

6 WORLD

8 NATION

- Iran's inflation hits World War II levels, deepening economic pain
- Ultra-orthodox protesters block roads and trains across Israel over military draft
- Shivakumar, Siddaramaiah meet Cong top brass ahead of new Karnataka cabinet
- BJP won Bengal polls by rigging counting in 177 seats: Mamata

Govt bid to attract investment gets push CM reviews investments, infrastructure and farmer welfare during Delhi meetings

HT Bureau

GUWAHATI, June 2: Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma on Tuesday held a series of meetings with senior corporate leaders and Union Agriculture Minister Shivraj Singh Chouhan in New Delhi to discuss infrastructure development, digital connectivity, investment opportunities and measures to strengthen the agricultural sector in Assam.

Sarma met Larsen & Toubro (L&T) Chairman and Managing Director SN Subrahmanyan and reviewed the progress of various infrastructure projects being executed by the company in Assam.

The discussions focused on ensuring timely completion of the ongoing projects and exploring future avenues of collaboration in the state.

In another meeting, the Chief Minister held talks with Bharti Enterprises Vice Chairman Rajan Bharti Mittal regarding the group's expansion plans in Assam, particularly in the telecommunications sector.

The discussions centred on improving mobile and internet connectivity in underserved and remote areas to ensure greater digital inclusion across the state.

Later, Sarma called on Union Agriculture and Farmers' Welfare Minister Shivraj Singh Chouhan and dis-

cussed measures aimed at enhancing farmers' welfare and accelerating agricultural growth in Assam.

The two leaders deliberated on modernising agriculture through mechanisation, strengthening cold storage infrastructure, improving market linkages, expanding supply chain facilities and promoting the effective utilisation of the Agriculture Infrastructure Fund.

They also discussed the implementation of various farmer-centric schemes and initiatives to ensure their benefits reach farmers at the grassroots level.

The Chief Minister further briefed the Union Minister on the progress of Assam's Lakhpati Baideu scheme, under which nearly 40 lakh women have been empowered to undertake and expand income-generating activities.

He noted that the initiative is contributing significantly to rural economic development and women's empowerment across the state.

The meetings form part of the Assam government's ongoing efforts to attract investment, strengthen infrastructure, improve connectivity and promote inclusive economic growth across key sectors. (With inputs from PTI)

Assam, M'laya hold high-level talks on border issues in West Karbi Anglong Interests of KA people to be protected: Tuliram

HT Bureau

DIPHU/SHILLONG, June 2: In a significant development aimed at easing tensions along the Assam-Meghalaya border, senior political leaders and administrative officials of the two states on Tuesday agreed to allow villagers from both sides to continue cultivation activities in designated areas of the disputed Lapangap region while deferring the issue of permanent boundary demarcation to a higher-level committee.

The understanding was reached during a high-level meeting held at Tapat in West Karbi Anglong district, attended by political representatives, senior civil and police officials, and local stakeholders from both states.

The Meghalaya delegation was led by Deputy Chief Minister Sniawhalang Dhar and included Principal Secretary Frederick R Kharkongor, Commissioner and



Secretary Cyril V Diengdoh, Jaintia Hills Autonomous Council Chief Executive Member Thombor Shiwat, West Jaintia Hills Deputy Commissioner Abhinav Singh and Superintendent of Police Jaggal Singh Dhanoo.

The Assam delegation comprised Additional Chief Secretary

Ajay Kumar Tiwari, Karbi Anglong Autonomous Council (KAAC) Chief Executive Member and MLA Tuliram Ronghang, Diphu MP Amarsing Tisso, legislators Surjya Rongphar, Lusing Teron, Habbey Teron and Niso Terangpi, among others.

The meeting focused on issues

concerning the Assam-Meghalaya border, particularly recurring tensions arising from agricultural activities and alleged encroachments in certain areas along the inter-state boundary.

The discussions were held in the backdrop of recent efforts by Assam Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma and Meghalaya Chief Minister Conrad K Sangma to find an amicable and peaceful solution to issues affecting the region.

According to a joint statement issued after the meeting, villagers of Lapangap will continue paddy cultivation in the foothill areas of the disputed region, while residents of Tahpat will be allowed to continue plantation of seasonal crops such as banana, pineapple, ginger and other crops on the hilltops and slopes. Both sides agreed that the issue of permanent boundary demarcation (CONTD. ON PAGE-2)

Cyber criminal involved in multi-state crime nabbed

GUWAHATI, June 2: A cyber fraudster, suspected to be involved in multi-state digital crimes, was arrested in Assam, police said on Tuesday.

The Crime Investigation Department's Cyber Police Station of Assam Police has arrested a key fraudster involved in operating a highly active mule account, CID SP (Cyber Crime) Saurav Jyoti Saikia said in a statement.

Acting on credible intelligence, a suo motu case was registered under relevant sections of the Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita (BNS) and the Information Technology Act, he added.

"During the investigation, it was revealed that the mule bank account in HDFC Bank was being operated by Amit Kr Beria. The account had witnessed massive transactions over the last three to four months," Saikia said. He said that an amount (CONTD. ON PAGE-2)

Tension runs high in Kharupetia

Protesters gherao police station over minor girl's abduction



HT Correspondent

MANGALDAL, June 2: Tension prevailed in Kharupetia town of Assam's Darrang district on Tuesday after hundreds of residents staged a gherao of the Kharupetia Police Station, alleging lapses in the investigation of the alleged abduction of a 16-year-old girl and

accusing police of shielding the accused.

According to local residents, the minor girl from Ward No 7 was allegedly abducted on the day of Eid by Rafiqul Islam (25), a married man from Bihudia village, on the pretext of marriage.

The girl was reportedly confined

at the residence of a person identified as Osman at Block Chowk in Kharupetia.

Following a complaint lodged by the victim's family, police registered a case and arrested Rafiqul Islam, who was subsequently remanded to judicial custody.

However, the arrest failed to quell public anger.

A large number of protesters, including women, gathered outside the police station and raised questions regarding the progress of the investigation.

They alleged that the victim had not undergone a medical examination even three days after being rescued and questioned the release of other persons allegedly connected to the case after they were brought to the police station for questioning.

The demonstrators further accused (CONTD. ON PAGE-2)

Govt notifies changes in Immigration and Foreigners Rules, 2025

NEW DELHI, June 2: The foreigners coming to India on a visa for 180 days or less will now have to register themselves "any time before the expiry of the said period of 180 days" in case they want to stay beyond the visa period, according to changes in the Immigration and Foreigners Rules, 2025 notified by the Union home ministry. The new provision, notified on Monday, will replace the previous rule that required the registration "within fourteen days after the expiry of one hundred and eighty days of arrival in India."

