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Modi pats Pramod Boro's leadership quality

Bodoland's sporting spirit highlighted in 'Mann Ki Baat'

HT Correspondent

KOKRAJHAR, June 29: Prime Minister Narendra Modi, in the 123rd episode of his monthly radio programme 'Mann Ki Baat', made a special mention of Bodoland's growing sports culture, lauding the region's passion for football and the successful organisation of the Bodoland CEM Cup 2025.

The Prime Minister praised the Bodoland Territorial Region (BTR) for promoting sports as a means of empowerment and unity.

He referred to the ongoing Bodoland CEM Cup 2025, which commenced on June 14 across 420 Village Council Development Committees (VDCs) in the region, with over 3,500 teams participating.

Modi acknowledged the remarkable enthusiasm shown by the youth and players, describing it as a celebration of sportsmanship and community spirit.

Highlighting Bodoland as a region with a new identity of peace, progress, and youth-led development, the Prime Minister appreciated the efforts made by the BTR government under the leadership of Chief Executive Member (CEM) Pramod Boro.

He commended the leadership for its proactive role in using sports as a tool for regional transformation.

PM Modi also acknowledged footballers from Bodoland who have earned national acclaim, including Halicharan Narzary, Durga Boro, Apurna Narzary, and Manbir Basumatary, attributing their success to



the rising sporting culture among the youth of the region. The mention by the Prime Minister has sparked widespread pride and excitement across the BTR districts, particularly among young people and sports enthusiasts.

Leaders and locals welcomed the recognition, noting that the BTR government has hosted several national and international football tournaments, further enhancing the region's sports landscape. CEM Pramod Boro expressed (CONTD. ON PAGE-2)

Northeast's first emergency landing facility on NH-2 to be activated by Oct

ELF big step forward towards national security: CM

HT Bureau

GUWAHATI, June 29: Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma on Sunday visited Jatiyani Village in Moran to inspect the ongoing construction of the Northeast's first Emergency Landing Facility (ELF) on a national highway.

The ELF is being developed on a 4.2-km stretch of the Moran Bypass under the Dibrugarh-Moran NH-2 project in coordination with the Indian Air Force and is expected to be operational by October this year.

Speaking to the media after the inspection, the chief minister said, "This will be the first emergency landing facility in the entire North East region. From civilian aircraft to advanced fighter jets like Sukhoi and Rafale, all will be able to land here. It's a big step forward in disaster preparedness and national security."

He added that he had reviewed the project with officials from the district administration, NHIDCL, and the Indian Air Force, and all minor issues had been resolved to



expedite the remaining work.

"During the opening of this strip, I have requested the Indian Air Force to hold an air show and bring in some of their fighter jets," Sarma said.

The ELF, once completed, will be capable of handling landings by defence aircraft including MIG, Tejas, Hercules, and AN-32.

The project, constructed with advanced specifications, is in-

tended to serve as a makeshift airstrip in times of war or natural calamities.

Located between Polo Club in Khatkhathi and Rassipathar on the under-construction 11-km four-lane stretch of NH-2, the facility also includes temporary fencing to prevent intrusions during operations and an Air Traffic Control (ATC) tower for flight management.

The Chief Minister's Office, in

a post on 'X' said, "Implemented by NHIDCL, this strategic project will enhance disaster response and national security readiness."

The road will be reserved exclusively for aircraft operations during emergencies and will otherwise remain open to public transport.

The ELF is a joint initiative between the National Highway Authority and the Indian Air Force's airfield construction division.

The Chief Minister remarked that the road from Moran Town to Tiloiyan has already been opened to traffic since April 1 and is awaiting formal inauguration by Prime Minister Narendra Modi.

In addition to the Moran facility, the Chief Minister announced that the central government will develop two more ELF projects in the state—one between Tihu and Barama in western Assam and another between Nagaon and Lumding (Sankardev Nagar) in central Assam.

Sarma further revealed plans to enhance flood preparedness across Upper Assam through the construction (CONTD. ON PAGE-2)

MDA urges centre to restore elected govt in Manipur

IMPHAL, June 29: The Manipur Democratic Alliance (MDA) has stepped up its pressure on the Centre to end President's Rule and re-instate a popular government.

At a press conference held Sunday at the MDA office in Babupara in Imphal, alliance convenor M Tombi Singh revealed that the group had submitted a detailed memorandum to key national figures including Union Home Minister Amit Shah, BJP president J P Nadda, and Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS) chief Mohan Bhagwat seeking intervention and restoration of democratic governance in the state.

"The President's Rule has not brought any progress or peace," Tombi said. "The people of Manipur are demanding the return of an elected government."

Manipur has been under central rule since February 13, following the resignation of Chief Minister N. Biren Singh amid mounting political pressure and prolonged violence. (CONTD. ON PAGE-2)

Sri Lankan Navy arrests 8 Indian fishermen

COLOMBO, June 29: The Sri Lankan Navy on Sunday arrested 8 Indian fishermen and seized their trawler for allegedly poaching in the island nation's waters, according to an official release.

The arrests were made during a search operation in the north of Mannar, the Navy said in a press release.

The eight fishermen and their trawler would be handed over to the Fisheries Inspectorate in Mannar for legal proceedings, it said. "The North Central Naval Command spotted a group of Indian fishing boats (CONTD. ON PAGE-2)

CM reviews progress of ₹118.2 cr Rangghar beautification project

HT Correspondent

SIVASAGAR, June 29: Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma on Sunday visited the site of the ongoing Rangghar Beautification Project in Sivasagar to review the progress of the ₹118.2 crore tourism initiative, which commenced on August 16, 2022.

The ambitious project includes the development of a wide range of infrastructure and tourist amenities such as a guest house, staff quarters, resort, cultural complex, artisans' village, food court, boathouse, amphitheatre, audio-visual room, clock tower, VIP lounge, water treatment plant, sewage treatment plant, and a musical fountain.

During his visit, the chief minister first entered the premises of the historic Rangghar to inspect the drainage works intended to address rainwater accumulation. He then held detailed discussions with the implementing authorities and the Sivasagar district administration, focusing on strategies to make the project more



tourist-friendly. Sarma proposed a direct entrance from the Rangghar premises to the new development instead of a circuitous approach road, emphasising integration over separation.

Speaking to the media, the Chief Minister said that earth-filling work is

nearly complete and that the project is expected to take a definitive shape by March next year.

He stressed that his government is prioritizing the completion of ongoing development works before the 2026 elections. (CONTD. ON PAGE-2)

CM inspects progress of Sivasagar Medical College and Tata Cancer Hospital

HT Correspondent

DEMOW, June 29: Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma on Sunday visited Demow Ekarani in Demow constituency to review the ongoing construction of the Sivasagar Medical College and the Tata Cancer Hospital.

The Chief Minister inspected the site and assessed the physical progress of both major healthcare projects, which are being developed to significantly strengthen the medical infrastructure of Sivasagar district.

Speaking to the media after the inspection, Sarma said that the construction of the medical college

has reached 20 percent completion, while the cancer hospital has made substantial progress, with 65 percent of the work already completed.

He informed that a new road connecting the hospital complex directly to the highway has been proposed to ease access and improve connectivity.

The chief minister assured that efforts are being made to complete both projects within the stipulated timeframe.

Sarma further added that the full completion of the expansive medical complex would typically take around three years, but with the

current pace of work and continued efforts, it could be completed within two and a half years.

On employment opportunities, he stated that recruitment for higher-grade posts is being handled through outsourcing to ensure that local youth benefit from the job openings.

For government positions, eligible candidates will be required to clear the ongoing Assam Direct Recruitment Examinations (ADRE). While commenting on infrastructure development, the chief minister acknowledged the slow pace of construction work on the (CONTD. ON PAGE-2)

NFR restores Lumding-Badarpur route in record time; train services resume smoothly

HT Bureau

GUWAHATI, June 29: The Northeast Frontier Railway (NFR) has successfully restored train operations on the affected stretch between KM 108/6-8 in the Jatinga Lumpur-New Haflong section of the Lumding-Badarpur Hill Section, less than a week after it was severely impacted by landslides.

According to an official statement, limited train operations will resume from today, June 29, between 12:00 and 18:00 hours, while full-scale train services are scheduled to resume from Monday, June 30, 2025.

Train movement through the once-disrupted route has now resumed smoothly, with the first empty goods train marking the reopening by departing from New Harangajao at 10:21 hrs. The first passenger train to pass through the restored stretch was Train No. 13175 Sealdah-Silchar Kanchenjunga Express, which began its journey on June 28 and completed its run through



the section without any hindrance. It was promptly followed by Train No. 13174 Sabroom-Sealdah Kanchenjunga Express, which also operated without issue on its original route. Additionally, a special relief train from Rangiya successfully crossed the affected area en route to Agartala. (CONTD. ON PAGE-2)

Breakthrough at Penn State demonstrates potential of 2D materials to replace silicon and reshape future of electronics

World's first computer devoid of silicon shows it is possible to replace it someday: Researchers

NEW DELHI, June 29: Researchers have built a computer from scratch without silicon, a "milestone" in showing that it is possible to one day replace the material that fuelled the bulk of technology advancements over the past half a century, by making devices smaller and faster.

Built at a nanofabrication unit at The Pennsylvania State University in the US, the research team has demonstrated the successful working of the world's first CMOS computer made using two-dimensional materials, which are paper-thin, but at the nano-level. It is described in a paper in the journal Nature.

"Complementary Metal-Oxide-Semiconductor", or CMOS, is widely used in designing electronic circuits. It consumes low power and accommodates more components.

The development is acknowledged as pioneering and a starting point in creating not just alternatives to silicon, but a roadmap for a new generation of still smaller,

more flexible electronics. Saptarshi Das, professor of engineering science and mechanics at The Pennsylvania State University (Penn State), and lead researcher on the paper, told PTI, "In the short term, you would like to augment silicon with these two-dimensional (2D) materials, because they offer new functionalities -- including in sensors and memory devices."

"This is why our paper is, I would say, a milestone, because it shows that it is possible in a way to replace silicon one day," Das said.

Silicon, whose conductivity can be manipulated for controlling electricity flow, has been foundational in advancing technology by helping electronics shrink in size, since 1947 when a transistor was first made using the material.

A transistor regulates electric signals and acts as a building block for an electronic circuit.

But now, nearly seven decades later, as electronic devices continue to become smaller, silicon may have hit a wall -- scientists say it

may not be able to function as well, if devices are to get tinier.

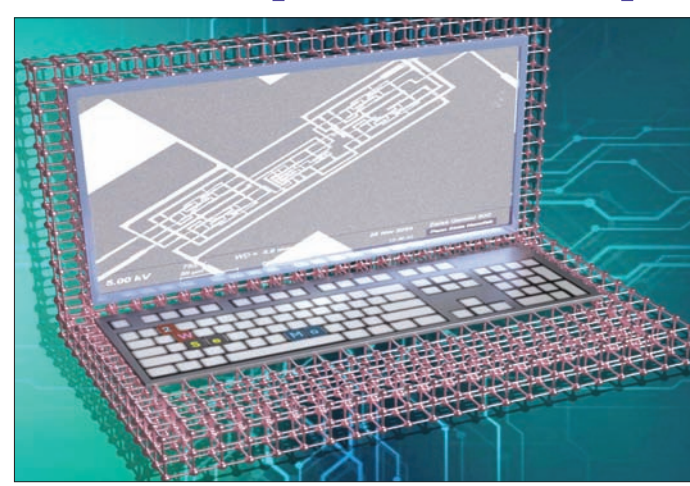
Das said, "The trajectory of silicon has stalled."

Lead author Subir Ghosh, a doctoral student at Penn State, explains, "We have used molybdenum disulphide (MoS2) and tungsten diselenide (WSe2) -- both quite common in the 2D materials community -- to make our semiconductor devices."

"Here at Penn State, you can grow this material over a large two-inch wafer. They are also scalable, which means that the industry can also adopt these 2D material," Ghosh added.

The semiconductor industry is said to be governed by Moore's law, according to which the number of transistors in circulation double every 18 months (a year and a half).

However, transistors are no longer becoming smaller. This is because silicon is a bulky material -- like a brick -- which cannot be made any smaller owing to detri-



mental effects, such as an increased leakage current, power consumption and a reduced performance of the device, Das explained over a video call.

"Now, for example, if we need to construct a multi-story building, we will use bricks. But now, what if I tell you that the best choice for this building is not

bricks -- but paper, which is extremely thin. You can then get back all the good qualities you need to make a device very small," Das said.

Research teams around the world, including China, are fiercely working for over a decade in developing 2D materials to initially support silicon in making

smaller devices, but eventually transition away from having to use the bulky material itself.

Scientists at China's Fudan University have created a RISC-V microprocessor chip by assembling transistors made of 2D materials. The chip, described in a paper published in April in the journal Nature, also used a low power to function.

Mayank Shrivastava, professor at the division of electrical, electronics and computer sciences, Indian Institute of Science, Bengaluru, and not involved in the study, told PTI, that a successful demonstration of the computer built using 2D materials is pioneering and "marks a watershed moment in the evolution of semiconductor technology."

"While we have seen individual devices and simple circuits from 2D materials before, building an actual computer, even one with a single instruction set, completely from 2D semiconductors is a bold leap," he said.

Shrivastava added that these developments are also a "wake-up call that the silicon race is maturing, and the next race, based on 2D materials, has already begun".

Das from Penn State explained that the 2D computer -- a primitive one that present day semiconductor foundries might be building in the 1960s -- was designed to perform a single instruction, which on repeat, can do all the basic functions of addition, subtraction and multiplication. Ghosh explained this single instruction, named 'reverse subtract, skip if borrow'.

"In order to subtract, you have two numbers. But while subtracting a bigger number from a smaller one, we need to 'borrow'. So, when a 'borrow' is raised, our computer will skip that instruction and move on to the next," the lead author said. The computer achieved a high drive current, with a low leakage and power dissipation, enabling 2D-semiconductor circuits to operate below three volts and (CONTD. ON PAGE-2)

Russia's Rosneft in early talks with Reliance to sell stake in India unit

NEW DELHI, June 29: Russian oil giant PJSC Rosneft Oil Company is in early talks with Reliance Industries for sale of its 49.13 per cent stake in Nayara Energy, which operates a 20-million tonnes-a-year oil refinery and 6,750 petrol pumps in India, sources said.

Reliance has held preliminary talks for acquisition of Nayara, which will help it overtake state-owned Indian Oil Corporation (IOC) to become India's No.1 oil refiner as well as give a meaningful presence in the fuel marketing space.

But the talks are at preliminary stage and there is no guarantee that they may lead to a definite deal as valuation remains a sticky ground, three sources with direct knowledge of the matter said.

Top Rosneft officials have visited India at least thrice in the last one year, including visits to Ahmedabad and Mumbai, for talks with potential investors.

For Rosneft, which is looking to exit from Nayara due to western sanctions limiting its ability to repatriate full earnings from India operations, a potential buyer could be one who has substantial earnings overseas or is an international company - both of which could make quick overseas payouts for the stake. Being a large exporter of fuel, Reliance has substantial overseas income, the sources said.

While emails sent to Rosneft for comments remained unanswered, a Reliance spokesperson said, "As a policy, we do not comment on media speculation and rumours." "Our company evaluates various opportunities on an ongoing basis," the spokesperson said. "We have made and will continue to make necessary disclosures in compliance with our obligations under Securities Exchange Board of India (Listing Obligations and Disclosure Requirements) Regulations 2015 and our agreements



with the stock exchanges."

Rosneft, which had in 2017 acquired Essar Oil in a USD 12.9-billion deal, is unable to get full financial benefits from its Indian operations, including repatriating earnings, due to international sanctions. Essar Oil was subsequently named Nayara Energy.

The Russian giant sometime in 2024 decided to exit Nayara and began scouting for potential buyers. Alongside Rosneft, UCP Investment Group, a major Russian financial firm, is also selling its 24.5 per cent stake in Nayara. The rest of Nayara's ownership includes Trafifura Group (24.5 per cent) and a group of retail shareholders. If a deal is struck, Trafifura too may exit the venture within months on same terms, they said.

The stake of Rosneft and UCP was offered to Reliance Industries, Adani Group, Saudi Aramco and state-owned ONGC/IOC combine among others. But the USD 20-billion valuation that Rosneft had put for Nayara was considered too steep a price by almost every potential investor.

Adani Group politely declined the offer to invest in an oil refinery, which is considered a sunset business given the energy transition planned worldwide.

Besides the asking price being too high, the conglomerate's understanding with French energy giant TotalEnergies, with whom it has stitched multi-billion dollar partnership in city gas and renewable energy space, also came in the way of investing in Nayara, the sources said, adding Adani had in its deal with TotalEnergies agreed to limit future investments in fossil fuel space to only natural gas.

Sources said Saudi Aramco is a serious contender to take over Nayara as it will fulfil its long-desired ambition of having downstream presence in the world's fastest growing oil market.

Aramco, the world's largest oil exporter, had previously agreed to invest in a giant oil refinery-cum-petrochemical complex that state-owned firms had planned to build in Maharashtra, but that project hasn't taken off due to land acquisition delays. It had in 2019 signed a non-binding agreement to buy a 20 per cent stake in Reliance's oil-to-chemical (O2C) business for USD 15 billion but the deal was called off two years later over valuation issues. Sources said Aramco too considers the USD 20 billion valuation too high.

It wasn't known if talks between Rosneft and Aramco have pro-

gressed beyond initial contact.

Nayara makes the most sense for Reliance, they said. Reliance operates twin refineries, with a combined capacity of 68.2 million tonnes per annum at Jamnagar in Gujarat. Its units are in the vicinity of Nayara's 20-million tonnes-a-year unit at Vadinar, Gujarat.

Nayara will help it cross IOC's 80.8-million tonnes-a-year capacity to become No.1 refiner in the country. But more importantly, the 6,750 petrol pumps of Nayara would help it gain a meaningful share in the fuel retailing business.

Reliance has just 1,972 petrol pumps out of 97,366 outlets in the country. "Oil refining alone is not a profitable business. Unless you have marketing, you can never make money," an industry official explained.

Sources said for both Oil and Natural Gas Corporation (ONGC) and IOC, the valuation being sought by Rosneft is too high.

For them the value of petrol pumps should not be more than ₹ 3-3.5 crore per outlet. This gives a valuation of not more than USD 2.5-3 billion for the marketing network and similar value is what they see for the oil refinery, they said.

But for Reliance, the value of the marketing network is more, perhaps ₹ 7 crore per outlet (USD 5.5 billion). And given the synergies the combined operations of Jamnagar and Vadinar refineries can derive, the 20-million tonnes Nayara unit and its planned petchem unit could be worth another USD 5 billion, they said.

Sources said since the start of talks, Rosneft has brought down the valuation to USD 17 billion but that too is considered too high by companies such as Reliance.

However, no official deal has been confirmed, and Rosneft has not made a formal statement on the matter yet. (PTI)

Signature Global to invest ₹ 2,200 cr on new housing project in Gurugram

NEW DELHI, June 29: Realty firm Signature Global will invest around ₹ 2,200 crore to develop a new housing project in Gurugram to expand business and achieve over 20 per cent growth in its pre-sales this fiscal year. The company has recently launched a premium residential project, 'Cloverdale', comprising 770 apartments, on Southern Peripheral Road (SPR), Sector 71, Gurugram. Signature Global emerged as the fifth largest listed real estate developer last fiscal in terms of sales bookings by achieving record pre-sales of ₹ 10,290 crore.

The Gurugram-based company has given a guidance of posting ₹ 12,500 crore worth pre-sales in the current fiscal. "We have launched a new housing project in Gurugram. Housing demand continues to be strong in this city, especially for reputed builders," Signature Global Chairman Pradeep Kumar Aggarwal

told PTI. The company is selling homes in a price range of ₹ 4 crore to ₹ 7 crore in this project, which is spread over 8 acres and is part of an overall 22-acre development. The project is scheduled to be completed by 2031. Last month, Aggarwal said the company will invest around ₹ 4,000 crore this fiscal to acquire land parcels and carry out construction activities in its housing projects at Gurugram.

Signature Global had invested ₹ 1,070 crore last fiscal year to purchase 48 acres of land in Gurugram, Haryana. "Land is an important raw material for real estate developers. We will be investing around ₹ 1,200-1,500 crore on the acquisition of land parcels," he had said. Aggarwal said the investment in construction activities would be around ₹ 2,500 crore in 2025-26 against ₹ 1,900 crore in the preceding fiscal. (PTI)

Contd. from Page 1...

Modi pats Pramod Boro's

gratitude to the Prime Minister for highlighting the Bodoland CEM Cup and the efforts of the youth. Recalling Modi's visit to Bodoland on February 7, 2020, Boro stated that the Prime Minister had laid the foundation of peace and development in the region during that visit.

He remarked that the overwhelming response to the Bodoland CEM Cup, with thousands of teams taking part, reflected the transformative impact of sports in uniting and inspiring the people of Bodoland.

"Hon'ble PM Shri Narendra Modi ji, your visit to Bodoland on 7th Feb 2020 laid the foundation of peace and development in our region. Today, as you spoke about football, the Bodoland CEM Cup, and the spirit of our youth in Mann Ki Baat, we are filled with pride and gratitude. Bodoland is marching ahead—thanks to your vision and blessings," Boro stated.

ELF big step forward towards

of permanent helipads along key national highways. "We are in talks with the Central government. It is being planned for the entire stretch from Numaligarh to Dibrugarh to Tinsukia. If there are such high floods that helicopters cannot land in any existing facility, then these helipads above the highest flood levels will serve as critical infrastructure," he said.

The proposed initiatives, which include both emergency landing strips and helipads, are part of a broader vision to strengthen Assam's emergency response capacity and strategic infrastructure. (With inputs from PTI)

CM reviews progress of

On the sidelines of the visit, the Sivasagar Municipality Tax Payers' Association, led by president M K Borthakur and secretary Arabinda Baruah, submitted a memorandum to the Chief Minister. Their demands included the construction of a flyover from the ASTC point to Darikapur to ease congestion at Station Chariari and the replacement of the existing British-era iron bridge over the Dikhow River with a modern structure.

In response, Sarma assured the delegation that efforts would be made to implement these infrastructure projects after the upcoming cabinet sitting proposed to be held in Sivasagar in September. Addressing media queries, the chief minister stated that the power to issue Aadhaar cards has now been delegated to District Commissioners instead of RCOs to tighten and streamline the process.

