngsters for the next level," Sarma said after inaugurating it in North Guwahati.

The academy will nurture emerging talent and the state government will extend all possible help, he said. The state's sports department will extend ₹ 2 crore for infrastructure development, which will include a hostel, Sarma said.

The fee at the academy "has been kept at just ₹ 500", a decision aimed at ensuring that every aspiring athlete can afford to train and pursue their dreams, he said.

"Boxing, along with other sports, is a viable career option and we actively encourage the youth to pursue their passion in sports," the chief minister said. He also said the Assam govt was planning to construct residential hostels to accommodate over 2,000 athletes, as part of a major infrastructure development and the details will be announced soon.(CONTD. ON PAGE-2)

Nagaland MP supports demand for review of state's job reservation policy

KOHIMA, June 5: Nagaland's lone Lok Sabha MP S Supongmeren Jamir on Thursday voiced his support for a review of the state's job reservation policy, calling for equal opportunities for all communities.

Speaking to reporters on the sidelines of launching the 'Clean & Green Nagaland' campaign through his MPLADS funds on the occasion of World Environment Day here, Jamir acknowledged the concerns raised by five major tribal bodies of the state regarding the "outdated" nature of the current reservation framework.

"The five tribes stated that the policy has not been reviewed for more than 40 years. So now it is a policy matter," Jamir, also the state Congress president, said.

He expressed confidence that the state government holds a "good intention of giving equal opportunities to all the citizens of the

state", and hoped for positive reforms.

Initially, 25 per cent reservation in non-technical and non-gazetted posts in the state government was allocated to seven tribes for a period of 10 years.

These tribes were designated as 'backward' based on their educational and economic disadvantages and limited representation in state services. This reservation has since been increased to 37 per cent, of which 25 per cent is for seven eastern Nagaland backward tribes and 12 per cent for four other backward tribes. The push to review Nagaland's reservation policy intensified after five apex bodies of non-backward tribes -- Angami Public Organisation (APO), Chakhesang Public Organisation (CPO), Rengma Hoho, Zeliang People's Organisation (ZPO), and Pochury Hoho -- under the banner of the 'Five-Tribe Committee on (CONTD. ON PAGE-2)

Student held from Assam over extortion demand, death threat to rapper Emiway Bantai

MUMBAI, June 5: The Navi Mumbai police have arrested a student from Assam for allegedly demanding ₹ 1 crore from rapper Mohamad Bilal Shaikh, popular as Emiway Bantai, and making death threats, an official said on Wednesday.

According to the Coastal police, the accused, Arulv Rameshkumar Alohi (18), is a second-year Commerce student in Assam's Sonitpur

district.

He was taken into custody recently after police tracked him down from his digital footprints, the official said. Police have also learnt that the youngster had sent similar threat messages to other singers in the past. Alohi told the police that he wanted to make some quick money and become famous through this method, he said.

According to the police,

Emiway's office had received multiple WhatsApp messages from an unknown mobile number, demanding ₹ 1 crore. Claiming association with gangsters like Lawrence Bishnoi, Goldy Brar and Rohit Gadara, the sender threatened to "kill" the rapper if he did not pay up. The threat was issued to Emiway after he released a song dedicated to the late singer Sidhu (CONTD. ON PAGE-2)

CM also flagged off 130 vehicles for the various forest ranges and divisions of the state

Himanta urges people to plant trees for honouring mothers

GUWAHATI, June 5: Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma on Thursday urged all to plant a tree in honour of their mothers following Prime Minister Narendra Modi's call to do so.

Sarma also said that information about the loss of forest cover in the state can now be received in real-time with the help of a new portal, and immediate action would be taken.

The PM has inspired all to plant a tree in the name of their mothers and 'we in Assam should continue to plant trees throughout the year,' he said.

"I have launched a portal




today where people, after planting trees, can upload information about it and also the growth of the plant from

ment Day here.

Sarma said that he launched another portal where, with the help of Artificial Intelligence (AI) and satellite imagery, information about deforestation and loss of forest cover can be received in real-time and immediate action can be taken.


"Usually, we get information after the entire forest is depleted but this will help us to get information in real-time," he said.

He also handed over arms and ammunition to members of the third Forest Protection Battalion, formed after he assumed office as the chief minister, (CONTD. ON PAGE-2)



অসম চৰকাৰ

লোকপ্ৰিয় গোপীনাথ বৰদলৈদেৱৰ জন্মদিন








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Markets log gains for 2nd day on fresh foreign fund inflows, buying in Reliance, ICICI Bank

MUMBAI, June 5: Benchmark equity indices Sensex and Nifty rallied for the second day on the trot on Thursday, driven by buying in blue-chip stocks ICICI Bank and Reliance Industries amid fresh foreign capital inflows.

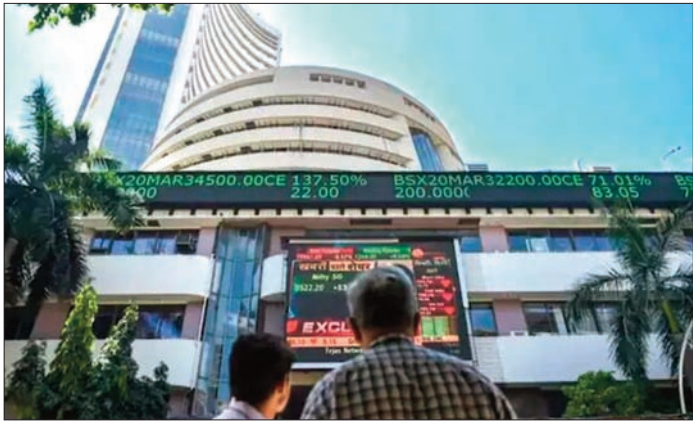
Besides, expectations of another interest rate cut in the RBI policy on Friday supported market sentiment, traders said.

After gaining over 900 points in the session, the 30-share BSE Sensex succumbed to profit booking to close 443.79 points or 0.55 per cent lower at 81,442.04. During the day, it jumped 912.88 points or 1.12 per cent to 81,911.13.

As many as 2,257 stocks advanced while 1,725 declined and 147 remained unchanged on the BSE. The NSE Nifty rose 130.70 points or 0.53 per cent to 24,750.90.

"Though profit-booking remains evident at higher levels, the benchmark indices are attempting to recover their momentum amid consolidation. With a weakening dollar index and volatile US bond yields, FIIs are turning net buyers again after the recent selloffs in anticipation of final trade negotiations.

"Despite global uncertainty, strong indicators of economic and corporate earnings growth are encouraging investors to adopt a buy-on-dip strategy. Moreover, markets are attentively awaiting upcoming central bank decisions, with a 25-



bps rate cut anticipated from both the ECB and RBI," Vinod Nair, Head of Research, Geojit Investments Limited, said.

Eternal was the biggest gainer in the Sensex pack, jumping 4.50 per cent, followed by Power Grid, ICICI Bank, Reliance Industries, UltraTech Cement, Adani Ports, Sun Pharma, ITC and Hindustan Unilever were among the winners.

In contrast, IndusInd Bank, Axis Bank, Bajaj Finserv and Bajaj Finance were among the laggards.

"Markets witnessed volatility on the weekly expiry day but managed to close in the green. A lack of strong cues from global markets led to a flat start for the Nifty, followed by a swift recovery in the first half. However, profit-taking in the latter half significantly trimmed the gains...." Ajit Mishra

— SVP, Research, Religare Broking Ltd, said. Foreign Institutional Investors (FIIs) turned buyers on Wednesday, as they bought equities worth ₹ 1,076.18 crore, according to exchange data.

"Nifty ended higher for the second straight session...Positive global cues and expectations of another interest rate cut in the RBI policy on Friday boosted market sentiment. "FIIs returned as net buyers on Wednesday after two consecutive days of selling, pumping in ₹ 1,076 crore into Indian equities. Renewed foreign inflows provided added comfort to the markets," Siddhartha Khemka, Head of Research, Wealth Management, Motilal Oswal Financial Services Ltd, said.

The BSE smallcap gauge climbed 0.65 per cent and the mid-cap index rallied 0.39 per cent.

Among sectoral indices, realty jumped 1.79 per cent, services (1.09 per cent), healthcare (0.88 per cent), consumer discretionary (0.73 per cent), industrials (0.60 per cent), commodities (0.51 per cent) and financial services (0.43 per cent).

On the other hand, auto and oil & gas were the laggards.

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

European markets were trading higher in mid-session deals.

US markets ended on a mixed note on Wednesday.

The Reserve Bank's rate-setting panel started its three-day brainstorming on monetary policy as expectations are high of a 25 bps or even a jumbo 50 bps rate cut to fuel economic growth amid uncertainties created by Trump's tariff moves. The decision of the Monetary Policy Committee (MPC), headed by Reserve Bank Governor Sanjay Malhotra, will be announced on Friday.

Global oil benchmark Brent crude climbed 0.35 per cent to USD 65.14 a barrel.

On Wednesday, the 30-share BSE Sensex climbed 260.74 points or 0.32 per cent to settle at 80,998.25. The Nifty went up 77.70 points or 0.32 per cent to 24,620.20. (PTI)

Silver price hit record of ₹ 1.04 lakh/kg; gold climbs ₹ 430/10 gm

NEW DELHI, June 5: Silver prices hit a lifetime high of ₹ 1,04,100 per kilogram in the national capital on Thursday, and gold prices jumped ₹ 430 in line with strong global cues, according to the All India Sarafa Association. Continuing the winning run for the fourth straight session, the white metal bounced ₹ 2,000 to hit a fresh peak of ₹ 1,04,100 per kilogram (inclusive of all taxes) in the local markets.

HDFC Securities' Senior Analyst of Commodities Saumil Gandhi said the "price of silver reached a new all-time high in the domestic market. The rally is supported by strong fundamentals, higher industrial demand, inflation hedging, and tight global supply."

On March 19, silver hit its previous all-time high of ₹ 1,03,500 per kg. Gold of 99.9 per cent purity appreciated ₹ 430 to ₹ 99,690 per 10 grams (inclusive of all taxes). The precious metal of 99.5 per cent purity increased ₹ 400 to ₹ 99,100 per 10 grams (inclusive of all taxes) on Thursday.

The most traded July contract for silver futures rallied by ₹ 3,833, or 3.78 per cent, to hit an all-time high of ₹ 1,05,213 per kg

on the Multi Commodity Exchange.

Additionally, gold futures for August contracts climbed ₹ 635 to ₹ 99,214 per 10 grams.

"Gold prices traded higher, supported by a weaker dollar and renewed safe-haven demand amid lingering tariff uncertainty and US debt concerns. Globally, gold scaled above USD 3,395 per ounce, while MCX gold gained to trade above ₹ 98,450," Jateen Trivedi, VP Research Analyst, Commodity and Currency at LKP Securities, said.

The broader sentiment in the bullion space remains positive, driven by geopolitical tensions and ongoing imbalance in global trade and financial dynamics, Trivedi added.

Meanwhile, spot gold in the international markets rose USD 21.58 per ounce, or 0.64 per cent, to USD 3,393.93 per ounce.

Also, spot silver went up nearly 4 per cent to trade at USD 35.80 per ounce in the overseas markets.

"Spot silver has surpassed the previous resistance level of USD 35 per ounce and is trading above that mark, reaching a 12-year high," Gandhi said. (PTI)

Declaration

I, Hironmoyee Nath, D/O Padmadhar Nath, resident of Kharupetia, Ward No. 2, Dist. Darrang (Assam), secretary National College of Law, solemnly affirm that I am a permanent resident of the said address and an Indian citizen by birth.

The National College of Law, offering LLB and BALLB courses under Bodoland University, Kokrajhar (Assam), has been renamed as Regional College of Law as per the Trust's resolution no. 02 dated 23/05/2025.

The institution, previously known as National College of Law and now it is known as Regional College of Law. National College of Law and Regional College of Law are a same College/Institution which is located at Kharupetia, Dist. Darrang (Assam). This affidavit serves as documentary evidence for the above facts.

Sd/-
Hironmoyee Nath
Secretary Regional college of Law

Contd. from Page 1...

Flood situation critical

The district authorities have set up two relief camps where 617 inmates have taken shelter. There have been no reports of any landslides from any part of the state so far today. Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma visited urban flood-affected areas in North Guwahati and interacted with people reeling under the impact of rising water.

"In North Guwahati, I met with people affected by #AssamFloods. We have housed them in shelter homes and ensured that all facilities are available to them," the chief minister posted on X.

"Over the coming days, we will work to improve the drainage system to mitigate the intensity of floods in the affected area," the CM added. (PTI)

Himanta slams Rahul over

public outcry during Narendra Modi's tenure as Gujarat Chief Minister. On the issue of border tensions with China, Sarma highlighted what he called repeated Chinese incursions during Congress rule, contrasting them with the Modi government's "decisive" responses in Uri, Balakot, and Galwan.

"Congress didn't just surrender land—it surrendered India's pride, security, and sovereignty," Sarma declared. "India remembers. India has risen. And India won't surrender again."

The political salvo is part of the BJP's broader strategy to position national security as a key differentiator between Prime Minister Modi's leadership and what it characterizes as the Congress party's legacy of "appeasement."

Himanta inaugurates Lovlina Boxing

"These hostels will offer all-round support – from food to accommodation – so that athletes can focus entirely on their training," he added. (PTI)

Nagaland MP supports demand

Review of Reservation Policy' submitted a joint memorandum to the state government. They argued that the reservation policy, which has been in place since 1977, no longer reflects the current socio-economic and educational realities of the various communities in the state.

Non-backward tribes currently don't have any reservation in non-technical and non-gazetted posts in the state government. Despite submitting a memorandum on September 20, 2024, followed by a 30-day ultimatum on April 26, 2025, the tribes claimed the government failed to respond until recently.

However, the state government, during a meeting between Deputy Chief Minister Yanthungo Patton and the committee on June 3, assured that it will constitute a commission to review the policy by June 17.

This assurance came after sustained public pressure, including a large rally held in Kohima on May 29 where the five tribes, joined by their frontal organisations, peacefully protested the government's delay and demanded transparency and inclusivity in the policy review process.

Meanwhile, Jamir also highlighted that a special session of Parliament has been convened from July 21, which would continue till August. He noted that this session is expected to address several pressing issues, including those raised by the INDIA bloc concerning Operation Sindoor. (PTI)

59 tourists airlifted from north

on another, officials said. Among those rescued were two foreigners, they said. Sikkim Nationalised Transport (SNT) has deployed buses to help the rescued tourists reach Siliguri in West Bengal.

An additional helicopter has been kept on standby at Pakyong airport for those who want to travel to Bagdogra near Siliguri by air. The two helicopters flew to Chaten with personnel from the NDRF and Power Department, and engineers of Airtel, who would work in the region for restoring essential services, they said. These 109 tourists were brought to Chaten for air evacuation, they added.

The tourists were accommodated in hotels and at the Chaten military camp, an officer said. Helicopter sorties from the Pakyong airport were suspended on Wednesday due to bad weather in north Sikkim, delaying evacuations. On Sunday, three Army personnel were killed and six soldiers went missing after landslides hit a military camp at Chaten. Several others were also injured.

The search operations for the six missing personnel have been hampered by bad weather conditions, unstable ground, and the challenging high-altitude terrain, an official said. The ongoing relief operations in north Sikkim faced a critical setback after two key bridges over the Taran Chu river, situated between Munshithang and Chaten, were washed away by incessant rains, severing motorable access to Chaten from Lachen. Three days ago, 1,678 tourists were rescued from Lachung and Chungthang, while 33 others, including two US nationals, were successfully airlifted before the sorties were suspended on Wednesday. (PTI)

Himanta urges people to plant

for safeguarding forests and wildlife. Sarma also flagged off 130 vehicles for the various forest ranges and divisions of the state.

Regarding the ban on plastic bottles to prevent clogging of drains leading to waterlogging in urban areas, Sarma said that many local youth have set up industries to produce mineral water bottles with bank loans and they had appealed not to ban it. "When we had tried to ban one-litre bottles, they came to us with this appeal and we had to consider this but 500 ml bottles are banned in the state", he said.

The state government will soon enter into an agreement with Oil India Limited (OIL) for producing biofuel from plastic waste.

OIL will set up biofuel producing plants in Tinsukia, Dibrugarh, Silchar, Tezpur and Guwahati. "The state government will hand over the waste plastics to OIL and we hope the problem will come down gradually," Sarma added. The CM appealed to the people to fulfil their responsibility of protecting the environment and taking steps to protect nature as it sustains humanity. (PTI)

Caste census to benefit Assam's

Kiren and Maimal Muslims of the Barak Valley, have consistently maintained that while Islam is their religion, they also possess unique ethnic, linguistic, and cultural traits which differentiate them from migrant-origin or non-indigenous Muslim populations, Sarma said.

The chief minister had last month said that the Assam govt has initiated preparatory measures to conduct a comprehensive caste census aimed at documenting and distinguishing the indigenous Muslim communities of the state. These communities have preserved distinct traditions, dialects, and historical narratives that are deeply rooted in Assam's civilizational heritage and cultural landscape.

The Cabinet Committee on Political Affairs (CCPA) decided on April 30 that caste enumeration will be included in the next census exercise. The Congress and other opposition parties have been demanding a nationwide caste census, making it a major election issue, and some states like Bihar, Telangana and Karnataka have conducted such surveys. (PTI)

Guwahati important healthcare

in the northeastern region. "... This expansion underscores our commitment to enhancing access to quality healthcare in emerging regions," he said.

Executive Director, Ambuja Neotia Healthcare Venture Ltd, Parthiv Neotia, said that Guwahati, as a critical healthcare hub for the northeast, presents an opportunity to strengthen the region's medical infrastructure. (PTI)

Student held from Assam

Moosewala. "While the sender had deleted the messages, the rapper's office had taken their screenshots. Based on those screenshots, we registered an FIR and subsequently arrested Alohi," the official added. (PTI)

RBI Gov Malhotra to announce monetary policy today

MUMBAI, June 5: Reserve Bank Governor Sanjay Malhotra will announce the bi-monthly monetary policy on Friday amid widespread expectations of a third consecutive rate cut of 25 basis points or even bigger to propel economic growth against the backdrop of trade tensions triggered by Trump tariffs.

The RBI's rate-setting panel Monetary Policy Committee (MPC) started its three-day deliberations on Wednesday.

The central bank reduced the key benchmark lending rate (repo) by 25 bps points each in February and April this year on the recommendations of the governor-headed MPC. Malhotra will present the monetary policy statement at 10 am on June 6 (Friday), the Reserve Bank said on Thursday.

Most of the experts are of the view that RBI will go for a 25 bps reduction in the repo this time also, though a research report by the State Bank of India (SBI) sees a jumbo rate cut of 50 bps.

In response to the 50-bps cut in the policy repo rate since February 2025, most of the banks have reduced their repo-linked external benchmark-based lending rates (EBLRs) and the marginal cost of funds-based lending rate (MCLR), according to an assessment by the RBI. A lowering of the repo rate leads reduction in lending rates by banks, which, in turn, brings down EMIs for retail and corporate borrowers.

The MPC consists of three members from the RBI and three external members appointed by the government. (PTI)

PepsiCo India, The Social Lab expand 'Tidy Trails' in Guwahati

HT Bureau

GUWAHATI, June 5: On the occasion of World Environment Day, PepsiCo India, in collaboration with The Social Lab (TSL), has announced the expansion of its flagship plastic circularity initiative, Tidy Trails, in Guwahati, said an official statement on Thursday.

Tidy Trails is a community-driven program focused on responsible plastic waste management through collection, segregation, and recycling to drive long-term environmental impact.

Speaking on the expansion, Yashika Singh, chief corporate affairs officer and Sustainability head, PepsiCo India and South Asia, said, "On World Environment Day, the expansion of Tidy Trails in Guwahati underscores our commitment to scaling sustainable, community-led solutions for post-consumer plastic waste management. Guided by our Partnership of Progress philosophy, we believe meaningful change is only possible through collective action. The success of Tidy Trails' pilot edition in Guwahati—driven by strong community engagement and support from local administrations—has laid a solid foundation for this new chapter in the city."

He further said that they are proud to collaborate with partners like The Social Lab and local municipalities to deliver real, on-ground impact.

Guided by its Partnership of Progress philosophy, Tidy Trails brings together local administrations, market associations, shopkeepers, and consumers to drive meaningful behaviour change around plastic waste segregation and recycling—creating a collaborative model for circularity at the community level.

The program was introduced as a pilot in Guwahati in 2024, resulting in collection of over 30,000 kgs of plastic waste with active participation from local shopkeepers and communities.

As part of the initiative, a special mobile van will be deployed to collect post-consumer plastic waste from local establishments. The effort aims to encourage citizens to maintain cleaner surroundings and foster a culture of tidiness—setting positive examples and inspiring other communities to adopt responsible waste practices.

At the heart of the Tidy Trails initiative is a powerful idea: transforming plastic waste into purpose. Collected plastic is repurposed into functional items such as benches and chairs, which are installed in public spaces like parks, community centres, and marketplaces.

These installations not only enhance the utility and aesthetics of these areas but also serve as daily reminders of the value of sustainable living.

2025 Yezdi Adventure unveiled

HT Bureau

GUWAHATI, June 5: JawaYezdi Motorcycles on Thursday unveiled the 2025 edition of the Yezdi Adventure, India's award-winning adventure tourer.

The 2025 Yezdi Adventure embraces classic-ADV styling with its commanding twin LED headlights and distinctive rally-inspired beak, creating an unmistakable road presence.

"We've created India's most honest adventure touring motorcycle, and we did it in our signature

style – it's a classic, it's a Yezdi. Here is a motorcycle Indian adventure bikers were waiting for – the right combination of design, tech and performance born of Indian roads. It confidently handles what Indian riders encounter, from morning traffic to weekend escapes to that dream motorcycle adventure," said Anupam Thareja, co-founder of JawaYezdi Motorcycles.

As per an official statement, the bike's fuel tank is a nod to Yezdi's adventure-touring legacy. Its integrated main cage suggests readiness, its urban-first stance promises capability, and its silhouette declares ruggedness and stability.

The visual confidence exuded by the new 2025 Yezdi Adventure is backed by an all-digital instrument cluster. Packed with practical and useable tech such as switchable ABS for varied terrain, traction control for confidence, and an adjustable windscreen and instrument console for comfort across riding conditions.

Ports—Kandla, Tuticorin, and Paradip—to support the manufacturing of green hydrogen and its derivatives and to pioneer the use of alternative fuels in the maritime domain. We are also proud to lead under the IMO's Green Voyage 2050 initiative, assisting developing countries in their energy transitions."

At a special session titled "India: The Resurgent Shipbuilding Destination" introduced delegates to India's expanding shipbuilding ecosystem. The session spotlighted India's transition into a global hub for new-age, sustainable vessels, backed by modern infrastructure, scalable capacity, and international collaborations.

Emphasis was laid on how India is leveraging its scale advantage and policy reforms to position itself as a shipbuilding powerhouse, he said.

Sonowal said that India's maritime digital ecosystem is undergoing a transformation. Initiatives such as ONOP (One Nation-One Port Process), National Logistics Portal (Marine) and MAITRI – Virtual Trade Corridor are creating a unified national platform for port services and EXIM trade.

"These efforts are improving operational transparency, reducing transaction time and building real-time data systems. We are also engaging with global partners to establish Virtual Trade Corridors that will digitally connect ports, enabling seamless cargo movement and reducing bottlenecks, he asserted.



Middle East-Europe Economic Corridor (IMEEC), the Eastern Maritime Corridor (EMC), and the International North-South Transport Corridor (INSTC).

"To support these efforts, India has committed USD 20 billion for infrastructure development focused on enhancing multimodal logistics, port connectivity, and trade facilitation. India is working to become a credible and competitive alternative. Through policy incentives, ease of doing business, and infrastructure enhancement, we are laying the foundation for India to emerge as one of the top five shipbuilding nations by 2047," Sonowal added.

He said that under the able and visionary leadership of Prime Minister Narendra Modi ji, India is moving decisively toward the goals

of Viksit Bharat and Atmanirbhar Bharat. These goals envisage India as a modern, self-reliant, inclusive, and globally engaged economy.

"In this journey, the maritime sector is central—not just as a driver of growth, but as an enabler of resilience, sustainability, and strategic connectivity. India has launched wide-ranging efforts to expand port infrastructure, integrate logistics systems, and improve ease of doing business for the private sector. These reforms are already bearing fruit in the form of increased port efficiency, stronger cargo flows, and rising investor confidence," he added.