"... the Immigration and Foreigners Rules, 2025 (hereinafter referred to as the said rules), in rule 12, (a) in sub-rule (1), (i) in the third proviso, for the words "within fourteen days after the expiry of one hundred and eighty days of his arrival in India", the words "any time before the expiry of the said

period of one hundred and eighty days" shall be substituted," the notification published in the gazette said.

The foreigners on a visa for more than 180 days with a stipulation that "each stay shall not exceed 180 days" and who wish to stay in India beyond that period on any single occasion or in the aggregate in a calendar year shall have to register "anytime before the expiry of 180 days". The new rule has now made it clear that such registration will now be granted "only in emergent circumstances".

The new rules also provide slight relief to children born to parents where either or both parents are foreigners.

Previous rules stipulated that upon the birth of the child in such cases, parents had to electronically intimate the registration officer within 30 days for availing visa

services, including the grant of new visa and exit permission on the designated online portal or the mobile application.

According to the notification, this sub-rule shall not apply in cases wherein either of the parents is an Indian citizen and such parent wishes to retain the Indian citizenship of the child.

It, however, says that if the child acquires citizenship of a foreign country while in India at a later stage, either of the parents shall intimate the position to the registration officer within thirty days of acquiring the citizenship of the foreign country by the child. The notification also revises provisions relating to reporting requirements and administrative procedures for every hospital, nursing home or any other medical institution providing medical, lodging or sleeping facility in their premises. (PTI)

No role for any third parties in resolution of India-Nepal border issue: MEA



NEW DELHI, June 2: India on Tuesday categorically rejected any role for third parties to resolve its boundary row with Nepal, days after Nepalese Prime Minister Balendra Shah sought involvement of China and the UK to address the long-standing dispute.

External Affairs Ministry spokesperson Randhir Jaiswal said both sides have established bilateral mechanisms to deal with all aspects of the border issue and that close to 98 per cent of the India-Nepal boundary has been demarcated.

Shah, the rapper-turned-politician, said in Nepalese Parliament on Sunday that apart from discussions with India on the border dispute, Nepal was in touch with China and Britain as well.

"Since this problem dates from the time when

British India left the region, it is our view that England should be involved in this matter," he said.

Nepal and India have had an old boundary dispute over Lipulekh, Limpiadhura and Kalapani. India has consistently maintained that the territories are part of Uttarakhand.

"We have established bilateral mechanisms to deal with all aspects of boundary matters. It should be clear to all concerned that there is no role for any third parties in a bilateral matter between India and Nepal," Jaiswal said at his weekly media briefing.

The external affairs ministry spokesperson's response came when asked about Shah's comments.

"We have seen the remarks of the prime minister of Nepal concerning India-Nepal boundary as well as the subsequent statement issued by Nepali foreign ministry on this matter," Jaiswal said.

"While close to 98 per cent of the India-Nepal boundary has been demarcated, there are some unresolved segments. The shifting of the course of the Gandak river has resulted in this situation," he said.

"In addition, there are cases of cross-border occupation and encroachment of No-Man's land in demarcated segments of the boundary which are currently being mapped jointly," he added.

In his comments, Shah had also acknowledged that Nepal has "encroached" on Indian territories. (PTI)

Govt shunts out 2 top CBSE officials, orders probe into OSM procurement

NEW DELHI, June 2: The government on Tuesday removed two top CBSE officials following alleged irregularities in the Class 12 digital evaluation system and ordered a probe by a high-powered committee to investigate how the national educational board procured these marking services.

Simultaneously, a 17-year-old student from Jharkhand affected by the CBSE's online marking system, appeared before a parliamentary panel where he pointed out the anomalies in the tendering process of the Central Board of Secondary Education (CBSE) to select vendors for online marking and put forth a set of questions for the board.

Sarthak Sidhant, who himself appeared in the board examination, presented a seven-page copy of his findings before the Parliamentary Committee for Education, Women, Children, Youth and Sports, chaired by Congress MP Digvijaya

Singh.

The CBSE, meanwhile, said "malicious actors" attempted to disrupt services on its re-evaluation portal through a barrage of cyberattacks, including a denial-of-service attack that caused 1.5 million hits on the platform within two minutes and more than one lakh attempts at unauthorised file access.

The CBSE engulfed into a controversy after some class 12 students alleged that the scanned copies of their answer sheets uploaded by the board did not match their handwriting, raising concerns over possible answer-sheet mismatch in the On-Screen Marking (OSM) system.

An official said CBSE chairman Rahul Singh and Secretary Himanshu Gupta have been transferred.

Subsequently, the Cabinet Secretary through a memorandum announced constitution of a one-member committee to inquire into

matters relating to the procurement of services for the on-screen marking system by the CBSE.

The committee will be chaired by S Radha Chauhan, chairperson, Capacity Building Commission, the Cabinet Secretariat said.

Chauhan has been empowered to obtain the assistance of officials from other departments, as required, while the Capacity Building Commission will provide secretarial assistance to the panel.

The committee will submit its report to the Department of Personnel and Training within one month.

The memorandum addressed to Chauhan was shared with the Department of School Education and Literacy, and the Department of Personnel and Training.

Concerns were raised by students and parents over the implementation of the OSM system in the CBSE board examination process. (CONTD. ON PAGE-2)

Four missing minors from Jorhat traced in Shillong

HT Correspondent

JORHAT, June 2: Four minors, including two boys and two girls who had gone missing from the Puloir area of Jorhat on Saturday, were traced in Shillong and safely brought back home on Tuesday.

According to police sources, the minors were initially tracked to Guwahati during the course of the investigation.

Subsequent efforts led investigators to identify their exact location at Police Bazar in Shillong, Meghalaya.

Following the breakthrough, a police team from Jorhat, accompanied by the parents of the two girls, left for Shillong on Monday.

The team located the four minors in the Police Bazar area and brought them back to Jorhat on Tuesday.

Police said the reason behind the minors leaving their homes without informing their parents is yet to be ascertained. Of the four minors, three — (CONTD. ON PAGE-2)

₹ 411 crore Mission 'Senehjori' launched to boost Assam's Muga Silk sector

GUWAHATI, June 2: Union Minister for Development of North Eastern Region (DoNER) Jyotiraditya Scindia on Tuesday virtually launched the ₹ 411 crore Mission Muga Silk 'Senehjori' to empower more than 2.5 lakh weavers, rearers and entrepreneurs associated with Muga silk production in Assam.

The launch event held in New Delhi was attended by Assam Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma, Union Minister of State for Textiles Pabitra Margherita and Minister of State for DoNER Sukanta Majumdar, among others.

Describing the initiative as a transformative step for Assam's famed "golden thread", Scindia said the mission would enhance value addition, improve production and quality, economically empower stakeholders and position



Muga silk competitively in global markets.