Responding to a separate question, Sarma noted that online platforms like Google are not the final authorities in certifying historical facts such as the identity of India's first martyr. He added that if Assam wishes to officially recognise Swahid Peoli Phukan and Jeuram Duliabara as the first martyrs of India's freedom struggle, a university-led research project must be undertaken to support such a claim.

Later in the day, the chief minister also visited Bhatipar Barichuk to inspect the site of a recent gas burst, which has now been successfully capped by ONGC. He concluded his visit with an inspection of the newly constructed Baliahat Harmotigarh bridge over the Dikhow River, where he issued instructions to relevant department heads for completing the approach roads to the bridge.

Those who fought Emergency

Internal Security Act (MISA) at that time. Students were harassed and freedom of expression throttled, he added. Thousands of people were arrested and subjected to inhuman treatment, but it is the strength of Indians that they did not bow and accept any compromise with democracy, he said.

People finally won, the Emergency was lifted and those who imposed it lost, he said. Noting that the 50th anniversary of Emergency was commemorated recently as 'Samvidhan Hatya Diwas', he said those who fought against it must always be remembered. The Emergency was imposed on June 25, 1975 by the then prime minister Indira Gandhi. After the defeat of the Indira Gandhi government in 1977, Vajpayee said, according to the audio, "Whatever happened in the country cannot be called just an election. A peaceful revolution has taken place. The wave of people's power has thrown the killers of democracy into the dustbin of history."

Modi said, "We should always remember all those people who fought the Emergency with fortitude. This inspires us to remain constantly vigilant to keep our Constitution strong and enduring." (PTI)

MDA urges centre to restore

The MDA leader pointed to the plight of thousands of internally displaced persons still stuck in relief camps more than a year after ethnic violence erupted on May 3, 2023. "Neither the ruling nor opposition legislators have been able to help these people return to their homes," he said. Tombi went further to blame the roots of the current crisis on the Congress government of 2005.

He alleged that bilateral talks initiated with Kuki militants based in Myanmar were the beginning of the trouble. By 2008, the talks became tripartite, and during that period, over 1,000 villages in hill areas were officially recognised, many of which, he alleged, were later settled by illegal immigrants who took up poppy cultivation.

He defended the MDA's crackdown on illegal activities and drug trafficking, accusing the Congress of politicising the issue instead of accepting responsibility. "The Congress is blaming us now, but it was their policies that laid the foundation for this crisis," Tombi asserted. (NNN)

Sri Lankan Navy arrests 8 Indian

engaging in illegal fishing, trespassing into Sri Lankan waters in the early hours of today. In response, the North Central Naval Command deployed its Inshore Patrol Craft to drive away those Indian fishing boats from island waters, north of Mannar," it said. Fishermen from both India and Sri Lanka are arrested frequently for inadvertently trespassing into each other's waters.

The fishermen issue is a contentious one in the ties between India and Sri Lanka, with Lankan Navy personnel even firing at Indian fishermen in the Palk Strait and seizing their boats in several alleged incidents of illegally entering the island nation's territorial waters. The Palk Strait, a narrow strip of water separating Tamil Nadu from Sri Lanka, is a rich fishing ground for fishermen from both countries. (PTI)

NFR restores Lumding-Badarpur

helping facilitate the travel of stranded passengers and restoring crucial connectivity to the region. The section had been severely damaged by multiple earth slips caused by relentless heavy rainfall, leading to a complete suspension of both passenger and freight train operations. The impact was significant, affecting not only daily commuters but also the transport of essential goods through this vital link. In response, the Northeast Frontier Railway undertook urgent restoration work. NFR General Manager Chetan Kumar Shrivastava personally visited the affected site to assess the damage, monitor progress, and encourage teams on the ground.

Under his supervision, the NFR mobilised maximum manpower and machinery, deploying resources round the clock to clear debris and stabilise the track. Thanks to the tireless efforts of the workforce, train services on this key hill section have resumed safely and efficiently.

The restoration, completed in record time, underscores NFR's commitment to operational resilience and rapid response in the face of natural disruptions. In the official statement, the Northeast Frontier Railway expressed gratitude to the passengers and the public for their patience and cooperation during the disruption.

Passengers are encouraged to follow NFR's official communication channels for timely updates on train services and travel advisories.

CM inspects progress of Sivasagar

Sivasagar—Demow road and assured that steps are being taken to speed up the project to ensure timely completion. Accompanying the chief minister during the inspection were Education Minister and Guardian Minister of Sivasagar district Ranaj Pegu, Demow MLA Sushanta Borgohain, Sivasagar Deputy Commissioner Ayush Garg, senior district officials, construction representatives, and BJP workers.

World's first computer devoid of silicon

up to 25 kiloHertz of frequency, the study says. Shrivastava, not involved in the study, said 2D materials hold the promise of pushing electronics beyond what silicon alone can offer. "With atomic-scale thickness, high mobility, and near-ideal electrostatic control, these materials are natural candidates for continuing Moore's Law in spirit, through performance-per-watt improvements, ultra-low leakage, and unprecedented device scaling," he said.

The field of 2D materials -- no longer a 'potential' one, but a strategic imperative -- offers a rare opportunity to leapfrog into next-generation semiconductor leadership, he added. However, the Penn State study's limitations need to be considered, the IISc professor said. "The operating speed of 25 kiloHertz is still far behind silicon, while challenges remain in improving channel mobility, gate oxides, contacts, managing parasitics, reliability, ensuring yield, and achieving top-gate device integration or nanosheet devices for scale," he said.

"It is also vital to emphasise that while this milestone is academically significant, its commercial translation hinges on building infrastructure -- testbeds, fabrication capabilities, tool ecosystems, and skillsets -- that don't yet exist in many countries." Despite the limits, Shrivastava described the 2D computer as a "foundational milestone that, over time, have historically driven transformative changes." On Friday, India's electronics and IT Ministry was reported to consider funding research on 2D materials.

They plan on floating expressions of interest for selecting which projects to fund, officials said. (PTI)

JCI India President launches community projects during NE visit

HT Bureau

GUWAHATI, June 29: In a historic and inspirational two-day visit, JFS Ankur Jhunjhunwala, National President of Junior Chamber International India (JCI India), arrived in Guwahati to spearhead a series of transformative community service initiatives across Zone XXV.

The visit, which commenced on Saturday, marks a defining moment for the region as both National President and National Vice President, JFS CA Shubham Agarwal, hail from this very zone—an unprecedented occurrence in the history of JCI India.

According to an official statement, the visit reflects JCI India's unwavering commitment to empowering leadership, entrepreneurship, and sustainable community development at the grassroots level, with a particular focus on the Northeast.

National President Jhunjhunwala is joined by Zone President JFF Gunjan Haralka, National Vice President JFS CA Shubham Agarwal, Protocol Officer RPP Rahul Chamaria, and other senior leaders of Zone XXV.

Their collective presence highlights a united vision for service, impact, and youth-led transformation in the region.

Throughout his tour of Guwahati, the National President inaugurated a series of sustainable community development projects implemented by local JCI chapters.

Among the major initiatives were projects by JCI Guwahati Princess at Uzanbazar, JCI Guwahati Achievers at Basistha, JCI Guwahati Pathfinders at Rajgarh, JCI Guwahati Hunar at Dhirenpara, JCI Guwahati Angels at Sau Kuchi, and JCI Dispur Capitals at Ulubari.

These initiatives span a wide range of areas including education, health care, skill development, and environmental sustainability.

They have been designed to provide long-term support to underprivileged communities, promote renewable energy in remote locations, and build inclusive growth through village and school adoption programs.

Additional events during the visit included a Multi-LO (Local Organisation) Meet at Raj Mahal, interactive sessions titled "Coffee with LO Presidents & ZGB," and meetings of the JCI Council of Members (JCOM) and Joint Area Committee (JAC).

Tax Bar Association hosts seminar on taxation of trusts, societies and AOP

HT Bureau

GUWAHATI, June 29: The Tax Bar Association, Guwahati, organised a seminar on the topic "Issues in Taxation of Trusts, Societies & AOP" on Saturday at The Ornate Hotel in Ulubari, drawing participation from professionals across the North East.

According to an official statement, the event aimed to address key legal and practical challenges in the taxation of trusts, societies, and associations of persons (AOP), particularly in light of recent regulatory changes.

The seminar began with Seminar Committee Chairman Advocate Rajesh Agarwalla welcoming all the delegates and formally initiating the programme.

A ceremonial felicitation of the guest speakers—Chartered Accountant Sanjay Mody and Deputy Commissioner of Income Tax Sumit Purkayastha—along with session moderator Advocate Vijay Kumar Chopra, was also conducted.

President of the Tax Bar Association, Advocate Dinesh Kumar Sharma, addressed the gathering and underlined the relevance and urgency of the seminar's theme, given the dynamic nature of tax laws governing such entities.

CA Sanjay Mody delivered a detailed presentation using visual aids to elaborate on critical aspects of taxation applicable to trusts, societies, and AOPs.

His presentation focused on structural compliance, exemptions, reporting standards, and evolving litigation trends.

Following this, Deputy Commissioner of Income Tax Sumit Purkayastha discussed the legal interpretations and procedural requirements in taxing these organisations.

He provided clarity on assessment processes and statutory obligations, encouraging tax professionals to maintain diligence and transparency.

In the concluding session, Advocate Vijay Kumar Chopra engaged the audience with an in-depth discussion on ambiguities within the legal framework.

He raised several real-world issues that are not clearly addressed in the tax laws, prompting interactive dialogue with the participants.

Both the speakers and the moderator responded to queries from the attendees and offered practical insights into navigating these complex tax structures.

The session concluded with a formal vote of thanks delivered by Secretary CA Gopal Singhania, who expressed appreciation to the speakers, participants, and the organising team.

He stated that with frequent amendments being introduced in the taxation regime of trusts, societies, and AOPs, the need to stay updated is more crucial than ever.

He also noted that the seminar was conceptualised to help professionals better understand the recent changes and to foster professional dialogue.

The seminar witnessed an enthusiastic turnout of around 100 tax professionals from different parts of the North East.

Delegates commended the Tax Bar Association's initiative in organising a knowledge-sharing platform on such a timely and significant subject.

The organising committee for the seminar included President Advocate Dinesh Kumar Sharma, Secretary CA Gopal Singhania, and Seminar Committee Chairman Advocate Rajesh Agarwalla.



As part of its comprehensive healthcare initiative, the company has contributed to improving health infrastructure, supplying essential medical equipment, and implementing outreach programmes to enhance access to primary and preventive healthcare for local communities.

The Environment & Sustainability Award acknowledges the organisation's dedication to responsible resource management and ecological conservation at its 750 MW power station.

The award recognises NTPC

Bongaigaon's implementation of best practices in sustainability and its commitment to minimising environmental impact through efficient and eco-friendly operations.

The awards were formally presented in New Delhi on June 12 and 14, 2025, and received on behalf of NTPC Bongaigaon by Smriti Das, Executive (CSR&R/LA) and Sheeja Ambika Sasidharan, AGM (EMG).

A felicitation ceremony was later held at the NTPC Bongaigaon premises, where the awards were handed over by Arnab Maitra,

Head of Project, NTPC Bongaigaon, in the presence of Debarata Kar, GM (O&M), members of the Site Management Committee, Amit K Asthana, Head of HR, Dr Deepayan Paul, CMO, and officials of the HR Department. The CSR award was presented by the HR team, while the Environment award was handed over by Sheeja Ambika Sasidharan in the presence of EMG officials.

The award ceremony in New Delhi was attended by several eminent dignitaries, including Dr Jagdish Mukhi, Former Governor of Assam; Dr Bhaskar Chatterjee, IAS (Retd), Former Secretary, Department of Public Enterprises, Government of India, and Former Director General and CEO, IICA; Ravi Shankar Prasad, IAS (Retd), Former Additional Chief Secretary, Ministry of Environment and Forests; K Sharan, Chairman and CEO, Greentech Foundation; Dr (Prof.) R K Dubey, Former CMD, Canara Bank; and Rajesh Soundararajan, Former IAS and Deputy Chairperson, Chidambarnar Port Authority.

NAME CHANGE

I have Changed my name from MOHAMMAD JOSIM UDDIN to JASIM UDDIN by swearing a notarial affidavit at Srimanta Sankardevnagar Hojai(Assam)

Tribute to Karbi icon, encouragement for youth mark eventful day in Diphu

CEM Ronghang unveils statue, felicitates students in Diphu



HT Correspondent

KHERONI, June 29: Chief Executive Member (CEM) of the Karbi Anglong Autonomous Council (KAAC), Tuliram Ronghang, attended two major events on Sunday, underscoring his commitment to cultural preservation and youth development in the region.

In the afternoon, CEM Ronghang unveiled a statue of renowned Karbi folklorist, writer, and cultural reformer Ru Bonglong Terang at the Karbi Lammet Amei (KLA) office in Diphu.

The unveiling ceremony was chaired by KLA General Secretary Liladhar Teron and attended by other office bearers.

The event was a tribute to Terang's remarkable contributions to Karbi literature and heritage.

Prior to the unveiling, Ronghang paid floral tributes to a portrait of Ru Bonglong Terang, seeking blessings and inspiration.

In his address, he emphasised the importance of preserving Terang's cultural legacy and urged the younger generation to draw in-

spiration from his life and works. "Although I didn't know Ru Bonglong Terang personally, his writings reflect his immense dedication to our culture and traditions," he said.

Ru Bonglong Terang, a pioneering figure in the field of Karbi literature and cultural reform, was honoured with the Karbi Lamkuru Sarpo Award in 1973 by the Karbi Lammet Amei, along with several other accolades throughout his lifetime.

The statue, sculpted by noted artist Diben Timung, was com-

pleted over a period of six months under the supervision of KLA officials.

The event was attended by several dignitaries, including MLA Bidyasing Englung of Diphu LAC and Padma Shri awardee Dhaneswar Engti, among others, who came together to celebrate the life and legacy of Terang.

Later in the day, CEM Ronghang participated in the final match of the T10 Polling Station-wise Cricket Tournament and a felicitation ceremony for students who passed the High School Leaving Certificate (HSLC) and Higher Secondary (HS) examinations in 2025.

Organised in memory of Late Basapi Teronpi, the mother of CEM Ronghang, the cricket tournament final drew a large crowd, showcasing the local sporting talent and community enthusiasm.

The felicitation programme recognised the achievements of meritorious students, celebrating their academic excellence and encouraging them to pursue further success.

Himanta opposing 'socialism, secularism', words enshrined in BJP's constitution: Congress

GUWAHATI, June 29: A day after Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma pitched for removing 'socialism' and 'secularism' from the country's Constitution, state Congress hit back on Sunday pointing out that the BJP's own constitution contains the same words he is opposing.

The opposition party questioned Sarma's remarks, terming it in conflict with the BJP's own document governing its functioning.

"A person who has taken an oath by the Constitution (of India) and is in such a high position making such comments is unbefitting of his chair. I strongly condemn it," Leader of Opposition in Assam Assembly, Debabrata Saikia, said.

Sarma had claimed on Saturday that 'socialism' and 'secularism' are "Western concepts", and these words should be struck off the Constitution.

He said these words were included in the Preamble of the Constitution by the then Prime Minister Indira Gandhi when the country was under Emergency rule, and these have no place in the Indian civilisation.

Hitting back at the BJP leader, Saikia said the saffron party's own constitution has the words 'socialism' and 'secularism'.

He pointed out that page 1 of the BJP's 24-page 'constitution and rules', as uploaded on its official website, says that the party will bear "true faith and allegiance to the Constitution of India" and "to the principles of socialism, secularism..."

"The first page of BJP's own constitution says it will follow the Constitution of the country and principles of socialism and secularism. After putting these words in their own constitution, I don't know what could be the reason for opposing it," the Congress leader asked.

He questioned that if the chief minister, who was an influential Congress leader before switching to the saffron brigade about a decade back, was "upset" with the BJP and is contemplating of shifting to another party. (PTI)

APCU Karbi Anglong announces two new awards

HT Correspondent

HOWRAGHAT, June 29: The Assam Press Correspondents' Union (APCU), Karbi Anglong District Committee, has announced two additional awards, bringing the total number of awards to be presented by the committee to five.

This was stated by Dharmendra Khakhar, Secretary of the APCU, Karbi Anglong.

According to the official announcement, the newly introduced awards will be sponsored by Purnima Ronghangpi in memory of her father, late Sum Ronghang, a former minister of Assam, and by brothers Prabhat Dwarfing Bordoloi, Deepak Bordoloi, and Yadav Bordoloi in memory of their father.

With these additions, the APCU forum will now present five awards in total.

The committee also plans to organise a seminar as part of an upcoming event to be held under the banner of APCU, the details of which will be announced at a later date.

Asam Prakashan Parishad organises symposium on creative literature at Darrang College

HT Correspondent

TEZPUR, June 29: A thought-provoking literary symposium on 'Creative Literature' was held on Saturday at Darrang College, Tezpur, organised by Asam Prakashan Parishad in collaboration with Prakash Sahitya Got, a literary forum of the college.

The symposium featured three engaging themes—'Searching for Stories and Interpretation through Travel Literature', 'The Constructing of Modern Poetry and the Joy of Reading', and 'Textual Interpretation and Reconstruction'—and brought together noted voices from the literary and academic community.

Eminent fiction writer Atanu Bhattacharyya delivered an insightful talk on 'Searching for Stories and Interpretation through Travel Literature' (Bhraman Sahityar Majere Galpor Sandhan Aru Byakhya).

He observed that while Assamese literature has seen the publication of several travelogues, the genre remains underexplored.

Drawing parallels with global literary traditions, he noted that travel literature in other languages has seen much greater development.

Citing the works of Hem Barua, he stressed the need for more focused literary attention and scholarly engagement with this genre in Assamese.

Dr Arindam Sharma, noted writer, translator and faculty member at Chaiduar College, addressed the theme 'Constructing of Modern Poetry and the Joy of Reading' (Adhunik Kobitar Nirman Aru Pathanor Ananda).

He reflected on how poetry encompasses all aspects of human existence—life, society, and nature—revealing both the visible and invisible layers of experience.

The act of constructing poetry, he said, becomes deeply meaningful when it reflects this dual vision, offering readers a profound sense of joy.

In the concluding session, Dr Ananya Hilodari, writer, translator, and faculty in the Department of English at Nagaon College, spoke on 'Textual Inter-



pretation and Reconstruction' (Pathar Byakhya aru Punor Nirman).

She emphasised that reconstruction is a vital process in literature, wherein a single text can offer multiple meanings and interpretations across time.

Literature, she explained, is dynamic, and reconstruction allows readers to uncover new dimensions and perspectives within familiar texts.

The symposium was moderated by poet and writer Nabajyoti Pathak.

Expressing gratitude on behalf of Asam Prakashan Parishad, noted writer and editor of the literary journal Prakash, Mihir Deuri, thanked the participants and organisers.

The event began with a welcome address by Dr Palshamoni Saikia, Principal of Darrang College.

Dr Gokul Kumar Das, senior faculty of the Assamese Department and coordinator of 'Prakash Sahitya Got', offered the vote of thanks at the end of the programme.

Milanpur hosts Bar Sabah, Panitola Sabah and felicitation event

HT Correspondent

TEZPUR, June 29: The two-day Bar Sabah and Panitola Sabah celebrations concluded on Sunday at Milanpur Dekachuburi village near Tezpur, creating a deeply spiritual atmosphere among the local community.

The events, held at the village Namghar, were led by Jayanta Krishna Mahanta, Satradhikar of Rup Narayan Satra of Deori Gaon, Tezpur.

The Namghar resonated with the devotional Nam-Prasang offered by Bhakats (devotees), reflecting the traditional religious fervour of the region.

Alongside the spiritual observances, the Namghar management committee and the villagers organised a felicitation programme in the presence of Tezpur MLA Prithiraj Rabha.

Senior journalist and native of the area, Utpal Baruah, was specially honoured during the event for his recent appointment as Assam's Information Commissioner.

The ceremony also recognised ten students from the village who had achieved success in high school, higher secondary, or graduate-level examinations, or had shown excellence in cultural pursuits.

The felicitation programme was conducted under the leadership of village development committee president Golap Baruah and secretary Kumar Koch.

The Panitola Sabah, a women-centric traditional event held in conjunction with the Bar Sabah, saw vibrant participation from Ayatis (young women devotees), adding a joyful dimension to the Namghar celebrations.

This tradition, observed annually during the Assamese months of 'Jeth' and 'Ahaan', continues to be practiced across Namghars in Assam. As part of the pre-sowing rituals, the villagers also organised a night-long Bhaona performance, further enriching the spiritual and cultural spirit of the occasion.

These events not only uphold the religious and social heritage of the community but also foster a sense of unity and continuity among generations.

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Webinar on development of assamese language abroad held in Nagaon

HT Correspondent

NAGAON, June 29: The Prabasi Asomiya Sub-Committee of Nagaon Zila Sahitya Sabha, in collaboration with Nowgong College, organised a webinar titled 'Development of Assamese Language Abroad: Experiences of Non-Resident Assamese' on Sunday.

The event brought together representatives from Canada, Europe, Ireland, and the United Kingdom, who shared their experiences and perspectives on promoting the Assamese language and culture beyond national borders.

The webinar was moderated by Dr Jagannath Biswakarma, a noted scientist, scholar, and researcher from the University of Bristol.

In her address, Nirala Baruah, a resident of Scotland and Vice President of Asom Sahitya Sabha, UK, stressed the importance of translating Assamese literature into English and other foreign languages to increase its global reach.

Manjira Chowdhury, former President of Assam Sahitya Sabha, UK, underlined the need to establish centres dedicated to Assamese language and culture in foreign countries to preserve and propagate the linguistic heritage among diasporic communities.

Other speakers included Sri-manta Bhuyan, President of the



Assamese Community in Europe; Diganta Baishya and Uma Talukdar from Canada; and Diganta Malakar from Ireland.

All speakers emphasised the urgent need to promote the Assamese language and culture globally and advocated the creation of a dedicated digital platform for its development and outreach.

Dr Sarat Borkotoki, President of Nagaon Zila Sahitya Sabha, welcomed the participants and appreciated the role of non-resident Assamese in preserving the linguistic and cultural identity of Assam.

In his concluding remarks, Dr Jagannath Biswakarma highlighted the significance of collective and coordinated efforts in this endeavor.