Emphasising the need for a Green and Sustainable Maritime Future, Sonowal added, "India is establishing three Green Hydrogen Hub

ENGINEERING WORKS UNDER ALIPURDUAR DIVISION
E-Tender Notice No.: 32/NW-2/APDJ;
Dated: 02-06-2025. E-tenders are invited by the undersigned for the following work:
Tender No: 10/AP-III-2025. Name of Work: "Supply of shingle boulder minimum 35 kg to 55 kg each and unscreened shingle for recoupment of flood reserve stocks at different stations/locations of Alipurduar division". Tender Value: ₹ 1,59,53,877.11; Earnest Money: ₹ 2,29,800.00. E-tender will be closed at 15:00 hrs. on 24-06-2025 and opened at 15:30 hrs. on 24-06-2025. The complete information with the tender documents of above e-tender will be available in the website <http://www.reps.gov.in>.
DRM (Works), Alipurduar Jn.
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World Environment Day celebrated across Assam

HT Bureau

GUWAHATI/DIPHU, June 5: Raj Bhavan Assam joined the global observance of World Environment Day 2025 with a meaningful celebration that called for stronger individual and collective actions towards environmental protection and sustainability.

According to an official statement the event was held at the Raj Bhavan premises in Guwahati and included a symbolic yet impactful initiative to promote ecological awareness among its staff.

As part of the programme, Commissioner and Secretary to the Governor, S S Meenakshi Sundaram, presented saplings to officers and staff, reinforcing the commitment to nurture the planet and uphold its biodiversity.

The act symbolised a pledge to restore and protect the environment, reflecting the day's broader theme of ecological stewardship. In his address, Sundaram underscored the urgency of environmental conservation, reminding the gathering of their shared responsibility.

"Our Earth is not just a home for us, but a legacy we leave behind. It is our duty to protect and restore it for future generations," he said.

Aligning with this year's World Environment Day theme, Beat Plastic Pollution, Sundaram urged everyone to take tangible steps to reduce plastic usage and transition to environmentally sustainable practices.

He stressed that the fight against plastic pollution cannot be limited to governmental action alone but requires sincere commitment at the individual and community levels.

The event served as a reminder of the urgent need to shift towards greener choices, and concluded with a call to uphold eco-friendly habits as part of everyday life.

In another event at Rang Bhawan, Maligaon, the Northeast Frontier Railway (NFR) marked World Environment Day 2025 with a day-long celebration, under the global theme "Beat Plastic Pollution." According to an official statement, the event featured the signing of a significant Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) between NFR and Cotton University, aimed at advancing collaborative research in environmental conservation.

The celebration began with the ceremonial lighting of the lamp by NFR General Manager Chetan Kumar Shrivastava and Shalini Shrivastava, President of the Northeast Frontier Railway Women's Welfare Organisation (NFR-WWO).

Senior officials of NFR Headquarters were present at the event, while Divisional Railway Managers (DRMs) and divisional officers joined virtually from various locations, helping spread the message of sustainability across the entire NFR network.

As part of the MoU, signed by M Kalimuthu, Chief Mechanical Engineer

(Environment & Health Management), and Dr Arindam Garg, Registrar of Cotton University, both institutions pledged to work together in areas such as climate-resilient infrastructure, renewable energy, wildlife conservation, and AI-driven sustainable transport solutions.

The partnership is expected to strengthen environmental research and innovation through academic-railway collaboration.

The programme also featured a guest lecture by Ajay Singh, retired Chief Mechanical Engineer of South Western Railway, who spoke on eliminating plastic packaging in station cafeterias.

A thought-provoking drama titled "Beat Plastic Pollution," performed by NFR Scouts and Guides, illustrated the environmental damage caused by plastic waste and promoted the principles of "reduce, reuse, recycle."

In his concluding remarks, General Manager Shrivastava reiterated NFR's commitment to sustainability and announced a series of new green initiatives, including the installation of plastic collection bins at 50 major stations and the introduction of reusable teacups in railway waiting areas.

A short film screened during the event showcased NFR's efforts to phase out single-use plastic water bottles, install refillable water stations, and adopt biodegradable alternatives in its catering services.

An environmental booklet detailing the railway's ongoing plastic-reduction measures, recycling collaborations, and success stories was also released.

The multi-pronged programme, combining institutional partnerships, public engagement, and actionable policy changes, underlines NFR's resolve to foster a cleaner, greener, and more sustainable future.

Meanwhile in Diphu, the District Administration of Karbi Anglong, in collaboration with the Forest Department and Lumbajong Block Development Office, marked World Environment Day with a vibrant community event at the open space near the weekly market in Mohan Dijuwa, located about 20 kilometres from Diphu.

The programme, held on Thursday morning, was part of a district-wide effort aligned with this year's global theme: "Beat Plastic Pollution."

The event began at 8:00 AM with the ceremonial planting of saplings along the roadside, symbolizing a collective pledge for a greener and cleaner environment. The occasion saw enthusiastic participation from students, local social organisations, and residents of the area.

Member of Parliament Amarsing Tisso, Deputy Commissioner Nirola Phangchopi (ACS), and Executive Member of the Karbi Anglong Autonomous Council Tiltotoma Hasnu graced the event.

Addressing the gathering, the Deputy Commissioner expressed gratitude for



the community's active involvement, especially the youth, and stressed the growing importance of public participation in environmental protection.

In a show of district-wide solidarity, similar events were also conducted by the Howraghat Development Block and the Bokajan Sub-Division at their respective office premises.

These initiatives were supported by the Forest and Environment Department and the Karbi Anglong Autonomous Council (KAAC), ensuring constituency-wise engagement across the district.

According to an official statement, the coordinated observance aimed to underscore that World Environment Day is more than a symbolic occasion—it is a call to action. With plastic pollution posing serious threats to ecosystems and public health, this year's theme urged both individuals and institutions to adopt sustainable alternatives and reduce reliance on plastic.

The campaign's alignment with India's traditional ethos of living in harmony with nature was evident in a broad-based participation and commitment to long-term ecological responsibility.

Our Sivasagar correspondent adds: World Environment Day was observed with enthusiasm and community participation in Sivasagar and Moran on Thursday, as various institutions and organisations undertook plantation drives and awareness campaigns aimed at promoting environmental responsibility.

In Sivasagar, the Senior Citizens' Association marked the occasion in collaboration with students of Sibsagar University by distributing saplings and environmental awareness pamphlets to households in Ward No. 10 of the town.

Participants gathered at the Senior Citizens Bhawan in the morning, where the initiative was formally launched.

Former Principal of Sivasagar Commerce College, Prof Kartick Dutta, led the programme, while students were

guided by Yogesh Chandra Rajkhowa, Guna Gogoi, Keshav Barua, Dilip Saikia, Umesh Chankakati, and Biman Sensuwa.

In another segment of the day's observance, a plantation drive was led by Moni Pathak, president of Drishyapat, Sivasagar, along with Dr Prakash Kotoky, former Principal of Sibsagar College, from the premises of Amolapatty Hindu Dharma Namghar.

Meanwhile, Moran Mahila Mahavidyalaya undertook an extensive plantation drive at its Moran Moutgaon campus. The initiative, carried out in association with the Red Cross Society of Charaideo district, the college's NSS unit, and the CISF unit of Oil India Limited (OIL) Moran, involved the planting of thousands of saplings.

The event was attended by Principal Dr Tarun Gogoi, Governing Body President Dr Rajen Borthakur, senior citizen Hem Borah, journalist Jadunath Puri, AASAA General Secretary Deben Urang, Teachers' Unit leaders Basanta Phukon and Jyotsna Buragohain, NSS Coordinator Debajani Tamuly, and a large number of teachers, staff, and students.

The CISF team was led by Senior Commandant L.K. Haque and Inspector S.K. Shukla of the OIL Duliajan unit.

Our Biswanath correspondent adds: The Vulture Conservation Breeding Centre (VCBC) organized a series of awareness programmes across Biswanath district to mark World Environment Day, with a special focus on vulture conservation and environmental education among school students.

A team comprising renowned biologist Ghanashyam Gogoi, biologist Githartha Boruah, field assistant Amar Jyoti Das, and staff from the Biswanath Wildlife Division, including Marchal Bourah and Raju Ali, conducted sessions in four schools—Chibhal Smriti High School, Gosai Chapori M E School, Dakshin Nagsankar High School, and Bhaskariyoti Adarsha Vidyapeeth.

As part of the programme, Ghanashyam Gogoi delivered a Power-Point presentation outlining the ecological importance of vultures, their rapid population decline in India, and their cultural significance.

He highlighted the crucial role vultures play in maintaining a clean ecosystem by disposing of animal carcasses, thereby helping prevent the spread of diseases.

Gogoi pointed out that India's vulture population has plummeted from around 40 million in the 1990s to less than 100,000 today, attributing the decline to the use of veterinary non-steroidal anti-inflammatory drugs (NSAIDs) like diclofenac, nimesulide, and aceclofenac, which are toxic to vultures.

He advocated for the use of meloxicam, a safer alternative for livestock treatment.

An interactive question-and-answer session followed, engaging students on the importance of conservation.

Gogoi also announced that a vulture release aviary is currently under construction at Tewaripal, near the sixth addition of Kaziranga National Park.

If weather conditions permit, the first release of vultures from this facility is expected by the end of the year.

In addition to the awareness sessions, Bhaskariyoti Adarsha Vidyapeeth organized a painting and essay writing competition for students from Class 1 to 10 as part of the World Environment Day celebrations.

These activities aimed to foster environmental consciousness and inspire the younger generation to participate actively in wildlife conservation efforts.

Our Dhubri correspondent adds: The Dhubri Municipal Board marked World Environment Day with a Plog Run and Clean-Up Drive aimed at promoting environmental consciousness and urban sanitation.

The event also witnessed the formal induction of 17 newly appointed "Paura Sakhis" (city friends), a dedicated force to support cleanliness initiatives across the town.

The day's activities were ceremoniously flagged off by Namrata Pradip Sharma, Executive Officer of Dhubri Municipal Board, and Umesh Roy, Conservancy In-charge and Ward Commissioner of Ward No. 1.

Municipal officials, sanitation workers, and other stakeholders joined the event to express solidarity with the cause of a cleaner and greener Dhubri.

A key component of the initiative was the official deployment of the 17 Paura Sakhis, recruited by the Feed Back Foundation Charitable Trust—a private agency appointed by the State Mission Director of the Swachh Bharat Mission Urban.

They have been engaged on a one-year tenure to support the town's waste management operations. Their primary role involves accompanying garbage

collection vehicles in every ward to conduct door-to-door awareness campaigns on waste segregation and responsible disposal.

The programme emphasizes direct engagement with residents to instill a sense of civic responsibility and build community participation in waste management practices. The integration of the Paura Sakhis with daily sanitation efforts is expected to strengthen grassroots awareness and build momentum for long-term environmental sustainability.

The initiative reflects a collaborative effort between the Dhubri Municipal Board, Swachh Bharat Mission Urban, and the Feed Back Foundation Charitable Trust to enhance urban sanitation and foster eco-conscious habits among the citizens of Dhubri.

Our Nagaon correspondent adds: The Nagaon district administration, in association with the Kaliabor sub-division and the Nagaon Forest Department, observed World Environment Day on Thursday with a tree plantation drive at Kamakhya village, aimed at promoting environmental conservation and mitigating human-wildlife conflict in the region.

District Commissioner Narendra Kumar Shah, who led the drive, highlighted the urgent need to restore ecological balance and reduce increasing instances of human-wildlife conflict.

He said the initiative was part of the district administration's broader strategy to provide alternative habitats for wildlife through afforestation and community-based conservation efforts.

The event saw participation from key officials, including Divisional Forest Officer Subhash Kadam, Superintendent of Police Swapnil Deka, and Sub-Divisional Officer of Kaliabor.

Local residents, social workers, and volunteers also actively took part in the plantation effort, reflecting growing public awareness and engagement with environmental issues.

In parallel with the plantation drive, the Nagaon Cultural Affairs Department and the Environment and Forest Department launched an awareness campaign through street plays performed in various parts of the district.

The plays were staged in locations such as Samaguri, Rupahihat, Dhing, Batadroba, Raha, and Barhampur.

Performed by local theatre groups, the street plays focused on the importance of protecting natural resources and adopting environmentally responsible behaviour. According to an official statement, the performances were well-received by the public and played a vital role in spreading awareness about the theme of World Environment Day 2025, which focuses on environmental restoration and sustainability.

The coordinated efforts reflect the administration's multi-pronged approach to fostering a culture of conservation across the district.

Ambuja Neotia launches woman and childcare hospital in Guwahati

HT Bureau

GUWAHATI, June 5: Ambuja Neotia Healthcare Venture Limited, a leading healthcare provider in Eastern India, has marked its entry into the North-east with the launch of its new facility—Neotia Bhagirathi Woman and Childcare Centre—in Guwahati. The 100-bed super-specialty hospital, focused exclusively on women and child healthcare, was formally inaugurated on Thursday by Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma, alongside top leadership from the Ambuja Neotia Group.

The event saw the presence of Harshavardhan Neotia, Chairman of Ambuja Neotia Group, and Parthiv Neotia, Executive Director of Ambuja Neotia Healthcare Venture Limited, among other dignitaries.

According to an official statement issued by the group, the launch marks a strategic milestone in its expansion plans and underscores its commitment to strengthening healthcare infrastructure in emerging regions like the Northeast.

Speaking on the occasion, Chairman Harshavardhan Neotia said, "The inauguration of the Neotia Bhagirathi Woman and Childcare Centre in Guwahati marks a significant milestone for us as we extend our footprint into the North-Eastern region. Having built a trusted legacy in woman and child healthcare across Eastern India, this expansion underscores our commitment to enhancing access to quality healthcare in emerging regions."

Strategically located in Guwahati, a key healthcare hub in the region, the hospital will offer a comprehensive range of services under one roof—including obstetrics, gynaecology, neonatology, paediatrics, and infertility treatment. The facility is equipped with modern infrastructure, state-of-the-art technology, and a team of experienced specialists committed to patient-centric care.

Executive Director Parthiv Neotia highlighted the centre's focus on advanced clinical practices, saying, "This state-of-the-art facility is dedicated to women and children and is designed to provide specialised, high-quality care. Assam holds immense potential for growth in the healthcare sector, with a significant need for accessible, advanced medical services. With this launch, we reaffirm our unwavering commitment to excellence in women and children's healthcare."

Officials said the centre's design reflects global best practices in medical architecture and is aimed at providing a comfortable and inclusive healing environment. The launch also reflects the growing importance of Guwahati as a gateway to the Northeast for specialised healthcare services. Ambuja Neotia Healthcare has built a reputation for clinical excellence and compassionate care through its flagship hospitals in Eastern India.

The Guwahati centre is expected to cater not only to Assam but also to neighbouring states, addressing a longstanding gap in specialised woman and child healthcare in the region.

"Through this facility, we aim to bring advanced clinical care, cutting-edge technology, and specialised services to women and children—not only in Assam but across the neighbouring states," said Harshavardhan Neotia. The hospital will also contribute to the region's healthcare ecosystem by generating employment opportunities for medical professionals and allied staff, while also facilitating training and research in women's and child health.

With this expansion, Ambuja Neotia Healthcare Venture Limited continues its mission to make high-quality, specialised healthcare both accessible and sustainable.

Election of Nagaon District Drug Dealers' Association scheduled for June 22

HT Correspondent

NAGAON, June 5: The election for the new executive body of the Nagaon District Drug Dealers' Association will be held on June 22, according to an official notification issued by the returning officer on Thursday.

Returning Officer Gunada Kanta Sarma, along with assistant returning officers Amitabh Bora and Gautam Shaha, released the election schedule and nomination guidelines.

As per the notification, interested candidates can collect nomination forms on June 6 and must submit them between June 6 noon and 6 PM on June 12 at the office of the returning officer located at Modern Drug Agency, Mahatma Gandhi Road, in front of Krishna Cinema Hall, Nagaon.

The scrutiny of nomination papers will be conducted on June 13, and the list of valid candidates will be published the same afternoon. The deadline for withdrawal of nominations is set for June 15, with the final list of candidates to be announced on June 16.

The election will be held specifically for the posts of President, General Secretary, and Treasurer of the association.

Meanwhile, the association has announced that individuals interested in becoming new members can reach out to the incumbent treasurer, Ravi Shankar Basak, or the current president, Jiban Banik, for membership details.

Palm oil plantation drive launched in Karbi Anglong

HT Bureau

DIPHU, June 5: A mega ceremonial palm oil plantation drive was held on Thursday at Sikari Bey village under Lumbajong ADO Circle in Karbi Anglong, aligning with World Environment Day celebrations.

The initiative was carried out under the National Mission on Edible Oils – Oil Palm (NMEOP), aimed at increasing domestic production of edible oils and reducing dependency on imports.

Officials and agricultural experts from the District Agriculture Office, Assam Agricultural University's Zonal Research Station (AAU-ZRS) in Diphu, and representatives from Patanjali were present at the event.

They engaged with local farmers, highlighting the techniques, economic potential, and long-term sustainability of palm oil cultivation.

Dr Kansam Dayamoy Singha, Chief Scientist at AAU-ZRS Diphu,



planted saplings along with other dignitaries and emphasized the need for caution while expanding palm cultivation. He urged that fertile lands suitable for rice cultivation should be spared to protect food security.

He also advocated for establishing a palm oil processing mill in Karbi Anglong to ensure that local farmers benefit directly from the initiative.

Local farmer Hemari Tisso, who contributed land for the plantation, expressed hope that oil palm farming

could become a game-changer for the rural economy of the hills.

Discussions during the event also focused on palm oil's expanding global demand, particularly in cooking, cosmetics, and biofuel industries.

Experts noted that oil palm is one of the most profitable and long-yielding crops, with the potential to provide steady income to farmers for up to 25 years.

Infrastructure development such as improved roads, irrigation, and processing facilities was also identified as a likely outcome of large-scale oil palm cultivation in the district.

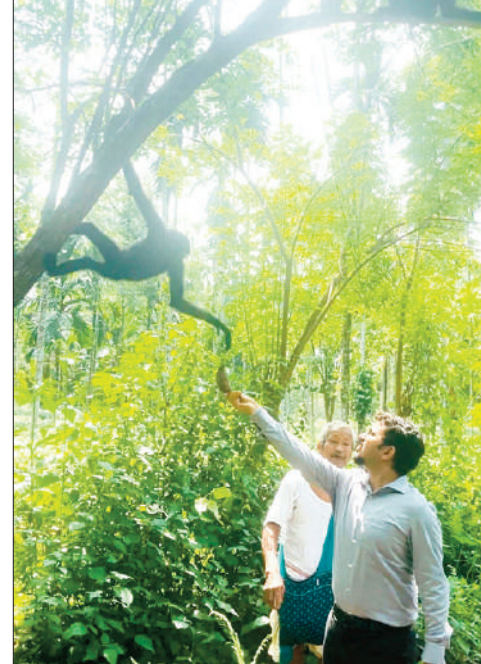
The NMEOP scheme offers a comprehensive support framework for farmers, including financial assistance, technical training, and assured pricing.

However, experts cautioned that sustainable growth hinges on prudent land selection and responsible agricultural planning.

Barekuri leads by example in Gibbon conservation

DC Tinsukia launches two key initiatives on World Environment Day

HT Correspondent



DIBRUGARH, June 5: In a major boost to community-driven wildlife conservation, Tinsukia District Commissioner Swapneel Paul launched two ambitious initiatives in Barekuri village on the occasion of World Environment Day, aimed at ensuring the long-term protection and ecological well-being of the endangered Hoolock Gibbons.

Barekuri, located in the Tinsukia district of Assam, has garnered national attention for its unique community-led efforts to protect the only ape species found in India.

The village came into the national spotlight after being featured in Prime Minister Narendra Modi's Mann Ki Baat in August 2024, where the deep bond between the villagers and the Hoolock Gibbons was lauded.

The visit by DC Paul comes two years after villagers raised concerns over a spate of gibbon deaths caused by electrocution from exposed transmission lines.

In response, the district administration undertook a major project to replace bare transmission lines with insulated ones.

The initiative has since been successfully

completed, significantly improving the safety of the gibbons' natural movement across the village.

Building on this momentum, two new initiatives were formally launched by the DC during his visit:

A green corridor will be developed to connect Barekuri with the Bherjan-Boraj-Padumoni Wildlife Sanctuary.

The corridor will be planted with native tree species to facilitate safe passage for gibbons and promote genetic exchange between isolated groups.

Officials said the corridor is expected to enhance biodiversity, improve habitat connectivity, and contribute to the long-term survival of the species in the region.

To address the dietary needs of the gibbons and reduce the risks associated with external food sources, the administration distributed 5,000 fruit-bearing saplings to local residents.

These trees, to be planted along village paths and in home gardens, will provide a natural, sustainable source of food for the gibbons. The move aligns with conservation norms that prohibit feeding gibbons

with market-bought fruit to avoid dietary disruptions and health risks.

The launch was marked by a public meeting attended by villagers, officials, conservationists, and a large number of students.

The DC also walked through the village alongside noted conservationists Khireswar Chetia and Diplob Chutia, both of whom have played crucial roles in protecting the gibbon population over the years.

In a symbolic gesture, the DC picked a Bhimkol (a local banana variety) from the backyard of Khireswar Chetia and offered it to a nearby gibbon—an act reflecting the traditional empathy of the villagers, who have long supported the primates during times of food scarcity.

The event highlighted how government initiatives, when combined with grassroots participation and ecological awareness, can produce meaningful outcomes. With the sustained commitment of the local community and administrative support, Barekuri continues to emerge as a model of peaceful human-wildlife coexistence and effective, locally anchored conservation.

QUOTE OF THE DAY

Principles have no real force except when one is well-fed - Mark Twain

Cryptocurrency market in USA

Former US President Joe Biden considered regulating crypto currency just like many level headed presidents and prime ministers of other countries because US intelligence reports revealed that the crypto currency was largely used by the underworld to stash money earned by beating the law and it kept moving across the globe and had no regulatory authority to track it. He also considered introducing Bitcoin through the Federal Reserve where there was accountability in terms of the source of income going into Bitcoin and it came under the government's regulatory measures. India too is considering introducing Bitcoin through its Federal Reserve, namely the Reserve Bank of India so that source of income is known for tax purposes, and its movement was kept a track of. The entire idea of introducing official crypto currency was to ensure that genuine investors monies parked in the Bitcoin was diverted back to official channels and their monies were protected and it was not mixed with the monies moved by the underworlds such as drug cartels of Mexico, crime lords of New York and Chicago, and blood money from Africa. Before Biden could move into the matter with Fed Reserve Chairman Jerome Powell, he went out of power ceding presidential powers and authority to a businessman cum politician Donald Trump, who thinks out of the box (the Wrong Way) and uses non bureaucratic methods to implement his policies.

So, the world of crypto currency has got a new lease of life, thanks to Trump, who has launched his own company through his family members, called the World Liberty Financial. The world of crypto currency is strange. Ever since its introduction, probably a decade ago, it was launched with a \$1 price tag which soared to \$1,000 and now is a whopping \$100,000. It's fantastic place to invest without being monitored by the government and having to pay taxes when you double, triple, quadruple your investments. Crypto currencies use a tool or methodology for storing virtual money in an ingenious way – the block chain technology. Money is stored virtually in a black box from which you can recall your money anytime, anywhere in the world through codes provided to you by the masterminds of the block chain who manage your currency. Those who manage the block chain are anonymous bankers. Bitcoins are becoming famous in India where a lot of income generated by mafia dons, film stars and corrupt politicians park their illegal incomes in crypto currency, which is not monitored by the government.

Trump was the promoter of the Bitcoin 2025 conference in Las Vegas where participants questioned the effects of Trump's meme coin. The meme coin had no links to the president himself per se but to his son Eric Trump, Don Trump Jr, managing a company called the World Liberty Financial (WLF). At Las Vegas, the biggest official gambling den of the world, bitcoin staged its biggest event of the year, the Trump administration was omnipresent.

Zelenskyy's gambit: A tactical masterstroke that threatens strategic collapse

By: M A Hossain

By any military measure, Ukraine's 'Operation Spider Web' was an astonishing success. In a meticulously planned operation, Ukrainian drones struck deep into Russian territory, obliterating at least 40 military aircraft—including nuclear-capable Tu-95 and Tu-22M3 bombers—in a single, devastating blow. The attack revealed not only meticulous Ukrainian planning over 18 months but also the glaring vulnerabilities of Russia's so-called impenetrable airspace. It was a coup de main that will be studied in military academies for decades. But as history too often reminds us, tactical brilliance can be the prelude to strategic disaster. The world now holds its breath, waiting to see what comes next.