"This initiative is to take Muga Silk from farm gate to foreign shore," Scindia said while launching the ambitious three-year project, which will be implemented

from 2026 to 2028.

Highlighting the Centre's vision for the Northeast, Scindia said the eight states of the region, collectively known as 'Ashtalakhshmi', have been identified based on their unique strengths and potential.

Nagaland has been identified for coffee, Tripura for pineapple, Sikkim for organic farming, Arunachal Pradesh for kiwi, Mizoram for organic ginger and Manipur for polo, Assam has been recognised for its world-renowned Muga Silk, he said.

The Union minister noted that the mission involves the collaboration of 11 stakeholders, including the Ministry of DoNER, Government of Assam, Ministry of Textiles, Ministry of Cooperation, APEDA, ICAR, DRDO and representatives of the weaving and rearing communities.

As part of the project, five modern reeling units will be established at Jorhat, Sivasagar, Sualkuchi, Majuli and Lakhimpur. A dedicated Muga spun silk unit will also be set up at Dhemaji to strengthen processing (CONTD. ON PAGE-2)

Ebola outbreak: India dispatches second tranche of medical assistance to Africa CDC

NEW DELHI, June 2: Amid the outbreak of Ebola in parts of the African continent, India has dispatched the second tranche of medical assistance to the Africa Centres for Disease Control and Prevention (Africa CDC) comprising protective gear, diagnostic and monitoring equipment, infection prevention supplies and medicines and supplements.

On May 17, the World Health Organization (WHO) declared the Ebola outbreak in the Democratic Republic of Congo and Uganda a Public Health Emergency of International Concern.

As an urgent response, the first tranche of about 2.5 tonnes of urgent medical supplies was dispatched on May 24 to Kampala, Uganda, comprising protective gear, medical monitoring equipment, essential medicines and supplements, the Ministry of External Affairs (MEA) said on Tuesday.



External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar in a post on X shared an update on the second tranche of medical assistance sent to Africa CDC and some photos of the consignment.

"India has dispatched the second tranche of medical assistance to @AfricaCDC, comprising protective gear, diagnostic & monitoring

equipment, medicines, and supplements. Confident that this 43 tons consignment will further strengthen public health preparedness and bolster Ebola response capacities across @AfricanUnion," he said on Tuesday.

The MEA in its statement said after receiving a more detailed list of (CONTD. ON PAGE-2)

Govt to replace WPI with Producer Price Index, new series from June 15

NEW DELHI, June 2: The government will phase out the Wholesale Price Index (WPI) over the next five years while simultaneously introducing a more detailed Producer Price Index (PPI), covering output, input and services prices, in a bid to offer a more realistic assessment of inflationary trends in the economy.

Speaking with reporters, Praveen Mahto, Principal Economic Adviser in the Commerce and Industry Ministry, said that the Department for Promotion of Industry and Internal Trade (DPIIT) will release the revised series of WPI with new base year 2022-23 on June 15, which would replace the existing series with base year 2011-12.

In addition, the department would release a new series of PPI from June 15. It will have three indices - Output PPI, Trial Input PPI and Services PPI.

Initially, services PPI will have seven services - Banking, Securities Transaction, Insurance, Management of Pension Funds, Railways, Air (Passenger), and Telecom.

"Considering the wide usage of WPI in price escalation clauses, this index will be released for five years from the date of release of the revised series along with PPI and will be discontinued thereafter," the ministry said in a statement.

The five-year period would give users sufficient time to switch from WPI to PPI.

Mahto said that after five years, the PPI is expected to replace WPI.

The transition from WPI to PPI aligns with global best practices adopted by advanced economies and the recommendations of the International Monetary Fund (IMF).

The availability of both Output PPI and Input PPI provides a better understanding of the price movements of output items vis-à-vis the input items used in an industry.

It also explains how inflation experienced by producers of input items is passed through to the output they produce.

Mahto said that the Service PPIs for seven services have been compiled in the first phase based on the availability of data from administrative sources/agencies.

More services are planned to be added to the PPI basket of services in subsequent phases, sub-



subject to data availability.

The DPIIT informed that WPI and Output PPI are being compiled on monthly basis and will be available for the month of May 2026 (Provisional) alongwith the back series from April 2023 to April 2026 (37 months) on June 15.

The monthly Trial Input PPI (for the manufacturing sector only) will be published on an experimental basis from March 2026 onwards.

"This would enable the department to examine the data quality and also receive feedback from stakeholders and users. Service PPI, compiled on a quarterly basis, will be released for Q4 of 2025-26 (provisional) along with the back series from Q1 of 2023-24 to Q3 of 2025-26," the ministry said.

Speaking about the new series of WPI (2022-23), Dilip Kumar Sinha, Deputy Director General in the Office of the Economic Advisor, said the total number of items has increased from 697 to 957.

He said that new sources of energy, such as solar and wind, have been added under electricity group. In addition, nuclear electricity has been included in the basket.

Similarly, crude petroleum and natural gas have been shifted from the primary articles to the fuel and power.

This reorganisation would lead to better alignment, as this group already houses other major fuels such as coal, electricity, and petroleum products.

WPI, Output PPI, and Service PPI are compiled on the basis of basic price (which excludes net tax and trade and transport margins), whereas

Input PPI is compiled using the purchaser's price, since industries purchase inputs from the market.

WPI revision is a periodic exercise. Two major indices are used to track price movements -- the Wholesale Price Index (WPI) and the Consumer Price Index (CPI). While the WPI measures price movements in wholesale markets, the CPI tracks inflation at the retail level and includes certain services.

WPI is a key indicator for measuring the average change in the prices of a fixed basket of commodities at the initial stage of a commercial transaction over a given period, with reference to a base year.

Ever since the introduction of the WPI in 1942 with the base year 1939, seven revisions have taken place, introducing new base years - 1952-53, 1961-62, 1970-71, 1981-82, 1993-94, 2004-05 and 2011-12.

The current WPI base year 2011-12 series was launched in May 2017.

Wholesale price inflation shot up to a 42-month high of 8.3 per cent in April, driven by a spike in energy prices following disruptions caused by the West Asia conflict. Most countries in the world release output PPI and services PPI.

When asked whether government contracts that are currently have price-escalation clauses linked to the Wholesale Price Index (WPI) would be shifted to the Producer Price Index (PPI) in the coming years, Mahto said that the department of expenditure will come out with a circular "very soon" to inform all the users that "in a period of five years, we will be transitioning from WPI to PPI. So, henceforth in case they want to enter into a long term contract then they should be using PPI rather than WPI".

He also said that the PPI services will be released quarterly.

Major economies such as the US, China, Japan, Germany, France and other G-20 countries use PPI to measure the average changes in prices received by domestic producers for their output.