The webinar also witnessed the launch of an e-magazine titled 'Prabasi Asomiya Kalamere', edited by Dr Jagannath Biswakarma.

The publication aims to provide a creative platform for non-resident Assamese to share their thoughts, experiences, and contributions towards the promotion of Assamese language and culture on a global stage.

The event was attended by several dignitaries, including Dr Surya Hazarika, former President of Asom Sahitya Sabha; Dr Basanta Kumar Goswami, President of Asom Sahitya Sabha; and Pabitra Margherita, Minister of State for External Affairs, Government of India.

Buridehing river floods devastate Kumchai Gaon Panchayat

HT Correspondent

MARGHERITA, June 29: Residents along the banks of the Buridehing River in Kumchai Gaon Panchayat, under the 83 No Margherita Constituency of Tinsukia district, are facing a grave crisis as floodwaters continue to submerge their agricultural fields and homes.

The situation has been further aggravated by severe riverbank erosion, leaving the affected communities in a state of despair.

Villages including 1 and 2 No. Toklong, Madhupur, and Amrit Gaon have borne the brunt of the disaster, with thousands of bigas of land reportedly lost to the advancing river.

The residents of these riverside areas, many of whom are indigenous people dependent on agricul-

ture, have been left without shelter or livelihood, and claim they have yet to receive any form of government relief or assistance.

In response to the crisis, a delegation from the All India Kisan Sabha and the All India Youth Federation visited Toklong No 2 on Saturday to assess the situation and interact with the affected residents.

The team included Ratul Gogoi, state executive member of the All India Youth Federation, Sanjeev Ganguly, assistant secretary of the All India Kisan Sabha, and Bijendra Gogoi and Hemanta Gogoi, president and secretary respectively of the All India Youth Federation Tinsukia district unit.

During a community meeting held at Toklong No 2 Primary

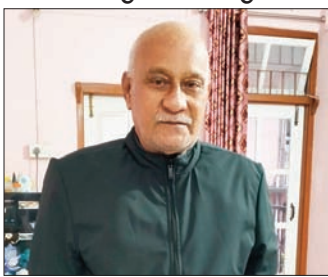
School, the affected residents voiced their grievances and called for immediate intervention.

They alleged that local authorities, including the Margherita MLA, the Co-District administration, and relevant ministers and officials, have remained unresponsive to the crisis.

The flood-hit villagers demanded a permanent solution to the recurring flood and erosion problem, stressing the urgent need for protective infrastructure and long-term planning.

The meeting concluded with a unanimous decision to form a committee that will soon submit a memorandum to the Assam government, urging concrete measures to address the growing challenges faced by the riverside communities.

Septagenarian reported missing from Nagaon



HT Correspondent

NAGAON, June 29: A 72-year-old man, Prakash Phukan, has been reported missing from his rented residence in Christianpatty, Nagaon, after he failed to return from a morning walk on Wednesday.

The incident has caused considerable concern among family members and local residents.

According to reports, Phukan left his home around 7 am for his routine walk and has not been seen since.

CCTV footage captured near the Kalang Kapili Senior Secondary School, close to his residence, showed Phukan boarding an e-rickshaw, after which there has been no trace of him.

Family members have confirmed that Phukan was formerly employed in a tea garden and hails from Bonamata, under the Titabor police station in Jorhat district.

At present, he had been residing in Nagaon with his daughter, Parimita Phukan, who is an associate professor at Nowgong College.

Despite extensive efforts to trace his whereabouts, the family has been unable to locate him.

A missing person complaint has been lodged at the Nagaon Sadar police station by his daughter.

The family has appealed to the public for any information regarding Prakash Phukan's whereabouts and can be contacted at 7896326722.

Sadou Jorhat Zila Satra Mahasabha to establish cultural college, honour senior satradhikars

HT Correspondent

JORHAT, June 29: The Sadou Jorhat Zila Satra Mahasabha, Jorhat, Asom has resolved to establish a cultural college in Jorhat district and to confer a 'Jibonjura Sadhana Award' (Lifetime Achievement Award) on satradhikars aged above 70 years in the district.

These decisions were taken at an extended executive meeting of the Mahasabha held on Saturday at the conference hall of the Jorhat Circuit House.

The meeting was presided over by Jagat Mahanta, president of the Mahasabha and Satradhikar of Khongia Letugram Satra.

The meeting was attended by the general secretary of Sadou Asom Satra Mahasabha, Prantik Goswami, who is also the Satradhikar of Sri Sri Jagaral Satra, Nagaon, as the chief guest.

The proposed cultural college will focus on facilitating academic and research-based study of Sattriya culture and the teachings of Mahapurush Srimanta Sankardev.

Detailed plans for the college will be prepared at a later stage. The Mahasabha also decided to organise a workshop and seminar in Jorhat, with dates to be announced later.

As part of its commitment to honour senior religious leaders, the Mahasabha will present the Jibonjura Sadhana Award to eligible satradhikars within the next month.

Addressing the meeting, Mahasabha general secretary Prantik Goswami announced that the central body will publish a book documenting all satras across the state and called upon all satras to provide necessary information for the compilation.

He further stated that tree plantation drives will be undertaken in every district of Assam and in Guwahati city by the end of July as part of the Mahasabha's initiative to address environmental concerns.

Goswami also revealed that the Mahasabha will organise an international seminar on the teachings and works of Mahapurush Srimanta Sankardev and Madhabdev at Ravenshaw University, Cuttack, Odisha on July 7 and 8.

Similar international seminars are planned in Mumbai in September and later in the United States.

Each seminar will feature cultural performances such as Khol Badon, Borgeet, Sattriya Nritya, and Ankiya Bhaona as part of efforts to promote the teachings and cultural legacy of Sankardev and Madhabdev globally.

The meeting was also attended by Pradip Goswami, Deka Satradhikar of Pukhuripar Satra, Golaghat, and vice-president of Sadou Asom Satra Mahasabha, as a special guest.

Historic Wahab Bazar Mosque lost to Brahmaputra erosion in Dhubri

HT Correspondent

DHUBRI, June 29: The historic Jame Masjid at Wahab Bazar in Fakirganj, located in Assam's Dhubri district, has been completely engulfed by the Brahmaputra River due to severe erosion, leaving no trace of the once-prominent religious and cultural landmark.

According to reports from the ground, the mosque had been under threat for weeks as the river's relentless currents gradually consumed the riverbank.

Eyewitnesses and local residents watched in despair as the final remnants of the mosque collapsed into the Brahmaputra, marking the end of a structure that had stood for generations.

The disappearance of the mosque was captured on camera, providing a haunting visual of the



river's power and the community's helplessness in the face of natural forces.

The Jame Masjid at Wahab Bazar was not only a site of worship but also a heritage structure, holding deep cultural and spiritual

value for the residents of the area.

Despite growing concern and the visibly precarious condition of the mosque in recent weeks, efforts to protect it were ultimately overpowered by the rapid pace of erosion and shifting riverbanks.

This incident has intensified local fears over the growing threat of river erosion in the region. Community members are urging immediate intervention by the government to prevent further devastation.

The Wahab Bazar market, situated in close proximity to the site of the now-vanished mosque, is also considered highly vulnerable.

Prominent local figure Atikur Rahman has appealed to Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma and Minister of Water Resources and Information & Public Relations Pijush Hazarika to take urgent steps to address the crisis.

Residents are calling for comprehensive riverbank protection and erosion control measures to safeguard other infrastructure and communities along the Brahmaputra's edge.

Medical myths: All about weight loss

By: Tim Newman

During the holiday season, many people take on more calories than they work off. Consequently, adding a little extra weight at this time of year is not unusual.

Classically, January is a time of change, and many people go on health kicks that include weight loss. With that in mind, we address some common misconceptions.

1. Skipping breakfast aids weight loss
The common adage that breakfast is the most important meal of the day may or may not be true, but it seems unlikely that skipping the morning meal aids weight loss.

The rationale behind this strategy is that missing one meal a day leads to a lower overall intake of calories. However, the story is not so straightforward.

One study, published in 2010, analyzed food intake information from 2,184 people aged 9–15 years. Twenty years later, the researchers asked for the same information again.

They compared data from people who had skipped breakfast during childhood and adulthood with data from those who had never skipped breakfast or had done so only in adulthood.

Compared with the other groups, the participants who skipped breakfast during both childhood and adulthood tended to have larger waist circumferences, higher fasting insulin levels, and higher total cholesterol levels.

Sometimes, people who skip breakfast eat more during the rest of the day to counteract the deficit. But one 2013 study found that missing breakfast does not lead to eating more at lunch. The authors conclude that “Skipping breakfast may be an effective means to reduce daily energy intake in some adults.”

However, these researchers only monitored the participants’ food intake at lunch, not dinner. And the study only included 24 participants, so we should be wary of drawing solid conclusions from the findings.

A much larger 2007 study, which involved more than 25,000 adolescents, looked for links between skipping breakfast and having overweight. The researchers also assessed the roles of alcohol intake and levels of inactivity.

The scientists found that skipping breakfast had a stronger association with overweight than either alcohol consumption or levels of inactivity.

A 2020 systematic review and meta-analysis that appears in the journal *Obesity Research & Clinical Practice* concurs. After analyzing the results of 45 previous studies, the authors concluded: “Skipping breakfast is associated with overweight/obesity, and skipping breakfast increases the risk of overweight/obesity.”

2. ‘Fat-burning’ foods can aid weight loss
Certain foods are referred to as “fat-burning.” This sounds too good to be true, and it probably is.

Some people claim that foods such as pineapple, ginger, onions, avocados, asparagus, celery, chilies, broccoli, green tea, and garlic speed up the body’s metabolism, thereby helping the body burn fat.

There is little scientific evidence, how-

ever, that these foods can help reduce weight.

3. Weight loss supplements can help
Proponents of certain supplements claim that they, too, help the body burn fat. In reality, these are generally ineffective, dangerous, or both.

The Food and Drug Administration (FDA) report that they have “found hundreds of products that are marketed as dietary supplements but actually contain hidden active ingredients [...] contained in prescription drugs, unsafe ingredients in drugs that have been removed from the market, or compounds that have not been adequately studied in humans.”

Jason Humbert, a senior regulatory manager at the FDA, adds:

“We’ve also found weight loss products marketed as supplements that con-

In general, snacking is multifaceted — it may support or hinder weight loss efforts, and in some cases it may have little effect.

Older research, from 2007, investigated the role of snacking in weight loss. In the yearlong study, the researchers asked one group of participants to have three meals a day, without snacking. A second group was asked to have three meals and three snacks daily. Individuals in both groups consumed equivalent amounts of energy each day.

At the end of the study, the authors found no difference in weight loss between the two groups; snacking, it seems, neither helped nor hindered.

Another study, from 2011, investigated the “relationship between eating frequency and weight loss maintenance.”



tain dangerous concoctions of hidden ingredients, including active ingredients contained in approved seizure medications, blood pressure medications, and antidepressants.”

4. Low fat foods aid weight loss

Of course, reduced fat or low fat foods are likely to contain less fat. However, these products sometimes compensate with added sugar or salt. Checking labeling is key.

Also, it is worth noting that “reduced fat” does not necessarily mean “low fat,” but simply that the fat content of a product is lower than the full-fat version.

5. Thou shalt not snack

People may believe that snacking is a cardinal sin of dieting. In some cases, though, snacking can help people manage their caloric intake more effectively. It is not so much snacking itself, but what one snacks upon that that counts.

Snacking may be more complex than it first appears. While some snack on celery and others on cookies, some people might snack because they are hungry and others because they are bored.

Having a piece of fruit or some low fat yogurt between meals, for instance, might reduce food cravings, keeping a person from overeating at mealtimes or resorting to more energy-dense snacks.

Some research has shown that people with obesity are more likely to snack than people without the condition. In this case, switching from unhealthy to healthful snacks may aid in weight loss, if this is a goal.

The researchers recruited participants who had previously had overweight or obesity but who had since maintained healthy weights.

They compared these individuals’ eating patterns with those of people with obesity and people with healthy weights who had never had overweight.

The team found that participants with healthy weights ate more snacks than those who had lost weight — and that people with overweight ate the fewest snacks.

Overall, the authors concluded that “Eating frequency, particularly in regard to a pattern of three meals and two snacks per day, may be important in weight loss maintenance.”

6. No treats allowed

This follows on from the myth above. Of course, limiting sugary, high fat treats is important, but cutting them out entirely is unnecessary and could be counterproductive.

As the British Heart Foundation explains:

“Depriving yourself of all the foods you enjoy won’t work. You’ll eventually give into temptation and abandon your efforts. There’s no harm in allowing yourself a treat now and again.”

7. Some sugars are worse than others

There is a rumour that minimally processed sugars, such as those in maple syrup or honey, are more healthful than white sugar. In reality, our bodies process sugar in the same way — regardless of its source. The gut re-

duces all sugars into monosaccharides. Rather than looking at sugar processing, it is more important to note the amount of sugar in any food. All types of sugar provide around 4 calories per gram.

8. Cut out all sugar
Following on from the myth above, we know that all sugar is high in calories. However, a person looking to lose weight does not need to mercilessly cut sugar from their diet.

As with all things, moderation is key. It may instead be a good idea to avoid products with added sugar.

9. Artificial sweeteners are healthful
To lower their sugar intakes, many people opt for low- or no-calorie sweeteners, such as aspartame. This may reduce the number of calories consumed, but some studies have linked artificial, or nonnutritive, sweeteners to weight gain.

A systematic review and meta-analysis published in 2017 analyzed 37 existing studies involving a total of 406,910 participants to investigate the impact of sweeteners on cardiometabolic health.

According to the researchers, “Observational data suggest that routine intake of nonnutritive sweeteners may be associated with increased BMI [body mass index] and cardiometabolic risk.”

However, not all studies have reached this conclusion. Researchers and health experts continue to discuss the effects of nonnutritive sweeteners on weight loss and metabolic health.

10. You can target fat in specific areas
Some people are particularly keen to lose fat from certain areas, such as the thighs or abdomen. In reality, this targeting is not possible. All bodies respond differently to weight loss, and we cannot choose which bits of fat will go first.

However, if weight loss is paired with exercises to tone a particular area, it can give the impression of more region-specific weight loss.

11. This fad diet is excellent
Vast legions of diets have become fashionable only to fade into obscurity, making room for more. As the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) explain in a nutshell:

“[Fad] diets limit your nutritional intake, can be unhealthy, and tend to fail in the long run.”

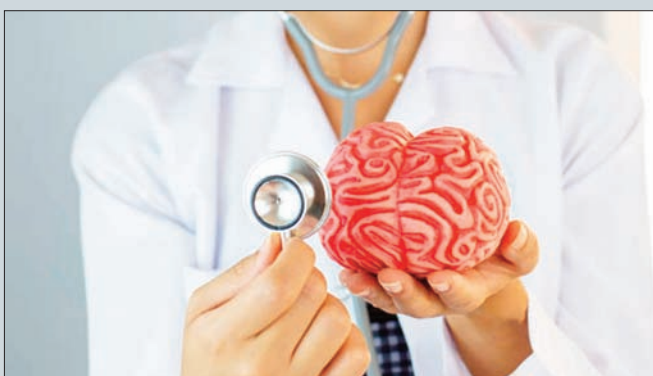
The take-home

Overall, losing weight can be challenging. Our bodies evolved during leaner times, so they are primed to take on energy and store it. However, many of us live in a world where calories are readily available, and our bodies still store this energy as if it’s going out of fashion.

In general, reducing the caloric intake and exercising is the most reliable approach to weight loss. With that said, people with chronic diseases, including diabetes and obesity, should speak with their doctors before beginning a new weight loss regime.

It is also worth remembering that if anything seems too good to be true, it probably is — any “weight loss miracle” is unlikely to be miraculous. Most foods are not inherently unhealthy, but it is a good idea to consume high-sugar and high-fat foods sparingly. (Courtesy: *Medical News Today*)

Busting common myths about brain tumours



By: Dr Shailesh Jain

Brain tumours are considered unique as being one of the most poorly understood medical conditions. Because of the wide-spread misdiagnosis, and the never-ending misinformation that presents as articles on the internet and even hard copy publications, patients and their families are experiencing undue stress and confusion. Let’s bust five common myths about brain tumours with facts.

Myth 1: All Brain Tumours Are Cancerous

Fact: Not all brain tumours are malignant. In fact, a lot of them are non-cancerous and grow slowly - benign. These tumours, while not spreading like cancer, can be problematic if they impact critical structures within the head that could lead to headaches, seizures, or even sight impairment. Diagnosis and treatment are critical whenever ‘surgery’ is mentioned.

Myth 2: Use of Mobiles cause brain tumours

Fact: After many years of research, there is no evidence that using a phone as per normal behaviour has a relationship with brain tumours; there are no links between normal usage unfounded research does exist that are based on alternate linking plans of granularity. Use of mobiles emit radiofrequency (RF) radiation which is non-ionizing radiation. Ionizing radiation, like x-rays have enough radiation energy to cause DNA damage, RF radiation does not. Authorities, like the World Health Organization (WHO) and the American Cancer Society routinely monitor this, but science does not support the possibility of the ‘myth’.

Myth 3: If you experience headaches, you certainly have a brain tumour

Fact: Although headaches can indicate a brain tumour, headaches also frequently result from non life-threatening causes—migraines, tension headaches, or simple dehydration from not enough intake of fluids. When headaches are related to brain tumours, they tend

to be non-varying, get worse every day, and can have neurological symptoms associated. Talk to your doctor, or health care provider if your headaches change or if you have any other unusual symptoms.

Myth 4: Brain Tumours Are Always Fatal

Fact: This is simply not the case. A large percentage of people diagnosed with brain tumours, both benign and malignant, live long, meaningful lives. This is yet again attributable to advanced techniques in neurosurgery, radiation, chemotherapy, precision medicine, and many other emerging fields of medicine, along with the type, grade, location, and size of the tumour, as well as the patient’s overall health.

Myth 5: Brain Tumours are Only Affecting the Elderly

Fact: Brain tumours can occur in people of any age, even in children and young adults. In fact, brain tumours are one of the more common solid tumours in children. Only age does not determine risk.

Myth 6: Brain Tumours Are Hereditary

Fact: Most brain tumours are not inherited. While some rare genetic conditions like neurofibromatosis or Li-Fraumeni syndrome may increase the risk, the vast majority of brain tumours occur sporadically, without a hereditary factor. Researchers hypothesize that an interaction between environmental and spontaneous genetic mutations, and causes unknown may be at fault.

Conclusion

Misinformation about brain tumours can lead to a delay in diagnosis, incite unnecessary panic, or cause individuals to make poor treatment decisions. Knowing the truth allows us to pursue timely medical care and reduce our anxiety. If you or someone you love is having any worrisome symptoms, see a neurologist or neurosurgeon. The earlier the evaluation, and, if indicated, advanced treatment could help considerably. (The writer is the Associate Director - Neurosurgery & Head - Neuro-intervention, Max Hospital, Shalimar Bagh)

The silent heart attack, often missed but deadly



By: Dr. Deepankar Vatsa

Heart attacks have long been associated with dramatic chest pain and older age. But in recent years, a silent and deeply concerning trend has emerged as young adults in their 20s, 30s, and early 40s are increasingly falling victim to heart attacks, and in many cases, without any warning signs at all. These are called silent heart attacks, and they can be just as dangerous, if not more than the typical ones.

What Is a Silent Heart Attack?

A silent heart attack, or silent myocardial infarction, occurs when the blood supply to a part of the heart is blocked, but the person feels little to no symptoms. Unlike the stereotypical image of someone clutching their chest in pain, silent heart attacks may be presented as mild discomfort, fatigue, indigestion, or breathlessness. Often, these symptoms are brushed off as minor acidity, overexertion, or stress leading to a delay in diagnosis and treatment.

Why the Young Are Increasingly at Risk

In India, nearly 25% of heart attacks are now seen in individuals under the age of 40, a startling figure. This shift is not just due to genetic predisposition but heavily influenced by lifestyle choices. Long hours at desks, poor diet, smoking, binge drinking, lack of sleep, and mounting mental stress are all playing a part.

Many young professionals, especially in urban centers, skip routine health check-ups and assume heart disease is decades away. Unfortunately, this assumption can be fatal. Silent heart attacks may quietly damage the heart muscle, and by the time they are discovered incidentally during a routine ECG or medical emergency the damage is already done.

The Subtle Signs You Shouldn’t Ignore

Though the signs may not be dramatic, the body does give hints. Persistent fatigue, shortness of breath after mild activity, dizziness, cold sweats, mild chest pressure, or pain in

the jaw, back, or left arm even if brief can be warning signs. These are often misinterpreted as acidity, anxiety, or muscle strain, particularly in younger people. This underestimation delays life-saving treatment.

Prevention Is Still the Best Medicine

The good news is that heart disease, including silent heart attacks, is largely preventable with early lifestyle changes. Maintaining a healthy weight, exercising regularly, avoiding tobacco, limiting alcohol, managing stress, and eating a heart-friendly diet can significantly reduce the risk.

It’s equally important to get regular screenings for blood pressure, cholesterol, blood sugar, and other cardiac risk factors especially if there is a family history of heart disease. In some cases, a stress test or an echocardiogram may be recommended by your doctor to assess how well the heart is functioning under exertion.

When Every Second Counts

If a heart attack, silent or otherwise is suspected, time is critical. Advances in cardiology such as angioplasty, stenting, and modern imaging techniques like Intravascular Ultrasound and Optical Coherence Tomography have greatly improved outcomes. However, these tools are only effective when the problem is recognized in time.

Rapid transportation to a hospital with a cardiac care unit and initiation of early treatment can make the difference between life and death. That’s why awareness, even in asymptomatic individuals, is so crucial.

A silent heart attack might not shout, but its consequences can be life-altering. Staying informed and proactive is not just smart, it could save your life. (The writer is a Consultant - Cardiology, Yatharth Hospital, Greater Noida)

Spreading awareness and adopting advanced technology can eliminate cataract blindness in India

By: Dr. Mahipal Singh Sachdev

Cataract remains one of the leading causes of blindness globally, yet it is among the most treatable eye conditions when detected early. In India, the burden of cataract-related vision loss is especially high due to limited awareness, delayed diagnosis, and socioeconomic barriers. As a nation that houses one-sixth of the world’s population, it is vital that we prioritize eye health and increase public education around cataracts especially as the elderly population continues to grow.