The immediate question is not whether Russia will respond—it will—but how. President Volodymyr Zelenskyy must now reckon with that distinction. Launched on the eve of scheduled peace talks in Istanbul, Spider Web didn't just dismantle a third of Russia's strategic bomber fleet—it may also have dismantled the fragile architecture of diplomacy that remained. If this was a calculated move to strengthen Ukraine's bargaining position, it was cynically timed and perilously shortsighted. It risks transforming what was still, however tenuously, a brutal regional war into an epoch-defining catastrophe.

We've seen this before. In 1914, the assassination of an Austrian archduke triggered a cascade of commitments, mobilizations, and miscalculations that led to a global conflagration. In 1941, Japan, feeling cornered by U.S. embargoes, attacked Pearl Harbour—a masterstroke of surprise that ultimately led to its own annihilation. And in 1962, the Cuban Missile Crisis brought the planet within inches of nuclear oblivion, saved only by backchannel diplomacy and the mutual recognition of unacceptable costs.

Ukraine's gamble did not occur in a vacuum. It came at a time when President Trump has been seeking to limit American exposure and end the war, while Europe is increasingly divided over how far to support Kyiv without inviting catastrophe. It also came amid a U.S. political landscape reshaped by Donald Trump's return to the White House, a president who has made clear his disinterest in "forever wars" and who, notably, has remained silent on this latest escalation. The American public, too, seems less inclined to bankroll Kyiv's ambitions, particularly when those ambitions risk dragging NATO into a direct confrontation with a nuclear adversary.

Zelenskyy's supporters will argue this operation was necessary—a bold stroke to jolt Russia from its entrenched positions and to demonstrate Ukraine's capability for long-range asymmetric warfare. They will say it sends a signal to Moscow: Ukraine cannot be intimidated and has the resolve to strike at the heart of Russian military power. They may even compare it to Israel's 1981 strike on Iraq's Osirak nuclear reactor—a preemptive blow to degrade a long-term threat.

But the analogy doesn't hold. Israel acted in secrecy against a latent, undeclared threat. Ukraine struck openly, on the record, against a nuclear-armed power just hours before peace talks. Worse, it struck not against fielded forces in battle, but strategic nuclear bombers inside Russia, a move that risks prompting a doctrinal response from Moscow. Since its updated nuclear posture last year, Russia allows for nuclear use in response to

conventional strikes that threaten its strategic deterrent—exactly the kind of attack Spider Web represents.

It is no exaggeration to say that Zelenskyy has lit a fuse dangerously close to a powder keg. Which raises a larger question: What exactly was the purpose of this attack?

Some suspect it was less about battlefield utility and more about political optics. With Western support waning and battlefield momentum stalled, Zelenskyy may have felt compelled to show that he still commands initiative—that he remains a credible partner worth backing. There's also speculation that this operation was a plea for continued arms shipments now under threat from Trump's "America First" administration.

But if this was an attempt to impress or pressure Western allies, it may backfire. The attack has already emboldened voices in Washington and Brussels who argue that the war is spiralling out of control. And it gives ammunition to Moscow's propaganda machine, which is portraying the strike as Russia's own Pearl Harbour. When a nuclear power perceives itself as the victim of an existential assault, dangerous decisions follow.

We must also ask: was NATO involved? Did European allies—through satellite intelligence or remote drone operations—have a hand in the planning or execution? If so, this operation could cross a previously avoided threshold, bringing NATO into direct conflict with Russia. That's not just a strategic misstep—it's a generational blunder.

President Zelenskyy must now answer for the consequences of his audacity. Yes, the strike humiliated Russia. Yes, it exposed the rot within Moscow's security establishment. But the cost of that humiliation could be paid not just in Ukrainian lives, but potentially in the lives of millions across Europe and beyond, should Putin interpret this as justification for escalation.

History is littered with leaders who mistook tactical victories for strategic triumphs. Napoleon's march into Moscow, Hitler's advance into Stalingrad, even George W. Bush's "Mission Accomplished" moment in Iraq—all stemmed from an overestimation of short-term success and a blindness to long-term consequence.

Zelenskyy, admired as he rightly is for his courage and resolve, must now be judged for his judgment. By launching Spider Web when he did, and in the manner that he did, he may have sabotaged the very peace he claims to seek. Worse, he has placed the entire international order at the mercy of a man like Vladimir Putin, whose worldview is shaped not by cost-benefit logic but by grievance, pride, and a paranoid sense of historical destiny.

The West must now perform a high-wire act. It must reaffirm support for ending the war. It must also demand restraint and a return to diplomacy. A nuclear confrontation, even a "demonstrative" one over a deserted military base, would rewrite the rules of war and peace for generations to come. It would show that nuclear blackmail works—or that nuclear retaliation can be normalized. Neither outcome is acceptable.

Operation Spider Web may be remembered as a brilliant military feat. But unless it is followed by swift and sober diplomacy, it risks becoming a historical monument to hubris—the kind that ignites wars from which there is no return. The lesson from history is chillingly clear: great fires often begin with a single, dazzling spark. (IPA Service)

Gopinath Bordoloi: The architect who shielded Assam from Islamisation

political career.

Bordoloi's political awakening came in 1921 when he joined the Indian National Congress as a volunteer, immersing himself in the Non-Cooperation Movement. His arrest in 1922, resulting in a year of imprisonment, only deepened his commitment to India's freedom struggle. After the movement's suspension following the Chauri Chaura incident, Bordoloi resumed his legal practice but remained active in social work, serving on the Guwahati Municipal Board and Local Board from 1930 to 1933. His advocacy for a separate university and high court for Assam during this period reflected his vision for the state's development. By 1936, the Government of India Act paved the way for provincial elections, and Bordoloi emerged as the leader of the opposition in the Assam Legislative Assembly, showcasing his growing political stature.

In September 1938, following the resignation of the Md. Sadulla Cabinet, Bordoloi was invited to form the government, becoming Assam's Premier. His tenure was marked by reforms aimed at protecting indigenous rights, including halting land allocations to migrant Muslims and suspending the Land Tax. The outbreak of World War II in 1939 and Mahatma Gandhi's call for resistance led to the resignation of his Cabinet in 1940, followed by his arrest in December of that year. Released due to ill health, Bordoloi's resolve remained unbroken. During the Quit India Movement of 1942, he faced imprisonment again, only to resume his activism upon release in 1944. His formation of a peace brigade in Assam to uphold non-violence amidst the Japanese advance from Burma and to aid war refugees from Burma and Malaya underscored his humanitarian leadership during a time of crisis.

manitarian leadership during a time of crisis.

The year 1946 marked a defining moment in Bordoloi's career as the Congress secured victory in the Assam Assembly elections, and he was unanimously chosen as Chief Minister for the second time, a position he held until his death on August 5, 1950. The arrival of the British Cabinet Mission on March 23, 1946, tasked with drafting a future Constitution for India, posed an existential threat to Assam's autonomy. The Mission's plan arbitrarily divided British India into three groups: Group A, comprising six Hindu-majority provinces; Group B, including Punjab, Sindh, Baluchistan, and the North-West Frontier Provinces; and Group C, clubbing Assam with Bengal to create a predominantly Muslim zone in eastern India. This proposal, designed to align with the Muslim League's demands for Pakistan, was a calculated move by the British Labour government to perpetuate division in the subcontinent.

On April 1, 1946, Bordoloi met with the Cabinet Mission and vehemently opposed the inclusion of Assam in Group C. He argued that Assam, a province formed on linguistic and cultural lines with provincial autonomy, deserved to remain a distinct entity in the future constitutional framework. Rejecting Mohammed Ali Jinnah's demand for Pakistan as "absolutely preposterous," Bordoloi also supported the separation of Sylhet district from Assam to preserve its cultural integrity. Despite his cogent arguments, the Mission persisted with its grouping scheme, announced on May 16, 1946. The proposal required Assam's representatives to the Constituent Assembly to sit with Bengal's representatives to deter-

mine both provincial and group constitutions by a simple majority, effectively subordinating Assam's interests to a Muslim-majority Bengal.

The announcement sparked widespread outrage in Assam. The Assam Provincial Congress Committee, meeting in Guwahati, lodged a strong protest with the Congress Working Committee, while the Asom Jatiya Mahasabha exposed the Muslim League's designs through secret documents. A fervent agitation swept the state, driven by fears that Assam would lose its identity in a "political whirlpool of Muslim India." On July 16, 1946, the Assam Legislative Assembly, led by Bordoloi, adopted a resolution expressing strong disapproval of the grouping plan. It directed Assam's ten representatives to the Constituent Assembly to refrain from sitting with any other province to devise Assam's constitution or settle related matters, a bold stand that underscored Bordoloi's determination to protect Assam's sovereignty.

Recognizing the gravity of the situation, Bordoloi sought the guidance of national leaders. Accompanied by Bijoy Chandra Bhagawati and Mahendra Mohan Choudhury, he met Mahatma Gandhi at Srirampur to present Assam's case. Strengthened by Gandhi's blessings, Bordoloi tirelessly lobbied the Congress Working Committee, which initially hesitated to take a firm stance. His persistence and strategic acumen ultimately prevailed, convincing Indian leaders to reject the Cabinet Mission's grouping scheme. This victory ensured that Assam could draft its own constitution independently, averting its inclusion in what would become East Pakistan (now Bangladesh). Had Bordoloi not acted with such foresight, Assam's history—and indeed India's north-eastern frontier—might have been

irrevocably altered.

Beyond this pivotal achievement, Bordoloi's post-independence contributions as Chief Minister were transformative. He spearheaded the establishment of Gauhati University, the High Court of Assam, Assam Medical College, and Assam Veterinary College, laying the foundation for the state's educational and judicial infrastructure. His efforts to rehabilitate millions of Hindu refugees fleeing violence in East Pakistan fostered communal harmony and stability. As chairman of the North-East Frontier Tribal and Excluded Areas Sub-Committee, Bordoloi shaped the Sixth Schedule of the Indian Constitution, ensuring autonomous governance for tribal areas in Assam, Meghalaya, Tripura, and Mizoram. His literary contributions, including works like Annasaktiyog and Shreeramachandra, penned during his imprisonments, reflected his intellectual depth and Gandhian values.

Bordoloi's untimely death in 1950 was a profound loss, yet his legacy endured. In 1999, he was posthumously awarded the Bharat Ratna by Prime Minister Atal Bihari Vajpayee, becoming the first Northeasterner to receive this honor. On October 1, 2002, a life-size statue of Bordoloi was unveiled in the Parliament House by President A.P.J. Abdul Kalam, cementing his place among India's national heroes. Revered as a disciplined Gandhian and a statesman of unparalleled stature, Gopinath Bordoloi's heroic leadership rescued Assam from a colonial conspiracy, ensuring its cultural and political integrity. As Assam grapples with contemporary challenges, Bordoloi's example of unity, integrity, and selfless service remains a powerful reminder of the leadership needed to navigate the state's future. (The writer can be reached at dipakkurmipltd@gmail.com)

Steel industry in India: A perspective

By: Diganta Barooah

India's steel industry is a global leader, experiencing significant growth in production and consumption, and is poised for further expansion. It is the world's second-largest producer of crude steel, with strong domestic demand driven by various sectors like construction, automotive, and infrastructure. The industry is characterized by robust capacity expansion, modernization, and increasing investment.

✓ In February 2024, the government has implemented various measures to promote self-reliance in the steel industry.

✓ Under the Union Budget 2025-26, the government is allocating ₹ 3362 crores in total in the Budget Estimate to the Ministry of Steel.

The Ministry of Steel is responsible for planning and development of iron and steel industry, development of essential inputs such as iron ore, limestone, dolomite manganese ore, chromites, ferro-alloys, sponge iron, etc. and other related functions. Crude steel production has shown a sustained rise since 2013-14 along with capacity.

The crude steel production capacity has steadily risen to 179.51 MT. A vibrant domestic steel industry is important for a developing economy as it is a critical input across major sectors such as construction, infrastructure, automotive, capital goods, defence, rail, etc. Steel has also been proven to be a driver for prompt environmentally sustainable economic development due to its recyclable nature and faster associated completion times. The steel sector is also pivotal for a nation as it drives employment generation and economic growth. It has a multiplicative effect on the economy stemming from both direct and associated effects on the supply chain and consumption industries.

Global Ranking of Indian Steel

The consistent growth in production has ensured that India remains a dominant player in the global steel industry. World's crude steel production stood at 1892.2 MT during 2023, up by 0.1 percent over the previous calendar year, based on provisional data released by the World Steel Association on June 18th, 2024. During this period, Chinese crude steel production reached 1019.1 MT, showing no change over the last year. China remained the largest crude steel producer in the world, accounting for 54 percent of World's crude steel production during this period. India was the second largest crude steel producer and recorded a growth of 12.3 percent in production during this period as compared to the same period last year.

National Steel Policy

The National Steel Policy (NSP) was launched in 2017 to ensure that the Indian Steel sector is prepared to service the growing requirements of modern India and to promote a healthy sustainable growth for the sector. The NSP was defined with the vision to create a technologically advanced and globally competitive steel industry that promotes economic growth. The Policy outlined key objectives for the steel sector and laid down multiple initiatives for the industry. Key features of NSP 2017 include establishing self-sufficiency in steel production by providing policy support and guidance to private manufacturers,

MSME (Micro Small and Medium Enterprises) Steel producers and CPSEs (Central Public Sector Enterprises). The Policy projects crude steel capacity of 300 million tonnes (MT), production of 255 MT and a robust finished steel per capita consumption of 160 kg by 2030-31, as against the current consumption of 97.7 kg. The Policy also envisages 100 per cent indigenous fulfillment of demand for high grade automotive steel, electrical steel, special steels and alloys for strategic applications along with an increase in domestic availability of washed coking coal so as to reduce dependence on coking coal from about 85 per cent to around 65 per cent by 2030-31.

The Ministry has initiated action on several initiatives to operationalise the actions enlisted in the National Steel Policy. The initiatives include:

Ensuring Raw Material Security:

Iron Ore:

Raw materials are crucial for ensuring sustained growth in iron and steel industry. The industry faces challenges both in the short and long term in terms of raw material security across iron ore and coal. According to the NSP 2017, to produce 255 million tonnes (MT) of crude steel with a total crude steel capacity of 300 MT by 2030-31, there is a need for 437 MT of iron ore and 161 MT of coking coal. For the Fiscal Year 2023-24, the production of crude steel is 144.30 MT of which approximately 29.44 MT is produced through scrap route and 114.86 MT from iron ore. This implies a demand for about 192 MT of iron ore, based on the requirement of 1.67 MT of iron ore to produce 1 MT of crude steel. The current crude steel capacity for FY 2023-24 stands at 179.5 MT. In FY 2023-24, iron ore production was 275.463 MT with 214 MT classified as high grade. This production level is adequate to meet domestic demand. However, the demand is also supplemented by existing stocks.

Coking Coal:

The entire demand of coking coal is not met from domestic production as the supply of high quality coal/coking coal (low-ash-coal) in the country is limited. Accordingly, the Indian Steel Industry has been largely dependent on imports. Most of the coking coal produced domestically in the country had a very high ash content making it redundant in the manufacture of steel which resulted in import of 51.83 MT in 2019-20, 51.20 MT in 2020-21, 57.16 MT in 2021-22, 56.05 MT in 2022-23 and 58.12 MT in 2023-24 of coking coal.

Manganese Ore:

Manganese ore is the important raw material in the Steel Industry. About 95 per cent of manganese ore is used in the production of steel. Despite its small quantity, it significantly enhances the steel's strength, toughness and hardness. Manganese is used in the form of Ferro Manganese (FeMn) and Silico Manganese (SiMn) alloys, which are critical for removing impurities and improving the quality of steel. Approximately, 30 kilograms of manganese ore are required to produce one metric tonne of steel, highlighting its importance in the industry. As per NSP 2017, the projected crude steel capacity by 2030 is 300 MT with an expected production of 255 MT.

Currently, India exports around 50 per cent of manganese alloys produced in the country. The requirement of manganese ore for this

production is estimated to be around 11 MT. Manganese Ore (India) Limited (MOIL) is employing various strategies to increase the production and reduce the dependency on imports.

Steel Scrap Recycling Policy

The Steel Scrap Recycling Policy (SSRP) was notified in 2019. It provides a framework to facilitate and promote establishment of metal scrapping centres in the country for scientific processing and recycling of ferrous scrap generated from various sources including end-of-life vehicles (ELVs). SSRP works out a model for collection, dismantling and shredding activities in an organised, safe and environmentally sound manner in order to cut pollution and prevent health hazards. The responsibilities of dismantling centre and scrap processing centre, roles of aggregators and responsibilities of the government, manufacturer and owner are enumerated in the Policy document. The shredded scrap produced by recycling would be used as raw material for steel making.

Mahindra MSTC Recycling Private Limited (MMRPL) is a pioneer in setting up of authorised auto dismantling centres in the country for scrapping of unfl ELVs in scientific and environmentally sound manner. The recycling plant offers niche services involving scrapping of end-of-life vehicles into shredded scraps, which act as raw material feed-back stock for secondary sector steel plants.

Steel Import Monitoring System

The Steel Import Monitoring System (SIMS), which is in force since 2019, but launched in July 2024, ensures the availability of granular data in regard to Indian steel import in public domain through prior registration on SIMS Portal. SIMS has enabled the domestic industry to plan their pricing and production strategy and helped the country move towards Aatma Nirbhar Bharat in steel making.

Production Linked Incentive Scheme

Production Linked Incentive (PLI) Scheme for Specialty Steel is in place since 2021. The scheme provides incentive in different slabs varying between 4 per cent to 12 per cent on incremental production in identified 5 product categories, namely,

- (i) coated / plated steel products;
- (ii) high strength / wear resistant steel;
- (iii) Specialty rails;
- (iv) alloy steel products and steel wires and
- (v) electrical steel.

These steel products are used in a variety of applications including white goods, automobile body and components, pipes for transportation of oil and gas, boilers, ballistic and armour sheets, high-speed railway lines, turbine components, distribution and power transformers. The steel industry and its associated mining and metallurgy sectors have seen major investments and developments in the recent past.

✓ According to the data released by the Department for Promotion of Industry and Internal Trade (DPIIT), between April 2000-September 2024, Indian metallurgical industries attracted FDI inflows of ₹ 1,10,062 crore (US\$ 18.06 billion).

✓ In FY22, demand for steel was expected to increase by 17% to 110 million tonnes, driven by rising construction activities. (... to be continued)

NEP 2020: Empowering India through education reform

By: Satyabrata Borah

The National Education Policy (NEP) 2020 marks a transformative milestone in India's educational landscape, aiming to overhaul the system to meet the demands of the 21st century. Introduced as a long-term structural reform, NEP 2020 is designed for phased implementation, with a vision to enhance the practical utility of education, boost employment generation, foster innovation in research, and position India's education system for global competitiveness. This policy represents a paradigm shift from rote learning and rigid structures to a holistic, flexible, and skill-oriented approach that aligns with global standards. By addressing critical gaps in the existing system, NEP 2020 seeks to empower students to thrive in a rapidly evolving world, contribute to India's economic and social progress, and establish the country as a knowledge hub on the global stage. This article explores the multifaceted dimensions of NEP 2020, focusing on its practical utility, employment generation capacity, research innovation, and ability to prepare India's education system for global competition.

NEP 2020 emphasizes a holistic and multidisciplinary approach to education, moving away from the compartmentalized learning that has long characterized India's education system. The policy introduces a new 5+3+3+4 curricular structure, replacing the traditional 10+2 model, to ensure a seamless progression from early childhood to higher education. This structure prioritizes foundational learning, critical thinking, and creativity, particularly in the early years, to lay a strong foundation for lifelong learning. By allowing students greater flexibility in choosing subjects based on their interests and aptitudes, NEP 2020 breaks down the barriers between arts, sciences, and vocational streams. For instance, a student passionate about both physics and music can pursue both without being confined to a single stream. This flexibility enhances the practical utility of education, as students can tailor their learning to their career aspirations and personal strengths, making them better equipped for

real-world challenges.

The policy's focus on vocational education and skill development is a significant step toward bridging the gap between education and employability. India's economy, with its growing demand for skilled professionals in sectors like information technology, healthcare, renewable energy, and artificial intelligence, requires a workforce that is not only academically proficient but also practically skilled. NEP 2020 addresses this by integrating vocational training into the school curriculum from Grade 6 onward, introducing students to skills such as coding, data analysis, and entrepreneurship early on. The policy also emphasizes internships, apprenticeships, and hands-on learning experiences to provide practical exposure. By aligning education with industry needs, NEP 2020 ensures that graduates are job-ready, reducing the mismatch between academic qualifications and market demands. This focus on skill development is poised to enhance employment generation, particularly in emerging sectors, where India has the potential to become a global leader.

NEP 2020 places a strong emphasis on fostering a culture of research and innovation, addressing a critical weakness in India's current education system. Despite its large pool of students and institutions, India lags behind in global research output and innovation, with only a handful of universities ranking among the world's best. The policy seeks to change this by establishing the National Research Foundation (NRF) to fund and promote cutting-edge research across disciplines. It encourages multidisciplinary research, enabling students and researchers to explore intersections between fields like artificial intelligence and biotechnology or environmental science and data analytics. By fostering a research-oriented mindset, NEP 2020 aims to nurture creativity and problem-solving skills, which are essential for innovation. The policy also promotes collaboration between academia, industry, and international institutions, creating opportunities for groundbreaking research that can address both local and global challenges. This focus on innovation is critical for positioning India as a leader in the knowledge economy,

where intellectual capital drives growth.

Global competitiveness is another cornerstone of NEP 2020, as it seeks to align India's education system with international standards. In a globalized world, where knowledge and skills transcend borders, Indian students must compete with their peers from countries like the United States, China, and Germany. NEP 2020 facilitates this by encouraging partnerships with foreign universities, promoting student and faculty exchange programs, and adopting international best practices in curriculum design. The policy also emphasizes the importance of learning global languages alongside regional ones, enabling students to communicate effectively in diverse settings. By creating world-class institutions and offering multidisciplinary undergraduate programs, NEP 2020 aims to produce graduates who can excel in global job markets and contribute to international research and innovation. The establishment of Multidisciplinary Education and Research Universities (MERUs) and the promotion of foreign university campuses in India further underscore the policy's commitment to global integration.

The practical utility of NEP 2020 lies in its ability to make education more inclusive and accessible, particularly for marginalized communities. By promoting education in regional languages up to at least Grade 5, and preferably beyond, the policy ensures that students from diverse linguistic backgrounds can access quality education without the barrier of language. This is particularly relevant in states like Assam, where linguistic diversity is a defining feature. The policy also emphasizes digital education, with initiatives like the National Digital Education Architecture (NDEAR) aiming to bridge the digital divide between urban and rural areas. By leveraging technology, NEP 2020 seeks to democratize education, ensuring that students in remote areas have access to high-quality resources and learning opportunities. This inclusivity enhances the policy's practical impact, as it empowers a larger section of the population to contribute to India's growth.

However, the success of NEP

2020 hinges on its effective implementation, which faces several challenges. India's education system is plagued by issues such as inadequate funding, a shortage of trained teachers, and disparities between urban and rural institutions. While NEP 2020 proposes increasing education spending to 6% of GDP, achieving this target requires sustained political will and coordination between central and state governments. Teacher training is another critical area, as the policy's ambitious goals such as integrating technology and fostering critical thinking require educators who are well-versed in modern pedagogical methods. Infrastructure development, particularly in rural areas, is also essential to ensure that digital and vocational education initiatives reach all students. Without addressing these challenges, the policy's vision risks remaining unfulfilled.

In the context of Assam, NEP 2020 presents both opportunities and challenges. The state's rich cultural heritage and linguistic diversity align well with the policy's emphasis on regional languages and inclusive education. By promoting Assamese and other local languages in early education, NEP 2020 can strengthen cultural identity while preparing students for global opportunities. However, Assam faces unique challenges, such as limited access to quality education in rural areas and a lack of advanced infrastructure for digital learning. Addressing these issues will require targeted investments in school facilities, teacher training, and internet connectivity. Additionally, Assam's strategic location in Northeast India makes it a potential hub for cross-border educational and economic collaborations, which NEP 2020 can leverage through partnerships with institutions in neighboring countries.