In January 2025, a working group was constituted under the chairmanship of then Niti Aayog Member Ramesh Chand for revision of WPI and compilation of PPI with base year 2022-23. (PTI)

Bengal govt holds pre-budget talks with industry bodies

KOLKATA, June 2: The West Bengal finance department on Tuesday held a pre-budget consultation meeting with industry chambers and trade associations, with stakeholders pitching for measures to boost investment, ease of doing business and infrastructure development ahead of the first budget of the BJP's maiden government in the state.

The meeting, chaired by Additional Chief Secretary (Finance) Prabhat Kumar Mishra, was attended by representatives of major industry bodies including the Bharat Chamber of Commerce, CREDAI, ASSOCHAM, CII and several other chambers and trade organisations.

Senior state government officials, including Commissioner of State Tax Khalid Anwar, were present at the meeting. According to finance department sources, the government sought suggestions from industry and trade bodies before finalising the budget proposals.

"The meeting was primarily consultative in nature. Representatives from various chambers and trade bodies shared their views and expectations from the upcoming

budget across sectors," a finance department source told PTI. Issues raised during the discussions included investment incentives, development of the Hadia industrial region, promotion of solar energy projects, simplification of trade licence procedures, strengthening of the single-window clearance mechanism, solid waste management, and concerns relating to the real estate and construction sectors, the source said.

The Bharat Chamber of Commerce submitted a memorandum containing its recommendations and also made a presentation on key policy measures required to improve the business environment in the state.

The state budget is scheduled to be presented on June 22, while the budget session of the Assembly is set to commence on June 18.

The state is currently awaiting the announcement of a state finance minister by the BJP government. Party legislators indicated that the portfolio allocation for the expanded Cabinet is expected on Wednesday, following the swearing-in of 35 ministers on Monday. (PTI)

Contd. from Page 1...

Interests of KA

in the area would be examined and decided by the appropriate state-level committee.

The two governments also resolved to maintain peace, harmony and law and order in the region and refrain from any action that could escalate tensions.

Addressing the media after the meeting, Tuliram Ronghang reiterated that the boundaries of Karbi Anglong had been clearly demarcated in 1951 and asserted that the territorial integrity of the district would remain protected.

He stated that the KAAC would continue to safeguard the interests of the people of Karbi Anglong and emphasised that no portion of the district's land would be compromised.

Officials said an earlier meeting of village representatives held on May 18 had remained inconclusive due to differing views on plantation activities in the disputed area.

The consensus reached on Tuesday is being viewed as a major confidence-building measure and a positive step towards resolving outstanding issues through dialogue, cooperation and mutual understanding. (With inputs from PTI)

Tension runs high

the police of displaying negligence in the investigation and demanded a transparent and time-bound probe. They also alleged that certain police officials were attempting to protect those involved in the case.

The protest continued for several hours, creating a tense atmosphere in the town. Protesters demanded immediate medical examination of the victim, strict legal action against all those involved and accountability from police officials if any misconduct is established during the investigation.

As of filing this report, no official statement had been issued by the police regarding the allegations raised by the protesters.

Further investigation is underway.

Cyber criminal involved

of ₹ 1.52 crore lying in the account has been frozen in connection with three digital arrest cases registered in Maharashtra and Odisha, and one online fraud case registered in Telangana.

"The arrested accused is being interrogated to uncover the larger network behind these frauds. Assam Police has already initiated formal communication with the concerned police agencies in the respective states to inform them of the arrest of the hardcore cyber criminal," the SP said.

Assam Police remains firmly committed to combating cybercrime in all its forms, and the operation underscores the effectiveness of proactive intelligence-based policing in curbing financial frauds, he added.

"Citizens are strongly advised to stay vigilant against cyber fraud. Never share OTPs, banking credentials or personal information with unknown callers. Remember — if someone claims you are under 'digital arrest', it is almost certainly a scam," Saikia said. (PTI)

Govt shunts out 2

The board has faced criticism over technical glitches, payment failures and delays in the verification and re-evaluation process, prompting demands for greater transparency and accountability.

Sarthak's presentation to the parliamentary panel was made in the presence of Rahul Singh, before he was shunted out of the CBSE chairmanship, and Secretary, School Education, Sanjay Kumar, along with other officials of the Ministry of Education and the board.

The CBSE handed over a report to the panel members, presenting their side on the problems faced by students, and assured the MPs that the glitches that appeared on its portal have since been rectified and students now have time till June 6 to apply for re-evaluation of their answersheets.

Amid the row over the CBSE's OSM system, the committee had summoned top officials of the board and the Ministry of School Education to discuss the issue of using OSM in the Class 12 board exams and the problems faced by students consequently.

The panel also discussed applying the three-language formula in Classes 9 and 10 with the education ministry officials.

On whether he was satisfied with the CBSE's replies, panel chairman Digvijaya Singh said, "That is for the committee to decide."

He did not respond to the three-language formula issue either, saying, "I believe the matter is sub-judice." "The committee has always been looking at the issues of students and their problems. This is exactly what the committee has done," Singh told reporters when asked about the meeting.

Meanwhile, the CBSE said "malicious actors" attempted to disrupt services on its re-evaluation portal through a barrage of cyberattacks, including a denial-of-service attack that caused 1.5 million hits on the platform within two minutes and more than one lakh attempts at unauthorised file access.

The board said the portal is currently supporting over 8,000 concurrent users, and more than 16,000 students have successfully completed their submissions as of 3 pm.

"While thousands of students accessed the CBSE re-evaluation portal today, malicious actors attempted to disrupt services through a barrage of cyberattacks," the board said on X.

"The most recent being a denial of service attack attempt causing 1.5 million hits on the portal within a matter of 2 minutes and more than 1 lakh attempts of unauthorised file access," it added.

Based on student feedback, the CBSE said it has further refined the platform, including extending session time limits, to make the process more convenient and seamless. (PTI)

Four missing minors

including one of the girls — had recently passed the HSLC examination, while the other girl is a Class VII student.

According to family members, all four had left for school on Saturday but failed to return home by the afternoon, prompting concern among their families.

The families of the two girls subsequently lodged complaints at the Jorhat ISBT Patrol Post, alleging kidnapping.

While the parents of the two boys did not file formal complaints, they had informed the police about their disappearance.

Police are continuing their inquiry to determine the circumstances under which the minors travelled to Shillong.

Ebola outbreak: India

requirements from Africa CDC, it mobilised a larger second tranche, comprising protective gear, diagnostic and monitoring devices, sample transport kits, infection prevention supplies, medicines and supplements.

The second tranche will be reaching Kampala on Tuesday and will be handed over to Africa CDC, it said.

India has extended urgent medical assistance to the Africa CDC to support their Ebola response efforts after receiving a request from the African Union Commission, it said.