A cataract is the clouding of the eye’s natural lens, leading to blurry vision, sensitivity to light, difficulty in night vision, and in advanced cases, complete vision loss. While aging is the most common risk factor, cataracts can also be caused by diabetes, smoking, prolonged exposure to UV rays, trauma, and prolonged use of certain medications like steroids. Sadly, many people still consider cataract-induced vision changes to be a ‘normal’ part of aging and delay treatment until significant vision impairment occurs.

Busting common myths surrounding Cataract

Cataracts continue to be the leading cause of blindness in India, responsible for over 66% of cases, yet many people delay surgery due to persistent myths and fears. It’s crucial to separate fact from fiction and make informed decisions. A common misconception is that cataracts only affect the elderly. While aging is a major factor, cataracts can also result from diabetes, steroid use, UV exposure, trauma, and can even occur in children. Another widespread myth is that eye drops, diet, or exercises can cure cataracts - scientific evidence confirms that surgery is the only effective treatment.

Waiting until vision is severely impaired before opting for surgery is also misguided; early

intervention leads to better outcomes and quicker recovery. Contrary to fears, cataract surgery is among the safest procedures, performed under local anesthesia with minimal discomfort and rapid healing. Finally, modern cataract surgery doesn’t necessarily mean life-long dependence on glasses.

Advanced intraocular lenses (IOLs), including extended-depth-of-focus (EDOF) lenses, offer excellent vision across distances and reduce reliance on spectacles. Dispelling these outdated beliefs is key to encouraging timely treatment. With today’s technology, cataract surgery offers a safe, effective path to restoring clear, vibrant vision so seek professional advice at the first sign of trouble.

Awareness is the key

Raising awareness is the first crucial step in addressing this challenge. People need to understand that cataracts are not only treatable but that modern advancements in ophthalmology have made cataract surgery safer, quicker, and more precise than ever before. Gone are the days when patients had to wait for the cataract to ‘mature’ or live with thick spectacles post-surgery. Today, with the right information and timely intervention, patients can regain near-perfect vision with minimal disruption to their daily life.

At Centre For Sight Group of Eye Hospitals, we are committed to transforming cataract care through patient education, early detection, and world-class treatment. Our hospitals across India are equipped with the latest technology, including Femto Laser-Assisted Cataract Surgery (FLACS), which is a bladeless, computer-controlled procedure offering unmatched precision. This technique allows for predictable outcomes, faster healing, and improved safety for patients, particularly those with co-existing eye conditions.

Additionally, we offer premium intraocular lenses (IOLs) such as multifocal, toric, and extended depth-of-focus lenses that help pa-

tients achieve excellent distance and near vision, significantly reducing their dependence on glasses post-surgery. These lenses are personalized based on the patient’s visual needs and lifestyle, ensuring better satisfaction and quality of life.

Centre For Sight also employs optical biometry, advanced phacoemulsification systems, and image-guided technologies to ensure optimal results. Our team of highly skilled ophthalmologists follows global best practices and continuously upgrades their skills to match international standards of care.

Beyond surgical excellence, we are equally focused on community outreach and preventive eye care. Our public awareness campaigns, eye screening camps in rural areas, and collaboration with governmental and non-governmental organizations have helped identify thousands of patients in need. Many of them have undergone sight-restoring surgeries free of cost or at subsidized rates.

It is important to remember that cataract surgery is not just a medical procedure; it is a life-changing intervention. It restores not just vision, but confidence, independence, and dignity especially among the elderly who may be dependent on others due to poor sight. Early detection and timely surgery can also prevent complications like hypermature cataract or secondary glaucoma, which may lead to permanent vision loss.

As we move forward, we must continue to educate, screen, and empower people about cataract and the importance of regular eye check-ups. At Centre For Sight, our vision is to help India see better one eye at a time. With the power of innovation, compassion, and awareness, we can eliminate preventable blindness and gift millions the joy of clear vision. (The writer is the Chairman & Medical Director, Centre For Sight Group of Eye Hospitals)

Russia launches biggest aerial attack since start of war: Ukraine

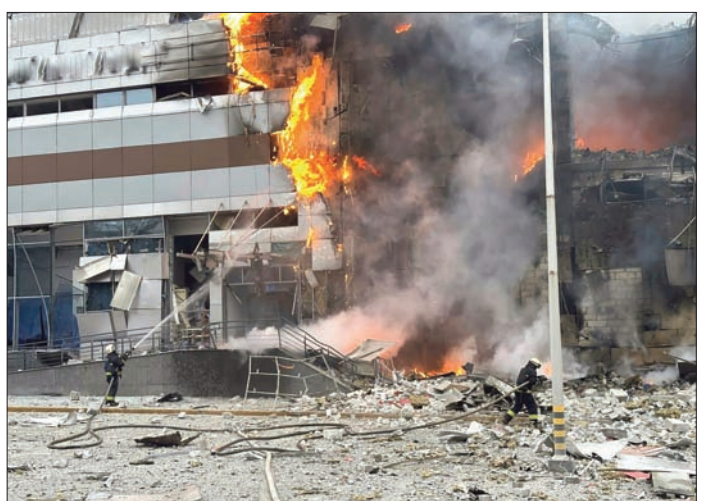
KYIV, June 29: Russia launched its biggest aerial attack against Ukraine overnight, a Ukrainian official said Sunday, part of an escalating bombing campaign that has further dashed hopes for a breakthrough in efforts to end the 3-year-old war.

Russia fired a total of 537 aerial weapons at Ukraine, including 477 drones and decoys and 60 missiles, Ukraine's air force said. Of these, 249 were shot down and 226 were lost, likely having been electronically jammed.

The onslaught was "the most massive airstrike" on the country since the beginning of Russia's full-scale invasion in February 2022, taking into account both drones and various types of missiles, Yuriy Ihnat, head of communications for Ukraine's air force, told The Associated Press. The attack targeted several regions, including western Ukraine, far from the front line. Poland and allied countries scrambled aircraft to ensure the safety of Polish airspace, the country's air force said.

One person died in a drone strike in the Kherson region, Gov. Oleksandr Prokudin said, while another was killed when a drone hit a car in the Kharkiv region, according to its Gov. Oleh Syniehubov. Six people were wounded in Cherkasy, including a child, according to regional Gov. Ihor Taburets.

In the far-western Lviv region, a



large fire broke out at an industrial facility in the city of Drohobych following a drone attack that also cut electricity to parts of the city.

Ukraine's air force said one of its F-16 warplanes supplied by its Western partners crashed after sustaining damage while shooting down air targets. The pilot died.

Attacks continued during the day. Dnipropetrovsk Gov. Serhii Lysak said a 72-year-old man was killed when a drone hit his car.

Russian troops reportedly advance in Donetsk

Russia's Defence Ministry said it had shot down three Ukrainian drones overnight. Two people were wounded in another Ukrainian drone attack on the city of Bryansk in western Russia, regional Gov.

Alexander Bogomaz said Sunday morning, adding that seven more Ukrainian drones had been shot down over the region.

Meanwhile, Russia claimed Sunday that it had taken control of the village of Novoukrainka in the partially Russian-occupied Donetsk region.

Russian forces have been slowly grinding forward at some points on the roughly 1,000-kilometre front line, though their incremental gains have been costly in terms of troop casualties and damaged armour.

In other developments, Russia's foreign intelligence chief, Sergei Naryshkin, said he had spoken on the phone with his US counterpart, CIA Director John Ratcliffe. "I had a phone call with my American

counterpart and we reserved for each other the possibility to call at any time and discuss issues of interest to us," Naryshkin said in remarks to state TV reporter Pavel Zarubin, who posted them on his Telegram channel on Sunday.

Sunday's attacks follow Russian President Vladimir Putin's comments two days ago that Moscow is ready for a fresh round of direct peace talks in Istanbul. Two recent rounds of talks between Russian and Ukrainian delegations in Istanbul were brief and yielded no progress on reaching a settlement.

Zelenskyy withdraws Ukraine from an anti-land mine pact

Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy signed a decree to withdraw Ukraine from the Ottawa Convention banning antipersonnel land mines, a Ukrainian lawmaker said Sunday. The move follows similar recent steps by the Baltic states and Poland.

The 1997 treaty prohibits the use, production, stockpiling and transfer of antipersonnel land mines in an effort to protect civilians from explosives that can maim or kill long after fighting ends. "This is a step that the reality of war has long demanded," said Roman Kostenko, secretary of the Ukrainian parliamentary committee on national security, defence and intelligence. He noted that Russia is not a party to the convention "and is massively using mines against our military and civilians". (AP)

Trump calls for deal on war in Gaza as signs of progress emerge

TEL AVIV (Israel), June 29: US President Donald Trump on Sunday pleaded for progress in ceasefire talks in the war in Gaza, calling for a deal that would halt the fighting in the 20-month-long conflict as Israel and Hamas appeared to be inching closer to an agreement. A top adviser to Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, Cabinet Minister Ron Dermer, was set to travel to Washington this week for talks on a ceasefire, an Israeli official said.

The official said plans also were being made for Netanyahu to travel to Washington in the coming weeks, a sign there may be movement on a new deal. The official declined to discuss the focus of the visit and spoke on condition of anonymity to discuss plans that had not yet been finalised.

"MAKE THE DEAL IN GAZA. GET THE HOSTAGES BACK!!!" Trump wrote on his social media platform Truth Social early Sunday between posts about a Senate vote on his tax and spending cuts bill. Trump raised expectations Friday for a deal, saying there could be a ceasefire agreement within the next week. Taking questions from reporters, he said, "We're working on Gaza and trying to get it taken care of."

Trump has repeatedly called for Israel and Hamas to end the war in Gaza. Despite an eight-week ceasefire reached just as Trump took office earlier this year, attempts since then to bring the sides toward a new agreement have failed.

Trump post slams Netanyahu corruption trial

The Gaza message wasn't the only Middle East-related post by Trump. On Saturday evening, he doubled down on his criticism of the legal proceedings against Netanyahu, who is on trial for alleged corruption, calling it "a POLITICAL WITCH HUNT, very similar to the Witch Hunt that I was forced to endure".

In the post on Truth Social, he said the trial interfered with talks on a Gaza ceasefire.

"(Netanyahu) is right now in the process of negotiating a Deal with Hamas, which will include getting the Hostages back. How is it possible that the Prime Minister of Israel can be forced to sit in a Courtroom



all day long, over NOTHING," Trump wrote.

The post echoed similar remarks Trump made last week when he called for the trial to be cancelled. It was a dramatic interference by an international ally in the domestic affairs of a sovereign state. And it unnerved many in Israel, despite Trump's popularity in the country.

The trial has repeatedly been postponed at the request of Netanyahu, citing security and diplomatic developments. On Sunday, the court agreed to call off two more days of testimony by Netanyahu scheduled this week.

A sticking point over how the war ends

Talks between Israel and Hamas have repeatedly faltered over one major sticking point, whether the war should end as part of any ceasefire agreement.

Hamas official Mahmoud Merdawi accused Netanyahu of stalling progress on a deal, saying in remarks on the Telegram messaging app that the Israeli leader insists on a temporary agreement that would free just 10 of the hostages.

Netanyahu spokesperson Omer Dostri said "Hamas was the only obstacle to ending the war", without addressing Merdawi's claim. (AP)

Senate Republicans advance Trump's tax and spending cuts bill after dramatic late-night vote

WASHINGTON, June 29: Senate Republicans voting in a dramatic late Saturday session narrowly cleared a key procedural step as they race to advance President Donald Trump's package of tax breaks, spending cuts and bolstered deportation funds by his July Fourth deadline.

The tally, 51-49, came after a tumultuous night with Vice President JD Vance at the Capitol to break a potential tie. Tense scenes played out in the chamber as voting came to a standstill, dragging for more than three hours as holdout senators huddled for negotiations, and took private meetings off the floor. In the end, two Republicans opposed the motion to proceed, joining all Democrats.

There's still a long weekend of work to come. Republicans are using their majorities in Congress to push aside Democratic opposition, but they have run into a series of political and policy setbacks. Not all GOP lawmakers are on board with proposals to reduce spending on Medicaid, food stamps and other programs as a way to help cover the cost of extending some USD3.8 trillion in Trump tax breaks.

"It's time to get this legislation across the finish line," said Senate Majority Leader John Thune, R-S-D.

Ahead of roll call, the White House released a statement of administrative policy saying it "strongly supports passage" of the bill. Trump himself was at his golf course in Virginia on Saturday with GOP senators posting about the visit on social media.

But by nightfall, Trump was lashing out against holdouts, threatening to campaign against one Republican, Sen Thom Tillis of North Carolina, who had announced he could not support the bill because of grave Medicaid cuts that he worried would leave many without health care in his state. Tillis and Sen Rand Paul of Kentucky voted against. The president was working the phones from the Oval Office late Saturday night, according to a person familiar with the discussions who was not authorized to speak publicly and spoke on condition of anonymity.

Pressure was mounting from all sides — billionaire Elon Musk criticised the package as "utterly insane and destructive."

The 940-page "One Big Beautiful Bill Act" was released shortly before midnight Friday, and senators are expected to grind through all-night debate and amendments in the days ahead. If the Senate is able to pass it, the bill would go back to the House for a final round of votes before it could reach the White House. With the narrow Republican majorities in the House and Senate, leaders need almost every lawmaker on board. A new analysis from the nonpartisan Congressional Budget Office said the Senate bill would in-

crease by 11.8 million the number of people without health insurance in 2034.

Senate Democratic leader Chuck Schumer of New York said Republicans unveiled the bill "in the dead of night" and are rushing to finish the bill before the public fully knows what's in it. He immediately forced a full reading of the text late Saturday in the Senate, which would take hours.

Make-or-break moment for GOP

The weekend session could be a make-or-break moment for Trump's party, which has invested much of its political capital on his signature domestic policy plan. Trump is pushing Congress to wrap it up and has admonished the "grandstanders" among GOP holdouts to fall in line.

The legislation is an ambitious but complicated series of GOP priorities. At its core, it would make permanent many of the tax breaks from Trump's first term that would otherwise expire by year's end if Congress fails to act, resulting in a potential tax increase on Americans. The bill would add new breaks, including no taxes on tips, and commit USD350 billion to national security, including for Trump's mass deportation agenda.

But the cutbacks to Medicaid, food stamps and green energy investments, which a top Democrat, Sen Ron Wyden of Oregon said would be a "death sentence" for America's wind and solar industries, are also causing dissent within GOP ranks. The Republicans are relying on the reductions to offset the lost tax revenues but some lawmakers say the cuts go too far, particularly for people receiving health care through Medicaid. Meanwhile, conservatives, worried about the nation's debt, are pushing for steeper cuts.

Tillis said he spoke with Trump late Friday explaining his concerns. Paul of Kentucky had been opposed to the bill's provision to raise the nation's debt limit by USD5 trillion.

And GOP Sen Ron Johnson of Wisconsin, who initially voted no, switched hours later after private talks to agree to advance the bill.

As the roll call teetered, attention turned to Sen Lisa Murkowski of Alaska who was surrounded by GOP leaders in intense conversation. She voted to proceed.

A short time later, Thune drew conservative holdouts Sen. Rick Scott of Florida, Mike Lee of Utah and Cynthia Lummis of Wyoming to his office, with Vance and Johnson also joining. Talks dragged on.

Then swiftly, Vance led them all back in to vote. Later, Scott said he had met with the president, adding, "We all want to get to yes."

Lee said the group "had an internal discussion about the strategy to achieve more savings and more deficit reduction, and I feel good about the direction where this is going, and more to come." (AP)

Iran's judiciary says at least 71 killed in Israel's attack on Tehran's notorious Evin prison

DUBAI, June 29: At least 71 people were killed in Israel's attack on Tehran's Evin prison, a notorious facility where many political prisoners and dissidents have been held, Iran's judiciary said on Sunday.

Judiciary spokesperson Asghar Jahangir posted on the office's official Mizan news agency website that those killed on Monday included staff, soldiers, prisoners and members of visiting families. It was not possible to independently verify the claim.

The June 23 attack, the day before the ceasefire between Israel and Iran took hold, hit several prison buildings and prompted concerns from rights groups about the safety of the inmates.

Jahangir did not break down the casualty figures but said the attack had hit the prison's infirmary, engineering building, judicial affairs and visitation hall, where visiting family members were killed and injured.

On the day of the attack, New York-based Centre for Human Rights in Iran criticised Israel for striking the prison, seen as a symbol of the Iranian regime's



repression of any opposition, saying it violated the principle of distinction between civilian and military targets.

At the same time, the group said Iran was legally obligated to protect the prisoners held in Evin, and slammed authorities in Tehran for their "failure to evacuate, provide medical assistance or inform families" following the attack.

Jahangir said some of those injured were treated on site, while others were sent to hospitals.

Iran had not previously announced any death figures, though on Saturday

confirmed that top prosecutor Ali Ghanaatkar — whose prosecution of dissidents, including Nobel Peace Prize winner Narges Mohammadi, led to widespread criticism by human rights groups — had been killed in the attack.

He was one of about 60 people for whom a massive public funeral procession was held on Saturday in Tehran, and he was to be buried at a shrine in Qom on Sunday.

Israel attacked Iran on June 13 in a bid to destroy the country's nuclear program.

Over 12 days before a ceasefire was declared, Israel claimed it killed around 30 Iranian commanders and 11 nuclear scientists, while hitting eight nuclear-related facilities and more than 720 military infrastructure sites. More than 1,000 people were killed, including at least 417 civilians, according to the Washington-based Human Rights Activists group. In retaliation, Iran fired more than 550 ballistic missiles at Israel, most of which were intercepted, but those that got through caused damage in many areas and killed 28 people. (AP)

China's humanoid robots generate more soccer excitement than human counterparts

BEIJING, June 29: While China's men's soccer team hasn't generated much excitement in recent years, humanoid robot teams have won over fans in Beijing based more on the AI technology involved than any athletic prowess shown.

Four teams of humanoid robots faced off in fully autonomous 3-on-3 soccer matches powered entirely by artificial intelligence on Saturday night in China's capital in what was touted as a first in China and a preview for the upcoming World Humanoid Robot Games, set to take place in Beijing.

According to the organisers, a key aspect of the match was that all the participating robots operated fully autonomously using AI-driven strategies without any human intervention or supervision.

Equipped with advanced visual sensors, the robots were able to identify the ball

and navigate the field with agility.

They were also designed to stand up on their own after falling. However, during the match several still had to be carried off the field on stretchers by staff, adding to the realism of the experience.

China is stepping up efforts to develop AI-powered humanoid robots, using sports competitions like marathons, boxing, and football as a real-world proving ground.

Cheng Hao, founder and CEO of Booster Robotics, the company that supplied the robot players, said sports competitions offer the ideal testing ground for humanoid robots, helping to accelerate the development of both algorithms and integrated hardware-software systems.

He also emphasised safety as a core concern in the application of humanoid robots.

"In the future, we may arrange for robots to play



football with humans. That means we must ensure the robots are completely safe," Cheng said. "For example, a robot and a human could play a match where winning doesn't matter, but real offensive and defensive interactions take place. That would help audiences build trust and understand that robots are safe."

Booster Robotics provided the hardware for all four university teams, while each school's research team devel-

oped and embedded their own algorithms for perception, decision-making, player formations, and passing strategies—including variables such as speed, force, and direction, according to Cheng.

In the final match, Tsinghua University's THU Robotics defeated the China Agricultural University's Mountain Sea team with a score of 5-3 to win the championship. (AP)

Severe heat waves hit Southern Europe as local authorities warn against wildfire risks

ROME, June 29: Major heat waves across Southern Europe have pushed temperatures above 40 C (104 F) in countries including Italy, Spain and Greece, as local authorities issued fresh warnings against the risk of wildfires.

Experts link the rising frequency and intensity of these heatwaves to climate change, warning that such extreme weather events are becoming increasingly common across Europe's southern region.

Severe heat waves were recorded in Italy, Greece, Spain and Portugal before the weekend, with locals and tourists alike taking shelter from the sweltering conditions.

Two-thirds of Portugal were on high alert on Sunday for extreme heat and wildfires, with temperatures expected to top 42 C (107 F) in Lisbon.

In Italy, a few regions — Lazio, Tuscany, Calabria, Puglia and Umbria — were planning to ban some outdoor work activities during the hottest hours of the day in response to the record-high temperatures. Italian trade unions pushed the government to expand such measures at a national level.

On Sunday, the Italian Health Ministry placed 21 out of 27 monitored cities under its highest heat alert, including top holiday destinations like Rome, Milan and Naples.

In Rome, tourists tried to seek shade near popular spots like the Colosseum and the Trevi Fountain, using umbrellas and drinking from public water fountains to stay cool.

Similar scenes were reported in Milan and Naples, where street vendors sold lemonade to tourists and residents to offer some refresh-



ment from the heat.

Greece was again on high wildfire alert because of extreme weather, with the first summer heat wave expected to continue

throughout the weekend.

A large wildfire broke out south of Athens on Thursday, forcing evacuations and road closures near the ancient Temple of Poseidon.

Strong winds spread the flames, damaging homes and sending smoke across the sky.

Greek authorities deployed 130 firefighters, 12 planes and 12 helicopters to battle the blaze, while police evacuated 40 people, with five areas under evacuation orders.

In Spain, locals and tourists were desperately trying to keep cool this weekend, as the country sizzled in temperatures as high as 42 C (107 F) in the southern city of Seville along with other locations in southern and central parts of the country.

Southern regions of Spain recorded temperatures above seasonal averages, prompting health alerts and safety recommendations from authorities. The country's national meteorological service Aemet has said that June is set to break yet another record, becoming

the hottest such month since records started.

Experts warned that intense heat can affect daily life, especially for vulnerable populations such as the elderly and children.

Local authorities advised against physical activity during the hottest hours of the day, and recommended drinking plenty of fluids.

A Lancet Public Health study published last year highlighted the increasing risk of heat-related deaths because of climate change. The study predicted that heat-related deaths could more than quadruple by mid-century under current climate policies. While more people currently die from cold than heat, the study stressed that rising temperatures will offset the benefits of milder winters, leading to a significant net increase in heat-related mortality. (AP)

Next polls to be 'most credible' in Bangladesh's history: Yunus' aide

DHAKA, June 29: The next general elections will be the "most credible and peaceful" in Bangladesh's history, Chief Adviser Muhammad Yunus' aide has said, asserting that the interim government has taken all necessary measures to ensure free and fair polls.