The policy's phased implementation approach allows for gradual adaptation, but it also demands long-term commitment. For instance, the transition to a multidisciplinary curriculum and the integration of vocational training will require significant changes in teacher training programs, assessment methods, and institutional frameworks. The introduction of a four-year undergraduate program with multiple exit

options allowing students to earn a certificate, diploma, or degree based on their years of study adds flexibility but also necessitates robust systems to ensure quality and recognition. Similarly, the emphasis on digital education requires not only infrastructure but also measures to address digital literacy gaps among students and teachers.

NEP 2020 also recognizes the importance of lifelong learning in a world where technological advancements are rapidly changing job requirements. By promoting continuous education through open and distance learning programs, the policy ensures that individuals can upskill and reskill throughout their careers. This is particularly relevant in a country like India, where a large youth population needs to stay competitive in a dynamic job market. The policy's focus on integrating emerging technologies like artificial intelligence, machine learning, and robotics into the curriculum prepares students for future-ready careers, further enhancing its practical utility.

The National Education Policy 2020 is a visionary framework that has the potential to transform India's education system into a global powerhouse. Its emphasis on practical utility, through flexible curricula and skill development, addresses the needs of a diverse student population. By fostering vocational training and aligning education with industry demands, it enhances employment generation, particularly in high-growth sectors. The policy's focus on research and innovation positions India to compete in the global knowledge economy, while its commitment to inclusivity and global integration ensures that Indian students can thrive on an international stage. However, the policy's success depends on overcoming implementation challenges, such as funding, infrastructure, and teacher training. In regions like Assam, leveraging local strengths while addressing structural gaps will be key to realizing NEP 2020's potential. With sustained effort and collaboration between stakeholders, NEP 2020 can pave the way for a brighter, more competitive future for Indian education, empowering generations to contribute to the nation's progress and global standing.

Assam's growing problem of human trafficking

By: Himangshu Ranjan Bhuyan

Human trafficking has become a serious and growing problem in Assam, a state known for its rich culture, scenic beauty, and diverse communities. Despite its natural blessings, Assam faces a dark challenge that threatens the safety and dignity of its people, especially women and children. Over the past decade, human trafficking has steadily increased in the region, turning into a major social issue that demands urgent attention and action. The trafficking of vulnerable individuals, driven by poverty, lack of education, and porous borders, has created a cycle of exploitation and suffering that is difficult to break.

Assam's geographical location plays a significant role in the rise of human trafficking cases. Bordered by international boundaries with Bangladesh, Bhutan, and Myanmar, and sharing internal borders with other northeastern states, Assam has become a transit and destination hub for traffickers. These traffickers exploit the porous nature of these borders to move victims across state and national lines. The region's connectivity, while beneficial for trade and travel, has unfortunately also made it easier for criminals to traffic people with minimal risk of being caught.

One of the major causes of human trafficking in Assam is the widespread poverty that plagues many rural and economically backward areas. For many families struggling to make ends meet, the promise of a better future elsewhere appears as a beacon of hope. Traffickers prey on this desperation, offering fake job opportunities or marriage proposals that lure victims away from their homes. Once trapped, these individuals are subjected to forced labor, sexual exploitation, and other forms of abuse. The victims often find themselves in situations where escape is nearly impossible due to threats, manipulation, or lack of resources.

Education and awareness also play a crucial role in either preventing or enabling trafficking. Many communities in Assam lack access to quality education, and this gap leaves individuals vulnerable to deceit. Without adequate knowledge about the risks of trafficking, many fall victim to false promises and fraudulent recruiters. Moreover, some families, driven by poverty, may unknowingly send their children away with traffickers, believing they are offering a chance for a better life.

Floods and other natural disasters, which frequently affect Assam, further increase the vulnerability of communities. Displacement caused by these calamities disrupts social structures and economic activities, leaving families desperate and easy targets for traffickers. The loss of livelihood and shelter creates conditions where traffickers can offer assistance in exchange for victims, thereby perpetuating the cycle of exploitation.

The methods traffickers use have become increasingly sophisticated. While earlier victims were usually deceived by strangers from outside their communities, now traffickers often operate through trusted intermediaries within the victims' own communities. These insiders exploit their familiarity with local customs and social networks to gain trust and manipulate victims. This internal involvement makes it harder for authorities to detect and prevent trafficking activities, as the operations become more covert and complex.

The impact of human trafficking on victims is devastating and long-lasting. Physical abuse and psychological trauma are common, but the consequences go beyond immediate suffering. Victims frequently face social stigma and discrimination upon their return, making reintegration into their families and communities difficult. Children who are trafficked lose precious years of education and normal development, often resulting in lifelong challenges. The damage inflicted by trafficking extends to entire families and communities, eroding social cohesion and trust.

Recognizing the urgent need to address this issue, the Assam government has taken steps to combat human trafficking. The establishment of Anti-Human Trafficking Units (AHTUs) in all districts has been a crucial move toward better identification, prevention, and rescue of victims. These units work closely with police, non-governmental organizations, and local leaders to monitor trafficking activities and support affected individuals. In addition, the government has sought to strengthen laws related to trafficking and regulate sectors prone to exploitation, such as domestic work.

Programs focused on education and empowerment form another essential part of Assam's response to trafficking. Initiatives like the 'Mukhya Mantrir Nijut Moina' scheme, which provides financial support for girls' education, aim to reduce vulnerability by encouraging school attendance and reducing dropout rates. Education equips young people with knowledge and skills, decreasing the chances that they will fall prey to traffickers. In recent years, thousands of girls have benefited from such schemes, showing promise for long-term prevention.

Despite these efforts, numerous challenges remain. Many trafficking cases go unreported because victims fear social rejection or retaliation by traffickers. The legal system often struggles to secure convictions due to lack of evidence or witness cooperation. Rehabilitation of rescued victims requires comprehensive support, including counseling, skill development, and livelihood assistance, but such resources are not always adequately available or accessible. Without proper rehabilitation, victims remain at risk of re-trafficking or social exclusion.

Community participation is essential to strengthen the fight against human trafficking in Assam. Local awareness campaigns, community vigilance, and active reporting of suspicious activities can help disrupt trafficking networks. When communities are informed and empowered, they become the first line of defense against traffickers. Building trust between law enforcement and communities encourages collaboration and makes it harder for traffickers to operate unnoticed.

In conclusion, Assam's growing problem of human trafficking is a complex issue that intersects with poverty, education, natural disasters, and social vulnerabilities. It requires a multifaceted approach that combines strong government action, community involvement, and sustained efforts toward social and economic development. Only through such comprehensive and united action can Assam hope to protect its citizens from the horrors of trafficking and build a safer, more just society for all. The time to act is now—lest more lives are lost to this invisible crime that thrives in the shadows. (The writer is Editor in Chief of the Assamese E-magazine SAMPROTIK. He can be reached at himangshur1989@gmail.com or 9954812261, 9864000260)

Trump's 'Golden Dome': A bridge too far

By: Vivek Mishra & Rahul Rawat

The United States (US) President Donald Trump appears tacitly motivated by the ambition to position himself as the most consequential president in Washington's history. The over 150 executive orders he has signed reflect a sweeping effort to reshape the US' internal and external policy landscape. Despite judicial challenges to many of these directives, the scale and scope of Trump's intended transformation across energy, fiscal, trade, and security policy domains remain unprecedented. Among these, his focus on revamping America's national security stands out. Across four critical dimensions of security projection, Trump has introduced new initiatives: a proposed US\$1 trillion military budget to boost the armed forces, measures aimed at 'restoring' US maritime dominance, the announcement of a new sixth-generation fighter aircraft called F47, and the unveiling of a nationwide missile defence system referred to as the 'Golden Dome.' While these proposals are ambitious, most may be realised over time—except perhaps the Golden Dome project, which faces particular hurdles in terms of timely execution and the historical limitations of aerial defence in the US.

As missile technologies evolve rapidly regarding delivery mechanisms, precision, and speed, missile defence must advance in tandem. The quintessential character of missile defence lies in its ability to outpace offensive systems, making it a key metric in the strategic competition between the US and China. Since hypersonic missiles are increasingly regarded as potential gamechangers, strengthening aerial defence to intercept them has become imperative in the broader framework of great power competition. With China and Russia potentially leading in the race for hypersonic missiles, the US faces mounting pressure to build an effective aerial defence shield around its homeland/perimeters. In this context, one of the most consequential executive orders issued by President Donald Trump on 27 January 2025 calls to revive the decades-old missile defence project now rebranded as the 'Golden Dome.' This initiative marks a contemporary iteration/avatar of the Strategic Defence Initiative (SDI) introduced in former President Ronald Reagan's era, aimed at providing the US with an impregnable shield of (ballistic) missile defence against targeting on military infrastructure and population centres.

Historical Context

The 1972 Anti-Ballistic Missile (ABM) treaty institutionalised the idea that offensive capabilities are costlier, and thus, limiting offensive arms would reduce the incentive to invest in defence systems. The US development of Anti-Satellite weapon (ASAT) capabilities in the late 1970s emerged as part of an action-reaction cycle of technological innovation in response to the erstwhile Soviet



Union's non-nuclear ASAT test. However, ASAT technology did not offer reassurance to US policymakers. Under former President Ford, the push for ASAT was driven by an intent to disable Soviet satellites in a wartime scenario, rather than simply matching Soviet capabilities. President Reagan's quest for SDI—a version of the Missile Defence (MD) shield against ballistic vectors—eliminated the scope for any bilateral arms control talks with the former Soviet Union. This marked a phase of 'remilitarisation' of space technologies and outer space during the Cold War.

By the late 1980s, Soviet policymakers under Gorbachev abandoned plans for deploying active missile defence systems and instead focused on asymmetric countermeasures such as the ASAT technology. After the Cold War, US strategic attention shifted from Russia and China towards more unpredictable regional actors such as North Korea. Following North Korea's 1998 Taepodong missile test, the US introduced the 1999 National Missile Defence (NMD) Act, laying the groundwork for funding capabilities against limited ballistic missile attacks, while also pursuing negotiated reductions in Russian nuclear forces. The Bush administration's withdrawal from the ABM treaty sought to close vulnerabilities by integrating MD with nuclear deterrence, thereby strengthening the threat of retaliation. This move reinforced the idea that missile defence could help neutralise adversarial threats and aggression, and reduce the political coercion against the US and its allies. These capabilities materialised in the form of deploying ground- and sea-based interceptors aimed at addressing the limited Intercontinental Ballistic Missile (ICBM) threats from rogue actors such as

Iran and North Korea. The trend saw continuity during the Obama administration.

In its first term, the Trump administration's 2019 Missile Defence Review (MDR), intentionally omitted the term 'ballistic' to broaden the scope of counter-threat measures. It also introduced the Next-Generation Interceptor (NGI) to supplement the existing forty-four Ground-Based Interceptors (GBIs). The Biden administration's 2022 MDR maintained this continuity, further funding NGIs within an integrated deterrence framework.

The development of missile defence technologies under successive administrations, coupled with an increasingly complex threat environment, has positioned President Trump to pursue a comprehensive missile defence agenda. The proposed Golden Dome aims to serve as a full-spectrum shield against the adversaries' nature and capabilities, and is designed to neutralise ballistic, hypersonic, cruise, and other advanced vectors from peer competitors, particularly China and Russia.

Challenges

The MD under the Golden Dome framework is intended to augment the speed, accuracy, and lethality of interception systems aimed at protecting both civilian population bases and critical infrastructure across the US homeland. Trump's executive order outlines a dual approach: expanding the existing ground-based sensor network and developing multi-domain sensors across sea, air, and space to improve detection, classification, interception, and verification of threat neutralisation. The order highlights two key satellite programmes: the acceleration of the Hypersonic and Ballistic Tracking Space Sensor (HBTSS) and the development of Proliferated Warfighter Space Architecture (PWSA).

Additionally, enhancing underlayer and terminal-phase intercept capabilities to defend against countervalue attacks is another important value addition. Together with supply chain components, these elements constitute the Golden Dome as a 'system of systems'—a coordinated architecture aimed at neutralising advanced missile threats.

At its core, the Golden Dome represents a quest for near-immunity and assured homeland security against adversarial attacks. Since the Reagan era, the US has invested roughly US\$250 billion in the MDA to develop these capabilities. An effective MD can offer two key advantages for the US grand strategy. First, it will increase the cost of offensive action for adversaries; second, it will impart greater confidence in signalling a pre-emptive strike against any adversary's brinkmanship strategy. As a multi-layered and integrated network, the Golden Dome introduces operational complexity and strategic uncertainty for adversaries, acting as a deterrent. However, the real challenge for Golden Dome's success in the future will hinge on its effective operationalisation, which is deeply dependent on technology and the continual evolution of systems. This technological reliance could also be its greatest vulnerability—especially in an era where military and space assets are increasingly dependent on the internet and Artificial Intelligence. Even in peacetime, maintaining such a US-wide missile defence would demand constant upgrades, significant financial resources, and agility.

The feasibility of the Golden Dome project—and the scale of its technological challenges—are reminiscent of the not-so-successful history of missile defence in the US. The project may likely outlast Trump's presidential tenure, and given its enormous costs, it may place a sustained burden on the US annual defence budget for years. That said, the project could also serve as a diplomatic bargaining chip for Trump, particularly in the backdrop of his de-nuclearisation agenda to bring both Russia and China to the negotiating table to discuss the arms limitation problem. Furthermore, Trump could also ask his allies and partners to invest in the US if the Golden Dome is used to provide extended deterrence to their territories. Notably, the US has already offered such a proposition to its neighbour and ally, Canada.

The realisation of the Golden Dome faces several challenges, including bureaucratic hurdles, high costs, and questions of technological feasibility. The US strategy of reducing vulnerability by bolstering its missile defence has already raised questions about the peaceful uses of the Outer Space Treaty. Ultimately, the modernisation of the American missile defence is likely to entrench Washington in a game of one-upmanship with its great power rivals—China and Russia. (Courtesy: ORF)

NATO set to approve new military purchases as part of major defense spending hike

'The commitment is there, 5 per cent on defence spending'

BRUSSELS, June 5: NATO defence ministers are set Thursday to approve purchasing targets for stocking up on weapons and military equipment to better defend Europe, the Arctic and the North Atlantic, as part of a US push to ramp up security spending.

The "capability targets" lay out goals for each of the 32 nations to purchase priority equipment like air defence systems, long-range missiles, artillery, ammunition, drones and "strategic enablers" such as air-to-air refuelling, heavy air transport and logistics. Each nation's plan is classified, so details are scarce.

"Today we decide on the capability targets. From there, we will assess the gaps we have, not only to be able to defend ourselves today, but also three, five, seven years from now," NATO Secretary-General Mark Rutte said.

"All these investments have to be financed," he told reporters before chairing the meeting at NATO's Brussels headquarters. US President Donald Trump and his NATO counterparts will meet on June 24-25 to agree to new defence investment goals.

Spurred on by their own security



concerns, European allies and Canada have already been ramping up military spending, including arms and ammunition purchases, since Russia launched a full-scale invasion of Ukraine in 2022.

At the same time, some allies balk at US demands to invest 5 per cent of their gross domestic product in defense — 3.5 per cent on core military spending and 1.5 per cent on the roads, bridges, airfields and sea ports needed to deploy armies more quickly — when they have already struggled to grow their budgets to 2 per cent of GDP.

Still, US Defense Secretary Pete Hegseth said that many appear on track to agree.

"The commitment is there. 5 per cent on defence spending," he told reporters after stepping out of the meeting.

"When you consider the threats that we face, the urgency in the world, it's critical. We don't need more flags. We need more fighting formations. We don't need more conferences. We need more capabilities. Hard power." The new targets are assigned by NATO based on a blue-

print agreed upon in 2023 — the military organisation's biggest planning shakeup since the Cold War — to defend its territory from an attack by Russia or another major adversary.

Under those plans, NATO would aim to have up to 300,000 troops ready to move to its eastern flank within 30 days, although experts suggest the allies would struggle to muster those kinds of numbers.

The member countries are assigned roles in defending NATO territory across three major zones — the high north and Atlantic area, a zone north of the Alps, and another in southern Europe.

NATO planners believe that the targets must be met within 5-10 years, given the speed at which Russia is building its armed forces now, and which would accelerate were any peace agreement reached to end its war on Ukraine.

Some fear Russia might be ready to strike at a NATO country even sooner, especially if Western sanctions are eased and Europe has not prepared. "Are we going to gather here again and say okay, we failed a bit," and then maybe we start learning Russian?" Lithuanian Defense Minister

Dovile Sakaliene said.

Swedish Defence Minister Pål Jonson also warned that while Russia is bogged down in Ukraine right now, things could quickly change.

"We also know after an armistice or a peace agreement, of course, Russia is going to allocate more forces closer to our vicinity. Therefore, it's extremely important that the alliance use these couple of years now when Russia is still limited by its force posture in and around Ukraine," Jonson said.

If the targets are respected, the member countries will need to spend at least 3 per cent of GDP on defence.

Dutch Defence Minister Ruben Brekelmans said his country calculates in the medium term that "we should spend 3.5 per cent at least on defence, which in the Netherlands means an additional 16 to 19 billion euro (USD 18-22 billion) addition to our current budget."

The Netherlands is likely to buy more tanks, infantry fighting vehicles and long-range missile systems, including US-made Patriots that can target aircraft, cruise missiles and shorter-range ballistic missiles. (AP)

'Those who think working in national interest is anti-party need to question themselves'



WASHINGTON, June 4: People who consider working in national interest as anti-party activities need to question themselves, Congress leader Shashi Tharoor has said even as he brushed aside speculations over his quitting the main opposition party.

Tharoor, currently in the US leading a multi-party delegation on Operation Sindoor, has been under attack by some Congress leaders who have recently attacked him for supporting the government's stand following the Pahalgam attack.

The Congress leader has even been dubbed as the "super spokesperson of the BJP by one of his party colleagues."

"Frankly, when one is doing the nation's service, I don't think one needs to worry too much about these things," Tharoor said here in an interview with PTI Videos on Wednesday.

"I think anybody who sort of considers that working in the national interest is some sort of anti-party activity really needs to question themselves rather than us," he said when asked what his message would be to his detractors upon his return to India.

Tharoor's remarks have at times been at variance with the Congress party's official stand on certain issues. On social media being abuzz about whether Tharoor would continue to be with Congress or join the BJP, he said: "I'm an elected member of parliament. I have four years left of my term. I don't know why there is any question to be asked."

In response to a question on Congress leader Rahul Gandhi criticising Prime Minister Narendra Modi and saying he had "surrendered" after receiving a phone call from US President Donald Trump, Tharoor said: "In a democracy, and this is normal, parties will contend, express criticism, and make demands."

"We are not here on a party political mission. We are here as representatives of a united India," he said, pointing out the delegation included five political parties from three religions and seven states.

The senior Congress leader said he noticed his friend Salman Khurshid asked if it was so difficult to be a patriot in India these days.

Apart from Tharoor, the delegation comprised MPs Sarfaraz Ahmad, Ganti Harish Madhur Balayogi, Shashank Mani Tripathi, Bhuvaneshwar Kalita, Milind Deora, Tejasvi Surya, and India's former ambassador to the US Taranjit Sandhu. They arrived from India in New York on May 24 and travelled to Guyana, Panama, Colombia and Brazil before arriving in Washington, the last leg of the tour.

"It's an incredible cross-section reflective of India's diversity. And yet we've come up with a united message. So there is unity in diversity as well, in this group, and to my mind, our focus has to be on that unified message, because when it comes to the national interest, national security, honestly, I think by and large, the nation is united."

Tharoor also asserted that they were not on a party political mission, but were visiting several countries as representatives of a united India.

He referred to an old interview saying that "our political differences stop at the edge of the border. Once you cross the border, you are Indian, and your other allegiances come second".

Responding to a question on Trump's repeated claims of mediating in the conflict between India and Pakistan, Tharoor said: "I'm not necessarily having to address it because I'm not here to stir up any sort of complications in our relationship with the White House. (PTI)

New Zealand Parliament suspends 3 Maori Party lawmakers for haka protest

WELLINGTON, June 5: New Zealand legislators voted Thursday to enact record suspensions from Parliament for three lawmakers who performed a Maori haka to protest a proposed law.

Hana-Rawhiti Maipi-Clarke received a seven-day ban and the leaders of her political party, Debbie Ngarewa-Packer and Rawiri Waititi, were barred for 21 days. Three days had been the longest ban for a lawmaker from New Zealand's Parliament before.

The lawmakers from Te Pati Maori, the Maori Party, performed the haka, a chanting dance of challenge, in November to oppose a widely unpopular bill, now defeated, that they said would reverse Indigenous rights.

The protest drew global headlines and provoked months of fraught debate among lawmakers about what the consequences for the lawmakers' actions should be and the place of Maori culture in Parliament.

Why the punishment was so strict

A committee of the lawmakers' peers in April recommended the lengthy bans. It said the lawmakers were not being punished for the haka, but for striding across the floor of the debating chamber toward their opponents while doing it.

Judith Collins, the committee chair, said the lawmakers' behaviour was egregious, disruptive and potentially intimidating. Maipi-Clarke, 22, rejected that description Thursday, citing other instances when legislators have left their seats and approached opponents without sanction. The suspended legislators said they are being treated more harshly than others because they are Maori.

"I came into this house to give a voice to the voiceless. Is that the real issue here?" Maipi-Clarke asked Parliament. "Is that the real intimidation here? Are our voices too loud for this house?"

Why this haka was controversial

Inside and outside Parliament, the haka has increasingly been welcomed as an important part of New Zealand life. The sacred chant can be a challenge to the viewer but is not violent.

As Maori language and culture have become part of mainstream New Zealand in recent years, haka appear in a range of cultural, sombre and celebratory settings. They also have rung out in Parliament to welcome the passage of high-profile laws.

Some who decried the protest haka in Parliament cited its timing, with Maipi-Clarke beginning the chant as votes were being tallied and causing a brief suspension of proceedings. She has privately apologised for the disruption to Parliament's Speaker, she said Thursday. (AP)

South Korea's liberal-led legislature passes bills calling for special probes into Yoon, wife

SEOUL, June 5: South Korea's liberal-led legislature on Thursday passed bills to launch special investigations into former President Yoon Suk Yeol's short-lived imposition of martial law in December and criminal allegations against his wife, targeting the ousted conservative a day after his liberal successor took office.

The bills previously were vetoed by Yoon and South Korea's caretaker government after his December 14 impeachment over the martial law debacle.

They are expected to be signed by new President Lee Jae-myung, a Democrat who won Tuesday's snap election triggered by Yoon's formal removal from office in April.

Many members of the conservative People Power Party refused to participate in the votes, which took place after one of the party's lawmakers accused the liberals in a speech of being driven by vendetta.

Lee, who as an opposition leader drove the legislative efforts to impeach and oust Yoon, pinned his presidential campaign on unity, promising not to target conser-

vatives and calling for an end to political polarization.

Yet Lee has vowed a full investigation into Yoon's martial law stunt and the allegations surrounding his wife, moves that could overshadow the new government and inflame tensions as Yoon faces a high-stakes rebellion trial carrying a possible death sentence.

The Seoul Central District Prosecutors' Office indicted Yoon in January over his December 3 martial law decree, charging him with masterminding a rebellion and describing his power grab as an illegal bid to seize the legislature and election offices and arrest political opponents.

Liberals have insisted independent investigations into Yoon are essential, saying probes by prosecutors, police and an anti-corruption agency were inadequate and hampered by Yoon's refusal to cooperate. If Lee approves the launch of independent investigations, special prosecutors could request the transfer of relevant cases for expanded probes, or direct public or military prosecutors to continue handling

them under their supervision.

The bills calling for independent investigations into Yoon's martial law decree and criminal allegations involving his wife both passed by a vote of 194 to 3.

Dozens of retired marines, dressed in red shirts, saluted and cheered from an observation box after lawmakers passed the bill for a special prosecutor investigation into the marine's death, which also passed 194 to 3. Yoon's martial law decree lasted only a few hours after a quorum of lawmakers pushed past a blockade of hundreds of heavily armed soldiers and voted to revoke the measure.

Yoon defended the move as a necessary act of governance, accusing the Democrats, whom he labelled "anti-state forces", of abusing their majority to obstruct his agenda and paralyse state affairs.

That same majority now gives Lee a far more favourable path to advance his agenda, though conservatives claim it could grant him virtually unchecked power and allow him to pass laws that shield him from legal trouble. (AP)

Election of Mexico's first indigenous supreme court justice in 170 years raises hope, scepticism

MEXICO CITY, June 5: In his campaign for Mexico's Supreme Court, Hugo Aguilar sent a simple message: He would be the one to finally give Indigenous Mexicans a voice at one of the highest levels of government. "It's our turn as Indigenous people ... to make decisions in this country," he said in the lead up to Sunday's first judicial elections in Mexican history.