"India's support is tailored to meet the needs of Africa CDC to contain the Ebola outbreak in some parts of Africa, and to strengthen public health preparedness and regional response capacities," the MEA added.

India's support reflects its "enduring commitment" to partnership with African countries, including in supporting them to respond to public health situations in the continent.

"Our Missions in Addis Ababa and Kampala remain closely engaged with the African Union Commission and the Africa CDC for supporting their Ebola response efforts," it said. (PTI)

₹ 411 crore Mission

and value-addition capabilities. Speaking on the occasion, the chief minister said that Muga Silk, a symbol of Assam's heritage and pride, would receive a major boost through the transformative initiative launched under the leadership of Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Union Minister for DoNER Jyotiraditya Scindia.

Expressing confidence in the project's potential, Sarma said the mission would unlock the vast economic opportunities associated with the golden thread and help realise the sector's untapped potential.

He said the mission seeks to protect and empower the people behind the craft, particularly the farmers and weavers who form the backbone of the Muga silk ecosystem. Under the initiative, 1,180 Farmer Interest Groups (FIGs) and 30 Farmer Producer Organisations (FPOs) will be formed to strengthen the value chain and enhance the livelihoods of stakeholders engaged in Muga silk production.

The chief minister further said that digital traceability and robust GI authentication mechanisms would enable global buyers to verify the authenticity of Assam's Muga products, thereby enhancing consumer confidence and expanding international market access.

Describing Mission Senehori as a reflection of the positive outcomes of the 'double engine government' led by Prime Minister Narendra Modi, Sarma said the initiative would provide greater opportunities to those engaged in the traditional craft while taking Assam's unique identity and heritage to global markets.

Sarma said the Geographical Indication (GI) tag accorded to Muga Silk has already given the product a distinct identity and expressed confidence that the mission would bring about a sea change in both the quality and quantity of production. (PTI)

Royal Enfield announces Himalayan Base Camp in Ladakh

HT Bureau

GUWAHATI, June 2: Royal Enfield has announced the inaugural edition of the Himalayan Base Camp - Ladakh Edition, a three-day immersive gathering for adventure enthusiasts to be held in Leh, Ladakh, from September 4 to 6, 2026.

Positioned as a community-driven adventure experience rather than a conventional festival, the Himalayan Base Camp aims to bring together riders, climbers, overlanders, trekkers and outdoor enthusiasts from across the country.

Set at an altitude of 11,480 feet in Leh, the event will feature curated expeditions, skill-based workshops, expert-led sessions and hands-on challenges covering adventure travel, adventure sports and outdoor lifestyles.

According to the organisers, participants will have opportunities to engage in activities such as motorcycling, overlanding, cycling, kayaking, bouldering and mountaineering, among others.

Mohit Dhar Jayal, Chief Brand Officer of Royal Enfield, said the Himalayan Base Camp is envisioned as a common platform for adventure seekers of all kinds.

AFFIDAVIT

My actual name is Laichan Sharai as in Aadhaar Card No. 8158 5146 0905, PAN Card No. MGFPS 8987M and Voter ID EPIC No. JRF0002927 but in my Langpi Dehangi Rural Bank, Bargaon Branch vide A/c No. 7469010092030 my name has been recorded as "Mrs Laison Maslai" instead of "Laichan Sharai".

So, for all intent and purposes the names "Mrs Laison Maslai" and "Laichan Sharai" refers to same and single person, i.e., myself.

Laichan Sharai,
C/o- Changija,
R/o- Vill. Borambi,
PO- Bargaon, PS- Bailthlangso,
Dist- West Karbi Anglong (Assam)

LOST

I have lost my land documents bearing Deed no. 1776, Date of sale deed-14/8/2006. Dag no-245,254 and patno-21,78 bounded by North-Abdul Gani South- other land of vendor. East-NH 52 West-Vender under pachim Dalgan mouza and Register of Mongaldai Sub Register office of Village Alisinga Goan under Lalpui Goan Panchayat. Total Land- 03B-2-Katha.

Sd/-
Bharati Dey Sarkar
W/O- Jayanta Sarkar
Vill-Tahakur Putty
PS- Kharupetia, Darrang

NAME CHANGE

I have Changed my name from ABDUL ROKIB to ABDUR RAKIB by swearing a notarial affidavit at Srimanta Sankardevnagar, Hojai (Assam) ABDUR RAKIB S/O-SAMSHUL HAQUE Vill-Utardandarmela, PO-Murajhar, PS-Murajhar, Dist-Hojai (Assam)

Stock markets snap 4-day losses led by strong rally in IT firms; Sensex up 382 pts

MUMBAI, June 2: Snapping the four-day losing streak, benchmark BSE Sensex rebounded by 382 points on Tuesday following a strong rally in IT shares.

The 30-share BSE Sensex climbed 382.50 points, or 0.52 per cent, to settle at 74,649.84 with 20 of its constituents ending higher and 10 with losses. The barometer jumped 1,047.07 points to 74,862.19 from its intra-day low of 73,815.12.

The 50-share NSE Nifty rose by 100.95 points, or 0.43 per cent, to end at 23,483.55.

Among 30 Sensex firms, Tata Consultancy Services jumped the most by 6.53 per cent. Infosys climbed 5.66 per cent. HCL Tech by 4.08 per cent and Tech Mahindra by 1.76 per cent. Adani Ports, Titan, Eternal, HDFC Bank and Mahindra & Mahindra were also among the gainers.

NTPC, Axis Bank, Power Grid and ICICI Bank were among the laggards.

"Markets recovered from initial losses, led by gains in the IT sector, while continued accumulation in large-cap stocks reflected comfort with valuations, as the Nifty-50 trades closer to its long-term averages than the relatively richer valuations in broader markets.

"Despite ongoing delays in a Middle East truce, global sentiment remained stable, highlighting resilience in risk appetite," Vinod Nair, Head of Research, Geojit Investments Limited, said.

Broader markets also advanced with the BSE MidCap Select index rising by 0.33 per cent and SmallCap



Select index by 0.19 per cent.

Among indices, IT surged the most by 4.40 per cent, followed by Focused IT (3.83 per cent), Consumer Durables (1.23 per cent), Services (1.11 per cent), Telecommunication (0.95 per cent), Mid-Small Private Banks Quality Tilt (0.93 per cent), Consumer Discretionary (0.83 per cent), FMCG (0.72 per cent) and Auto (0.68 per cent).

Power, Utilities, Financial Services and Oil & Gas were the laggards.

A total of 2,301 stocks advanced, while 1,904 declined and 172 remained unchanged on the BSE.