Yunus' Press Secretary Shafiqul Alam made the remarks on Saturday during an interaction with journalists in Khulna city, the state-run Bangladesh Sangbad Sangstha (BSS) news agency reported.

General elections in Bangladesh are scheduled for the first half of April next year, the chief adviser announced last month.

Asserting that the polls will take place in a festive and peaceful environment, Alam said, "The upcoming national election will be the most credible and peaceful one in the country's history." He said that the primary goal of the mass uprising in July 2024, which ousted the Sheikh Hasina-led Awami League regime, was to restore democracy in Bangladesh and added that the interim government has taken all necessary measures to ensure free and fair elections.

Deposed prime minister Hasina fled to India when her regime was toppled on August 5 last year in a massive student-led protest. Last week, the interim government formed a committee to investigate allegations of irregularities, corruption and administrative involvement in the 2014, 2018, and 2024 general elections. (PTI)

5.3 magnitude quake hits Pakistan; 5 people injured

KARACHI, June 29: At least five people were injured when a 5.3 magnitude earthquake shook Pakistan's Balochistan province on Sunday. The earthquake, with an epicentre near Barkan town, struck around 3.30 am local time, according to paramilitary Levies official Tauqueer Shah.

"We have reports of at least five people being injured including a couple whose house roof collapsed in the Rara Shaim area near Barkan," Shah said.

The United States Geological Survey put the epicentre of the quake around 60 kilometres from Barkan town.

Shah said the tremors were felt in many areas near Barkan including Rara Shaim, Kingri and Wastu.

According to initial reports, around a dozen houses were damaged during the tremors while cracks appeared in many residences in the affected areas.

Some media reports stated that the earthquake measured 5.5 on the Richter scale.

In 2021, an earthquake in the Harnai town of the province left 20 people dead and scores injured, while in October 2005, a 7.6 magnitude earthquake in the northern areas of Pakistan killed more than 73,000 people and left about 3.5 million people homeless. In June, Pakistan's largest city, Karachi also experienced around a dozen earthquake tremors between magnitudes 2.2 and 3.5, but no casualties or damage were reported. (PTI)

Community, tradition and talent converge as BBK honours young achievers with support from Pasighat's historic business families

Bogong Banggo Kebang felicitates CBSE toppers and sporting achievers in East Siang

HT Correspondent

PASIGHAT, June 29: In a celebration of academic brilliance and sporting excellence, the Bogong Banggo Kebang (BBK), the apex traditional council of Bogong Banggo, on Sunday felicitated the top ten CBSE Class X and Class XII district toppers for the academic session 2024-25, along with national-level gold medalists in sports from East Siang district.

The felicitation ceremony, held at the IGHS Auditorium in Pasighat, was organised under the initiative of BBK President Basalung Jamoh and General Secretary Onong Perme, as stated in an official release.

The programme was graced by local MLA Tapi Darang as the Chief Guest, with East Siang Deputy Commissioner Sonalika Jiواني as the Guest of Honour.

Among the special guests were Superintendent of Police Pankaj Lamba, 5th IRBn Commandant Garima Singh, DDSE Odhuk Tabing, Principal of IGHS Oyar Tabing, CEO of Pasighat Smart City Dr Manjuli Komut, Registrar of Arunachal State University Narmi Darang, as well as senior citizens, teachers, parents, and students.

Members of the "Pre-Independence Business Families of Pasighat Market," who played a pivotal role in the town's



economic development, were also present.

Congratulating the young achievers for bringing laurels to the district, MLA Tapi Darang expressed heartfelt appreciation for the philanthropic gesture of the

Pasighat Market's historic business community, whose forefathers were instrumental in shaping the commercial and socio-economic foundation of Pasighat and East Siang.

Their contribution towards sponsoring

the awards and felicitation, the MLA said, would go a long way in inspiring other youth to pursue academic and sporting excellence.

Deputy Commissioner Sonalika Jiواني, addressing the gathering, encour-

aged the students to become role models for their peers.

She emphasised that true progress lies in empowering children and youth through holistic and quality education. She called upon the community, edu-

cators, and parents to work collectively in shaping the future of the younger generation.

The Deputy Commissioner also announced that the district administration would soon introduce a "Deputy Commissioner for a Day" programme to promote academic excellence.

Under this initiative, meritorious students would be ceremonially given the opportunity to serve as the DC for a day. Earlier in the programme, BBK President Basalung Jamoh delivered an inspiring speech on the importance of education in shaping society.

He paid homage to the educators of the NEFA (North-East Frontier Agency) era for their pioneering efforts in spreading education in the region. He also reaffirmed BBK's commitment to human resource development.

The welcome address was delivered by BBK General Secretary Onong Perme.

The felicitation event was organised with the generous sponsorship of the "Business Families of Pasighat Market" and coordinated by Bhimal Srivastav and Santosh Singh.

The event not only recognised the hard work and accomplishments of students and athletes but also reflected the community's enduring commitment to fostering talent and celebrating excellence across generations.

Kaling Moyong concludes five-day interaction tour in West Kameng



HT Correspondent

BOMDILA, June 29: The five-day interaction tour of Arunachal Pradesh State BJP President Kaling Moyong concluded recently at the BJP Mandal Office in Rupa, West Kameng district.

The outreach initiative, aimed at reinforcing organizational structures and encouraging local leadership ahead of upcoming polls, saw the state party chief actively engaging with various party units and community members across the region.

According to an official statement, Moyong began his tour in Bomdila, where he held discussions with the office bearers of the West Kameng District BJP.

During the meeting, he reviewed the party's ongoing organisational activities and stressed the importance of strengthening grassroots involvement.

He also visited the District Craft

Centre in Bomdila, where he commended the craftsmanship of local artisans and underscored the vital role of indigenous industries in fostering regional economic development.

The final phase of the tour took place at the Rupa Mandal Office. Addressing Mandal Office Bearers (MoBs), Moyong urged party workers to remain vigilant and committed in preparation for the forthcoming Panchayat Elections.

As part of the programme, he distributed appointment order certificates to newly inducted MoBs, officially welcoming them into the party's organisational framework and encouraging them to undertake their responsibilities with sincerity and diligence.

The event at Rupa was attended by a number of senior State Office Bearers, reflecting the party's cohesive approach and commitment to strengthening its base.

Among those present were Vice President Ashok Sangchoju, General Secretary Tadar Niglar, Treasurer Vinay Gupta, Convenor of the Media Cell Dolang Tako, Chairman of APFCL Nalong Mize, and Nima Sange, Chairman of the Resource Mobilisation Committee under the Planning and Investment Department of the Government of Arunachal Pradesh.

Okiam Moyong Borang, Chief Councillor of Pasighat Municipal Council, also participated in the programme. Office bearers of the West Kameng District BJP, along with Mandal leaders from Rupa and Khalaktang, were in full attendance, underscoring the party's united front and enthusiastic grassroots network.

The tour is being seen as a significant step in energizing the party cadre and aligning the organization's efforts ahead of crucial electoral challenges.

Indigenous faith awareness campaign and free eye screening camps held across Kurung Kumey

HT Correspondent

KURUNG KUMEY, June 29: A four-day Indigenous Faith Awareness Campaign-cum-Free Eye Screening Camp concluded on June 28, marking a major milestone in community healthcare and cultural revival in Arunachal Pradesh's Kurung Kumey district.

The programme was organised from June 25 to 28 under the leadership of Tadar Chachung, Assistant General Secretary of the Indigenous Faith and Cultural Society of Arunachal Pradesh (IFCSAP), Western Arunachal.

The event was jointly conducted by IFCSAP, Taniak Development Welfare Society (TDWS), Nyapin Nyobia Sangram Phassang Students' Union (NNSPSU), and Karuna Trust, according to an official statement.

The campaign was flagged off with an inaugural programme at Koloriang on June 25, where Kurung Kumey Deputy Commissioner Chukhu Cheechung and District Reproductive and Child Health Officer (DRCHO) Dr Tadar Tagh formally launched the initiative.

A total of 275 patients were screened at the first camp, where 155 power glasses were distributed free of cost.

Nineteen cataract cases were also identified for further medical intervention.

On June 26, a joint meeting of IFCSAP's Central Executive Council, its Kurung Kumey District Unit, and Indigenous Faith followers from the region resolved to revive the defunct Nyedar Namlo, a traditional Indigenous prayer centre in Koloriang.

Under the leadership of Tadar Chachung, a social service initiative was conducted alongside an inspection of the non-functional Tribal



Heritage Centre and its adjoining land to plan future development efforts.

The campaign continued on June 27 with a medical camp at the Inspection Bungalow in Nyapin.

There, 255 patients underwent eye screening and 146 spectacles were distributed.

The medical team also detected 24 cataract cases, 69 high blood pressure cases, and 33 patients with random blood sugar (RBS) irregularities.

Later that day, an Indigenous Faith Awareness programme was held at Leya village under Phassang Circle, during which a Nyedar Namlo Lapang Committee was formed for Lungsa and Leya villages with Phassang Bachi as Chairman and Phassang Siba as Secretary.

Highlighting a strong cultural shift, BJP Kurung Kumey District President Phassang Bungbi pledged land for the construction of a new Nyedar Namlo.

Former pastor Phassang Sime, who previously served for six years,

publicly declared his return to the Indigenous Faith and committed to initiating the construction of the prayer centre by winter through community-based crowdfunding, without seeking government aid.

Additional support came from Ringu Tapin, Vice President of IFCSAP's Kurung Kumey Unit, who pledged his one-month salary for the construction of the new centre.

Speaking to the media, Tadar Chachung confirmed that all identified cataract patients from the camps would receive free surgeries at either TRIHMS in Naharlagun or Ramakrishna Mission Hospital in Itanagar, depending on the patients' preferences.

He reaffirmed IFCSAP's commitment to making essential healthcare accessible to remote communities in ways that are culturally and personally appropriate.

The concluding camp was held on June 28 at Sango village, organised by the NNSPSU.

A total of 275 patients were screened, and 155 spectacles were distributed. The camp also recorded

19 cataract, 120 blood pressure, and 70 RBS cases.

In his closing remarks, Chachung pledged to present the concerns and aspirations of Koloriang, Nyapin, and Phassang before IFCSAP's Central Executive Committee.

He expressed deep gratitude to all supporters, including MLA Er Tai Nikio, Deputy Commissioner Chukhu Cheechung, Dr Tadar Tagh, SDO Sangram Philip Tayeng, EE RWD Tawang Er Kipa Rinia, ZPM Nyapin Tadar Tadey, IFCSAP Kurung Kumey President Ha Tatu, Vice President Ringu Tapin, General Secretary Sangha Babung, Youth Wing President Bengia Tayis, Advisor Bengia Tado, senior citizen Chello Kama, TDWS Chairman Tadar Guntey, and BJP District President Phassang Bungbi.

The successful integration of healthcare outreach with cultural resurgence in Kurung Kumey through this campaign marks a significant stride in strengthening Indigenous identity and building community-driven development models.

Taro Duchok to represent India at Kudo World Cup 2025 in Bulgaria

HT Correspondent

ITANAGAR, June 29: Taro Duchok, a dedicated martial artist from Arunachal Pradesh, has earned a coveted spot in the Indian contingent for the Kudo World Cup 2025 to be held in Bulgaria.

This prestigious selection recognises Duchok's years of rigorous training, discipline, and unwavering commitment to Kudo, a Japanese hybrid martial art that combines elements of karate, judo, and other combat disciplines.

According to an official statement, Duchok's selection marks a significant milestone in his sporting journey and is a moment of pride not just for him but for the entire Kudo community in India.

Trained under the Kudo International Federation India (KIFI) and Arunachal Kudo Association (AKA), Duchok has consistently showcased his prowess and sportsmanship at national-level competitions.

His notable achievements include a silver medal at the Kudo National Championships in 2021, bronze medals in 2022 and 2023, and another silver in 2024.

His rise through the ranks has been fuelled by strong support from his coaches, family, friends, and the local community.

The Kudo World Cup 2025 will bring together top martial artists from around the globe, and Duchok's participation reflects both his personal excellence and the growing presence of Indian athletes on the international Kudo stage.

His journey stands as an inspiration to aspiring martial artists and athletes across the country.



Pakke Tiger Reserve unveils community-focused initiatives for conservation and livelihoods

HT Correspondent

SEIJOSA, June 29: In a major push towards community-centric conservation, Pakke Tiger Reserve on Sunday held a multifaceted programme at West Bank, Seijosa, integrating welfare initiatives for frontline forest staff with traditional livelihood promotion and digital solutions for human-wildlife conflict mitigation.

The event was organised under the leadership of Divisional Forest Officer and Field Director Satyaprakash Singh, IFS, and saw the participation of senior forest officials, PRI members, local stakeholders, and representatives from various government departments of Arunachal Pradesh.

According to an official statement, the programme was graced by Biyuram Wahge, Minister of Health & Family Welfare and Water Resources Department, Government of Arunachal Pradesh, as the chief guest.

In a key highlight, the PTR Veer Vanrakshak Smriti Workers' Club was formally inaugurated by the Minister.

The dedicated facility, developed for the welfare and recreation of frontline forest staff and their families, is equipped with amenities such as sports equipment, a library, exercise machines,

projector, television, and more.

It aims to provide a space for rest, engagement, and rejuvenation for forest personnel who play a vital role in protecting the biodiversity of the reserve.

The event also marked the launch of a handloom training initiative under the SAMARTH Scheme of the Ministry of Textiles, Government of India.

The initiative is focused on reviving traditional weaving skills and empowering local women and youth through self-employment, cultural preservation, and economic self-reliance.

A preview of the Nyime Aid App, currently under development, was presented during the programme.

Designed as a digital platform for the fast and transparent disbursement of ex-gratia relief to victims of human-wildlife conflict, the app represents a step forward in tech-enabled, conservation-driven governance.

As part of the day's events, ex-gratia cheques were handed over by the Chief Guest to conflict victims, alongside the distribution of full-body protectors, uniforms, liveries, and field gear to forest staff.

Speaking on the occasion, DFO Satyaprakash Singh said, "These



initiatives reflect our commitment to a conservation model that is

both people-centric and future-ready. True conservation is only

possible when communities and frontline staff—those who live and work closest to nature—are supported and empowered."

Minister Biyuram Wahge commended the DFO's leadership and proactive initiatives, which he said were instrumental in transforming Pakke Tiger Reserve into a model of integrated conservation and development.

He specifically highlighted achievements such as the Butterfly Park, Decorative Entry Gate, Foresters' Memorial, and the newly inaugurated Workers' Club.

The Minister also praised the development of the Nyime Aid App, calling it an innovative and timely tool to address the increasing challenges posed by human-wildlife conflict.

Following the main event, the Minister visited the Handloom Training Centre at Niti Darlung, where he once again lauded the efforts of the forest department in promoting skill development and economic resilience among local communities.

The programme concluded with an interactive session over lunch, reinforcing the Reserve's vision of community-based conservation and participatory development as key to biodiversity protection and sustainable livelihoods.

95 crore people now benefiting from social security schemes: Modi

NEW DELHI, June 29: Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Sunday said around 95 crore people are now benefiting from one social security scheme or the other, while till 2015, the government schemes were reaching less than 25 crore people.

In his monthly Mann Ki Baat radio broadcast, Modi cited an International Labour Organisation (ILO) report which stated that more than 64 per cent of India's population is now availing some social protection benefit or the other.

"Presently, most of the populace in India is taking advantage of one social protection benefit or the other and recently a very important report of the ILO has come out. It has been mentioned in this report that more than 64% of the population of India is now definitely availing some sort of social protection benefit or the other," Modi said. Social Security is one of the biggest coverages in the world, he said.

"Today, around 95 crore people of the country are getting the benefit of some or the other social security scheme; whereas, till 2015, the government schemes were

reaching less than 25 crore people," Modi said.

From health to social security, the country is moving ahead with the feeling of saturation in every field, he said. "This is also a great picture of social justice. These successes have instilled a belief that the coming times will be even better; India will become even stronger at every step," Modi said.

The prime minister also hailed as a "remarkable milestone" the World Health Organisation (WHO) declaring India Trachoma-free and lauded the efforts of healthcare workers for the success. Trachoma is a highly contagious bacterial infection, which has been a major cause of preventable blindness worldwide.

"The 'Swachh Bharat Abhiyan' also helped in eradicating it. The 'Jal Jeevan Mission' also contributed a lot to this success. Today, when clean water is reaching every home through taps, the risk of such ailments has reduced," Modi said.

The WHO has also appreciated the fact that along with tackling the disease, India has also got rid of its root causes, he said.

In his broadcast, Modi also ex-



tended his best wishes to all the fortunate devotees going on the various religious yatras.

After a long time, the Kailash Mansarovar Yatra has had an auspicious re-start, he said.

"Kailash Mansarovar is the abode of Lord Shiva. Kailash is considered the centre of faith and devotion in every tradition; be it Hindu, Buddhist or Jain," he said.

Noting that the holy Amarnath Yatra is going to commence on July 3, Modi said the holy month of 'Sawan' is also just a few days away. "Just a few days ago, we have also witnessed the Rath Yatra

of Lord Jagannath ji. Be it Odisha, Gujarat or any other corner of the country, lakhs of devotees participate in this Yatra. From North to South, East to West, these Yatras are a reflection of the spirit of 'Ek Bharat-Shreshtha Bharat'," he said.

"I also commend those who are engaged in making these Yatras successful and safe with a spirit of service," he said.

Talking about Assam's Bodoland, Modi said today it stands out in the country with a new face, a new identity.

"The energy and confidence that the youth here have, is most visible

on the football field. In the Bodo Territorial Area, the Bodoland CEM Cup is being organised. This is not just a tournament; it has become a celebration of unity and hope," Modi said.

More than 3,700 teams, about 70,000 players, and even among them, a large number of our daughters are participating, he said. "These statistics tell the story of a big change in Bodoland. Bodoland is now increasingly casting its glow on the sports map of the country," the prime minister said.

Modi also reiterated his call for reducing obesity and cutting 10 per cent oil in food to reduce obesity.

"When you'll be fit, you will be more super hit in life," he said.

Noting that people across the country and the world participated in the 'International Yoga Day' on June 21 this year, Modi said that over these 10 years, this event is turning grand with every passing year. "This is also an indication that more and more people are adopting yoga in their daily lives. We have seen so many attractive pictures of 'Yoga Day' this time. Three lakh people performed yoga together on the beach of Visakhapatnam. Another amazing visual

emerged from Visakhapatnam itself - more than two thousand adivasi students performed 108 Surya Namaskars for 108 minutes," he said. "People of Delhi connected yoga with the resolve of a clean Yamuna and performed yoga on the banks of the Yamuna. In Jammu and Kashmir, people also did yoga on the Chenab Bridge, which is the world's highest railway bridge. The snowy peaks of the Himalayas and ITBP soldiers - yoga was seen there too; courage and 'sadhana' were hand in hand," he said.

In Gujarat's Vadnagar, 2,121 people did 'Bhujangasana' together and created a new record.

"Pictures of yoga came in from New York, London, Tokyo, Paris; every big city of the world" - and one thing was special in every picture - peace, stability and balance," he said. In his broadcast, Modi also highlighted the Eri Silk of Meghalaya, saying it has received the GI Tag a few days ago.

"Eri Silk is like a heritage for Meghalaya. The tribes here, especially the people of the Khasi community, have preserved it for generations and have also enriched it with their skills." (PTI)

INDIA bloc may knock door of judiciary against SIR: Digvijaya



PATNA, June 29: Senior Congress leader Digvijaya Singh on Sunday said all constituents of INDIA bloc may knock the door of judiciary against the ongoing Special Intensive Revision (SIR) of electoral roll in Bihar if the Election Commission does not accept opposition parties objections about the drive.

Singh accused the NDA government at the Centre of trying to erase the names of poor and marginalised voters from the electoral rolls through SIR ahead of the assembly polls in the state.

"The SIR drive of the EC is a deliberate attempt to disenfranchise poor, tribal, young, flood-affected, and migrant voters in the upcoming Bihar Assembly elections. All constituents of INDIA bloc may knock the door of judiciary against the ongoing SIR of the electoral roll in Bihar if the EC does not accept the opposition's objections about the drive."

"I met RJD supremo Lalu Prasad ji here on Saturday and requested him to speak to our party president Mallikarjun Kharge over the issue," Singh told reporters here.

Is it possible to conduct house-to-house verification of around eight crore voters within 25 days by the ECI in Bihar, he asked.

"I once again repeat that the drive is an attempt to snatch the voting rights of people of Bihar in big numbers, especially poor, farmers, labourers, socially marginalised and oppressed classes by making them ineligible to vote. It will be a sheer injustice to the majority of the voters of Bihar. This will adversely affect BJP also," he said.

The SIR drive has been launched just a few months before the state polls, he said, adding, "The EC should have taken the opinion of all political parties before launching this drive."

Criticising the NDA government in the state, Singh said, "The state of education is in a very pathetic condition in Bihar. The NDA government has ruined the education system in Bihar...the state has the worst dropout rates in the country. A large number of government schools in the state are running without electricity, teachers, computers, or libraries."

He alleged that around 2,637 government schools in the state operate with only one teacher, while 2.91 lakh students are enrolled in these schools and 117 schools have no students at all, yet 544 teachers are still posted there.

"Bihar has the lowest number of higher educational institutions per lakh population in the country. According to data provided by the authorities concerned, there are just 37 universities, 1,092 colleges, and 315 standalone institutes, totaling 1,387 institutions. That means the state has only seven colleges per lakh population, compared to the national average of 30 — the lowest in India," he claimed. (PTI)

India has set USD 1 bn turmeric export target by 2030: Shah



HYDERABAD, June 29: Union Home Minister Amit Shah on Sunday said the Centre has set a target of achieving USD one billion in turmeric exports by 2030.

Addressing a gathering after the inauguration of the National Headquarters of Turmeric Board in Nizamabad, he said the board would focus on packing, branding, marketing and export of the commodity.

The turmeric board would work towards ensuring remunerative prices for farmers, export of their produce, besides research and development, he said.

"You will be surprised to know that the Indian gov-

ernment has set the goal of exporting USD one billion worth of turmeric by 2030. And, we have also made full preparations to achieve the goal of exporting USD one billion to international markets. The (Turmeric) board that will be formed will work to ensure that the highest price of turmeric reaches the farmers," he said.

Shah further said, during the 2023 assembly elections, Prime Minister Narendra Modi had promised to establish a Turmeric board in Telangana, and orders in this regard were issued later.