Now, the 52-year-old Aguilar, a lawyer from the Mixtec people in Mexico's southern Oaxaca state, will be the first Indigenous Supreme Court justice in nearly 170 years in the Latin American nation, according to Mexican President Claudia Sheinbaum.

He could lead the high court. The last Indigenous justice to do so was Mexican hero and former

President Benito Juárez, who ran the court from 1857 to 1858.

For some, Aguilar has become a symbol of hope for 23 million Indigenous people long on the forgotten fringes of Mexican society. But others fiercely criticize his past, and worry that instead of representing them, he will instead stand with the ruling party, Morena, that ushered him onto the court.

Top vote getter in controversial contest

Supporters cite Aguilar's long history of working on Indigenous rights, while critics say that more recently he's helped push the governing party's agenda, including former President Andrés Manuel López Obrador's massive infrastructure projects, at the expense of Indigenous communities. Aguilar's

team said he would not comment until after official results were confirmed. "He's not an Indigenous candidate," said Francisco López Bárcenas, a distinguished Mixtec lawyer from the same region as Aguilar who once worked with him decades ago. He applauded the election of an Indigenous justice, but said "He's an Indigenous man who became a candidate."

Aguilar was elected in Mexico's first judicial election, a process that's been criticised as weakening Mexico's system of checks and balances. López Obrador and his party overhauled the judicial system the populist leader was long at odds with. Instead of appointing judges through experience, voters elected judges to 2,600 federal, state and local positions. (AP)

China issues warrants for alleged Taiwanese hackers, bans business for pro-independence links

TAIPEI, June 5: China issued warrants Thursday for 20 Taiwanese people it said carried out hacking missions in the Chinese mainland on behalf of the island's ruling party, while separately banning dealings with a Taiwanese company whose owners mainland authorities called "hardcore Taiwan independence supporters".

Police in the southern manufacturing hub of Guangzhou said they were led by a man named Ning Enwei on behalf of Taiwan's independence-leaning Democratic Progressive Party but did not identify their alleged crimes.

Meanwhile, China's government said all commercial contact had been banned with the Siciens International Company Ltd, which it says are led by businessman Puma Shen and his father, calling the two men independence supporters.

Websites mentioning Siciens say it specialises in sourcing bicycle parts from China. Shen is also the head of the Kuma Acad-

emy, an organisation that encourages Taiwanese people to prepare for possible invasion. Taiwan's ruling Democratic Progressive Party (DPP) swiftly dismissed China's accusations. "This is clearly a case of the Chinese Communist Party fabricating a pretext to stir up trouble. When it comes to infiltration, cyberattacks, cognitive warfare and gray-zone threats, the CCP is by far the most serious perpetrator," said Michael Chen, the DPP's acting director of International Affairs. Gray-zone warfare refers to offensive tactics short of open combat.

"What we are seeing now is a textbook example of the bully crying foul," Chen said.

China considers Taiwan its own territory, to be brought under its control by force if necessary. Zhu Fenglian, a spokesperson for the Taiwan Affairs Office of the China's Cabinet, said Siciens "engages in trade and business cooperation with certain mainland enterprises in pursuit of economic benefits." (AP)

Israel says it has recovered bodies of 2 Israeli-American hostages from Gaza Strip

TEL AVIV, June 5: Israel has recovered the bodies of two Israeli-American hostages taken in Hamas' October 7, 2023, attack that ignited the war in the Gaza Strip. Israeli strikes overnight and into Thursday meanwhile killed at least 13 people, including three local journalists, according to health officials in the territory.

Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu said the remains of Judith Weinstein and Gad Haggai were recovered and returned to Israel in a special operation by the army and the Shin Bet internal security agency. "Together with all the citizens of Israel, my wife and I extend our heartfelt condolences to the dear families. Our hearts ache for the most terrible loss. May their memory be blessed," he said in a statement.

Kibbutz Nir Oz announced the deaths of Weinstein, 70, and Haggai, 72, both of whom had Israeli and US citizenship, in December 2023. Weinstein was also a Canadian citizen. The military said they were killed in the October 7 attack and taken into Gaza by the Mujahideen Brigades, the small armed group that it said had also abducted and killed Shiri Bibas and her two small children. The army said it re-



covered the remains of Weinstein and Haggai overnight into Thursday from the southern Gaza city of Khan Younis.

A teacher who helped children and a chef who played jazz

The couple were taking an early morning walk near their home in Kibbutz Nir Oz on the morning of October 7 when Hamas militants stormed across the border and rampaged through several army bases and farming communities.

In the early hours of the morning, Weinstein was able to call emergency services and let them know that both she and her husband had been shot, and send a message to her family.

Weinstein was born in New York and taught English to children with special needs at Kibbutz Nir Oz, a small community near

the Gaza border. The kibbutz said she also taught meditation techniques to children and teenagers who suffered from anxiety as a result of rocket fire from Gaza. Haggai was a retired chef and jazz musician.

"My beautiful parents have been freed. We have certainty," their daughter, Iris Haggai Liniado, wrote in a Facebook post. She thanked the Israeli military, the FBI and the Israeli and US governments and called for the release of all the remaining hostages. The couple were survived by two sons and two daughters and seven grandchildren, the kibbutz said.

Reporters among 13 killed in Israeli strikes

At least 10 Palestinians were killed in Israeli strikes in Khan Younis overnight, according to Nasser Hospital, which received the bodies. It was not immediately clear if the strikes were related to the recovery mission.

In Gaza City, three local reporters were killed and six people were wounded in a strike on the courtyard of the al-Ahli Hospital, according to Gaza's Health Ministry. It did not immediately identify the journalists or say which outlets they worked for. (AP)

Private Japanese lunar lander heads toward touchdown in moon's far north

TOKYO, June 5: A private lunar lander from Japan is closing in on the moon, aiming for a touchdown in the unexplored far north with a mini rover.

The moon landing attempt by Tokyo-based company ispace on Friday Japan time is the latest entry in the rapidly expanding commercial lunar rush.

The encore comes two years after the company's first moonshot ended in a crash landing, giving rise to the name Resilience for its successor lander.

Resilience holds a rover with a shovel to gather lunar dirt as well as a Swedish artist's toy-size red house that will be lowered onto the moon's dusty surface. Long the province of governments, the moon became a target of private outfits in 2019, with more flops than wins along the way. Launched in January from Florida on a long, roundabout journey, Resilience entered lunar orbit last month. It shared a SpaceX ride with Firefly Aerospace's Blue Ghost, which reached the moon faster and became the first private entity to successfully land there in March.

Another US company, Intuitive



Machines, arrived at the moon a few days after Firefly. But the tall, spindly lander face-planted in a crater near the moon's south pole and was declared dead within hours.

Resilience is targeting the top of the moon, a less forbidding place than the shadowy bottom. The ispace team chose a flat area with few boulders in Mare Frigoris or Sea of Cold, a long and narrow region full of craters and ancient lava flows that stretches across the near side's northern tier. Once settled with power and communication

flowing, the 7.5-foot resilience will lower the piggybacking rover onto the lunar surface.

Made of carbon fibre-reinforced plastic with four wheels, ispace's European-built rover — named Tenacious — sports a high-definition camera to scout out the area and a shovel to scoop up some lunar dirt for NASA.

The rover, weighing just 11 pounds, will stick close to the lander, going in circles at a speed of less than one inch per second.

Besides science and tech experiments, there's an artistic touch.

The rover holds a tiny, Swedish-style red cottage with white trim and a green door, dubbed the Moonhouse by creator Mikael Genberg, for placement on the lunar surface.

Takeshi Hakamada, CEO and founder of ispace, considers the latest moonshot "merely a steppingstone", with its next, much bigger lander launching by 2027 with NASA involvement, and even more to follow. "We're not trying to corner the market. We're trying to build the market," Jeremy Fix, chief engineer for ispace's US subsidiary, said at a conference last month. "It's a huge market, a huge potential."

Fix noted that ispace, like other businesses, does not have "infinite funds" and cannot afford repeated failures. While not divulging the cost of the current mission, company officials said it's less than the first one which exceeded USD 100 million. Two other US companies are aiming for moon landings by year's end: Jeff Bezos' Blue Origin and Astrobot Technology. Astrobot's first lunar lander missed the moon altogether in 2024 and came crashing back through Earth's atmosphere. (AP)

A farmer-scientist interaction session allowed participants to voice their concerns

'Viksit Krishi Sankalp Abhiyan' marks World Environment Day with programs across Namsai district

HT Bureau

NAMSAI, June 5: The nationwide pre-kharif campaign "Viksit Krishi Sankalp Abhiyan" continued into its eighth day on Thursday with a series of awareness programs organised across the blocks of Chowkham, Namsai, and Lekang in Arunachal Pradesh.

According to an official statement, the events, which also coincided with World Environment Day, focused on scientific agricultural practices and environmental conservation.

In Piyong, Theja Angami, a scientist from the ICAR-AP Centre in Basar, urged farmers to adopt sustainable practices such as intercropping in arecanut plantations, soybean cultivation with plantation crops to boost soil fertility, and the use of low-cost polyhouse technology to increase vegetable productivity.

At various sessions held across the district, experts from Krishi Vigyan Kendra (KVK) Namsai, including Senior Scientist and Head Upal Barua, SMS (Plant Protection) Madhumita Sonowal Bora, and SMS (Agronomy) K Nithinkumar, provided detailed guidance on integrated nutrient and pest management systems.



They also emphasized the importance of leguminous crop inclusion, mulching, and scientific methods for cultivating paddy and maize.

The discussions highlighted the value of organic and natural farming, crop diversification, and integrated farming systems for long-term agricultural sustainability.

In observance of World Environment Day, the adverse impacts of deforestation

on the ecological balance of Northeastern India were underlined.

Representatives from the State Departments of Agriculture, Horticulture, Fisheries, and Veterinary Services also took part, briefing farmers on various central and state-sponsored schemes designed to promote rural livelihoods and agricultural development.

Farmers were encouraged to take advantage of the subsidies and benefits provided under these schemes.

A farmer-scientist interaction session allowed participants to voice their concerns, particularly on arecanut planting techniques and pest and disease management strategies, receiving practical advice from the attending experts.

To mark the occasion, saplings were planted in all three blocks of Namsai district.

The initiative also promoted the use of biodegradable alternatives and discouraged plastic usage, reinforcing the campaign's commitment to environmental conservation alongside agricultural progress.

Governor Parnaik leads World Environment Day celebrations at Raj Bhavan



HT Bureau

NAMSAI, June 5: Arunachal Pradesh Governor Lt General KT Parnaik (Retd), PVSM, UYSM, YSM, led the World Environment Day 2025 celebrations at Raj Bhavan in Itanagar on Thursday, calling on citizens to adopt environmentally responsible habits and contribute actively to the national mission to end plastic pollution.

The Governor's appeal and the details of the event were shared in an official statement.

Marking the occasion by planting Maha Neem saplings on the northern lawn of the Raj Bhavan, the Governor stressed the importance of individual and collective action in conserving the environment.

He urged every citizen to say a firm "No" to single-use plastic and highlighted the transformative potential of simple everyday choices such as switching from plastic to cloth and biodegradable bags, segregating household waste, recycling responsibly, and participating in community clean-up drives.

Governor Parnaik called on youth, educators, community leaders, and civil society to work hand-in-hand to build a cleaner, greener, and plastic-free Arunachal Pradesh.

In line with the national campaign "One Nation, One Mission: End Plastic Pollution" initiated by the Ministry of Environment, Forest

and Climate Change, he underlined the need for widespread awareness and systemic change.

The Governor also outlined the five core pillars of the campaign—spreading awareness on the hazards of plastic pollution, reducing dependency on single-use plastics, improving waste management systems, promoting sustainable alternatives, and nurturing eco-friendly lifestyles.

During an interaction with Raj Bhavan officials and the Forest Department staff stationed at the estate, the Governor lauded their efforts in maintaining the natural beauty and greenery of the premises.

He expressed appreciation for their commitment to environmental stewardship.

On the occasion, Governor Parnaik felicitated Er Heni Basar, a forester from Ita-Park Range under the Social Forestry Division of the state's Department of Environment, Forest & Climate Change.

Basar was recognised for his outstanding contribution in the design, preparation, and landscaping of the Raj Bhavan's flower beds and golf course.

The World Environment Day celebrations at Raj Bhavan served as a reminder of the urgent need to curb plastic pollution and embrace sustainable living for the well-being of future generations.

Jairampur observes World Environment Day with focus on tree plantation and catchment protection



HT Bureau

NAMSAI, June 5: World Environment Day 2025 was observed with a district-level programme at the KVK Auditorium in Jairampur, located within the VKV school campus.

The event witnessed active participation from government officials, educational institutions, student bodies, security forces, and local residents.

According to an official statement, the event was held under the central theme "Ek Ped Maa Ke Naam," the celebration aimed to promote ecological responsibility and sustainable environmental practices.

The programme was attended by Wangki Lowang, Minister of Environment & Forest, Geology, Mining & Minerals and Chairman of DoTCL, along with Laisam Simai, MLA of the 51-Nampang (ST) Assembly Constituency.

Both leaders emphasised the urgent need to move away from harmful land-use practices like Jhum cultivation and highlighted the importance of catchment area protection in preserving water sources and addressing climate change.

Divisional forest officer Dobin Lendo opened the event with a welcome address, underscoring the escalating threats of global warming and the critical role of collec-

tive conservation efforts. Deputy Commissioner of Changlang, Vishal Sah, also spoke on the occasion, encouraging participants to plant at least one sapling in their homes and to actively contribute towards maintaining a clean and green environment.

As part of the day's activities, saplings were planted around CHC Jairampur by the District BJP unit. VKV Jairampur staff and students, along with heads of departments, PRO members, and political workers, also participated in the plantation drive.

The Changlang District Students' Union led a separate plantation activity along the local market roadside, while the Assam Rifles contributed by planting saplings within their campus.

The event concluded with sapling plantations within the VKV campus by Minister Wangki Lowang, MLA Laisam Simai, and various department heads.

The gesture, under the theme "Ek Ped Maa Ke Naam," symbolised a shared commitment to environmental stewardship within educational institutions.

The plantation drive will continue across the district from June 6 to September 30, 2025, as part of a sustained campaign to reinforce ecological awareness and promote long-term environmental sustainability.

IBC-AP observes World Environment Day with call for eco-conscious engineering and youth awareness

HT Bureau

NAMSAI, June 5: The Arunachal Pradesh State Unit of the Indian Building Congress (IBC-AP) joined national and global celebrations of World Environment Day on June 5 with a programme held at its office in Mowb-II, Itanagar.

According to an official statement, the event, which underscored the urgent need for environmental protection and climate action, was attended by IBC-AP Chairman Toli Bassar, Secretary Nabam Takar, and other senior professionals.

Speaking on the occasion, Chairman Toli Bassar expressed optimism that increasing awareness about global warming was a positive trend, reflecting people's growing desire to live in cleaner, greener surroundings.

"As engineers, we carry the added responsibility of educating the next generation and inspiring the youth to uphold the values of environmental conservation and hygiene," he said.

He noted that while Arunachal Pradesh enjoys vast forest cover, rapid construction, urbanisation,



and environmental degradation—such as earth cutting and poaching—have contributed to the depletion of wildlife populations. Commending the state's Home Minister Mama Natung for the ongoing Airgun Surrender Abhiyan, Bassar described it as a commendable initiative that highlights the importance of preserving nature and wildlife.

"We must respect and protect the natural laws that govern our planet," he added.

IBC-AP, which was recently constituted, has planned several programmes to raise awareness about its mission and to familiarise professionals with emerging technologies, including artificial intelligence in the engineering and

construction sector.

However, Bassar emphasized that despite technological advancement, there can be no substitute for safeguarding the planet from the escalating threats of global warming.

Public Works Department Chief Engineer (CSQ) Tanyok Taga and other key resource persons also participated in the event, engaging in discussions on the critical role of forests and environmental sustainability.

The attendees pledged to plant trees at their workplaces and homes, and to encourage children to adopt similar eco-conscious habits, reinforcing the day's commitment to a cleaner, greener future.

Civil-military coordination meeting in Tawang

HT Bureau

NAMSAI, June 5: A Civil-Military Coordination Meeting was held on Thursday at the conference hall of the Tawang Brigade, reaffirming the strong partnership between the civilian administration and the armed forces in the strategically significant region.

According to an official statement the meeting saw the participation of heads of various government departments, ex-servicemen, and Gaon Burahs, highlighting the ongoing efforts to foster a cohesive approach to national security.

Brigadier Bhupal Singh, SM, Commander of the Tawang Brigade, addressed the gathering and emphasized that the concept of security in the modern era extends beyond traditional military boundaries.

"Security today is not confined to the Army, paramilitary, or police forces alone. Every citizen has a crucial role to play in safeguarding our society and nation," he said.

Stressing the importance of information sharing and public engagement, he noted that protecting the nation encompasses everything from safeguarding citizens' rights and assets to ensuring the future of the next generation.

Arunachal preps for crackdown on illegal Bangladeshi immigrants

ITANAGAR, June 5: The Arunachal Pradesh government has launched a statewide crackdown to detect and deport illegal Bangladeshi immigrants, an official said on Thursday.

Acting on directives issued by the Union Ministry of Home Affairs (MHA), the state has instructed all districts to immediately constitute district task forces (DTFs) to identify undocumented immigrants and ensure strict enforcement of Inner Line Permit (ILP) provisions. The decision was taken at a high-level meeting chaired by advisor to home minister Muthu Mithi and DGP Anand Mohan on Wednesday.

The meeting was attended by senior police officers, including inspector generals and superintendents of police.

"Statewide crackdown on illegal Bangladeshi immigrants and ILP violations. A district task force will be immediately constituted in every district to carry out detection of illegal Bangladeshi immigrants and ensure strict enforcement of the Inner Line Permit regime," Mithi said. (PTI)

Tawang hosts training on cleanliness and emergency medical kits for tourism stakeholders

HT Bureau

NAMSAI, June 5: In a move aimed at enhancing safety and hygiene in the tourism sector, the District Administration of Tawang conducted an awareness-cum-hands-on training programme on Thursday at the Conference Hall of the Deputy Commissioner's Office.

According to an official statement, the initiative, spearheaded by Deputy Commissioner Kanki Darang and jointly organised by the Department of Tourism, Tawang and KDS District Hospital, sought to equip key tourism stakeholders with essential knowledge on cleanliness protocols and the use of emergency medical kits.

Participants included taxi and tour operators, hoteliers, and homestay owners, who were trained on basic first-aid procedures crucial for a high-altitude destination like Tawang.

Addressing the gathering, DC



Darang stressed that life-saving skills such as CPR and oxygen administration are critical in a region frequented by tourists with varying levels of altitude acclimatisation.

He recommended that all tourist vehicles and accommodations be equipped with oxygen cylinders as a mandatory safety measure.

The DC also highlighted the importance of environmental conservation and announced that plastic

and PET bottles would no longer be allowed beyond the Giant Buddha for vehicles and tourists heading towards popular destinations such as Bumla.

He advocated for stricter cleanliness practices, including waste segregation and the use of compost pits for biodegradable household waste to support organic farming.

District Tourism Officer Tsering Dekey welcomed attendees and

expressed gratitude for the proactive participation of tourism service providers.

She also thanked the Health Department for their support in conducting the training and urged stakeholders to adhere strictly to the district's cleanliness and safety guidelines to ensure a responsible tourism experience in Tawang.

The medical training session was led by a team from KDS District Hospital, under the guidance of District Medical Officer Dr Thupten Lhamu and Medical Superintendent Dr Tenzin Kunga.

Participants were given practical demonstrations on using portable oxygen kits, performing CPR, and managing high-altitude illnesses such as mountain sickness.

The programme received a positive response from the participants and was seen as a meaningful step toward ensuring safer and more sustainable tourism practices in the region.

Namsai observes World Environment Day with anti-plastic pledge and tree plantation drive



HT Bureau

NAMSAI, June 5: World Environment Day 2025 was observed at the District Secretariat in Namsai on Wednesday with a call to action under the theme "One Nation, One Mission: End Plastic Pollution."

According to an official statement, the programme was attended by MLA and Advisor to the Home

Minister (RWD, Sports & Youth Affairs) Chau Zingnu Namchoom, along with Deputy Commissioner C R Khampa, Superintendent of Police Sangey Thinley, ZPC Nang Urmila Mancheyskhun, ADC, heads of departments, government officials, and Anganwadi workers.

In his address, MLA Namchoom stressed the urgency of environ-

mental conservation and urged citizens to adopt eco-friendly habits, especially by eliminating the use of single-use plastic.

He specifically called on Anganwadi workers to raise awareness in their respective communities about the environmental and health hazards posed by plastic waste.

Emphasizing the importance of cleanliness, he encouraged office bearers across departments to maintain clean and green office premises.

A pledge in line with the theme "One Nation, One Mission: End Plastic Pollution" was administered to all attendees during the event, reinforcing the commitment to sustainable and responsible practices.

In a move aimed at enhancing administrative efficiency, 5G mobile phones procured through the MLA Local Area Development (LAD) fund were distributed to Anganwadi workers for better data entry and reporting on the POSHAN portal.

Dassault Aviation partners with Tata Advanced Systems to manufacture Rafale jet fuselage in India

'For the first time, Rafale fuselages will be produced outside France'

NEW DELHI, June 5: French aerospace major Dassault Aviation and Tata Advanced Systems Ltd on Thursday announced firming up of a deal to manufacture fuselage for Rafale fighter jets in India.

Under the partnership, Tata Advanced Systems will set up a cutting-edge production facility in Hyderabad to produce the key component of the combat jet.

The first fuselage sections are expected to roll off the assembly line in financial year 2028, with the facility expected to deliver up to two complete fuselages per month, Tata Advanced Systems Ltd (TASL) said.

The TASL said it will set up a cutting-edge production facility in Hyderabad for the manufacture of key structural sections of the Rafale, including the lateral shells of the rear fuselage, the complete rear section, the central fuselage, and the front section.



The TASL said it signed four production transfer agreements with Dassault Aviation to manufacture the Rafale fighter aircraft fuselage in India, marking a "significant step forward" in strengthening the country's aerospace manufacturing capabilities

and supporting global supply chains.

"For the first time, Rafale fuselages will be produced outside France. This is a decisive step in strengthening our supply chain in India," said Eric Trappier, chairman and CEO of Dassault Aviation.

"Thanks to the expansion of our local partners, including TASL, one of the major players in the Indian aerospace industry, this supply chain will contribute to the successful ramp-up of the Rafale and, with our support, will meet our quality and competitiveness requirements," he said.

Sukaran Singh, chief executive officer and Managing Director of TASL, said this partnership marks a significant step in India's aerospace journey.

"The production of the complete Rafale fuselage in India underscores the deepening trust in Tata Advanced Systems' capabilities and the strength of our collaboration with Dassault Aviation."

"It also reflects the remarkable progress India has made in establishing a modern, robust aerospace manufacturing ecosystem that can support global platforms," he said. (PTI)

Narender surrendered to Adani, China: Cong ups ante with fresh jibe at PM

NEW DELHI, June 5: The Congress on Thursday upped the ante with its "Narender-surrender" jibe at Prime Minister Narendra Modi, alleging that he "surrendered" before billionaire Gautam Adani as well as to China.

There was no immediate response from the government or the Adani Group over the Congress's accusations but the business conglomerate has, in the past, rejected all such allegations against it.

Congress leader Ajoy Kumar said the duo of Adani and Modi has left behind the Jai-Veeru duo from the film "Sholay".

"The process of Narendra Modi's surrender before (US President Donald) Trump has happened after many years of practice," Kumar said at a press conference at the Indira Bhawan, the All India Congress Committee (AICC) headquarters here.

"Wherever Narendra Modi goes or whatever Adani wants -- he gets the contract.... The diplomatic moves of India's prime minister have helped industrialist Mr A to expand his international business interests in ports, airports, electricity, coal mining and weapons," the Congress leader claimed and cited examples from various countries.

"Narenderji has hurt his country's relations with her neighbours as well as with other countries by brazenly promoting Mr A's ambitions. The growth of the Mr A Group outside India over the past decade or so has been closely aligned with the diplomatic efforts of Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi," he alleged.