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

"The primary driver behind the recovery was the explosive rally in the IT sector. The Nifty IT index surged

over 4 per cent, with heavyweights such as TCS and Infosys leading the gains. The move was fueled by strong earnings and guidance from major US technology companies, reinforcing the view that global AI, cloud, and enterprise technology spending remains resilient despite broader economic uncertainty," Hariprasad K, Research Analyst and Founder, Livelong Wealth, said.

US markets ended in positive territory on Monday.

Brent crude, the global oil benchmark, declined 1.28 per cent to USD 93.76 per barrel.

Meanwhile, Foreign Institutional Investors (FIIs) offloaded equities worth ₹ 3,911.68 crore on Monday, according to exchange data.

On Monday, the Sensex dropped 508.40 points, or 0.68 per cent, to settle at 74,267.34.

Falling for the fourth consecutive day, the Nifty edged lower by 165.15 points, or 0.70 per cent, to end at 23,382.60. (PTI)

Assam Pharmaceutical Association holds Triennial General Meeting

HT Bureau

GUWAHATI, June 2: The Triennial General Meeting (TGM) of the Assam Pharmaceutical Association (APA), a premier organisation representing pharmaceutical and allied trade interests in the region since 1955, was held at Anannya Edition, 9th Mile, Guwahati, under the chairmanship of its president, Prafulla Chandra Sarmah.

The proceedings commenced with the hoisting of the Association's flag by the president.

General Secretary Ranjan Kumar Deka presented the annual activity report, while Treasurer Sourav Lilha placed the audited financial report before the house.

Following detailed deliberations, both reports were unanimously adopted.

In his presidential address, Sarmah highlighted the Association's longstanding contribution to ensuring the availability of medicines across the North-East despite logistical challenges.

He also acknowledged the commitment shown by members during the COVID-19 pandemic in maintaining uninterrupted supplies of essential medicines and vaccines under difficult circumstances.

The meeting adopted a resolution urging the Prime Minister's Office to consider subsidised air cargo services for the transportation of essential medicines to Manipur in view of the substantial increase in freight costs.

Similar support was sought for Mizoram and Tripura during periods of prolonged disruption of road connectivity caused by floods and landslides.

The Association also resolved to institute a one-time educational assistance scheme for children of employ-

ees of member firms pursuing higher education at the graduate and postgraduate levels.

Presenting a report on contemporary developments in the pharmaceutical sector, Secretary Sanjiv Dev Choudhury highlighted concerns relating to the circulation of spurious and substandard medicines.

The meeting also expressed concern over the growing trend of online sale of medicines and discount-based marketing practices, noting the need for strict adherence to the provisions of the Drugs and Cosmetics Act, 1940.

As part of a special felicitation programme, the Association honoured social workers Mujibur Rahman of Shanti Ananth Niwas, Nalbari, and Kumud Kalita of Topoban, Pathsala, for their outstanding contributions to society.

The Association, along with member Sanjiv Dev Choudhury, extended financial assistance of ₹50,000 each to the two awardees.

The Association also felicitated former president Lion D.P. Bajaj, Drug Controller In-Charge Biswajeet Talukder, Food Safety Designated Licensing Officer Anil Sarma, and Birendra Kumar Barman, Member of the Pharmacy Council of India and President of the Advanced Pharmacy Practitioners of Assam, in recognition of their contributions to the healthcare and pharmaceutical sectors.

The meeting concluded with the election of a new executive committee.

Prafulla Chandra Sarmah was re-elected President, Ranjan Kumar Deka as General Secretary, and Raja Bajaj as Treasurer.

BJP Dhubri welcomes passage of Assam UCC Bill

Slams Congress MLA over remarks on women's rights

HT Correspondent

DHUBRI, June 2: The Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) Dhubri district unit organised an important press conference at its district office to address the successful enactment of the "Equal Civil Code" (Uniform Civil Code/UCC Bill) in the Assam Assembly.

The press conference was attended by prominent party leaders, including BJP Dhubri District president Ranjit Kumar Roy, BJP Assam State Media Panelist / Spokesperson Banendra Kumar Musahari, BJP District News Department Convener Srivats Das, District vice president Debaprasad Singh and District secretary Utkam Prasad among others.

Addressing the media representatives, District President Ranjit Kumar Roy launched a scathing attack on Baby Begum, the Congress MLA representing the Dhubri Assembly constituency. Roy strongly condemned her recent remarks regarding the UCC Bill in the Assam Assembly, labeling them "unwarranted and shameful."

Roy stated that by supporting a man's second marriage, Baby Begum has actively worked to de-



prive women across society of their fundamental rights. He added that it was deeply unfortunate that, as a woman herself, she chose to humiliate and undermine the entire women's community through her stance in the House.

BJP Assam State Spokesperson Dr Banendra Kumar Mushari reiterated that the implementation of the UCC Bill remains a core commitment of the Bharatiya Janata Party across every state in India. Dismissing opposition claims, Mushari clarified that the UCC is entirely constitutional, noting that

previous governments failed to enforce it due to persistent "appeasement politics."

He also recalled that Dr BR Ambedkar, one of the principal architects of the Indian Constitution, had spoken as early as 1948 about the need for a Uniform Civil Code to ensure equal rights for all citizens.

Mushari reminded reporters of the pledge made by the Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma. The Chief Minister had promised the public that if the BJP-led coalition government returned to power in

2026, the UCC Bill would be introduced and passed in the very first assembly session.

"Accordingly, the promise made by the Chief Minister to the people was fulfilled in letter and spirit in the very first assembly session by forming the new BJP coalition government in 2026 and the UCC Bill was enacted in Assam," Dr Mushari stated.

The party leadership highlighted that the newly enacted UCC Bill will serve as a vital legal shield in protecting the rights of every woman in Assam, specifically targeting social evils like child marriage and polygamy. Speakers emphasised that the BJP coalition government has consistently prioritised the upliftment, self-reliance and dignity of women—a commitment reaffirmed by today's historic legislative passage.

Concluding the briefing, District president Ranjit Kumar Roy extended his heartfelt gratitude and congratulations on behalf of all Dhubri district party workers and citizens to the state leadership for turning the UCC Bill into a reality for the people of Assam.

Stresses strengthening public outreach

BTC EM Akhtara Ahmed reviews functioning of I&PR Department



HT Correspondent

KOKRAJHAR, June 2: The newly appointed Executive Member (EM) of the Information and Public Relations (I&PR) Department, Govt of BTC, Begum Akhtara Ahmed on Tuesday visited the Regional Office (RO) cum Council Head of Department (CHD) office of the I&PR department, Kokrajhar and chaired a review meeting with officers and staff to assess its functioning and deliberate on strategies for strengthening public communication and outreach in the districts.

Earlier, the officers and staff of the department felicitated her and

extended a warm welcome on her first official visit to the office.