Earlier, Union Coal and Mines Minister G Kishan Reddy and other leaders received Amit Shah when he arrived at Hyderabad's Begumpet airport.

Taking to X, BJP's Telangana unit earlier on Sunday said Prime Minister Narendra Modi who had earlier announced the establishment of the turmeric board has now fulfilled the dream of farmers as per the word given to them.

PM Modi has allocated ₹ 200 crores to improve the quality of turmeric crop, carry out research and to improve farmers' income, it said.

The establishment of the Turmeric Board has been a major demand of the turmeric farmers in Nizamabad and it was also a key election issue.

BJP Lok Sabha member from Nizamabad D Arvind, who had promised to set up the turmeric board, had defeated BRS MLC and then Chief Minister K Chandrasekhar Rao's daughter K Kavitha in the 2019 Lok Sabha elections. He was re-elected in 2024. (PTI)

Monsoon covers entire country 2 dead in Uttarakhand cloudburst; IMD sounds red alert in several states

NEW DELHI/SHIMLA/UTTARKASHI, June 29: A cloudburst in Uttarakhand's Uttarkashi district early Sunday left two construction workers dead and seven missing as monsoon covered the entire country almost a week early than usual, bringing rain in national capital and other northern states and triggering landslides in several hilly areas.

The India Meteorological Department (IMD) has issued a red alert for heavy rainfall on June 29 and 30 in various districts of Uttarakhand, including Uttarkashi, Rudrapur, Dehradun, Tehri, Pauri, Haridwar and Nainital. Authorities have put the Chardham yatra on hold for a day for the safety of pilgrims.

A similar red alert of heavy to very heavy rain has been issued for 12 districts in Himachal Pradesh, where rain-related incidents have claimed 17 lives since the onset of monsoon in the state on June 20.

In Uttarakhand, a landslide triggered by a cloudburst destroyed the shelters of workers engaged in the construction of a hotel along the Yamunotri National Highway in Uttarkashi district, officials said.

There were 29 labourers at the campsite when the landslide occurred washing away around 10 metres of the highway. Twenty of them were evacuated to safety while nine went missing, the district emergency operation centre said.

Bodies of two missing labourers were recovered

from the banks of the Yamuna River near Tiladi Shaheed Smarak, about 18 km from the place where the landslide occurred, police said.

The labourers are said to be of Nepalese origin.

NDRF, SDRF and police personnel are carrying out search and rescue operations at the site, District Magistrate Prashant Arya said. The highway is blocked by landslide debris, he said, adding pilgrims returning from Yamunotri have been asked to stay at safe locations due to the blocked highway, he said.

The Chardham Yatra has been postponed for a day as a precautionary step and a decision on further travel will be taken after reviewing the weather conditions along the routes on Monday, Garhwal Commissioner Vinay Shankar Pandey said.

In Himachal Pradesh, services on the Shimla-Kalka rail line -- a UNESCO world heritage -- were suspended on Sunday after boulders and trees fell on the tracks following overnight rains in Solan district. A bridge in Solan's Barotiwala industrial area was also washed away. A landslide near Koti on the Shimla-Kalka National Highway (NH-5), connecting Shimla and Chandigarh, damaged some stretches of the road, resulting in a two to three-km-long traffic jam for hours. Bald River in the Baddi area of the district is swelling and there are reports of water up to four feet entering over 20 houses in Shivalik Nagar in Jhadmajri. (PTI)

CM tenders apology 3 killed, 50 injured in stampede near Gundicha Temple in Odisha's Puri

PURI, June 29: At least three persons, including two women, were killed and around 50 others injured in a stampede near Shree Gundicha Temple in Odisha's Puri on Sunday morning, officials said.

The incident took place around 4 am when thousands of devotees gathered near the temple to witness Rath Yatra festivities, they said.

The injured have been admitted to a nearby hospital, and the condition of six people is stated to be critical. "Out of the 50 injured, six are still unconscious and their condition is very serious," an official of the medical facility, where they are undergoing treatment, said.

Chaos ensued after two trucks carrying materials for rituals reportedly entered the crowded spot near the chariots of Lord Jagannath and his sibling deities.

Devotees in large numbers had assembled outside the temple since the early hours to catch a glimpse of the deities when the 'Pahuda' (cloth) covering their faces was to be removed, as part of the rituals, the officials said.

The deceased were identified as Basanti Sahu (36) from Bolagarh, and Premakant Mohanty (80) and Pravat Das (42) from Balipatna.

Their bodies have been handed over to family members, and the cremation will take place at 'Swaragdar' in Puri.

In a punitive measure following the stampede, Chief Minister Mohan Mahi ordered the transfer of District Collector Siddharth Shankar Swain and SP Vineet Agrawal. Mahi also announced the suspension of two police officers -- DCP Bishnu Pati and Commandant Ajay Padhi -- an official release said.

He ordered an administrative inquiry into the matter to be carried out under the supervision of the development commissioner.

The Odisha government will provide financial assistance of Rs 25 lakh each to the next of kin of the deceased, the release added.

Another notification issued by the General Administration De-

partment stated that senior bureaucrat Aravind Agarwal has been appointed as in-charge of the overall supervision of Rath Yatra.

Earlier in a post on X, Mahi sought forgiveness from devotees of Lord Jagannath for the stampede, and tendered an apology on behalf of his government for the incident.

"Due to intense eagerness among devotees to have a glimpse of Mahaprabhu... an unfortunate incident occurred because of the resulting jostling and chaos. I and my government seek forgiveness from all Jagannath devotees. We express our condolences to the families of devotees who lost their lives... pray to Mahaprabhu Jagannath to grant them the strength to bear this profound sorrow," Mahi said. He also said that security lapses behind the incident would be probed and those found guilty will face stringent action.

Odisha Law Minister Prithviraj Harichandan said that the situation is now normal at the Shree Gundicha Temple, where devotees are offering prayers to the deities on chariots.

Puri's titular king, Gajapati Maharaja Divyasingha Deb, expressed shock over the incident, and appealed to the state government to carry out a comprehensive inquiry into the matter.

The titular king, who is also the chairman of the Shree Jagannath Temple Managing Committee (SJPMC), also urged the Odisha government to take proper and immediate steps to prevent the recurrence of any such incident.

Health department sources said among those critically injured, one has been shifted to the SCB Medical College and Hospital in Cuttack, while five others are in ICU.

A host of political leaders, including Congress president Mallikarjun Kharge, Rahul Gandhi and BJD chief Naveen Patnaik condoled the deaths, with many criticising the state government over arrangements for the Rath Yatra. (PTI)

AAP suspends Amritsar North MLA Kunwar Vijay Pratap Singh from party for 5 years

CHANDIGARH, June 29: The Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) on Sunday suspended Amritsar North MLA and former IPS officer Kunwar Vijay Pratap Singh from the party for five years for allegedly indulging in anti-party activities.

Singh's suspension came days after he questioned the manner in which a Vigilance Bureau team raided the residence of Shiromani Akali Dal (SAD) leader Bikram Singh Majithia in Amritsar in a disproportionate assets case.

The decision to suspend Singh from the party was taken by the AAP's political affairs committee, party sources said, adding the government's message is clear that politics cannot be tolerated in the campaign against drugs.

There is no place in the party for those who try to create hindrance in the campaign against drugs, the sources said.

They said Singh has been suspended from the party for five years for allegedly indulging in anti-party activities.

Soon after the news of his suspension

emerged on social media, Singh posted on Facebook, "Kabir, jis marne to jag dare, mere man anand" (Kabir, the world is afraid of dying, but my mind is happy)."

The Vigilance Bureau on June 25 arrested Majithia after conducting a raid at his residence in the disproportionate assets case.

Majithia and his wife Ganieve Kaur Majithia, who is an Akali MLA, had protested against the raid, alleging 30 members of the Vigilance Bureau barged into their house in Amritsar.

Majithia had even shared the video of the raid operation. Singh had shared the same video on his Facebook on June 25 and wrote, "The dignity of a family is shared by all - whether one is a politician, actor, rich or poor, friend or foe. Carrying out a raid at someone's house early in the morning is against principles. Almost every government has misused the police and vigilance agencies for its own benefit, but the result has never been significant."

He further wrote, "I may have political or

ideological differences with someone, but when it comes to principles, religion, and integrity, it becomes necessary to discuss. When Majithia sahib was in jail in a case registered during the Congress government, the Mann government did not seek any remand nor did any questioning. Later, the state apparatus under Mann sahib even facilitated his bail."

Singh also wrote, "The honourable high court granted bail (to Majithia) on grounds that if the police do not require (him) for interrogation, keeping in custody is against the law."

"When he was in custody, the government facilitated his bail, and now suddenly, notices are issued to him for questioning, and today a raid is being conducted at his house," he said.

Singh has remained a vocal critic of the AAP government over many issues.

He had earlier expressed his displeasure over the handling of the 2015 sacrilege and police firing incident cases in Faridkot, seeking justice in the matter. (PTI)

EC to soon upload 2003 Bihar voters list on website; 4.96 crore electors need not give documents

NEW DELHI, June 29: The Election Commission will soon upload the 2003 Bihar electoral roll on its website to facilitate the nearly 4.96 crore voters whose names figure on it to extract the relevant portion to be attached with the enumeration form for the special intensive revision of the voters' list.

According to the instructions issued by the poll authority to its Bihar poll machinery, the 4.96 crore voters -- 60 per cent of the total electors -- who were listed in the 2003 special intensive revision need not submit any supporting document to establish their date or place or birth except the relevant portion of the electoral roll brought out after the revision.

The other three crore -- nearly 40 per cent -- will have to provide one of the 11 listed documents to establish their place or date of birth.

"The basic exercise is to identify each and every individual of the remaining three crore voters before their names are included in the list," a functionary explained.

The special intensive revision will ensure that no eligible elector is left out of the electoral rolls and no ineligible one is part of it, Chief

Election Commissioner Gyanesh Kumar told PTI on Sunday.

Bihar, as of now, has more than 7.89 crore voters spread across 243 assembly seats. Polls in the state are due later this year.

According to EC instructions, the electoral registration officer (ERO) of each assembly constituency will be responsible for ensuring that "no eligible citizen is left out and no ineligible person is included in the electoral roll" while carrying out the revision.

The EROs will satisfy themselves regarding the eligibility of every person before entering their name in the electoral roll.

The EC said every existing elector, as on the date, will be provided available an enumeration form through a booth level officer (BLO). The elector can download the enumeration form from a dedicated website.

The BLO will collect a copy of the enumeration form and sign the acknowledgement of receipt on the second copy to be retained by the existing elector.

Based on the enumeration forms received, along with documents, the ERO will prepare the draft roll.

The last intensive revision in Bihar was done in 2003, with Jan-



uary 1, 2003, as the qualifying date. "As the eligibility of electors enrolled in the electoral rolls after the last intensive revision was established then, the Commission has decided that such electors need not attach any additional document alongwith the enumeration form, except the extract of the roll."

"Thus, CEO/DEO/ERO shall make the electoral rolls with a qualifying date of 01.01.2003 freely available to all BLOs in hard copy, as well as online on their website for anyone to download and use as documentary evidence while submitting their enumeration

form," the poll panel said.

As part of the intense revision, poll officials will carry out house-to-house verification to ensure an error-free voters' list.

The terms of the legislative assemblies of Assam, Kerala, Puducherry, Tamil Nadu and West Bengal are ending in May-June next year, and an intensive revision of the electoral rolls in these states will commence by the end of the year, officials said.

However, since assembly polls in Bihar are due later this year, the EC decided to conduct the revision there immediately.

Amid allegations by opposition parties that the EC has fudged voter data to help the BJP, the poll panel has taken additional steps in the intensive revision to ensure illegal migrants do not get enrolled in the voters' list.

An additional 'declaration form' has been introduced for a category of applicants seeking to become electors or shifting from outside the state. They will have to undertake that they were born in India before July 1, 1987, and provide any document establishing the date of birth and/or place of birth.

One of the options listed in the declaration form is that they were born in India between July 1, 1987, and December 2, 2004.

They will also have to submit documents about the date and place of birth of their parents.

The last intensive revision for Bihar was conducted in 2003.

The EC said multiple reasons, such as rapid urbanisation, frequent migration, young citizens becoming eligible to vote, non-reporting of deaths and inclusion of the names of foreign illegal immigrants have necessitated the conduct of the exercise to ensure integrity and preparation of error-free electoral rolls. (PTI)

Civilian casualties down, arms recovery and anti-narcotics drives intensify since Manipur sees drop in violence, rise in drug seizures under President's rule: Officials

IMPHAL, June 29: Manipur has witnessed a significant decline in violence, with a sharp drop in civilian deaths and injuries and a marked increase in drug seizures since the imposition of President's rule in February, officials said here on Sunday.

Besides, Manipur Police, Assam Rifles and other paramilitary forces are also working tirelessly to recover thousands of weapons looted from police armouries following the outbreak of violence in May 2023, they said.

Despite the relative calm, challenges remain for the security forces to recover thousands of lost arms and addressing the activities of the banned valley-based terrorist groups involved in extortion and petty crimes, they added.

The recent crackdown on cadres of Meitei outfit Arambai Tengol, accused of allegedly engineering violence against the Kuki people and indulging in largescale violence within the valley, has also been helpful in bringing a sense of peace in certain parts of the state, officials said.

Recently, a dismissed police head con-

stable of Manipur Police and a prominent Arambai Tengol leader Asem Kanan Singh and four associates were arrested in a joint operation of Manipur Police and the CBI.

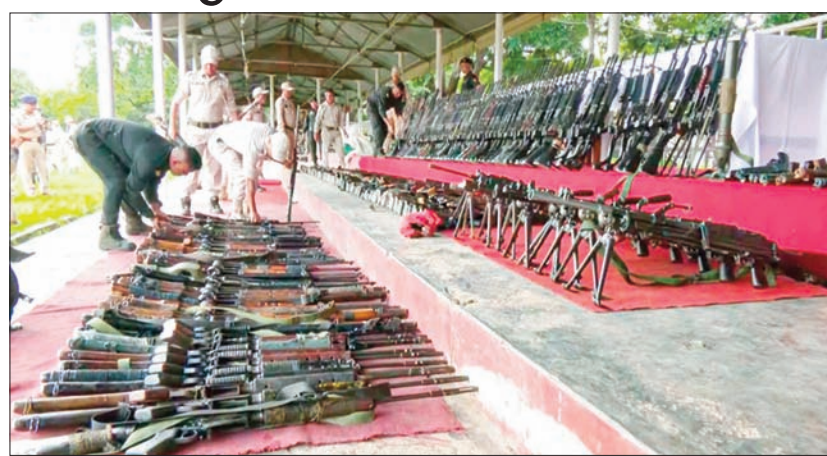
Singh was wanted for many cases including an alleged attack on Additional Superintendent of Manipur Police last year.

After the arrest of Singh, the outfit announced distancing itself from any violent activities being done on the streets in its name.

During the period of central rule beginning February 13, only one protest-related fatality has been reported, a stark contrast to the 260 fatalities documented from May 3, 2023, until the enforcement of President's rule, they said.

Injuries have also seen a significant drop, with just 29 new cases reported in the last four months compared to a total of 1,776 since May 2023.

From February 13 to June 26, the region saw no incidents of arson or vandalism, while cumulative incidents of such nature crossed 17,000 before the imposition of



President's rule.

In the fight against drug abuse, Manipur Police, Assam Rifles and paramilitary forces have stepped up their operations, resulting in the arrest of 84 people under the Narcotic Drugs and Psychotropic Substances (NDPS) Act during the central rule period.

The security forces have seized 24.4 kg

of heroin, 25.7 kg of brown sugar, 31.8 kg of opium, and over 379 kg of 'Ganja', contributing to a stabilisation of the drug issue in the region, officials said.

However, the issue of unrecovered firearms continues to pose a significant challenge for the security agencies.

Since the imposition of central rule, no new arms have been reported lost from po-

lice armouries, but of the initial 6,020 firearms lost, many are understood to have been recovered or surrendered.

In the last four months alone, 2,390 weapons were seized out of which many were looted weapons.

Moreover, security forces have recently demolished 63 illegal bunkers, adding to the total of 548 that had been dismantled since May 2023.

While arrests related to extortion continue, with 336 people apprehended in the last four months out of a total of 601, experts are voicing concerns over the resurgence of banned terror groups, including the United National Liberation Front (UNLF), People's Liberation Army (PLA), Kanglei Yawol Kanba Lup (KYKL), and People's Revolutionary Party of Kangleipak (PREPAK).

Officials alleged that these groups are running extortion rackets besides indulging in out of court settlements in cases related to matrimonial and property disputes. Manipur Police recently cracked down on such a gang and arrested some people, they added. (PTI)

2 militants arrested in Manipur

IMPHAL, June 29: Security forces arrested two militants belonging to proscribed outfits from Manipur's Bishnupur and Tengnoupal districts, police said on Sunday.

The arrests were made on Saturday.

One active cadre of the banned Kangleipak Communist Party (Taibanganba) was apprehended from his residence at Oinam Ushakhandabi in Bishnupur, while a member of the outlawed Peoples' Liberation Army was held in Tengnoupal along the India-Myanmar border, a police officer said.

Security forces also recovered arms and ammunition, including a rifle, guns, live cartridges and a hand grenade, during an operation near Ngariyan Hill in Imphal East district on Friday, he said.

Meanwhile, in Tengnoupal district, personnel of the bomb disposal squad neutralised an "old unexploded bomb" after being informed of its presence by locals, the officer added. (PTI)

Three Manipur civil groups head to Delhi for crucial third round of talks with MHA

Delegation to press for displaced persons' return, border security, and peace roadmap

IMPHAL, June 29: Three key civil society organisations from Manipur have left Imphal for New Delhi today for a third round of talks with officials from the Ministry of Home Affairs (MHA), hoping to find a breakthrough in the ongoing conflict in Manipur that has gripped the state since May 2023.

A joint delegation of 19 members, including seven representatives from the Coordinating Committee on Manipur Integrity (COCOMI), seven from All Manipur United Clubs' Organisation (AMUCO) and five from Federation of Civil Society Organisations (FOCS) will participate in the meeting scheduled for June 30.

The violence between the Meitei and Kuki communities that began on May 3, 2023 has resulted in the deaths of around 250 people and displaced more than 60,000.

In response, civil society groups have been engaging with the central government in a series of talks, though previous meetings have yet to produce concrete results.

The first round of discussions was held on April 5 in New Delhi, where representatives from the Meitei and Kuki-Zo communities met MHA officials separately.

AMUCO and FOCS represented the Meitei side, while the Kuki-Zo delegation included members from the Kuki-Zo Council, Kuki Inpi Manipur, Zomi Council, United Zou Organisation, and Hmar Inpi.



The second round of talks took place on May 27, attended by COCOMI and FOCS. AMUCO did not participate in that meeting, and it concluded without any resolution.

On Saturday, the three Meitei civil groups had held a joint meeting in Imphal and agreed to attend the third round together.

Speaking to the media at the Manipur Press Club, COCOMI convenor Khurajam Athouba said the delegation would focus on key issues such as the return of internally displaced persons to their original homes, ensuring proper security for farmers in sensitive border areas, and restoring free movement along all major highways in the state.

Athouba expressed hope that

this round of talks would be decisive. He stated that if an amicable solution is reached, there may be no need for further negotiations.

AMUCO representative S Buhol said the joint delegation will also emphasize the importance of restoring peace and maintaining unity among Manipur's 36 ethnic groups.

He reiterated that any settlement must not compromise the territorial integrity of the state.

The state of Manipur has been under President's Rule since February 13, after Chief Minister N Biren Singh resigned amid the escalating unrest.

The civil society organisations see this upcoming round of talks as a critical opportunity to bring the crisis closer to resolution. (NNN)

Maitree Sangha of Tezpur holds biennial general meeting

HT Correspondent

TEZPUR, June 29: Maitree Sangha, one of Tezpur's most prominent women's organisations, held its biennial general meeting with a daylong programme marked by cultural performances, introspection and administrative proceedings.

The meeting, chaired by outgoing president Bhanumati Hazarika, began with the presentation of the organisation's title song, followed by a welcome address delivered by joint secretary Kanchan Saikia.

As part of the agenda, the annual report and audited financial statements were presented by Krishna Sarma.

Observations and feedback on the financials were provided by auditors Jashoda Dutta and Mrinalini Bora.

In their remarks, both Dutta and senior adviser Parul Mahanta urged members to uphold the traditions of Maitree Sangha and work in unity to further its objectives.

Member Minakshi Sharma gave a detailed account of the organisation's journey from land allotment to the construction of its premises, highlighting the community's efforts and resilience.

Several senior members, including Kalpana Kalita, Suchitra Devi and Ranju Devi Bora, shared their experiences and personal reflections about their longstanding association with the Sangha.

In her final address as president, Bhanumati Hazarika expressed gratitude for the support she received during her tenure and humbly apologized for any shortcomings.

She also voiced deep concern over the rising number of undesirable incidents involving women in society and called upon the members of Maitree Sangha to remain vigilant and socially responsible in fostering a safer and more inclusive environment.

The meeting also saw the formation of a new executive committee for the forthcoming term.

Minakshi Sharma was named the new president, with Bhanumati Hazarika assuming the role of Chief Advisor.

Mrinalini Bora (Minu Bora) was appointed vice president, while Krishna Sharma and Kanchan Saikia will serve as joint secretaries.

Rita Gogoi and Ranju Devi Bora were named assistant secretaries, Runuka Baruah as treasurer, and Gitali Baruah and Mrinali Baruah as cultural secretaries.

Advisors for the new term include Parul Mahanta, Jashoda Dutta, Makhani Saikia, Nizara Bhuyan and Kalpana Kalita.

The event featured vibrant cultural performances by Kalpana Kalita, Meera Bora and Mrinali Baruah, who captivated the gathering with their musical and dance presentations.

The meeting concluded on a celebratory note with senior members and advisors engaging in song, conversation and camaraderie.

The formal vote of thanks was delivered by Kanchan Saikia, bringing the event to a close.



Jorhat police arrests two for fake lottery scam

HT Correspondent

JORHAT, June 29: In a coordinated operation, Jorhat police, with assistance from Nagaon police, arrested two individuals identified as Ashikur Rahman (19) and Elias Ahmed (20) from Kochuwa in Nagaon district for allegedly defrauding people through a fake lottery scheme.