Many of "Mr A's" international deals were struck soon after Modi's official visits to certain countries or after heads of government visited India, Kumar



claimed. Alleging that Modi had also "surrendered" before China, he said "Narender-Surrender" must apologise to the country for his "clean chit" to the neighbouring country on its invasion of Indian territory in 2020.

Kumar claimed that China has vowed to stand by Pakistan in defending its "sovereignty" and "territorial integrity", and called it its "iron-clad friend".

"China's foreign minister, Wang Yi, recently gave a statement that his country would continue to stand by Pakistan in upholding its sovereignty, territorial integrity and national independence. China has supplied arms worth over USD 20 billion to Pakistan," Kumar claimed.

The Congress had said on Wednesday that it is wrong to think that "Narendra Modi is India and India is Narendra Modi", as it slammed the ruling Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) for its criticism of Rahul Gandhi over his dig at the prime minister, and doubled down on the "Narender-surrender" jibe.

Gandhi had said in Bhopal on Tuesday that "as soon as Trump

signalled from there, picked up the phone and said, 'what are you doing Modiji? Narender, surrender'.... And Modiji obeyed Trump's orders with Ji Huzoor".

Urging people to remember 1971, Gandhi said back then, a phone call had not come but the United States had sent its 7th fleet, weapons and an aircraft carrier, but prime minister Indira Gandhi did not surrender and said she would go by national interest. Referring to the BJP and the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS), Gandhi said they are habituated to writing "surrender letters" since Independence.

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

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

Delhi court acquits Army colonel in rape case

NEW DELHI, June 5: A Delhi court has acquitted an Army officer and his friend of rape charge, citing the complainant's "unreliable" testimony.

Additional Sessions Judge Gagandeep Jindal highlighted the contradictions and inconsistencies in the complainant's testimony, besides the absence of forensic or medical evidence to prove the allegations and an unexplained delay in reporting the matter to the police. While the colonel was booked under Sections 376 (2) (n) (repeated rape), 328 (causing hurt by means of poison etc.), and 506 (criminal intimidation), both men faced Section 376 D (gang rape) of IPC.

In an order dated May 30, and made available on June 2, the court said, "Solitary, uncorroborated and unreliable testimony of the complainant cannot be taken as a gospel truth on its face value in the absence of corroboration from any other independent cogent evidence....prosecution has failed to establish its case against the accused beyond a reasonable doubt."

Referring to the complainant's version, the court noted that the first incident of rape took place in October 2016 in Delhi and last incident occurred in August 2021, but the matter was reported to police in November 2021. The court, however, said no such video was found during the investigation, and even the forensic analysis of the Army officer's cell phone did not reveal any such video.

The order added, "The complainant is an advocate by profession. Therefore, it cannot be said that she was not aware of her legal rights. It is hard to believe that she continued to be a victim of circumstances for five years and simultaneously continued to provide legal advice to the accused." Pointing out the substantial delay in reporting the matter to police, the court observed the framing of the accused persons couldn't be ruled out, particularly given a dispute over the payment of the complainant's professional fee by the Army officer. (PTI)

LS Speaker Birla pitches for inclusion of developing nations in multi-lateral institutions

NEW DELHI, June 5: Lok Sabha Speaker Om Birla on Thursday voiced concern over the inadequate representation of developing countries in multi-lateral institutions and made a strong pitch for BRICS nations to correct this imbalance.

Addressing the second Working Session of the BRICS Parliamentary Forum in Brasilia, Birla said global crises such as the Covid-19 pandemic have disproportionately affected the global south and sought coordinated action to address such challenges.

"We are concerned that representation of developing countries in international institutions remains inadequate. This imbalance hampers global equity and balanced development. Therefore, BRICS countries must collectively make concrete efforts to enhance the

participation of the Global South in such institutions," Birla said.

He said challenges related to health, food and energy security have intensified and achieving the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) will be difficult without concrete and coordinated action.

"Despite global challenges, BRICS nations have made inspiring progress in the realm of economic development. India believes that to further strengthen this progress, we must enhance intra-BRICS trade, investment and financial cooperation," the Lok Sabha Speaker said.

Birla welcomed the recent expansion of the BRICS grouping and said this will make the collaboration more inclusive and impactful. (PTI)

Pak national living in Goa since 2016 moves SC over Centre's visa clamp down

NEW DELHI, June 5: A Pakistani national residing in Goa since 2016 on long-term visa on Thursday moved the Supreme Court in wake of the Centre's notification revoking the visas of Pakistani nationals following the Pahalgam terror attack.

The April 22 attack in Pahalgam in Jammu and Kashmir left 26 people, mostly tourists, dead.

Following the attack, the Centre issued a notification revoking the visas granted to Pakistani nationals except for those mentioned in the communication and gave a specific timeline for their deportation.

However, those having long-term and diplomatic or official visas were exempted from the 'Leave-India' order. The Pakistani national's counsel on Thursday mentioned the matter before a bench of Justices Sanjay Karol and Satish Chandra Sharma for urgent listing.

"This is a matter of a Pakistani national residing in Goa since 2016 on long-term visa. After the Pahalgam attack, there is a notification issued by the Government of India," the counsel said.



"You go back (to Pakistan)," the bench said.

The counsel said the petitioner would go back but he may be heard as there was a specific condition in the long-term visa.

The top court, however, inquired with the counsel why his client hadn't moved the jurisdictional high court.

The counsel responded saying the police came to the petitioner following which the court said the matter would be listed for hearing.

In a separate matter, the apex court on May 2 directed the authorities not to deport six members of a family to Pakistan, for allegedly overstaying their visas, till their citizenship claim was verified. (PTI)

India has shown to world that terrorism will no longer be tolerated: Dhankhar

JAIPUR, June 5: Vice President Jagdeep Dhankhar on Tuesday said India has shown to the world that terrorism will no longer be tolerated and that the nation's rise is now "unstoppable, incremental and full of possibilities".

Addressing students at Sainik School Chittorgarh -- his alma mater -- on the occasion of his visit, Dhankhar said, "Enough is enough! No more tolerance of terrorism. Those who will commit barbarity, use terrorism as a weapon, will be taught the lesson of their life like Bahawalpur and Muridke."

Citing India's recent military operations, he said, "Operation Sindoor did not target civilians, did not wantonly destroy property. Only the terrorist hide-outs were targeted. Precise, calibrated, accurate and we all had the occasion to see it."

Lauding the Indian armed forces, he said, "The Pahalgam barbarity has been avenged to the accolades of the entire world. Jaish-e-Mohammed, Lashkar-e-Taiba, who defined terrorism, their locations in Bahawalpur and Muridke, deep inside the territory of Pakistan, beyond international border were destroyed."

"You must have seen coffins being escorted by terrorists, their army and their politicians. That was the greatest success of our defence forces," he remarked.

Calling the present times a transformational phase for the country, the vice president said, "We are a nation on the rise, the rise is unstoppable, the rise is incremental. We are no longer a nation with potential."

"Our potential is getting exploited. We are no longer a nation that dreams, No." "Viksit Bharat is our destination, we are marching

towards that and we will succeed," he asserted, urging the youth to contribute by making optimal use of their time and talent.

He said India's achievements in science and defence reflect this growing strength.

"What I did not dream. I never thought Bharat will rise so much that we will be the first nation in the world to land our Chandrayaan-3 at the South Pole of the Moon."

Welcoming the increased participation of women in all sectors, the vice president said a big change has taken place. The Sainik Schools were meant only for boys and 50 per cent of humanity was ignored.

"Can you succeed in the world without 50 per cent of the talent not being recognised?" he asked.

He said Indian girls are combat pilots, they are in the police force and in the CAPFs (Central Armed Police Forces). He said those girls involved with ISRO are called rocket women. Participation of girls in equal measure is fundamental, he said. Appreciating Prime Minister Narendra Modi's leadership, he said, "I must appreciate Prime Minister Modi for achieving something which did not happen for three decades earlier -- an epochal development, a game-changing development -- one-third reservation for women in Lok Sabha and state legislatures."

He also highlighted the establishment of all-girls Sainik Schools, including one in Mathura, as a major milestone.

Calling Sainik School Chittorgarh his true birthplace, Dhankhar said, "I was born in village Kithana, district Jhunjhunu but that was my biological birth. My real birth took place in Sainik School, Chittorgarh." (PTI)

2 held for stabbing man multiple times in Delhi's Kotla Mubarakpur

NEW DELHI, June 5: Two men have been arrested for stabbing a man multiple times following a heated argument in south Delhi, police said on Thursday.

The incident took place in Kotla Mubarakpur area on Monday when Ashish alias Chiku was attacked by the accused -- Tanish and Manish -- both aged 20, when he was heading to a park with friends, a senior police officer said.

He was allegedly stabbed multiple times following a heated argument with a group of people, including Tanish and another person named Bablu, the officer said. Ashish is currently in a critical condition and is medically unfit to give his statement, police said.

On Tuesday a case under relevant sections of the Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita was registered at Kotla Mubarakpur police station and investigation was taken up. Police received a tip-off about the accused planning to flee the city. "On June 4, a police team laid a trap near Safdarjung Hospital and the two were spotted arriving from the AIIMS side. They attempted to flee upon seeing police but were overpowered and arrested after a brief chase," the officer said.

Both the accused have a criminal background and were previously involved in a snatching case registered at Safdarjung Enclave police station. (PTI)

Cyber-fraud gang busted by Delhi Police; 2 arrested, Armyman among victims

NEW DELHI, June 5: The Delhi Police has busted a cyber-fraud racket and arrested two men, including the mastermind, for allegedly duping an Indian Army soldier of more than ₹ 82,000 near the New Delhi railway station, an official said on Thursday.

Accused Sahil Verma (24) and Deepak Jain alias Naveen (33) used fake firms and multiple bank accounts to carry out cyber frauds and cheat unsuspecting victims, he added.

"The case came to light on May 18 when a complaint was received at the Daryaganj police station. The complainant, Abhishek, serving as an Agniveer in the Army and posted in Udhampur, reported that he was defrauded of ₹ 82,496 near Metro Gate No. 4 at the New Delhi railway station," deputy commissioner of Police (Central) Nidhin Valsan said.

The accused allegedly told the victim that he was in desperate need of money and lured the latter under false pretences. After deceitfully gaining access to the victim's mobile phone, the fraudster fled and used a UPI platform to transfer the funds, the officer said.

A case under the relevant sec-

tions of the Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita (BNS) was registered and investigation launched. Police said the probe involved the analysis of the footage collected from more than 50 CCTV cameras from the surrounding areas and extensive digital surveillance.

The investigation revealed that fraudsters used fake firms, such as RS Trading Company and Shri Sham Garments, to route money through current accounts in various banks. On May 28, based on technical surveillance, Verma was arrested from a location near the Ajmal Khan Park in Karol Bagh.

"He confessed to his involvement and operating fraudulent bank accounts. Based on his disclosure, his associate, Deepak Jain, was arrested the following day from Rajasthan's Chittorgarh," the DCP said.

Police have also seized five mobile phones used in the commission of the fraud and several bank passbooks. Efforts are underway to apprehend the other associates of the accused, identified as Akash Tomar and Mohit Sharma, and recover the remaining cheated amount. Further investigation is in progress to determine the full extent of the fraud, the officer said. (PTI)

'This project started when I was in school, maybe in class 7 or 8' Better late than never: Omar as PM set to inaugurate Kashmir rail service

KATRA/JAMMU, June 5: Noting that he has been "waiting for this day for a long time", Jammu and Kashmir Chief Minister Omar Abdullah on Thursday said the inauguration of rail service is better late than never as it will be a landmark occasion for the people of the valley.

He also said the start of the rail service will enable people to travel without spending much and put an end to the practice of some air service providers who "rob us" by selling tickets worth ₹ 5,000 at ₹ 20,000.

Prime Minister Narendra Modi will inaugurate the much-awaited Kashmir rail link on Friday. He will also inaugurate the Chenab bridge and India's first cable-stayed Anji bridge.

Abdullah invited pilgrims to come in large numbers for the annual 38-day Amarnath yatra, scheduled to commence in south Kashmir Himalayas on July 3.

"If I say that I have been waiting for this day for a long time, it won't be an exaggeration. This project started when I was in school, maybe in class 7 or 8. Today, my children have also completed their education and are now working," Abdullah told reporters

at Katra Railway station.

Abdullah along with Union minister Jitendra Singh visited different venues of the prime minister's function including the iconic Chenab railway bridge and Katra railway station.

They also inspected the specially-designed Vande Bharat train which will be flagged off by Modi to mark the completion of Udhampur-Srinagar-Baramulla Railway Link to connect Kashmir with the rest of the country.

"Visited the tallest railway bridge in the world, the Chenab Bridge, to review arrangements for the visit of the PM tomorrow. Tomorrow is a landmark day for J&K when, finally, the valley will be connected to the rest of the country by a railway link to be inaugurated at the hands of the PM," Abdullah wrote in a post on X.

"It is better late than never. Finally, we have reached that stage when the Prime Minister will come and inaugurate the Kashmir rail service which will benefit all of us," he said.

As soon as the Jammu-Srinagar national highway gets closed owing to landslides or snowfall, he said the goods and the movement of people come to a halt and the air



service providers start "robbing us" with tickets worth ₹ 5000 sold at ₹20,000.

The start of the direct rail service to Kashmir will put an end to this and also facilitate transportation of horticulture produce including apples and cherries to reach the markets.

Asked whether the direct train service to Kashmir will also revive tourism which was badly hit in the valley following the April 22 Pahalgam terror attack, he said "unfortunately, the summer season is over...we should not expect much but we have hope for the next summer."

Abdullah said he would like pilgrims to visit Amarnath cave shrine in large numbers during the yatra starting on July 3.

"Let them come. Benefit from our hospitality and enjoy 'darshan' (glimpse of naturally formed ice-shivling) before returning safely. Like yesteryears, we will try to ensure a successful yatra," he said.

On security, he said there is no need to worry as adequate security arrangements are in place for the safety of the railway infrastructure and the passengers.

"The train service has been running without any problem in the

valley for many years. The Katra-Sangaldan section is being commissioned and we are ready for it," Abdullah said.

On Chenab and Anji bridge, he said the 272-km railway line between Udhampur to Baramulla has set a lot of records.

"The Chenab bridge is higher than the Eiffel Tower in Paris, making it the highest bridge in the world. I have come from there and it is scary to look down from there. Similarly, the Anji bridge is India's first cable-stayed railway bridge," he said.

Abdullah said the project was very challenging and the railway track along Katra-Banihal section is mostly going through the tunnels, having very little open air track.

"The railway line will be beneficial to our economy, tourism, trade and (create employment) for locals. It will benefit everyone," he said. He said the ticket price is not high and a traveller can reach Srinagar within four hours from Katra.

"In next few months when the construction work at Jammu railway station gets completed, the train will run from there instead of Katra," he said. (PTI)

Local people and stakeholders in the tourism industry shocked and concerned: Sangma

Those behind Indore tourist's murder will be brought to book: Meghalaya CM

SHILLONG, June 5: Meghalaya Chief Minister Conrad K Sangma said his government will leave no stone unturned to ensure that those behind the murder of a tourist from Indore, Raja Raghuvanshi, are brought to book.

Raghuvanshi (29) and his wife Sonam had gone missing on May 23, hours after they checked out of a homestay at Nongriat village in Sohra area. His body was found on Monday in a gorge 20 km from the village, while a search is underway for his wife.

"We will leave no stone unturned to make sure that those responsible for this incident are brought to book," Sangma told reporters on Wednesday.

On the Raghuvanshi family's demand for a CBI probe, the chief minister said the government will take an appropriate decision.

"It is important to get to the facts of the situation so that the truth comes out. Therefore, we will take whatever steps are required to be taken... then we will take an appropriate decision. Right now, it is too early to say what is happening and



how much we know and how much we don't because there are so many missing links even now," he added.

The chief minister also assured the family members of the Indore couple that the government is trying to work as fast as possible to find the deceased's wife, who is still missing.

Terming the incident as very un-

fortunate, Sangma also described it as something which nobody had seen in Meghalaya before.

"It has taken all of us by surprise and shock. The local people and stakeholders in the tourism industry are very shocked and concerned. This is something we never expected would happen," he stated.

Stating that Meghalaya has al-

ways been a tourist-friendly state, Sangma said, "We have always ensured the safety of tourists. In the last few years, lakhs of tourists have visited the state. So, this incident is something very out of the ordinary for us."

"My deepest condolences to the family members. I know it's a great loss for them but I want to assure them that we are working overtime to get to the facts and the depth of really what happened... as of now, we are not very clear what the sequences of events were, what happened, how it happened," he said.

The couple, hailing from Indore in Madhya Pradesh, arrived at Mawlakhat village on May 22 on a rented scooter.

They parked their scooter and trekked 3,000 steps down the gorge to visit the famous living rootbridges at Nongriat village, where they stayed the night and left the homestay the following morning. On May 24, their scooter was found abandoned at a cafe along the road from Shillong to Sohra. (PTI)

HT Correspondent

AGARTALA, June 5: The Twipra Students' Federation (TSF), a constituent of the North East Students' Organisation (NESO), on Thursday announced its plan to initiate a "Clean Illegal Immigrants Drive-Out Mission" across Tripura. The student body also called on the state government to implement the Ministry of Home Affairs (MHA) directive on identifying and deporting illegal immigrants from Bangladesh.

In a joint press release, TSF President Samrat Debbarna and General Secretary Hamalu Jamatia expressed deep concern over the issue, citing a recent notification from the MHA dated May 19, which was reported widely across print and electronic media.

According to the TSF, the MHA notification instructs all state governments, including Tripura, to identify and deport Bangladeshi nationals living illegally within 30 days.

"We urge the Tripura government to treat this matter with utmost seriousness. Ground reports from different parts of the state suggest a continuous influx and settlement of illegal immigrants. Though some individuals have



been apprehended by local authorities, the issue continues to worsen," the statement read.

The TSF alleged that illegal settlers have been reported in multiple districts, including Gomati, Dhalai, Sepahijala, South Tripura, West Tripura, and North Tripura.

"This unregulated settlement poses a serious threat to the demographic composition, land rights, cultural heritage, and overall security of the indigenous communities in Tripura," the student leaders warned.

The federation demanded swift

Tripura Congress calls for statewide ban on flex printing, single-use plastics

HT Correspondent

AGARTALA, June 5: On the occasion of World Environment Day, the Tripura Pradesh Congress Committee on Thursday demanded a complete ban on flex printing and single-use plastics in the state, citing their grave environmental and health hazards.

To mark the day, the Congress organized a public awareness program in Agartala, highlighting the escalating dangers of plastic pollution. Party leaders used the platform to criticize both public apathy and government inaction.

Addressing the gathering, senior Congress leader and former minister Sudip Roy Barman said that indiscriminate use of plastics—from food packaging to water bottles—was contributing to ecological degradation and public health crises.

"Most of our daily-use items are wrapped in plastic. This not only contaminates our food and water but is also linked to diseases like cancer. Plastic bottles are clogging our drainage systems, worsening urban flooding and hampering groundwater recharge. If we continue down this path, we are digging our own graves," Barman said.

He also linked the environmental crisis to broader policy failures and hinted at vested interests blocking stricter regulations.

"If ministers themselves are involved in the flex printing business, how can we expect a ban to be enforced? Still, we urge citizens to stop using flex banners, plastic water bottles, disposable plates, glasses, and tea cups. The change must begin with us," he added.

Tripura Congress president

Asish Kumar Saha echoed similar concerns and underscored the importance of collective action to tackle plastic pollution.

"Plastic waste is a major contributor to the severe floods we have witnessed across Tripura over the last two decades. Ironically, flex banners—despite being banned—are still widely used by the government itself for publicity. The State Pollution Control Board has failed to act, and the ruling party continues to violate the very laws it enacted," Saha said.

He emphasized that protecting the environment is not just the responsibility of the government but of every citizen.

"This year's World Environment Day theme is 'Beat Plastic Pollution,' and we want to send a strong message from Tripura: the time to act is now," he said.

Flood situation improves in Manipur

IMPHAL, June 5: The flood situation in Manipur improved significantly on Thursday with water receding from major rivers as the intensity of the rain decreased, officials said.

The Assam Rifles and Army continued rescue and relief work under Operation Jalrahat-II across the state, which has been battered by heavy rains since May 31, they said.

The flood has affected over 1.65 lakh people and damaged 35,242 houses across the state. The overflowing Imphal, Kongka and Nambul rivers breached several embankments, aggravating the situation, they added.

So far, 4,097 people have been rescued and given shelter in 78 relief camps, officials said.

A 57-year-old man was killed after being swept away by a river in the Imphal West district on Tuesday.

The rain has damaged crops on 115.59 hectare, officials said. (PTI)

Nagaland gets run-of-the-river power project



HT Correspondent

DIMAPUR, June 5: Nagaland power and parliamentary affairs minister KG Kenye on Thursday virtually inaugurated the 1 MW Ponglefo Small Hydro Electric Project (SHP), a run-of-the-river power project, at Salomi village under Kiphire district.

It is designed to generate approximately 3.9 million units (MU) of electricity annually.

This project, developed by the Nagaland power department, aims to enhance the state's power gener-

ation capacity using clean and renewable energy.

It utilises the natural flow of the Likimo river, a tributary of the Tizu river, which is a perennial river in the eastern region of Nagaland.

The project was funded jointly by the Union ministry of new and renewable energy, the North Eastern Council (NEC) and the state government.

It consists of two generating units of 500 KW each, using horizontal Francis turbines.

The power plant is supported by well-designed civil structures and an advanced electro-mechanical system, all tailored to the region's challenging terrain.

Connected to the state grid, the Ponglefo SHP will play an important role in improving the power supply in the region and promoting economic development.

In his inaugural speech, Kenye highlighted the abundance of natural resources in the state.

He stressed that it was time to focus and concentrate on exploring and tapping the potential of the state's natural resources.

Kenye said all small and mini hydro projects, including solar, bio or any kind of clean energy producing avenues, will be explored for production and generation of energy in the state.

He further said doors are open for the international community to invest in the power sector, especially focusing on the sector of production and energy generation.

Tripura seeks Centre's assistance for introducing seaplane services

AGARTALA, June 5: Tripura Chief Minister Manik Saha sought assistance from the Centre for introducing seaplane services to connect the Narikel Kunja island resort in Dumbur lake in Dhalai district.

Saha made the proposal to Development of North Eastern Region (DoNER) Minister Jyotiraditya Scindia during the second meeting of the High-Level Task Force led by Meghalaya Chief Minister Conrad Sangma for the promotion of tourism in the Northeast. He emphasised the need for a strategic framework to attract national and international investments by identifying high-potential areas and projects in the Northeastern states, a statement issued by the Tripura Chief Minister's Office said on Wednesday.

Saha stressed the importance of evaluating current investment practices, reviewing tourism policies, investment incentive schemes, and regulatory frameworks to create a more conducive environment for growth, it said.

He noted that new homestay guidelines have been introduced to promote tourism in the state, with 48 homestays currently operational. He said a delegation of the Airports Authority of India (AAI) recently visited the Kailashahar airport to assess its potential.

Highlighting his government's initiatives to boost tourism, Saha said a lease agreement was signed between the Tourism Department and the Indian Hotels Company Limited (IHCL) for setting up a Taj property at the historic Pushpawati Palace.

The state continues to actively participate in road shows and Northeastern investment conferences to attract investments in the sector, he said. Arunachal Pradesh Tourism Minister Pasang Dorji Sona, Sikkim Tourism Minister Tshering T Bhutia and other stakeholders from across the region participated in the meeting. (PTI)

Kharge, Rahul discuss Manipur situation with Cong leaders from state

NEW DELHI, June 5: Congress president Mallikarjun Kharge and Leader of Opposition in the Lok Sabha Rahul Gandhi on Thursday met party leaders from Manipur and discussed the situation in the state.

Congress general secretary (organisation) K C Venugopal was also present at the meeting which was held at the new AICC headquarters at Indira Bhavan. He said Manipur requires a political solution soon to bring back normalcy at the earliest.

The party's in-charge for Manipur, Saptagiri Ulaka, and PCC president Keisham Meghachandra Singh besides other leaders from the state were also present at the meeting.

"Manipur has been under the grip of a devastating civil war for the last two years. It requires a political solution to bring back normalcy at the earliest," Venugopal said in a post on X later.

The Congress has been urging Prime Minister Narendra Modi to visit the state of Manipur and heal the wounds of people who have suffered due to the violence.