During the meeting, detailed deliberations were held on the department's ongoing activities, the existing mechanisms for dissemination of information and measures to enhance communication between the administration and the public.

The Executive Member reviewed the department's current operations across BTC and sought inputs from officials regarding its functioning, future plans, improvements among others.

Manash Das, Secretary I&PR, BTC; Gagan Chandra Narzary, RO

cum CHD of I&PR, BTC; Pradeep Brahma, OSD, I&PR, BTC; Sameswar Basumatary, Addl Director, I&PR, BTC; Manaswita Mahanta, i/c DIPRO, Kokrajhar, along with other departmental officials, apprised the Executive Member of the department's ongoing activities, communication initiatives, achievements, challenges and future priorities. They also presented an overview of the existing information dissemination framework and discussed measures for enhancing the department's outreach and public engagement efforts.

EM Begum Akhtara Ahmed stressed the importance of strengthening grassroots-level communication so that the benefits of government programmes and key public information effectively reach the intended beneficiaries across the region.

The meeting concluded with a shared commitment to further strengthen the department's communication framework and expand its outreach mechanisms to promote greater public awareness, participation and engagement in the developmental initiatives of the BTC.

Two apprehended with suspected narcotics in Jorhat

HT Correspondent

JORHAT, June 2: Two youths riding a Pulsar motorbike were nabbed with a large amount of suspected narcotics at Cholahdara Chariali here in the wee hours of Tuesday.

Acting on specific information, police apprehended the duo - who were reportedly coming from Golaghat district and recovered the contraband, which was kept in 17 soap cases.

Legal action has been initiated as per the NDPS Act against the accused youths identified as Samim Akhtar and Nazim Ahmed from Golaghat district.

AGS Biswanath felicitates meritorious students

HT Correspondent

BISWANATH CHARIALI, June 2: The Biswanath district committee of Assam Gorkha Sammelan (AGS) in collaboration with the Bhanupur and Jaisiddhi branches of the AGS felicitated the meritorious students who have passed the recently declared HSLC and HS examinations with flying colours. The felicitation programme was held at Bhanupur LPS with Hari Prasad Sarma, president of the district committee in the chair on Sunday. Dipak Gajurel, secretary of the central committee, graced the event as the chief guest.

The meeting was attended by Ishwar Tim-sina, Tarabir Chetry, Keshab Raut, Raju Limbu, Sagar Sapkota, Shyamal Rai among others. Nearly fifty meritorious students of the area were felicitated by the district committee with Gamosa, Khada, citation and a packet of books. All the proceedings were conducted by Hemanta Bhattarai, secretary of the Biswanath district committee of AGS.



KCS team wins Silver at national folk dance competition

HT Bureau

DIPHU, June 2: In a momentous achievement that has brought immense pride and honour to the region, the Karbi Cultural Society (KCS) Cultural Team secured the Silver Prize (2nd Award) at the National Talent Search Competition held in Pune, Maharashtra on Monday.

The competitive event was organised under the banner of the 22nd Cultural Forum of Performing Arts by the Akhil Bharatiya Sanskrutik Sangh, Pune—an official partner of UNESCO. The KCS team clinched the silver distinction in the "Open Category Folk Dance Competition", standing out among exceptional performing groups from across the country.

The achievement has been widely celebrated as a significant milestone for the Karbi community. The team successfully showcased the rich cultural heritage, traditional dance forms and artistic excellence of the Karbi people on a prominent national stage, earning widespread acclaim.

"The award is a matter of immense pride for the entire Karbi community and serves as recognition of the cultural richness and artistic talent of the Karbi people," said Hingchong Tisso, Secretary In-Charge of Publicity, KCS. Following the announcement of the results, members of the society, leaders and well-wishers extended their heartfelt congratulations and best wishes to the team. The community has expressed strong confidence in the troupe's future artistic success and its continuing mission to keep indigenous traditions vibrant. Building on this success, the team has achieved another elite distinction. It has been selected for the 16th Cultural Olympiad of Performing Arts 2026, scheduled to be held in the Andaman and Nicobar Islands from November 12 to 16, 2026.

This upcoming festival will provide yet another prestigious platform to represent and preserve Karbi cultural heritage on an international scale.

Bimal Bora talks on Uniform Civil Code

HT Correspondent

SIVASAGAR, June 2: Tingkhong MLA Bimal Bora on Tuesday addressed the media in Sivasagar BJP office and explained the salient features of the Uniform Civil Code bill 2026 passed in the first session of the Assam Legislative Assembly. Bora said that the BJP-led government brought the UCC in the first session of its third term as promised in its election manifesto. He also explained the provisions of the Uniform Civil Code Act.

He said that the Act bans polygamy and marriage registration and divorce registration have become compulsory. It also brings in certain restrictions to live in relationship. The main purpose, he said, of the Act is to ensure a uniform civil law system for all citizens of the state barring the Scheduled Tribes.

The BJP leadership hoped that the Equal Civil Code, Assam-2026 would further strengthen social justice, gender equality and legal transparency in the state.

Locals seek eviction from encroached grazing reserve land

HT Correspondent

NAGAON, June 2: Serious allegations have emerged regarding large-scale encroachment of government grazing reserve land at Misa Gaon Kismat under the Rangagora Mouza of the Samaguri Revenue Circle in Nagaon district by suspected illegal settlers.

According to local sources, about 20 years ago, during the tenure of the Congress government, a group of suspected illegal settlers occupied government land in the area and have since been residing there permanently.

The encroachers have allegedly occupied 21 bighas of land under Dag No 98 and about 61 bighas under Dag

No 751 at Amoni Amatol, Misa Gaon Kismat, both designated as grazing reserve land. Local indigenous residents have alleged that more than 120 families are illegally occupying the land.

Although eviction notices were issued during the Congress regime, the administration allegedly failed to carry out any eviction drive for unexplained reasons. Locals stated that an eviction order was also issued by a court in 2017 and while the administration had made preparations, the drive never materialised.

The encroaching families have reportedly constructed kutcha and pucca houses, mosques, shops and dug ponds, transforming the area into

a large settlement. They have also allegedly occupied land belonging to government institutions, including a sub-health centre.

Residents further alleged that anti-social activities, including drug peddling, continue unchecked in the settlement. Many indigenous people in the area claim they no longer feel safe because of the encroached settlement. Locals pointed out that during Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma's first term, suspected illegal settlers were evicted from government land in several areas. They have now appealed to the Chief Minister to free their area from alleged illegal encroachment, as well as other affected parts of the state.

Literary luminary Lummer Dai remembered on 87th birth



HT Correspondent

TEZPUR, June 2: Janabidyapeeth Tezpur and the Arunachal Pradesh Pensioners' Association organised a tribute and remembrance ceremony marking the 87th birth anniversary of celebrated Assamese litterateur Lummer Dai on Monday at the Lummerdai Bhavan of Janabidyapeeth here.