According to a statement issued by Jorhat Superintendent of Police Shwetank Mishra, the arrests were made following the circulation of social media posts that falsely claimed a lottery draw would be held at Harimandir, Duliagaon in Jorhat.

Morigaon District Pensioners' Association holds 43rd biennial session

HT Correspondent

MORIGAON, June 29: The 43rd biennial session of the Morigaon District Pensioners' Association (MDPA) was held at its office premises on Sunday with a day-long programme.

The day commenced with the hoisting of the Association's flag by MDPA President Mileswar Patar.

This was followed by the ceremonial lamp lighting by Secretary Ramesh Ch Barman and Vice President Indramohan Barua.

The selection meeting for new members of the Association's body was inaugurated by Satyabrath Barthakur.

During the meeting, the annual report of the secretary and the annual audit report were read out.

It was unanimously decided to retain the current Executive Committee, led by President Mileswar Patar, for the next two years.



An open meeting was held in the afternoon as part of the session and was formally inaugurated by former President Puniram Patar.

The meeting saw the presence of several dignitaries, including Kamal Kumar Bora, Secretary of Assam Government Pensioners Association, Herambaprasad Das, and Guruprasad Medhi, who addressed the gathering as keynote speakers and special guests.

Among other attendees were Atul Chandra Barua, Hansadhar Das, former President of the Morigaon District Committee Nakul Chandra Barua, Tuleswar Nath, social worker Reena Deka, Bhupendra Nath Bardoloi, and several other distinguished personalities.

Citizens group to honour Padma Shri Arup Kumar Dutta on 79th birthday

Arup Kumar Dutta, born in Jorhat on July 2, 1946, is known for his extensive body of work encompassing non-fiction books on topics such as rhinos, tea, the Brahmaputra, the Ahom dynasty, and the Gauhati High Court, along with a wide range of fiction and children's literature

HT Correspondent

JORHAT, June 29: A citizens group in Jorhat is set to celebrate the 79th birthday of internationally acclaimed writer and journalist Arup Kumar Dutta by organising a two-day event beginning July 2.

The event will feature a public felicitation ceremony at Jorhat Theatre hall to honour Dutta, a Padma Shri awardee and a celebrated literary figure from Assam.

The citizens group, led by its president Hemanta Kalita—former MLA and former Jorhat district BJP president—announced that the felicitation programme will begin at 3.30 pm on July 2.

Kalita described Dutta as "an illustrious son of Jorhat" whose diverse literary contributions have brought recognition to Assam and the region.

Arup Kumar Dutta, born in Jorhat on July 2, 1946, is known for his extensive body of work encompassing non-fiction books on topics such as rhinos, tea, the

Brahmaputra, the Ahom dynasty, and the Gauhati High Court, along with a wide range of fiction and children's literature.

Kalita stated that Dutta's achievements deserve to be celebrated through a public ovation.

The event will be graced by noted writer and social thinker Mayur Bora, literary critic Hrishikesh Goswami, and Dr Samudra Gupta Kashyap, Chancellor of Nagaland University and former Information Commissioner of Assam.

As part of the celebration, an interaction programme with students will be held on July 3 at 10 am at the auditorium of the Jorhat Science Centre and Planetarium, where Dutta is expected to share his experiences and insights with the younger generation.

Dutta began his professional career as a faculty member at Jagannath Barooah College in Jorhat and went on to gain national and international acclaim for his literary work.

Lions Club inaugurates vision center in Nagaon



HT Correspondent

NAGAON, June 29: A vision center was inaugurated at the office premises of the Lions Club, Nagaon in Christian Patty on Sunday, reflecting the club's continued commitment to community welfare and public service. The initiative has been undertaken under the leadership of club president Ajay Mittal, with active support from the executive team and members.

The center was formally inaugurated by District Governor Lalit Kumar Kothari. The project has been generously sponsored by Manak Chandra Nahata, a long-serving and dedicated member of the Lions Club, Nagaon, and Bharti Nahata. The newly established vision center will provide free eye check-ups by qualified ophthalmologists three days a week at the Lions Club Service Centre, making essential eye care more accessible to the local population.

The inauguration ceremony was attended by General Secretary Hardashan Singh, Treasurer Madan Saha, and several club members including Biswajit Mahanta, Ganga Ballav Goswami, Nanu Das, Vinod Khetawat, Malchand Agarwal, Jiten Agarwal, Gurucharan Singh, Bakul Bora, Surendra Banka, Mahabir Agarwal, Devendra Singh Sehmi, Dhiraj Bordoloi, Mala Sarma Bordoloi, among others.

The event marked a significant step forward in the club's ongoing efforts to serve the people of Nagaon through healthcare outreach.

PM lauds Meghalaya's Eri silk, highlights indigenous craftsmanship in 'Mann Ki Baat'



SHILLONG, June 29: Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Sunday praised Meghalaya's traditional Eri silk and its unique handicrafts during the 123rd episode of 'Mann Ki Baat', highlighting the nation's rich tapestry of indigenous arts and crafts.

Chief Minister Conrad K Sangma thanked Modi for highlighting Meghalaya's pride, a week after he gifted the PM the silk fabric woven by women of the northeastern state.

In his address, Modi highlighted the recent recognition of Meghalaya's Eri silk with the prestigious Geographical Indication (GI) tag, calling it "a proud moment not just for the state, but for the entire country."

"Eri Silk is not just a fabric; it is a heritage of Meghalaya, lovingly preserved and enriched over generations, especially by the Khasi community," Modi said, highlighting that the silk is in itself 'Ahimsa silk' where silkworms are not harmed in its production.

Sangma noted that global demand for such eco-conscious and ethically produced

products is rising, calling Eri silk a "perfect product" for the international market.

Stating that the worldwide demand for such goods are increasing, Modi also emphasised on its sustainability.

"This silk keeps you warm in winters and cool in summers, making it ideal for all climates and markets," he added.

Acknowledging the role played by women in Meghalaya in its production, Modi lauded the Eri Silk revolution through Self Help Groups (SHGs), preserving traditional knowledge while creating sustainable livelihoods.

The PM also urged all citizens to support indigenous products, reiterating his call for 'Vocal for Local' and strengthening the 'Atmanirbhar Bharat Abhiyan'.

"If customers buy only products made in India and traders sell only products made in India, the self-reliance movement of India will gain unstoppable momentum," he said.

"A great encouragement to our heritage textile weavers. Thank you Hon'ble PM!" the Chief Minister posted on X. (PTI)

My son Abhishek is worthy of praise: Amitabh Bachchan



NEW DELHI, June 29: Bollywood legend Amitabh Bachchan praised his son Abhishek Bachchan, who is completing 25 years in the film industry this month and said he is worthy of admiration.

Abhishek made his debut in 2000, alongside Kareena Kapoor Khan in "Refugee", Directed by J P Dutta, the film featured him in the role of a nameless Indian Muslim, who helps illegal refugees cross the border between India and Pakistan in the Great Rann of Kutch. It released on June 30, 2000.

Amitabh responded to a fan edit on X handle featuring glimpses of Abhishek's characters.

Amitabh responded to a fan edit on X handle featuring glimpses of Abhishek's characters.

The veteran actor wrote, "Is Variety ko mein pranam karta hoon, aur apne putra ki sarahna karta hoon. Jee haan, pita hoon

main uska, aur mere liye mera putra Abhishek sarahna karne yogya hai (I bow to this variety and I praise my son. Yes, I'm his father, and for me my son Abhishek is worthy of praise).

Earlier this month, Amitabh penned a heartfelt note on his personal blog, admiring Abhishek for daring to choose challenging films and roles.

"Each role he has accepted and played has been with immense dedication .. he has ever delivered the character to perfection .. his choice of films and roles has guided him to give him opportunity to try something different," it read.

Abhishek's latest work is "Housefull 5", co-starring with Akshay Kumar, Riteish Deshmukh, Jacqueline Fernandez, Nargis Fakhri and Sonam Bajwa among others.

Released on June 6, the film is currently running in theatres and is the fifth installment of the "Housefull" franchise, which began in 2010. (PTI)

KAJOL-STARRER 'MAA' EARNs ₹ 11.19 CRORE AT BOX OFFICE IN TWO DAYS



NEW DELHI, June 29: "Maa", headlined by Bollywood star Kajol, has collected ₹ 11.19 crore nett at the domestic box office in two days, the makers said on Sunday.

Also starring Indraneil Sengupta, Kherin Sharma and Ronit Roy alongside Kajol, the film released in theatres on Friday.

Presented by Jio Studios and Devgn Films, the mythological horror film is produced by Jyoti Deshpande and co-produced by Kumar Mangat Pathak.

It is written by Saiwyn Quadras and directed by Vishal Furia, known for "Lapachhapi", "Criminal Justice" and "Chhori".

The makers shared the box office collection on the X handle, featuring the film's poster. The text on it read, "Maa makers her mark! 11.19 crore NBOC India." It further had a day-wise breakdown of the collection.

The film opened with ₹ 4.93 crore and went on to earn ₹ 6.26 crore on the following day at the domestic box office.

"This mytho-horror is leaving a mark — on your hearts and at the box office!"

#MaaTheFilm - in cinemas NOW. Book tickets now," read the caption of the post.

The film narrates the story of a mother who becomes Goddess Kali to end a demonic curse rooted in fear, blood, and betrayal. It also marks the first horror movie for Kajol. (PTI)

Aamir Khan's 'Sitaare Zameen Par' earns ₹ 107.78 crore at box office

NEW DELHI, June 29: Aamir Khan-starrer "Sitaare Zameen Par" has collected over ₹ 100 crore at the domestic box office.

Directed by R S Prasanna, the film is produced by Aamir alongside Aparna Purohit and Ravi Bhagchandka. Billed as a spiritual sequel to the critically acclaimed movie "Taare Zameen Par", it released in theatres on June 20.

The film opened with ₹ 10.7 crore nett at the domestic box office. The total box office collection stands at ₹ 107.78 crore nett, according to a press release. "Sitaare Zameen Par" follows the journey of a basketball coach (Aamir), who mentors ten differently-abled individuals.

Alongside Aamir, the film also stars Aroush Datta, Gopi Krishna Varma, Samvit Desai, Vedant Sharma, Ayush Bhansali, Ashish Pendse, Rishi Shahani, Rishabh Jain, Naman Mishra, and Simran Mangeshkar.

Aamir's "Taare Zameen Par" released in 2007, starring Darsheel Safary alongside the actor. In the film, Aamir portrayed the role of a school teacher who helps Safary's character uncover his potential after discovering he has dyslexia.

"Sitaare Zameen Par" also stars Genelia D'Souza. (PTI)



Selena Gomez to feature in 'Wizards Beyond Waverly Place' season 2

LOS ANGELES, June 29: Actor-singer Selena Gomez will reprise her role of Alex Russo in the second season of "Wizards Beyond Waverly Place".

Created by Todd J Greenwald, the show is a spinoff of the 2007 sitcom, which starred Gomez alongside David Henrie, Jake T Austin, Jennifer Stone, David DeLuise, and Maria Canals-Barera. The first season of the spinoff series released in 2024 and featured Gomez in two episodes. According to the entertainment news outlet The Hollywood Reporter, the 32-year-old actor is preparing to return for the second season.

She shared a picture from the set on her Instagram handle on Thursday with "Just feels right" written over it. The "Emilia Perez" actor was holding the wand in the picture.

The original series ran till 2012, with four seasons. It revolved around the Russo family, who own a restaurant and live in New York. It featured DeLuise as the wizard and father of Alex (Gomez), Justin (Henrie) and Max (Austin), who learn how to use their powers. The child who masters the powers would get a family wand. "Billie (Janice LeAnn Brown) grapples with the fact that being part of the Russo family might be more complicated than she thought — especially now that she's not the only wizard in the house. Thanks to Roman (Alkaio Thiele) and Milo's (Max Matenko) new magical powers, Justin is now tasked with training three young wizards for the Family Wizard Competition. As the stakes rise inside and outside the family, a mysterious new threat emerges — one that could unravel the Russos forever," the synopsis of the second season reads. (PTI)

Varun Dhawan criticises insensitive coverage of Shefali Jariwala's death

NEW DELHI, June 29: Bollywood actor Varun Dhawan slammed the insensitive media coverage following the death of Shefali Jariwala.

Dhawan penned a note on his Instagram handle on Sunday, questioning the need for covering "someone's grief". The 38-year-old actor didn't specify any name in the post.

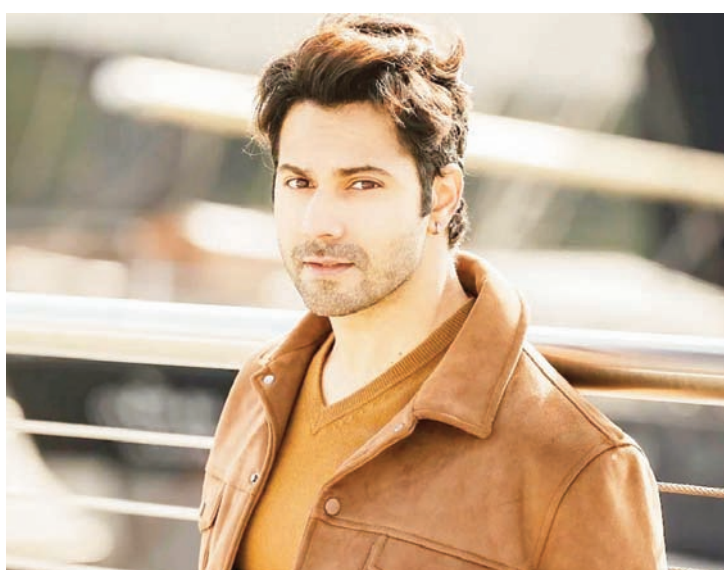
"Again one more passing of a soul being insensitively covered by the media. I just don't understand why do you have to cover someone's grief everyone looks so uncomfortable with this how is this benefiting anyone...My request to my friends in the media this isn't the way someone would want their final journey covered,"

he wrote.

His post comes a day after Jariwala's death news. Jariwala was rushed to the hospital by her husband, Parag Tyagi, on Friday night, but was declared dead on arrival. She was 42.

Following, many clips surfaced on social media, which resulted in paparazzi getting criticised for mobbing Jariwala's closed ones during the tragic time.

One clip included her mother, Sunita Jariwala, breaking down, as she arrived for her daughter's final rites. Another video featured Tyagi folding his hands in front of the photographers as he walked towards Cooper Hospital, where Jariwala's body was taken for post-mortem. (PTI)



Enrique Iglesias adds second show in Mumbai

NEW DELHI, June 29: Popular Spanish singer Enrique Iglesias, who is returning to perform in India after 13 years, has added second show in Mumbai following the high demand.

Iglesias will now have another show on October 29, prior to his previously announced concert, which will take place on October 30. Both the performances will be held at MMRDA Grounds in Mumbai's Bandra Kurla Complex.

The event is produced and promoted by EVA Live in partnership with BEW Live, according to a press release.

The Bailamos singer said he missed performing in the country. "I've missed performing in India, the fans there are some of the most loyal and passionate in the world. Since my first show back in 2004, the love has always been unreal. I can't wait to get back to Mumbai and bring them this new show," he said in a statement.

The 50-year-old singer previously visited India in 2012 for a tour, where he covered three cities — Delhi, Pune and Bangalore.

Deepak Chaudhary, founder and managing director, EVA Live said the response to Mumbai show has been "phenomenal and truly historic".

"The response to Enrique Iglesias's first Mumbai show has been nothing short of phenomenal and truly historic. The sheer speed at which tickets were snapped up is a testament to his immense and unwavering appeal in India, confirming the unparalleled excitement for his return.

"We are incredibly excited to be able to accommodate more of his devoted fans by adding a second date, ensuring that even more individuals have the opportunity to experience what promises to be an unforgettable, world-class musical spectacle," he added. (PTI)

Djokovic figures Wimbledon gives him his best chance at a record 25th Grand Slam title

LONDON, June 29: It's become part of Novak Djokovic's routine now, particularly at Grand Slam tournaments: He shows up and gets asked — at the start of the event, during the event, after the event or sometimes all three — whether this will be his final appearance there.

Happened again Saturday at Wimbledon, and his response was the same it tends to be, which essentially amounts to: Who can tell?

"Whether it could be my last dance," the 24-time major champion began, repeating the phrase used by the reporter who posed the question, "I'm not sure — as I'm not sure about Roland Garros or any other Slam that I play next."

And then Djokovic continued, offering something of a mix of seemingly trying to quiet any talk about whether he truly is pondering retirement at age 38 while also being realistic about where things stand.

"My wish is to play for several



more years. I would love to be healthy physically and also mentally motivated to keep on playing at the highest level," he said. "That's the goal. But you never know at this stage."

What Djokovic did concede is that the All England Club might offer the likeliest spot for him to gather one more Grand Slam singles title, which would allow him to raise his career haul to 25 — a number that no tennis player ever has reached.

"I would probably agree that Wimbledon could be the best chance, because of the results I had, because of how I feel, how I play in Wimbledon," said Djokovic, who faces Alexandre Muller in the first round Tuesday. "Just getting that extra push mentally and motivation to perform the best tennis at the highest level."

Djokovic has won seven championships at the grass-court major and come oh-so-close to making his total eight — the number Roger Federer won, and one be-

hind Martina Navratilova's record nine women's trophies — but lost in the 2023 and 2024 finals to Carlos Alcaraz.

All told, Djokovic has appeared in the title match each of the past six times the tournament was held (it was canceled in 2020 amid the COVID-19 pandemic), winning it in 2018, 2019, 2021 and 2022. His most recent Wimbledon loss came all the way back in 2017, when he was defeated in the quarterfinals by 2010 runner-up Tomas Berdych.

As for the persistent questions about Djokovic's future, it's the same type of topic that was presented to Federer, Rafael Nadal and Serena Williams as those greats of the game neared their farewells.

Now it's just Djokovic's turn.

But just because he hasn't won a Grand Slam trophy in more than 1 1/2 years — he collected three in 2023, capped by the U.S. Open that September — don't think that Djokovic isn't capable of grabbing another. (AP)

Honduras beats Panama in shootout to reach Gold Cup semis

GLENDALE (USA), June 29: Carlos Pineda scored the decisive penalty shot as Honduras beat Panama in a shootout after the teams played to a 1-1 draw in the CONCACAF Gold Cup quarterfinals on Saturday night.

Honduras advanced to the semifinals on Wednesday in Santa Clara, California, where it will face the winner of Saudi Arabia and Mexico. It's the first time Honduras has made the Gold Cup semis since 2013.

Honduras struggled to generate many scoring opportunities until coming alive late in the second half. Los Catrachos evened the score in the 82nd minute when Anthony Lozano deflected a shot from Carlos Pineda into the corner of the net following a corner kick.

Both teams made four out of five shots in the initial round of kicks. Honduras had a chance to win with its fifth attempt, but Orlando Mosquera made a diving stop on Lozano's shot.

Panama's Eduardo Guerrero sailed the next penalty kick over the net, giving Honduras another chance to win. This time, Pineda took advantage, burying his shot into the bottom left corner to give Honduras the 5-4 shootout win.

Panama dominated possession in the first half, but couldn't break through until Cristian Martínez was fouled by Honduras' Edwin Rodríguez in the 44th minute just inside the penalty area. Ismael Díaz took the shot and calmly scored his Gold Cup-leading sixth goal, finding the bottom left corner of the net to give Panama a 1-0 lead.

Panama scored 10 goals in the three games during the group stage, including eight in the first half. With his sixth goal, Díaz passed Gabriel Torres as the Panamanian player with the most goals in a single Gold Cup.

Panama is a three-time Gold Cup runner-up, losing twice in the championship game to the U.S. (2005, 2013) and once to Mexico in 2023. Honduras was runner-up in the inaugural tournament in 1991, losing to the U.S.

It was the first knockout round meeting between the two countries in the Gold Cup.

Panama advanced to Saturday's quarterfinals after winning Group C, beating Guatemala, Jamaica and Guadeloupe. Honduras was the runner-up in Group B, beating Curacao and El Salvador following a 6-0 loss to Canada. (AP)

Sinner won't say why he fired two team members right before Wimbledon

LONDON, June 29: Jannik Sinner confirmed that he recently fired two members of his team — fitness coach Marco Panichi and physiotherapist Ulises Badio, who themselves were replacements for people involved in the player's doping case — but declined Saturday to explain the reason for the change ahead of Wimbledon.

Sinner, who has been ranked No. 1 for more than a year, said that he decided shortly after losing in the second round of the grass-court tournament in Halle, Germany, this month to make the change. Sinner has not yet found substitutes for Panichi and Badio, who both used to work with Novak Djokovic. "Nothing seriously bad happened. They did great work for (the past) three months. Sometimes, things happen," Sinner said at his pre-tournament news conference. "The timing obviously isn't the best, but having done a lot of work (together) before, it won't affect this Grand Slam a lot. I feel well physically and mentally and ready to compete."

Play begins Monday at the All England Club, where Sinner was a quarterfinalist in 2024. He will play Luca Nardi in an all-Italian matchup on Tuesday. Last year, Sinner tested positive twice for a trace amount of an anabolic steroid in March; the case wasn't made public until August, shortly before the U.S. Open, which he ended up winning for the second of his three Grand Slam titles. He initially was completely cleared, based on the defense that he accidentally was exposed to the banned substance, Clostebol, via a massage from his then-physiotherapist, Giacomo Naldi. (AP)

Paulinho scores in extra time to give Palmeiras 1-0 win over Botafogo at Club World Cup



PHILADELPHIA (USA), June 29: Paulinho worked his way between a pair of defenders and rolled a shot into the back of the net in extra time Saturday to put Palmeiras into the quarterfinals of the Club World Cup with a 1-0 victory over Brazilian league rival Botafogo.

Paulinho, who has made one appearance for Brazil's national team, dribbled through the defense with an inside cut from the right wing in the 100th minute. He then sent a left-footed shot into the lower left corner of John's net.

Botafogo created multiple chances for an equalizer in the final minutes but couldn't get a goal. The match at Lincoln Financial Field was full of attacking soccer with a combined 35 shot attempts. Palmeiras, however, ended the match with 10 men after defender Gustavo Gómez was given a red card.

Gómez received a second yellow card in the 116th minute after tackling Igor Jesus in midfield to prevent Botafogo from starting a counterattack. The 33,657 fans in attendance helped set the tone for the match with incessant cheering, bringing the flavor of a South American game to the

United States.