The state has been in the grip of violence between two main communities of Meitais and Kukis since May 2023 and over 200 people have already lost their lives. (PTI)

Sikkim committed to global fight against plastic pollution: CM Tamang

GANGTOK, June 5: Greeting people on World Environment Day, Chief Minister Prem Singh Tamang on Thursday said Sikkim is committed to the global fight against plastic pollution.

He urged the people to renew their commitment to protect the planet from the pervasive threat of plastic waste.

"Sikkim is more than just a state, it is a living laboratory of environmental stewardship and sustainable development. Sikkim's journey is one of setting a national benchmark in green governance," he said in a post on Facebook.

"Committed to the global fight against plastic pollution, the state banned single-use plastics very early and continues to promote eco-friendly alternatives with strong community support," he said.

Tamang said the recognition of Khachodpalri lake as the

state's first Ramsar site in February is a landmark achievement.

"It is a reminder that every water body, every forest, and every mountain is a sacred trust that the people must protect for future generations," he said.

"Recent camera trap evidence of tigers and Snow Leopards, along with frequent discoveries of new flora and fauna, reflect the thriving health of Sikkim's forests and ecosystem," he said.

The CM said that Sikkim has demonstrated that development and ecology are not adversaries, but allies.

"The Sikkim Model of Sustainable Development is now being recognised nationally and globally," he said.

"Together, let us rise as one to #BeatPlasticPollution, end plastic waste, and preserve the pristine beauty of Sikkim for generations to come," he said. (PTI)

Sorshia Christian College observes World Environment Day with faith-based environmental message

HT Bureau

GUWAHATI, June 5: In celebration of World Environment Day 2025, Sorshia Christian College hosted a community-wide event centered on the global theme "Ending Plastic Pollution."

The event, which brought together students, faculty, and members of the local neighbourhood, was described as both spiritually enriching and environmentally conscious.

The information was shared in an official statement issued by the institution.

The day's programme was inaugurated by college founder Sorei Raman, who reflected on the humble beginnings of the institution and its enduring commitment to a learning environment rooted in both academic excellence and spiritual growth.

He emphasized the college's dedication to providing holistic, biblically grounded education.

Linking environmental care with Christian values, Dr R Chance Raman, Chairman of Needy Home Academy and Associate Professor at DMU, highlighted the biblical foundation for stewardship of the Earth.

Citing scripture, he reminded the gathering that God had instructed Adam to care for and protect creation, framing environmental action as a form of worship and moral responsibility.

Adding a scientific and practical dimension to the discussions, Zangbell Raman, retired Agricultural Officer from ADC Senapati, spoke about the ecological impact of human activities.



He addressed issues such as greenhouse emissions, riverbank erosion, and the harmful effects of UV radiation.

Sharing his own experience with a sun-induced skin condition, he stressed the urgency of reducing plastic use and properly managing waste for the benefit of current and future generations.

Further enriching the discussion, Sanyaola Raman, retired chief technical officer of ICAR, Lamphel, shared insights from her years of experience in agricultural research and food innovation.

She detailed her work in developing sustainable food products from indigenous fruits, including Kachai Lemon

pickle, wild apple confectionery, and gooseberry candy.

She spoke eloquently about the long-term value of tree planting, not only for environmental health but also for community nutrition and livelihoods.

The event concluded with a sapling plantation drive on the college campus, symbolising hope and responsibility.

The activity served as a collective commitment to ecological stewardship, blending faith, science, and community action.

Participants were reminded that protecting the Earth is not just a divine directive, but a shared duty requiring consistent effort, prayer, and purpose.

'Meghalaya well prepared to tackle COVID, health threats'

SHILLONG, June 5: Talking to the media persons here on Wednesday Meghalaya Health & Family Welfare Minister Ampareen Lyngdoh assured that the state machinery is well-prepared to combat not only Covid-19 but also any other emerging health threats.

Speaking to reporters, Lyngdoh said, "Just last weekend, we had an online discussion with the Union Health Minister, and we assured the Government of India that Meghalaya is prepared."

"We will respond only as and when the situation arises," she added.

Urging the citizens not to panic, Lyngdoh emphasized that the current Covid-19 scenario is far less severe than the 2019-2020 outbreak. "The Covid we remember from 2019-20 was a situation that stormed all nations, countries, and states, but today, Covid is something that can be managed by health systems across the country."

She advised citizens to remain vigilant and follow protocols if symptoms appear. "Do not create unnecessary panic. If any citizen is experiencing Covid-like symptoms, isolate yourself, take timely

medication, and follow all Covid protocols. If we do this, the state machinery will be able to handle the situation effectively," she said.

The minister further noted that whether or not testing is conducted, people today are well-acquainted with Covid protocols.

"If you have doubts and your symptoms don't subside within a few days say, 72 hours or more you know what to do. We don't need to unnecessarily alert the system, and I don't believe we should create panic among citizens," she said.

"We are aware and alert. But if panic spreads in the community, it could lead to further issues. As I said, the state is ready," Lyngdoh stated. (NNN)

REPLACEMENT OF QUAD CABLE
E-Tender No. SNT-10-LMG-2025-26;
Dated: 31-05-2025. E-tenders are invited by the undersigned for the following work.
Name of work & Place: Replacement of quad cable on condition basis for reliability improvement of block communication & emergency communication in between Maibang-Damchakra section of Lumding division.
Tender Value: ₹6,25,60,226.33; Bid Security: ₹4,62,800.00. E-tender will be Closed at 15:00 hrs. on 25-06-2025 and Opened at 15:30 hrs. on 25-06-2025. For details visit: www.itrps.gov.in
Sr. DSTE, Lumding
NORTHEAST FRONTIER RAILWAY
"Serving Customers with a smile"

NOTICE

The District Legal Services Authority, Karbi Anglong is going to organize National Lok Adalat on 14.06.2025 from 10 AM onwards at District Judiciary Campus, Diphu and at SDJM Court Camus, Bokajan, Karbi Anglong. All types of compoundable pending Court cases, civil cases, matrimonial disputes and pre-litigation matters relating to bank, APDCL, BSNL etc. will be taken up in the National Lok Adalat to be held on 14.06.2025. So, litigants and parties who have received summons/notices are requested to attend the said National Lok Adalat for availing the opportunity to settle their cases amicably.

Sd/-
Secretary,
District Legal Services Authority,
Karbi Anglong, Diphu.
DIPR /D/HLT/26/6-Jun-25

AAMIR KHAN TEAMING UP WITH LOKESH KANAGARAJ FOR A FILM



MUMBAI, June 5: Bollywood superstar Aamir Khan is teaming up with acclaimed Tamil director Lokesh Kanagaraj for a superhero film.

The actor, who is awaiting the release of "Sitaare Zameen Par" on June 20, confirmed the news in a media interaction.

"Lokesh and I are working on a film, it is a superhero film. It is a big-scale action film and it will start next year, second half," Aamir told PTI in a group interview.

Kanagaraj is a prominent director in Tamil cinema, known for his action-packed and commercially successful films like Kamal Haasan-starrer "Vikram", "Leo" and "Master" with Vijay, and "Kaithi" starring Karthi.

Aamir dismissed reports about a possible sequel to his 2014 comedy drama "PK". Instead, he said he is reuniting with "PK" director Rajkumar Hirani for a biopic on Dadasaheb Phalke, the Father of Indian Cinema.

"PK 2" is a rumour. I'm doing Dadasaheb Phalke biopic, Raju and I are working on it," he said.

Aamir said his most ambitious project is "Mahabharata" but he would not reveal any details until

he has the basic foundation ready.

"Mahabharata" has been my dream for the last 25 years. It is not a film. When you are making 'Mahabharata', you are not making a film, you're surrendering. I'm trying, but I don't know if I'll be able to fulfil my dream. Till the time I don't make a basic foundation for it, I won't be able to answer (any questions on it). I don't have the right information right now. All I know is I'm going to start work on it," the actor said. Asked about the movies from his filmography that have the potential for a sequel, Aamir named "Dil Chahta Hai" (2001) and "3 Idiots" (2009).

"A sequel can be made to '3 Idiots' with those three characters (played by him, R Madhavan and Sharman Joshi), who can meet later (in life). Also, a sequel can be made to 'Dil Chahta Hai', and 'Sarfarosh'.

"Like, in 'Dil Chahta Hai' we can explore the mid-life crisis of the three boys (played by him, Akshaye Khanna, and Saif Ali Khan), and they all are seeking therapy. So, it will be an interesting thing, you know, for the three of them," he said. (PTI)

KAMAL HAASAN'S 'THUG LIFE' HITS THEATRES, CELEBRATORY SCENES PLAY OUT IN TAMIL NADU



CHENNAI, June 5: "Thug Life", Tamil superstar Kamal Haasan's 234th movie as a lead, made its debut in cinema halls across the country on Thursday and with much fanfare in his native state of Tamil Nadu, where fans queued up outside several theatres to catch the first show.

The movie, which reunites the 70-year-old actor with iconic filmmaker Mani Ratnam since 1987's "Nayakan", could not be released in Karnataka after Haasan's comments about Kannada language sparked a major controversy.

Gautam Dutta, CEO- Revenue & Operations, PVR INOX Ltd, said the film has been received well by the audiences, especially in Tamil Nadu.

"Tamil Nadu is showing excellent numbers with 60-65 per cent occupancy already. Other South regions are also performing strongly. We're also seeing a steady rise in the North, driven by positive word of mouth.

"The film is generating strong buzz, and we expect high footfalls throughout the opening weekend. Thug Life is clearly connecting with audiences, and we're excited to see how it continues to grow," Dutta said in a statement. In Tamil Nadu, the film's shows started at 9 am. Outside Chennai's Rohini Theatre, the excitement was visible as crowds gathered for the first-day-first-show of Haasan's film. The venue was adorned with posters and cutouts of the movie and its stars, including Kamal Haasan, Silambarasan TR, and Trisha.

In the wake of a stampede in Bengaluru during IPL

team Royal Challengers Bengaluru's celebrations on Wednesday, authorities deployed significant police presence at key cinema halls across Tamil Nadu.

The beefed up security arrangement played a spoilsport to grand celebrations planned by many fans.

"We were excited for the movie. We had planned to celebrate in a grand way but the government has not given us permission for it considering law and order issues. Hence we are a little disappointed," said one of the fans.

Another fan said, "There is too much expectation from the movie. We have planned many things but the permission was not granted. Despite that we are excited and celebrating. The movie is definitely coming out well." Celebratory scenes also played out in Coimbatore where fans welcomed the arrival of Haasan's new movie in style. Musical instruments, including the Sendai Melam, were played to uplift the crowd's spirits. The sound of drums echoed outside Archana Theatre in the flower market area.

"I have always been a great fan of Kamal Haasan. His film releases are like festivals for us. We are sure about the success of the film," said a cinephile who came to watch the movie.

"Thug Life", a gangster drama, was released in Hindi, Tamil, Telugu and Malayalam.

The movie was also set to premiere in Karnataka but its release in the state was cancelled after Haasan's controversial "Kannada was born out of Tamil" remark. (PTI)

Shubhankar aka Hectik wins 'Hip Hop India' season two on Amazon MX Player

MUMBAI, June 5: Shubhankar, popularly known as Hectik, has been crowned as the winner of "Hip Hop India" season two, the popular dance reality series.

The grand finale of the show, which streams on Amazon MX Player, featured high-octane performances and star-studded appearances. Shubhankar outshined fellow finalists Hitesh, Rule Breakerz, Aman-Kunal, and Lil Pool to emerge as the winner.

He impressed judges Remo D'Souza and Malaika Arora with his explosive KRUMP performances, a street dance style that originated in the early 2000s, throughout the season. The finale episode also featured special appearances by actors Sara Ali Khan and Aditya Roy Kapur, who were present to promote their upcoming film "Metro... In Dino", releasing in theatres on July 4. "My journey at 'Hip Hop India' season two has been incredible and something that I'll never forget... KRUMP taught me to move with purpose and speak without words. Now it's time to take KRUMP to places it's never been," Shubhankar said. D'Souza praised the winner and said Shubhankar brought a new language to the stage. "His KRUMP performances weren't just powerful, they were honest, intense, and unforgettable. That's what hip hop is all about—channeling who you are into your art. Week after week, he performed like he had something to prove, and today he proved it to the entire nation," he added. (PTI)



Hina Khan marries longtime boyfriend Rocky Jaiswal

NEW DELHI, June 5 Popular TV actor Hina Khan has tied the knot with her longtime boyfriend Rocky Jaiswal.

The actor shared multiple photos from her marriage ceremony on Wednesday evening. In one of the photos, Khan and Jaiswal are seen signing marriage registration papers.

"From two different worlds, we built a universe of love. Our differences faded, our hearts aligned, creating a bond to last lifetimes. We are our home, our light, our hope and together, we transcend all barriers.

"Today, our union is forever sealed in love and law. We seek your Blessings and Wishes as Wife and Husband," Khan wrote in the caption.

For her wedding, Khan wore an opal green handloom saree with gold and silver motifs, paired with a blush pink border and veil. The outfit was designed by Manish Malhotra.

Jaiswal also opted for an outfit by Malhotra, wearing an ivory ecru kurta set. Khan and Jaiswal had been in a relationship for over 13 years. They first met on the sets of "Yeh Rishta Kya Kehlata Hai", where Khan played the role of Akshara and Jaiswal served as the supervising producer.

In June last year, Khan was diagnosed with stage three breast cancer. (PTI)

Remakes are a new canvas for me, will do them all my life: Aamir Khan

MUMBAI, June 5: He believes in remakes and will make them all his life, says Aamir Khan, whose last film "Laal Singh Chaddha" was an official adaptation of "Forrest Gump" and latest "Sitaare Zameen Par" has been trolled for being a remake of Spanish movie "Campeones".

The star and filmmaker said he has done over 10 remakes and they have all been superhits except for "Laal Singh Chaddha".

"Like, 'Ghajini' or if I've to start from the beginning of my career then 'Qayamat Se Qayamat Tak', which is a remake of Romeo and Juliet. So, I have never had a problem till date in remaking because for me, it is a new canvas," Aamir said in a group interview in response to a question from PTI.

"I believe in remakes and I will do it all my life. Whenever I get a good remake, I will do it. Why shouldn't I do it? If you don't want to see it,

then don't see it. It's your choice. My choice is to do it, your choice is to watch it," he added.

Why is Shakespeare respected so much even today, Aamir asked about the playwright whose work has been endlessly adapted in cinema, theatre and other art forms.

"He is gone, write your own play. Why are you doing 'Hamlet' again? Why do you want to say, 'To be or not to be'? The chatter about remakes, I don't know where it came from... Now suddenly, some trolls have launched it.

"Some of our biggest hits have been remakes. If a cut and paste is so easy to do, then you do it, it's just a cut and paste. But it's not a cut and paste thing, you've to put your life into it," he added.

Aamir said he's not the only one doing remakes. Many in Hindi cinema, including the great screenwriting duo of Salim Khan and Javed Akhtar, have adapted stories in their

career.

"I've seen this beautiful film, which is made in Spanish. Are you going to watch a Spanish film? I don't think you have ever seen a Spanish film in India, you must have seen one or two. But by and large, we don't watch it," he said.

What is needed is sensitisation for all. Spanish audiences liked "Campeones" and understood its message about neurodivergence, which refers to differences in mental or neurological functioning from what is typically considered the norm. And that is something he wants to achieve with "Sitaare Zameen Par", the film he has produced and acted in.

"We should also be sensitised. We should also move forward, and that the topic of neurodivergence should become important for us too. In our country too, there should be a public discourse on it what is neurotypical and how we should behave? This is

a very important topic for India. I'm very clear I have done the right thing."

"Sitaare Zameen Par", directed by R. S. Prasanna, features Aamir as Gulshan, an assistant coach of major basketball team. After being fired from his job, he is ordered to either go to jail or do 90 days of community service as the coach of a team of specially-abled basketball players. The movie, which releases June 20, comes three years after "Laal Singh Chaddha" that tanked at the box office when it was released in theatres in August 2022.

At the time, the movie faced calls for boycott on social media with hashtags #boycottlaalsinghchaddha and #boycottbollywood garnering tens of thousands of posts on X.

"You work so hard, and then a person is saying something wrong just because of negativity. He has never seen the film nor does he know about the topic, you just have

to be negative. So, whatever you say, that person will speak negatively. So that is the meaning of trolling. Troll is not an angel. We don't call them angels. We call them trolls," he said.

However, the actor dismissed the notion that online trolling has an effect on a movie's box office performance.

"There was a lot of trolling in 'Laal Singh Chaddha'. Maybe people think that it didn't work because of trolling. They are absolutely wrong. Imagine if the same trolling was there during '3 Idiots', what do you think would have happened? Then the trolling doesn't work. Why? Because the film is good."

"Laal Singh Chaddha" didn't work at the box office because it was not made well, Aamir stressed.

"It couldn't touch the hearts of people. If 'Dangal' had released on the same day in place of 'Laal Singh Chaddha', it would still have been a

super hit. So, trolling didn't make a difference. The film was weak so it couldn't sustain. If the film was good, it would have gone up. So, I'm not disturbed by trolling. I don't have any tension. The film should be good," he added.

The actor said he has read the social media comments on "Sitaare Zameen Par" and is able to figure where the post is coming from.

"I know about the troll in a second as they write, 'Boycott, boycott' or 'Go to Pakistan', so I understood it's a troll... That reaction doesn't affect me at all. I want to listen to the real audience, who are neither a troll nor anything, they see your work and they either like it or they don't like it. If they like or dislike it, they say it from their heart. So, I'm bothered by the reactions of the real audience for whom I make films. I don't care about the reaction of the trolls." (PTI)

Amateur Saanvi joins Vani in shared lead at 8th Leg of Hero WPGT

BENGALURU, June 5: Local amateur Saanvi Somu, who has finished runner-up multiple times, put herself in joint pole position once again with a second straight one-under 69 in the 8th Leg of the Hero Women's Professional Golf Tour at the Bangalore Golf Club here on Thursday.

Saanvi, who was runner-up in the opening leg this season at Golmuri in Jamshedpur, shares the lead with Vani Kapoor (67-71) at two-under 138 for 36 holes.

Gaurika Bishnoi, playing only her fourth event this season, is sole third as she shot one-under 69 after a first round par 70. She is one-under 139. Gaurika's last win came in the seventh leg of the 2024 season at Mysuru and she was runner-up in the fifth and sixth legs.

Teenager Saanvi has been consistently performing well. She has finished runner-up as many as four times without winning. This season she has been runner-up once and third on another occasion.

After a bogey on the Par-4 second, she played 10 pars in a row and then picked birdies on the 13th and the 14th and closed with four more pars.

Vani, who began the day as the sole leader at 3-under 67, dropped two shots early on the first and the third. A birdie on the Par-3 seventh was negated by a bogey on Par-4 11th. She picked another birdie on the par-4 16th before finishing 1-over 71 and a share of the lead at 2-under 138.

Gaurika birdied the first and the sixth but dropped a shot on the eighth to turn in 1-under. She birdied the 10th, bogeyed the 13th, and again birdied the 15th. She closed with a bogey on 18th and carded 69 to be sole third.

Another amateur Zara Anand (69-72) was tied fourth with Durga Nittur (68-73) at 1-over 141, while Jasmine Shekar (73-69) and Seher Atwal (72-70) were tied sixth at 2-over 142.

Three players Vidhatri Urs (73-70), Rhea Purvi (73-70) and Ananya Garg (70-73) were tied eighth at 3-over 143, while three players Neha Tripathi (76-68), Khushi Khanijau (72-72) and Anvitha Narender (70-74) were tied 11th.

Last week's winner Aman-deep Drall (75-70) was Tied 14th with Agrima Manral and Disha Kavery.

The cut fell at 10-over 150 and 26 players made the cut. (PTI)

SATWIK-CHIRAG ENTER QUARTERFINALS, SINDHU LOSES IN INDONESIA OPEN

JAKARTA, June 5: India's top men's doubles pair of Satwik-sairaj Rankireddy and Chirag Shetty advanced to the quarterfinals while two-time Olympic medallist PV Sindhu lost in the women's singles second round in the Indonesia Open Super 1000 badminton tournament here on Thursday.

Satwik and Chirag, the 2023 champions, showed great temperament under pressure to register a hard-fought 16-21, 21-18, 22-20 win over world number 16 Danish pair of Rasmus Kjaer and Frederik Sogaard in a 68-minute second-round clash.

Satwik and Chirag, who had reached the semifinals of the Singapore Open Super 750 last week, thus remained the only surviving Indians in the competition.

The former world number one pair will face Malaysian seventh seeds Man Wei Chong and Kai Wun Tee next.

Earlier, Sindhu faltered in the deciding game to go down to world number 8 Pornpawee Chochuwong of Thailand in the second round. Sindhu squandered a 15-11 lead in the decider to lose 22-20, 10-21, 18-21 in a gruelling 78-minute battle.

It was a disappointing day for the rest of the Indian contingent, as Sathish Karunakaran and Aadya Variyath, along with the women's doubles pair of Gayatri Gopichand and Treasa Jolly, also bowed out in the second round.

While Sathish and Aadya were outclassed 7-21, 12-21 by the sixth-seeded Thai duo of Dechapol Puavaranukroh and Supissara Paewsampran in just 25 minutes, Gayatri and Treasa put up a fight before losing 13-21,



22-24 to Japan's Yuki Fukushima and Mayu Matsumoto in 46 minutes.

Satwik and Chirag, playing only their second tournament since returning from injury, had to do the catch-up in the opening game, as the Danes dominated the net play with sharp interceptions and won most of the short rallies.

The Indians trailed 6-10 at one stage and, although they pulled level with four straight points, the Danish pair kept their nose ahead to pocket the opening game.

The second game was a tight affair, with the Indians putting pressure on the back court. From 14-14, Satwik and Chirag reeled off five straight points to force a decider.

They carried the momentum into the third game, racing to a 5-1 lead. But the Danes clawed their way back to 8-8 after two unforced errors from Satwik. The short rallies continued and the Danes held a slender one-point lead at the mid-game interval.

The Indians stayed close at 14-15 despite a few misjudged lifts going long. Two quick points earned by Chirag brought them back at 16-17, and they eventually levelled at 19-19.

The Danes earned a match point, but Chirag's sharp body return made it 20-all. He then produced a fine serve to earn match point for the Indian duo, and Satwik sealed the win with a precise return that caught the line,

sparking celebrations.

In the women's singles, Sindhu looked in control after overturning a 10-16 deficit to win the first game. She led 15-11 in the decider and had the momentum, but a series of errors proved costly.

Chochuwong capitalised on the lapse, winning five straight points — four of them due to Sindhu's misused smashes and drops in fast conditions.

"I think I should have converted it to win. I was leading 16-13 in the third set, but I think from there also it was a bit faster so I had to control a lot more. From there, she took the lead and I think I made it equal at 18 all. It was anybody's game at that point of time," Sindhu said. (PTI)

I'm on right track, not really far away from my best: Sindhu

JAKARTA, June 5: Still striving to regain peak form, two-time Olympic medallist P V Sindhu says she is on the right track and not far from reclaiming her place among the world's top players.

The former world champion has struggled for consistency this season, with deep runs eluding her despite training under well-known Indonesian coach Muhammad Hafiz Hashim.

On Thursday, her inability to close out matches came to the fore again as she let slip a 15-11 lead in the decider to lose 22-20, 10-21, 18-21 to Thailand's Pornpawee Chochuwong in the second round of the Indonesia Open Super 1000 here.

"But things are going on well and of course there's a lot of scope to improve as well and I think we are on the right track," The 29-year-old, who suffered a

hamstring injury during training in Guwahati in February, has also faced early exits against the likes of Thuy Linh Nguyen, Putri Kusuma Wardani and Kim Gaeun this season.

"I'm positive that it's not really far away, but I think again it's just one tournament at a time for me," said Sindhu when asked how far she is from the top players at the moment.

"It's also important to go back and learn from your mistakes because every tournament is fresh, every tournament is new. But I think it's not too far away. I can see that and I'm positive."

"And of course my coach and me are working really hard to come up. So yeah, I hope that we'll be there soon." Asked about the kind of changes she needs to make at this stage of her career, Sindhu said: "I need to make sure



I'm injury free. And I think I have to maintain my condition as well because it's not easy. And I'm not a junior anymore."

"Of course it's important to make sure everything is going in the right way. Overtraining also sometimes would lead to injury

and if you train less again, you need to keep up with the youngsters as well."

"So you need to know the equal ground and keep going. So yeah, it's not going to be easy," Sindhu, who has won five world championship medals, including two silver and a gold, believes the sport has evolved significantly over the last decade.