Paulinho's goal in extra time broke the scoreless draw and gave Palmeiras the win and a spot in the quarterfinals against either Benfica or Chelsea.

Palmeiras is the first team to reach the quarterfinals of the Club World Cup. The team will return to Philadelphia to face the winner of Friday's match between Benfica and Chelsea. Botafogo, the current Copa Libertadores champion, has been eliminated from the tournament.

"Coach has been saying this since the start of the season, that we have a dream and dreaming costs nothing. We follow that dream, one game after another. Always thinking about the present, about the next game ... We're very happy, we're pleased to have qualified, and as I said, we have to keep dreaming." — Palmeiras defender Bruno Fuchs.

"We leave with our head held high. We faced teams of a high level, the highest level in soccer. We were able to represent well Botafogo, Botafogo's shirt. Of course, we wanted to go further and we prepared to go further, but things don't always go the way we want them to." — Botafogo defender Vithinho. (AP)

Mexico beat Saudi Arabia 2-0 in CONCACAF Gold Cup quarterfinals

GLENDALE (USA), June 29: Alexis Vega snapped a 19-match scoreless streak in international play with a goal in the 49th minute and defending champion Mexico beat Saudi Arabia 2-0 in the CONCACAF Gold Cup quarterfinals on Saturday night.

Mexico will face Honduras in the semifinals on Wednesday in Santa Clara, California. Honduras beat Panama in a penalty shootout earlier Saturday after the teams played to a 1-1 draw in regulation.

The 27-year-old Vega scored after finding some room to work following a nice pass from Raúl Jiménez. His first shot bounced off goalkeeper Nawaf Alaquidi, but the forward quickly corralled the rebound and sent it through Alaquidi's legs and into the net.

Vega was initially ruled offside but after review, the goal was allowed and Mexico had a 1-0 lead.

Mexico coach Javier Aguirre was pleased with how his team played, particularly after half-time. He said they're heading in the right direction going into the



semifinals.

"It was an A-plus," the coach said.

Vega's goal snapped a scoreless streak in international play that dates back to 2022. It also ended a dry spell for Mexico, which scored for the first time in 166 minutes of play.

El Tri's final match in group play ended with a scoreless draw against Costa Rica.

Mexico pushed ahead 2-0 in the 81st minute on an own goal by Saudi Arabia's Abdullah

Madu. Mexico's Mateo Chavez sent a crossing pass to Roberto Alvarado, who never made contact with the ball. Instead, it caromed off a defending Madu and into the net.

Saudi Arabia stifled Mexico's offense for much of a scoreless, physical first half. The tension escalated just before the halftime break — Saudi Arabia's Ali Majeed and Mexico's Jesús Gallardo were both being shown yellow cards after the two exchanged shoves.

Coco Gauff says criticism of Aryna Sabalenka's French Open comments went 'too far'

LONDON, June 29: It didn't take long for Coco Gauff and Aryna Sabalenka to patch up their relationship after this month's French Open final.

Now as Wimbledon is about to start, Gauff is hoping everyone else can also forget what the top-ranked Sabalenka said in the wake of her loss to the American at Roland-Garros.

A day after dancing together on Wimbledon's Centre Court in a TikTok video, the two tennis players faced more questions on Saturday about the aftermath of Sabalenka's comments right after the final, when she said her loss had more to do with her own mistakes than Gauff's performance.

The Belarusian later wrote to apologize to Gauff and said her

comments were "unprofessional," but not before she faced some major backlash from fans and pundits — especially in the United States.

Gauff is trying to make sure the criticism stops.

"I'm not the person that will fuel hate in the world," said Gauff, who opens her Wimbledon campaign against Dayana Yastremska on Tuesday. "I think people were taking it too far. ... It was just really targeting and saying a lot of things that I felt were not nice. I didn't want to fuel that more."

Sabalenka, who faces Carson Branstine on No. 1 Court on Monday, said she hopes the TikTok video shows that all is well between the two.

"We are good, we are friends," the three-time major winner said. "I hope the U.S. media can be easy on me right now."

Sabalenka reiterated that she never meant to offend Gauff.

"I was just completely upset with myself, and emotions got over me," she said. "I just completely lost it."

Gauff did acknowledge that she was initially tempted to hit back publicly at Sabalenka, who said the American "won the match not because she played incredible; just because I made all of those mistakes from ... easy balls."

Gauff also said she was slightly surprised that it took a while for Sabalenka to reach out to apologize. But once that happened, the American was quick to bury any

grudge.

"I preach love, I preach light," Gauff said. "I just want us to be Kumbaya, live happily, hakuna matata, and be happy here."

Other players were also pleased to see the top two women's players getting along again.

"I'm happy to see that they turned the page about it," said Frances Tiafoe, who is seeded 12th in the Wimbledon men's bracket. "That's the biggest thing, because they're the best players in the world. So those relationships you kind of need."

Then the American added with a laugh: "But also it wouldn't be too bad if they were also back-and-forth. That'd kind of be cool if they kind of didn't like each other." (AP)

A ton in T20Is is pretty special because it's not one of my natural formats: Mandhana

NOTTINGHAM, June 29: Smashing a maiden T20I century against England was "pretty special" as the shortest format is "not one of my strengths," said India stand-in skipper Smriti Mandhana after powering her side to a 97-run victory in the opening match here. Mandhana struck her first T20I ton in her 149th game, a 62-ball 112 studded with 15 fours and three sixes, to help the visitors to 210 runs before dismissing the hosts for 113 in 14.5 overs.

"It's a nice feeling because this format is something which, for me as a batter, I need to keep pushing and keep improving. It's not a very natural format for me," Mandhana said during the post-match press conference on Saturday. "I like to time the ball; (I'm) not a big hitter of the ball and, for the last six years, it's always (been) a work in progress and it's still a work in progress."

"So, to actually get a hundred in this format, getting it before in Test cricket and one-day cricket which are more suited to my batting, but getting it in this format is pretty special because it's not one of my strengths," she said.

Mandhana added that she had been working on her power hitting. "The improvement... and I'm trying to work a lot on my power hitting and to see that come through, which is a really nice feeling," she said.

The left-handed opener, who had topped the batting charts last year with 763 runs in 23 T20Is, including eight fifties, said her celebration after scoring the ton was directed at teammate Radha Yadav.

"That's actually a funny story. I think three days back, me and Radha Yadav were having a conversation that, (and) you know all these girls are really hard on me

sometimes, they keep telling me (and) she was telling me that it's high time you get a century in T20s," Mandhana said.

"You keep getting out in 70s, 80s and you're not doing justice to your talent and all of that stuff. I was like, 'okay Radha, I will see now'. This time, I'll try and get (it) in one of the matches in the series."

"I did not think that it would come in the first match. The finger was towards her that 'see, I got it today'. It's pretty frustrating to get out in the 70s and 80s over the last 10 years," she added.

Mandhana heaped praise on India bowlers, especially 20-year-old debutant Shree Charani, who bagged four wickets.

"The way the bowlers bowled and executed the plans was just amazing. That makes our job very, very easy when they bowl like that," Mandhana said.

"They all were really focused. They knew their plans, especially (for) Shree to come in the first match and bowl (like that)... we saw what she could do in WPL, a little bit. She was always looking really like a good bowler. But today, the way she actually bowled was amazing," Mandhana said. "(For) all the bowlers, the plans were pretty clear. Even when we were inside and there were a few wickets fell and Nat (Sciver-Brunt) was on one end. The plan was pretty clear to try and execute your best ball to Nat and give a single to her, which they did brilliantly throughout."

Mandhana said a big knock from opener Shafali Verma was also round the corner. "I've seen Shafali bat last 7-8 days amazingly well in the nets so I don't see a big knock too far because the way she's been hitting the ball." (PTI)



India is too much dependent on Bumrah, should play Kuldeep: Azharuddin



HYDERABAD, June 29: Former captain Mohammad Azharuddin said India should play left-arm wrist spinner Kuldeep Yadav in the Edgbaston Test against England to add more experience to their bowling attack and reduce the burden on pace talisman Jasprit Bumrah.

Azharuddin told PTI Videos. India will face England in the second Test at Birmingham from July 2, and the pitch, which is expected to be dry, could offer some assistance to Kuldeep. India made a good first innings total of 471 with skipper Shubman Gill, Yashasvi Jaiswal and Rishabh Pant making hundreds. They had a reasonable second innings total of 364 with KL Rahul and Pant scoring centuries, but middle and late order collapse in both digs meant that the visitors could not raise stronger totals or a target. Azharuddin called for keeping the team combination right to take the team out of the Leeds debacle. "We lost because of batting collapse, but anyways now they have to pick the right players and bowling has to be perfect," he noted. The 62-year-old defended new Test captain Gill, saying he should be given enough time to prove his mettle. "This is his just first match as a captain, you just can't talk about captaincy. It's too early to talk about captaincy," he remarked. "We should give him a fair chance and he has just taken over. So, you should give him a lot of time and support. We cannot just complain and criticise players like that," said Azharuddin, who led India to 14 wins in 47 Tests as captain. (PTI)

Wanted to finish Test quickly as Bumrah could have been brought in with second new ball: Smith

LONDON, June 29: England batters' decision to go after Ravindra Jadeja in the 82nd over and complete the task of winning the first Test in a hurry was borne out of the thinking that India could bring in their strike bowler Jasprit Bumrah in a desperate attempt to take some late wickets. With Joe Root and keeper-batter Jamie Smith batting comfortably and the winning target of 371 within sniffing distance, the latter finished off the contest by smashing Jadeja for two sixes and a boundary to guide the hosts to a memorable five-wicket win. "The runs at that point (when Smith decided to go after Jadeja) were not too many, so I wasn't expecting him (Bumrah) to come on and bowl (with the new ball), but you're just never quite sure, especially in cricket," Smith was quoted as saying by ESPNcricinfo. England's thinking was that had Shubman Gill pressed Bumrah into service when the hosts were 355/5 after the 81st over and the Indian quick had struck a couple of blows,

things could have become slightly difficult for Ben Stokes' side. "You don't know what will happen. I always back our tail but there could be a couple of decent balls and suddenly you're eight-down and the pressure's back on you again. It was nice to just get it done and move on." "I knew there was a new ball coming and it looks as though I'd exposed Chris Woakes (at No. 8) but, at that point, if I'd hit another couple of sixes in that over, you're taking all the momentum into the new ball," said Smith. He added, "The second new ball can bring wickets but it can increase the scoring rate as well. There's always a little bit of calculated thinking behind it." Smith said India "kept trying all day" on the final day but England's philosophy of keeping it simple in good batting conditions helped the hosts get over the line. Chasing 371, England won in the final hour with Ben Duckett (149), Zak Crawley (65), Root (53 not out) and Smith (44 not out) delivering

the goods. "It was simple in that you knew you had to chase the runs and we weren't going to block out for the draw," Smith said. "We were always going to be positive and try to get the runs. It was a rapid outfield and as good a batting conditions as you could have on day five." "It (wicket) wasn't misbehaving too much as the Test went on, so you always felt as though you could keep it simple, you didn't have to do things too out the box to get the runs which is very helpful," he said. Smith said he did not read much into the talk about the inexperience in the Indian side. "When they're trying to get 10 wickets and you're chasing 370, it's not everyday that gets done. There could have been some head-downs at the end but they kept trying all day," he said. "I see a lot of chat about maybe some inexperience on their part but I thought they were fantastic throughout the five days." (PTI)

T20 World Cup Triumph: Rohit recalls emotional build-up to final, Surya's catch, and Kohli's knock

NEW DELHI, June 29: Revisiting India's T20 World Cup triumph under his captaincy, Rohit Sharma has revealed he was a bundle of nerves, didn't sleep the whole night, and "couldn't feel my legs" before the big final against South Africa.

Sunday marked the first anniversary of the memorable win in Barbados that broke 13 years of World Cup title drought for India.

"Thirteen years is a long time. Most people don't even have a 13-year career. So, to wait that long to win a World Cup... the last one I won was in 2007. For me, it couldn't have gotten any bigger than this. I didn't sleep the whole night. I was only thinking about the World Cup. I was nervous. I couldn't feel my legs," Rohit reminisced while speaking to JioHotstar.

"Did I feel nerves? Of course. I just don't show it — but inside, it was a lot. We were supposed to leave around 8:30 or 9 in the morning. But I woke up at 7. From my room, I could see the ground and just kept watching it.

"I remember thinking — 'In two hours, I'll be there. And in four hours, the result will be out. Either the Cup will be here or it won't'."

The skipper described the nimble-footed Suryakumar Yadav's catch to dismiss David Miller in the last over as the defining moment of the final.

"Even after (the catch), the umpires sent it up to the third umpire and it was being checked whether Surya caught the ball or not, and everyone's hearts were in their mouths.

"I thought it was gone, and it was a six because I was on the long off. I was standing right opposite Surya," Rohit said of the thrilling game.

Suryakumar showed great presence of mind to pull off a stunning catch at long-off to dismiss the dangerous looking Miller, which eventually sealed a seven-run win for the Indian team.

Detailing the catch, the then India captain



added, "I saw this and thought 'Oh shit', (they now need) 10 (runs) off five balls. But then I saw that the ball is coming into Surya's hands.

"It would have taken a blinder to take that catch. It would have taken a lot of effort to take that catch because when it was in the air it looked like it would cross the rope easily. Maybe the wind pulled the ball a bit into the ground.

"I was standing with Surya. When the umpires were checking the catch and I said 'Surya, tell me. You tell me. I don't want to look there (at big screen). And he said I have caught it.

"Surya is honestly one of the safest catchers in the team — without a doubt. I haven't seen him drop many catches. He's got incredibly safe hands." South Africa needed 16 in the last over

bowed by Hardik Pandya but could manage only eight runs, after Virat Kohli anchored India to 176 for seven with a 59-ball 76 after Keshav Maharaj and Kagiso Rabada removed Rohit, Rishabh Pant and Suryakumar.

Pandya also contributed to the win with three vital wickets.

"When we lost those three wickets up front, there were obviously a lot of nerves in the dressing room," Rohit said.

"I was panicking. I was not comfortable. I was thinking that we let them into the game.

"But of course, in the back of my mind there was always a thought that our lower middle order had not batted so much in the tournament but whenever they had the opportunity, they made an impact."

Rohit recalled the useful knock played by left-arm spinner Axar Patel and his 72-run partnership with Kohli, before the superstar added another 57 runs with Shivam Dube to lift India to 176 for seven.

"Not many people are talking about (Axar's) knock, but that knock was a game-changer. To get 47 off 31 in that time was very, very crucial.

"And then we needed one guy to stick around and Virat did that job perfectly. Batted throughout the entire innings, which was good. Because then Shivam, Axar, Hardik — they can come in and play their role," Rohit said.

Kohli, who had until then struggled to get going, fired when it mattered — the big final — and was the Player of the Match.

"You know, the experience of playing for India for so long, being there, it really helps. You can control your emotions, you can control your thoughts and be in the moment.

"And I am sure he was thinking the same — 'today is the day I need to be focused and not worry about what has happened in the past'. And he played a great knock," Rohit said of his longtime India teammate. (PTI)

Shuttlers Tanvi, Ayush in US Open final

IOWA (US), June 29: Talented Indian shuttlers Tanvi Sharma and Ayush Shetty moved into the finals of the US Open badminton tournament in contrasting fashion as they continued their impressive run in the Super 300 Tournament here. The 16-year-old unseeded Indian Tanvi defeated Ukraine's seventh-seeded Polina Buhrova 21-14, 21-16 in the women's singles semifinal in just 34 minutes to make it to the title round. This was the teenager's second career victory against the Ukrainian in as many outings. Tanvi will take on top seed Beiwen Zhang of the United States in the final.

Ayush, seeded fourth here, created a big upset by overcoming the challenge of top seed and world No. 6 Chou Tien Chen of Chinese-Taipei 21-23, 21-15, 21-14 in a gruelling men's singles contest that lasted more than an hour.

Ayush will face another tough opponent in third-seed Brian Yang on Canada. Yang overcame the challenge of Chinese-Taipei's Liao Jhuo-Fu 21-10, 21-12. (PTI)

Diksha Dagar in top 10 after three rounds in German Masters

HAMBURG (GERMANY), June 29: Diksha Dagar held onto her spot inside the top-10 despite a difficult third round at the Amundi German Masters here at the Green Eagle Golf Courses.

Diksha shot a round of 1-over 74 with three birdies and four bogeys and was tied-eighth. Vani Kapoor (76) was T-21 and Avani Prashanth (74) was T-36 after three rounds.

Singaporean star Shannon Tan produced a strong round of 5-under 68 to become the sole leader heading into the final day.

She made seven birdies and two bogeys in her round to move three shots clear of her closest rival for the title. She now has a combined score of 12 under par.

Diksha's third round was a mixed tale as her front nine and back nine were contrasting in nature. She started on the front nine and played a bogey free round with three birdies for the first 11 holes.

In the last seven holes she had four bogeys and fell down the leaderboard, barely hanging on within the top 10 with a combined score of three under par.

Vani Kapoor, the other Indian who was in the top 10 after two rounds, also started on the front nine and like Diksha had a mixed round as she made six bogeys on the front nine.

After her first birdie of the day on the 12th hole she was able to get two more on the 16th and 18th holes to close the day with a score of 3-over 76. She is now tied 21st on the leaderboard.

The other Indian in the field to have made the cut is Avani Prashanth at tied 36. She shot a round of 1-over 74 for the second day in a row.

Her round included two birdies, one bogey and one double bogey. Her total score stands at two over par. (PTI)

England fined for slow over-rate in first WT20I against India

NOTTINGHAM, June 29: England have been fined 10 per cent of their match fee for maintaining a slow over-rate against India in the first Women's T20 International which the visitors won by 97 runs here.

Helen Pack of the Emirates ICC International Panel of Match Referees imposed the sanction as England were ruled to be two overs short of the target after time allowances were taken into consideration.

"In accordance with Article 2.22 of the ICC Code of Conduct for Players and Player Support Personnel, which relates to minimum over-rate offences, players are fined five per cent of their match fee for every over their side fails to bowl in the allotted time," the ICC said in a statement on Sunday.

England captain Nat Sciver-Brunt pleaded guilty to the offence and accepted the proposed sanction, so there was no need for a formal hearing. (PTI)

Pant's first question to his surgeon after accident: Am I ever going to be able to play again?

LONDON, June 29: When India wicketkeeper-batter Rishabh Pant was brought into a hospital in Mumbai following grievous injuries suffered in a car crash in December 2022, the first question he asked the attending doctor was "will I be able to play again?" recalled renowned orthopaedic surgeon, Dr Dinshaw Pardiwala, who treated the superstar cricketer following the horrific incident. Pant, while driving from Delhi to his hometown, Roorkee, on December 30, 2022 lost control of his car which crashed into a divider and caused him severe injuries.

He was pulled out of the mangled mass, and Pardiwala said, "Rishabh Pant was extremely lucky to be alive — extremely lucky."

"When he first came in, he had a dislocated right knee. He also had an injury to his right ankle, lots of other minor injuries all over. He had a lot of skin loss, so his entire skin from the nape of the neck down to his knees was completely scraped off in the process of that accident," Pardiwala told The Telegraph, recalling the brutal impact of the crash on Pant's body.

"Then getting out of the car — that broken glass scraped off a lot of the skin and the flesh from his back," he added.

The fighter in Pant endured 635 days of recovery, rehabilitation, multiple surgeries and extensive physiotherapy to make a triumphant return to professional cricket, a fight-back which has become one of the most heartwarming stories in sports.

"To be in an accident like this, where the car actually overturns and blows up, the risk of death is extremely high," said Pardiwala, days after seeing his patient in full flow, smashing the ball effortlessly and playing audacious strokes on way to scoring back-to-back centuries in the opening Test against England at Headingley. Pardiwala said that Pant was extremely lucky to not lose blood supply in his right leg given the severity of the injuries, as it could have led to serious complications including amputation.

"When your knee dislocates, and all the ligaments break, there's a high possibility of the nerve or the



main blood vessel also being injured. If the blood vessel gets injured, you typically have about four to six hours to restore the blood supply.

"Otherwise, there's a risk of losing your limb. The fact that his blood vessel wasn't injured despite having a severe high-velocity knee dislocation was extremely lucky," said Pardiwala.

Pardiwala recalled the day Pant was brought into his hospital in Mumbai, his first question was, "Am I ever going to be able to play again?"

His mother, though, was more practical, asking the surgeon: "Is he ever going to be able to walk again?"

Pardiwala said the injuries were so bad that Pant needed a complete reconstruction of his knee.

"We had a lengthy discussion about the fact that these are grievous injuries — we would need to reconstruct the entire knee. Once we reconstruct the entire knee, we're going to have to then work through a whole process of letting it heal, letting it recover, then get back the basic functions — the range, the strength and the stability."

The orthopaedic surgeon performed a four-hour

surgery on January 6, 2023 on Pant's right knee, reconstructing three ligaments and repairing tendons and meniscus. Pardiwala recalled that for several weeks after the surgery, the young cricketer couldn't even brush his teeth.

"He lost a lot of skin, and so he couldn't really move his hands. They were completely swollen. He couldn't really move either of his hands initially."

Gradually he started to drink water without assistance and then managed to walk without crutches after four months. But the surgeon was sceptical about Pant being able to play cricket professionally again.

"Typically, when we reconstruct these patients they are happy just to get back to normal life. If they can walk and do some minimal amount of recreational sports, they're happy."

"I said: 'We can certainly make sure that he walks again. I'm going to try my best to make sure that we can get him back to playing again.' We didn't really want to offer him too much initially, but we did want to give him hope. So I said: 'We'll break it down into steps.' Step one, of course, has to be the surgery.

"When we discussed it just after the surgery, the way I told him is the fact you're alive, the fact that your limbs survived — that's two miracles down. If we get you back to competitive cricket, that's going to be a third miracle. Let's just hope for everything, and then take it a step at a time."

But Pant was determined to get back onto the field and started setting timelines for himself.

"His question then was: 'OK, assuming that we do manage to get there, how long is it going to be?' I said: 'Probably looking at 18 months to get back to competitive cricket.'" He moved to National Cricket Academy in Bangalore and remained there for most of 2023.

"His whole aim was 'Get me back to normalcy as fast as possible'. And we were trying to make sure that we were doing just the optimum, not too little, but not too much. His recovery was much faster than we had anticipated. He was like: 'Nothing is too much.' He pushed harder than normal people." (PTI)



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