"The game has changed, I would say, in terms of I think back then in 2016, I think it was more of an attacking game. But I think now it's more of like, you know, long rallies and, you know, it's more of the clear and drops. And of course, defense has become very, very strong."

"So, we should be prepared for long rallies and long games. I think compared to back then, now it's become more of a rally game." (PTI)

Kohli quit Tests due to loss of mental clarity, not form: Chappell

MELBOURNE, June 5: Former Australia captain Greg Chappell believes Virat Kohli's decision to retire from Test cricket stemmed not from a decline in skill but from the toll the game had taken on him over the years.

The Australian batting great added that Kohli called it quits due to the loss of mental clarity required to perform at the highest level. "His decision was not born of diminished skill, but from the growing realisation that he could no longer summon the mental clarity that had once made him so formidable," Chappell wrote in his column for ESPNcricinfo.

"He accepted that, at the highest level, unless the mind is sharp and decisive, the body falters."

Kohli had announced his retirement from Test cricket last month, after representing India in 123 Tests, scoring 9,230 runs at an average of 46.85, including 30 centuries.

The former India coach said doubt has a way of creeping into an athlete's game, gradually impacting decision-making, footwork, and the spontaneity essential to elite-level performance. "When doubt begins to settle in the bones, it disrupts decision-making, impairs footwork, and erodes the spontaneity

essential to elite performance. Kohli's retirement is a reminder that form is more a function of the mind than it is of mechanics," Chappell wrote.

Chappell emphasised that intent should not be confused with recklessness or blind aggression as it stems from a player's inner clarity and confidence.

"A batter's intent is the emotional heartbeat of their game. Intent isn't about slogging or reckless aggression — it's about conviction. A player in form moves decisively, trusts their instinct, and lets their subconscious take over. When that trust is broken, even the cleanest technique looks laboured," Chappell suggested that experience often clouds the instincts that once fuelled success, and returning to a simpler mindset can help seasoned players find their rhythm again.

"The path back for older players is rarely through exhaustive technical reconstruction. Rather, it comes from returning to a state of mental clarity, rekindling the thinking of their younger days."

"This doesn't mean blind aggression or naive optimism. It means remembering why they succeeded in the first place: trust, intent, and simplicity." (PTI)

WPL, state leagues have shown women's cricket can generate revenue: Mandhana

NEW DELHI, June 5: The elegant Smriti Mandhana feels the WPL and launch of different state leagues have shown that women's cricket in the country is in safe hands and financially viable at the same time. Mandhana will be captaining Ratnagiri Jets in the inaugural edition of the Women's Maharashtra Premier League (WMPL).

"I feel, for women's cricket to have this sort of stage is amazing, and the very fact that state associations and also the WPL, the way they have supported it shows that, of course, women's cricket can generate revenues, which is an amazing thing for women's cricket," Mandhana. "And people are ready to invest money into it. I mean, the more professional the sport gets, it's only going to get better, especially for grassroots level cricketers. For them, I think this is just amazing."

"So, from my point of view, of course, promotion is one thing, but I think we are well beyond that in women's cricket. I see it as people

being ready to invest, and that shows that women's cricket is growing and people want to watch it," she added.

The Indian women's team vice-captain said the growing interest in the game promises a bright future of the next generation of players. "Yeah, I mean, to get that at the age of 14-15 is great."

Of course, we got it a little later, so we had to start developing it by looking at international standards. "But the best thing about India at this moment, with women's cricket, is the investment that's coming in and the investment they get to groom a player. I mean, very late in our careers, we realised the importance of fitness and all of those things," Mandhana said.

"But I'm sure the club and the initiative are only going to promote or help them understand more about what is actually needed for the next level, and I'm sure they'll be well-prepped." (PTI)



Team relay system, 3x15 scoring format among innovations at World Junior Badminton C'ships in Guwahati

NEW DELHI, June 5: An updated scoring system in mixed team event, along with 3x15 format, will be trialled as part of the Badminton World Federation's (BWF) broader testing and analysis programme when Guwahati hosts the World Junior Championships in October.

The prestigious tournament will take place at the National Centre of Excellence at the Assam capital, with the BWF and the Badminton Association of India (BAI) jointly introducing the two new formats to make the competition more exciting and attract global audience to the game. A revamped relay format will be implemented in the mixed team tournament, with the best of three sets up to 45 points, with each set comprising five matches — one of each event from men's singles, women's singles, men's doubles, women's doubles and mixed doubles. "We are delighted to present a forward-thinking championships promoting innovation for badminton and reflecting a progressive and modern approach by BAI, Guwahati and BWF," BWF Secretary General Thomas Lund said in a release on Wednesday.

"This is part of BWF's wider long-term considerations for innovation in events and event delivery. The broader goal remains to modernise badminton in ways that protect athlete wellbeing while making the sport even more exciting and engaging for global audiences."

The system builds on a version

first trialled at the 2024 BWF World Junior Mixed Team Championships in China, where it received encouraging feedback. Insights from that event have helped shape the updated format to be introduced in Guwahati.

In the individual competition, the 3x15 scoring format will be tested as part of the BWF's innovation programme.

According to the team relay format, each tie will consist of three sets, with each set comprising five matches. Each match will be won once a player or pair scores nine points. The second match will begin from the score at which the first ended, and play will continue cumulatively until one of the teams reaches 45 points.

Two more sets will be played in a similar manner, and the team winning two out of the three sets will be declared the winner.

Both scoring formats were approved by the BWF Council at the AGM held in Xiamen, China in April. "It is essential that this process remains inclusive and well-informed, with any future decision guided by evidence, wide consultation, and what is in the best interest of badminton worldwide," Lund said. "That's why it is necessary to test such innovations in live tournament settings and it is great that we have the endorsement and backing from our Member in India and the city of Guwahati who share the same vision as us. (PTI)

Carlsen wanted to draw some line in the sand by beating Gukesh in Norway Chess: Anand

TAVANGER (NORWAY), June 5: World no.1 Magnus Carlsen's fiery reaction after losing to D Gukesh in Norway Chess here was probably because he saw his authority in the game being challenged by someone so young, feels five-time world champion Viswanathan Anand, who also indicated that FIDE could discuss the incident "very soon". Frustrated by the loss to Gukesh in Round 6 of Norway Chess, Carlsen slammed his fist on the table sending the pieces flying all over before shouting "Oh my God" and leaving the playing arena in a hurry, as millions of followers across the world watched the spectacle — some bewildered, some bemused.

Anand, who is known for his calm demeanour and gentlemanly style, said the 34-year-Norwegian desperately wanted to win against the Indian world champion and "draw some line in the sand".

"But it (beating Gukesh) mattered a lot to him. Even if all the other games he's kind of going through emotions (here)... But in this game (against Gukesh), I think something he wanted to establish. He wanted to draw some line in the sand and tell all these kids 'hang on a few years', whatever. But this meant a lot. I think a 2-0 (win against Gukesh) here, he would have been very, very happy," Anand told PTI on the sidelines of Norway Chess on Wednesday.

The fact that he lost from a winning position perhaps exacerbated the frustration, opined Anand, who is international chess federation's



(FIDE) deputy president and is here for broadcasting commitments as well.

"Against any opponent on earth, he would have hated losing such a good position. I mean to miss that the knight comes back. I felt exactly the same way when I blew my game against Magnus three years ago in 2022 in Norway," added Anand.

Anand averred that several factors could have been responsible for the meltdown. "Certainly, the game meant a lot to him and he came close and he slipped, but it could also be fatigue. It could be this new time control (in Norway Chess). Here we have this thing where we have Classical chess and then we have a sudden-death Armageddon tie-break (after every game in the event of a draw)... he said."

The chess legend added that he had seen "enough anger" on the table during his playing career to

call it an aberration.

"Yes, (I've seen) enough anger. All this has been around for a while, people screaming and cursing. I think it was in Delhi (2000 World Championship), where after his game with (Estonia's) Jaan Ehrlvest, (Vassily) Ivanchuk threw a chair across. So, the only difference is the camera, not the incident. "And, the other thing I would say is that this (game between Gukesh and Carlsen) was very intense. I mean, maybe Magnus isn't that excited about classical chess, but he's certainly taken on Gukesh (in the format)," Anand said. "Or if not Gukesh personally... the person who is now the world champion... showing that he (Carlsen) can fight youngsters. I mean, a lot of stuff (was) probably going on in his head, and it came out. So, those two games (against Gukesh), he took very, very intensely and seriously. And that's kind of partially what

brought it (frustration) on." Anand said such incidents are not so common but once in a while they do trickle in and are mostly precipitated by a player losing from a position of strength.

"I mean, it's not that common... Well, you kind of see fragments every day. There was somebody who could barely bear to look at (the chessboard), because he blundered, mostly angry with himself... you're so suicidal, briefly... that you spoiled something that you had done so well."

Anand hinted that the issue will be discussed by FIDE, when asked if soft warnings might be necessary in the future for such actions. "Laws means definitions. It gets tricky. I guess it will come up (in FIDE discussions), I think. But, you know, on the other hand, if you take someone like (American GM) Hikaru (Nakamura), he says, 'let's have more of it' (Carlsen incident). It gets attention. So, we'll have to balance these things out."

"But certainly, I think it will be discussed very soon," added Anand. On whether he foresees chess being included in the Olympic programme sometime in the near future, Anand said FIDE was "trying hard" to liaise with the International Olympic Committee (IOC) and he hoped it could be there in some form or the other. "Yes, I very much hope so. I don't know if, at some point, the IOC decides various forms of engagement, either through esports or through the regular games and something. But we are trying very hard in that area," said Anand. (PTI)

Himanta inaugurates Lovlina Boxing Academy in Guwahati

GUWAHATI, June 5: Assam Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma on Thursday said that Olympic bronze medallist boxer Lovlina Borgohain is an icon for the youth, and hoped she will inspire many more to take up boxing as a viable career.

"Assam's emerging pugilists have a new destination to pursue their dreams - the Lovlina Boxing Academy - equipped with modern training facilities and it will prepare our youngsters for the next level," Sarma said after inaugurating it in North Guwahati. The academy will nurture emerging talent and the state government will extend all possible help, he said.

The state's sports department will extend Rs 2 crore for infrastructure development, which will include a hostel, Sarma said. The fee at the academy "has been kept at just Rs 500", a decision aimed at ensuring that every aspiring athlete can afford to train and pursue their dreams, he said. "Boxing, along with other sports, is a viable career option and we actively encourage the youth to pursue their passion in sports," the chief minister said. He also said the Assam government was planning to construct residential hostels to accommodate over 2,000 athletes, as part of a major infrastructure development and the details will be announced soon. (PTI)

I feel very bad, lives are more important than celebration: Kapil on IPL stampede



BENGALURU, June 5: The legendary Kapil Dev on Thursday expressed his anguish at the death of 11 fans during Royal Challengers Bengaluru's IPL victory celebrations here, saying "lives are more important than celebration" and advised everyone to take proper precautions in future.

Nearly two and half lakh people thronged the areas near the M Chinnaswamy Stadium on Wednesday to catch a glimpse of their idols but the ensuing chaos caused the death of 11 people, besides leaving scores of others injured.

"I feel very bad about that. I think we have to learn from each other. Next time something like this (victory parade) happens, people should be more conscious. People do make a mistake," Kapil told PTI on the sidelines of a corporate event organised by the Arche Global Private Limited.

The 1983 World Cup-winning India captain urged the teams and other stakeholders to keep sanity while organising events of such magnitude.

"Mistake should not be to that scale where you are having fun and you lose lives. In the future,

if any team wins, keep it calm. Lives are more important than celebration. Let's put it that way," he added.

Kapil hoped India would come out victorious in the upcoming five-match Test tour to England.

"They are a good side. Cricket is a team game and if they play as a team then they will get good results. Whether it is Shubman Gill or Jasprit Bumrah... it is not about individuals, play as a team. That's more important. Good luck to them, and hope they come back victorious," he said.

The former all-rounder said he is now more occupied with golf — as a player and an administrator.

"I think cricket can be played only up to a certain age, you know, certain sports like tennis, football, you can't play at the age of 50 or 60. But when I started playing golf, I felt that one can play, as long as you want. And that's wonderful, as a sportsman, if you keep on playing something."

"Golf has given me that kick, that I can compete with myself," said the 66-year-old, who is also the president of the Professional Golf Tour of India. (PTI)

All eyes on senior pro K L Rahul in second and final four-day game against England Lions

NORTHAMPTON, June 5: K L Rahul would look to make the most of his first red-ball outing in months ahead of the Test series against England while the fringe players will be desperate for impactful performances when India A face England Lions in their second and final unofficial Test beginning here on Friday.

With major parts of India enduring monsoon, Rahul decided to leave for UK before the main Test squad to train for the five-match series beginning on June 20. The Shubman Gill-led India squad will depart from Mumbai late on Friday.

Rahul, who has had reasonable success in England including two hundreds, is the senior-most batter in the Test squad following the high-profile retirements of Rohit Sharma and Virat Kohli.

Though he averages an underwhelming 33.57 in 58 Tests, most of his success in the traditional format has come at the top of the order. It remains to be seen if he continues to open or bats down the order.

Even the likes of Gill and Sai Sudharsan were expected to play the second four-day game but their IPL commitments did not allow them. The duo would only get the intra-squad game to acclimatise before the first Test in Leeds.

As many as six players from the Test squad took part in the first game against England Lions that ended in a draw on a doctored pitch where mounts of runs were scored by both teams.



Pacer Akash Deep, who did not play in Canterbury, is likely to feature here.

With the top three of Yashvi Jaiswal, Abhimanyu Easwaran and Karun Nair being among the runs in the tour-opener, there is a possibility that the likes of Ruturaj Gaikwad and Ishan Kishan would be tried in the middle.

Nair, fresh off a double century, was able to make the quick switch from white-ball to

red-ball cricket and it would be tough to ignore him for the Test series opener. Rahul, who too is good at leaving the ball, would look to tighten up his game over the possible two innings he would get in the game.

There will be a toss-up between Shardul Thakur and Nitish Reddy for the fast bowling all-rounder's slot. Both played in Canterbury but it was Thakur who bowled more than Reddy. The latter did not roll his arm

over for the majority of the IPL due to fitness issues.

If another flat surface is offered, it may not be ideal preparation for Rahul and Co. for the tougher battles that lie ahead.

In the England Lions squad, pacers Josh Tongue and Chris Woakes would look to make an impact after being named in England's main squad for the first Test.

With their main pace guns Mark Wood and Jofra Archer doubtful for the India series due to injuries, England's fast bowling options appear to be scarce. Gus Atkinson has been ruled out of the series opener.

One of three centuries for England Lions in Canterbury, Dan Mousley, has been released from the squad to play in T20 blast alongside Zaman Akhter and Henry Crocombe.

India A squad: Abhimanyu Easwaran (C), Yashvi Jaiswal, Karun Nair, Dhruv Jurel (VC) (WK), Nitish Kumar Reddy, Shardul Thakur, Ishan Kishan (WK), Manav Suthar, Tanush Kotian, Mukesh Kumar, Akash Deep, Harshit Rana, Anshul Kamboj, Khaleel Ahmed, Ruturaj Gaikwad, Sarfaraz Khan, Tushar Deshpande, Harsh Dubey.

England Lions squad: James Rew (capt & wk), Farhan Ahmed, Jordan Cox, Rocky Flintoff, Emilio Gay, Tom Haines, George Hill, Max Holden, Ben McKinney, Eddie Jack, Ajeet Singh Dale, Josh Tongue, Chris Woakes.

Match starts 3.30 IST. (PTI)

IPL Stampede: RCB announces ₹ 10 lakh each for families of deceased

BENGALURU, June 5: IPL champions Royal Challengers Bengaluru announced a financial assistance of Rs 10 lakh each for the families of the 11 supporters, who lost their lives in a stampede outside the Chinnaswamy Stadium during the team's victory celebrations here.

Lakhs of people turned out to catch a glimpse of Virat Kohli and Co. leading to complete chaos and eventually a stampede that caused the death of 11 people outside the stadium here on Wednesday.

"The unfortunate incident in Bengaluru yesterday has caused a lot of anguish and pain to the RCB family," said an RCB statement on Thursday.

More than 50 people were also injured in the incident and the franchise said a fund is being set up to assist them.

"As a mark of respect and a gesture of solidarity, RCB has announced a financial support of Rs 10 lakh to each of the eleven families of the deceased. In addition, a fund called RCB Cares is also being created to support fans injured in this tragic incident," it added.

A magisterial inquiry is currently underway into the tragedy and its report is expected within the next fortnight.

RCB has drawn widespread criticism for going ahead with the victory celebrations just a day after

winning the trophy, denying the administration and police authorities enough time to arrange adequate security needed for an event of such magnitude.

BCCI secretary Devajit Saikia has already questioned the lapses in arrangement on Wednesday and also stressed on the need for proper co-ordination between the franchise, the police and the district administration for smooth conduct of such a programme.

He cited the seamless victory parade in Mumbai, which drew lakhs on to the streets, after India's T20 World Cup triumph last year as a case in point.

RCB's social media team had invited people to the celebrations

with a social media post but later withdrew it after the Bengaluru Traffic Police stated that it would be difficult to allow a victory parade given the congestion on the route.

The parade was given the go ahead by Chief Minister Siddaramaiah but did not take place due to crowd chaos and rain.

Former India wicketkeeper and Karnataka legend Syed Kirmani was scathing in his criticism while talking to India Today, calling it a "deadly welcome".

RCB's biggest star Virat Kohli, who attended the festivities, said that he was left "guttured" by what transpired outside the stadium. (PTI)

Beyond tragic: Tendulkar condoles Chinnaswamy stampede deaths

NEW DELHI, June 5: Indian batting great Sachin Tendulkar has offered his condolences on the loss of 11 lives in a stampede outside Bengaluru's Chinnaswamy Stadium during RCB's IPL victory celebrations, describing the incident as "beyond tragic".

Apart from 11 deaths, more than 30 were injured in a stampede outside the popular venue on Wednesday during the victory celebrations of Royal Challengers Bengaluru's maiden IPL trophy win.

"What happened at Chinnaswamy Stadium, Bengaluru, is beyond tragic. My heart goes out to every affected family. Wishing peace and strength to all," Tendulkar wrote on 'X'. Former South Africa and RCB batter AB de Villiers, who is immensely popular in Bengaluru, also expressed his sympathy for the victims.

"My thoughts and prayers are with all those affected by the tragic events at the Chinnaswamy stadium today," De Villiers wrote.

Former India captain-cum-coach and a Bengaluru native, Anil Kumble termed the incident as a "sad day for cricket".

"It's a Sad day for Cricket! My heart goes out to the families of those who lost their lives while celebrating RCB's victory today. Praying for the speedy recovery of those injured. Tragic !!," he wrote. (PTI)

Vaibhav Suryavanshi: I will look to do two times better for my team in next IPL

MUMBAI, June 5: Having left an indelible mark in his debut season itself, 14-year-old batting sensation Vaibhav Suryavanshi says he will look to do two times better for his team Rajasthan Royals in next year's Indian Premier League. Suryavanshi created the record for the fastest century for any Indian in terms of balls faced (35) when he cracked 101 off only 38 balls with seven fours and 11 sixes against Gujarat Titans in Jaipur in April. The whirlwind knock helped Suryavanshi not only enter his name in record books for the second fastest century ever in IPL, he also became the youngest T20 centurion in men's T20 cricket at 14 years and 32 days.

"Playing in the IPL is like a dream for everyone and I got a lot of positives from my first season and I also

learnt a lot in terms of what I can do for the team in the next season," Suryavanshi said in a video shared by IPL's official website. Even as the Royals endured a forgettable campaign, the left-handed Suryavanshi tasted success on personal front as he was given the IPL Super Striker of the Season award after the conclusion of the final on Tuesday.

"Next year, I will work on areas where I made mistakes and try to do much better for the team," he said.

Talking about his learnings from the maiden season, Suryavanshi said, "My learning is that I have to do two times better than what I have done so that my team also plays in the final next year and how much I can contribute to my team, I will focus on that." (PTI)

Chris Woakes included in England's 14-man squad for first Test against India

LONDON, June 5: Fast bowler Chris Woakes was on Thursday named in a 14-man England squad to take on India in the first of the five Tests to be played from June 20 at Leeds. The 36-year-old Woakes, who has 181 wickets and 1970 runs from 57 Tests so far, had played a major role in a big England win over India at the Lord's during the 2018 series.

He scored an unbeaten 137 and took four wickets in the match to help England win by an innings and 159 runs.

Woakes along with fast bowler Josh Tongue have been asked by the ECB to get some miles under their legs before the first Test against India starting June 20. Hence the duo will turn up for England Lions against India A in the second unofficial Test starting on Friday

at Northampton

Jamie Overton returned to the Test fold for the first time since his maiden appearance against New Zealand in June 2022, even though he sustained a fracture to his right little finger on May 29 during the first ODI against West Indies at Birmingham.

The 31-year-old Overton, who also played in the recently-concluded Indian Premier League for Chennai Super Kings, "continues to be assessed and reviewed daily by the England medical team", the ECB said on their website.

The England squad led by Ben Stokes features a lone spinner in Shoaib Bashir, who took nine wickets in their win against Zimbabwe in the only Test played earlier this summer. (PTI)

Gill has work to do on Test match batting and it won't be easy as captain: Ponting

NEW DELHI, June 5: Shubman Gill has work to do on his Test match batting and considering the added responsibility of captaincy on the upcoming tour of England, he should move himself down to number four in the order, reckons Australian great Ricky Ponting.

There is plenty of speculation over India's new number four following the retirement of Virat Kohli and Ponting has backed Gill to take up that position at least in the initial stages of his leadership tenure beginning with the five-Test rubber from June 20.

"His white ball form has been incredibly good. He's got a little bit of work to do, on his Test match batting. And that's never easy when you're a new captain, to have to worry about your batting to the degree that he's going to have to, it won't be easy for him," Ponting told PTI on the sidelines of the IPL where he coached Punjab Kings to the final.

The newly appointed Test captain started his career as an opener before moving down to number three last year. Ponting said India have made the right investment in Gill the captain. The two-time ODI World Cup winning skipper sees Gill serving India for a long time.

"I actually named him as captain for the Sydney Test match last summer when Rohit didn't play that game and there was a bit of an injury cloud over Bumrah, or as that game went on, Bumrah actually broke down in that game."

"And look, I don't know Shubman that well. I've spoken to him six, eight, 10 times, maybe the last couple of years around different things and around batting and around leadership. He's done a great job with



GT (Gujarat Titans), no doubt about that," he said.

"But he just seemed the sort of guy that the extra responsibility wouldn't faze too much. It seems like he's got a really level head on his shoulders. He's someone that's going to be around in Indian cricket for another 10 years."

In his 32-Test career, Gill has been found guilty of playing with hard hands on multiple occasions. His defensive technique too has been questioned.

Ponting feels Gill also has work to do on the mental side of Test match batting.

"...it's a bit both, there's some of the great Test players that haven't had great defensive games, (Virender) Sehwag is probably a great example of that."

"But if you're in control of your stroke-play, you don't have to worry too much about your defence. I mean, obviously it's (defence) a big part of Test match cricket, but I think it's more his mental application," he explained.

Ponting said he sees no technical fault in Gill's defence.

"(But) I think sometimes you might just get a little bit either ahead of him-

self or a little bit lazy in the middle of a test match innings. You can't afford to do that. You've got to be 100 per cent committed to every ball that you face through six or seven hours of every day..."

"I think that's the challenge for Shubman..." said Ponting.

Ponting has picked Gill at number four for the first at Leeds for a set of reasons.

"...the reason I did that was if they go with (Yashvi) Jaiswal, and if Sai Sudarshan is the other opener, they need someone a bit more experienced at number three. So that could be either, KL at three, or that could be a Karun Nair at three and Shubman at four."

"...once you grow into it, then you can move yourself back up to that number three spot," said one of the finest batters of his generation.

The reason Ponting won't have Rahul open with Jaiswal is because he wants Sudharsan to get his opportunity at the top of the order. The southpaw has been rated highly and has been in sensational touch of late.

"I think the time's right for Sudarshan to come into the side, to be honest. There's a bit of a regeneration that's going to happen around this Indian team now, obviously with Rohit and Virat not there."

"Every team goes through that...seems to me like Sudarshan's ready. Lots of first class runs, his IPL form this year has been probably better than anybody else," he pointed out about the Orange Cap winner of the just-concluded season.

"Technically, seems fine. And, you know, KL down in the middle order somewhere probably just gives that bit more stability." (PTI)

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