The programme commenced with the lighting of a lamp and garlanding of the portrait of the eminent writer by the former president of the Sonitpur Zila Sahitya Sabha and noted novelist Dr Bhupen Saikia. Speaking on the occasion, Dr Saikia recalled that Lummer Dai, born into an illiterate society in the remote village of Chiluk in Arunachal Pradesh had devoted himself to literature from his student days itself.

His debut work 'Udayachalor Sadhu' written at the age of just 19 was published by the Assam Sahitya Sabha. Through novels such as Paharor Sile Sile, Prithibir Hahi, Mon aru Mon, Koinar Mulya and Upor Mohol he enriched Assamese literature immensely.

"Lummer Dai was a bridge of harmony between Assam and Arunachal," Dr Saikia said, quoting the writer: "The people of Arunachal understand the hearts of the people of Assam and the people of Assam know the souls of those in Arunachal, ours is a bond of brotherhood."

Notably, Lummer Dai had inaugurated the open session of the 67th Dibrugarh session and the 69th North Lakhimpur session of the Assam Sahitya Sabha which continues to honour his legacy through the Lummer Dai Award. Chittadev Sharma, president of the undivided Sonitpur district unit of the Arunachal Pensioners' Association highlighted the significant role played by Dr Birendra Kumar Bhattacharyya editor of the literary journal Ramdhenu in shaping Lummer Dai's literary life and philosophy.

The programme, coordinated by Janabidyapeeth secretary Bhuban Goswami, concluded with a vote of thanks by Deepak Mukhia of the Arunachal Pensioners' Association who pledged continued support for such commemorative events in the future.

PCB organises painting competition ahead of World Environment Day



HT Correspondent

SIVASAGAR, June 2: The Pollution Control Board (PCB) Sivasagar Zonal Office in association with Sivasagar Sanmilita Sewa (SSS), organised a painting competition in Sivasagar Government HS School among school children on the UNEP theme, "Inspired by Nature, for Climate, Our Future" on Sunday on the occasion of World Environment Day 2026. Over 200 students took part in the competition.

Inaugurating the competition,

the zonal Officer of the PCB, Jayanta Dutta, said that the objective is to connect young minds with colourful nature and factors affecting our environment. Sarat Hazarika, secretary, SSS, said that the competition is part of the wide range of social activities the SSS is involved in. Dr Utpal Dutta, Dean, Sibsagar University, who was present on the occasion, said that environment degradation will jeopardise the entire ecosystem if we do not pay heed to the earnings. The prize winners in the compe-

tion were Lionjyoti Gogoi, Anaya Hussain and Priyangshu Mandal achieving the first, second and third prizes in Group A. In Group B, the first three positions went to Anirban Gogoi, Rupankrita Baruah and Atreyee Sharma while in Group C, the position holders were Luis Baruah, Tamann Ahmed and Sarfaraj Amin Rahman.

The team of officials visited Fuleswari Girls' HS School and demonstrated before the students the table of dos and don'ts to keep our environment healthy.

DC reviews Census 2027 training programme

HT Bureau

DIPHU, June 2: District Commissioner cum Principal Census Officer Aranyak Saikia, IAS on Tuesday reviewed the ongoing three-day training programme on Census Operations 2027. The high-level review meeting evaluated the progress of the training session, which commenced on June 1 and is scheduled to conclude on June 3, 2026.

The intensive training is being attended by all Charge Census Officers, District & Charge Assistants and Technical Assistants. The core focus of this phase is to equip personnel with administrative and technical expertise for the upcoming House Listing and Housing Operations (HLO) Phase-I of Census 2027.

During his review, Aranyak Saikia emphasised that absolute procedural accuracy and comprehensive capacity building are non-negotiable for a successful exercise. He instructed officials to ensure robust field-level preparedness, highlighting that a smooth, efficient and reliable census depends entirely on the meticulous execution of data collection at the grassroots level.

The review session underscored the importance of cross-departmental coordination, seamless data reporting and the proactive resolution of technical bottlenecks.

MCLA Daobaisa nominates as leader of UPPL in BTCLA

UPPL holds 28th CWC meeting in Kokrajhar

HT Correspondent

KOKRAJHAR, June 2: The 28th Central Working Committee (CWC) meeting of the United People's Party Liberal (UPPL) was held on Tuesday at Banargaon Community Hall in Kokrajhar district.

The meeting was presided over by UPPL president and Rajya Sabha MP Pramod Boro and was attended by senior party leaders, including UPPL founder president and former Assam cabinet minister Urkhao Gwra Brahma, Rajya Sabha MP and working president Rungwra Narzary, Lok Sabha MP Joyanta Basumatary, along with all MCLAs, central committee members and district-level leaders.

During the meeting, leaders reviewed the party's organisational activities and discussed various issues concerning the development and welfare of the people of the Bodoland Territorial Region (BTR) and Assam.

The CWC adopted several important resolutions and decisions aimed at strengthening the party's grassroots structure, enhancing organisational effectiveness and ensuring better delivery of services and development initiatives to



the people. During the meeting, BTC MCLA and senior

UPPL leader, Daobaisa Boro has been appointed as leader of the UPPL for the BTC Legislative Assembly. The party also expressed serious concern on the price rise of the essential commodities as well as LPG, petrol, diesels across the state and urged the governments as well as concerned authorities to take necessary steps to rollback the price rises.

UPPL chief Pramod Boro told that the party discussed elaborately on the strengthening of the party affairs. He said that the party is committed to work for all round development and welfare of the citizens across the region. He stated that the party is getting well being response from the grassroots and accordingly party workers and leaders are working towards the welfare and uplift of the people.

"The meeting thoroughly discussed regarding the performance of UPPL in the last Assam Assembly election. Despite UPPL's defeated in the last election, all the workers are seen very enthusiastic in strengthening the party. The party has vowed to continue to work for the inclusive development of the BTR in days to come", Boro added.

QUOTE OF THE DAY

Hope is being able to see that there is light despite all of the darkness. - Desmond Tutu

AI influence and job stability

The dimension of the threat from Artificial Intelligence to the human labour force is becoming more clearer as AI enters its new stage of development. The first wave of artificial intelligence largely functioned like an assistant. It made workers write code faster, summarise documents, analyse data and automate repetitive tasks. Companies presented these tools as productivity enhancers rather than job destroyers. But the next stage of AI development is qualitatively different. "Agentic AI" systems are capable of independently executing complex tasks with minimal human supervision. These threaten to alter the economics of white-collar employment itself. The implications extend far beyond the technology sector. In advanced countries, firms are already slowing recruitment at junior levels. Entry level programming, technical writing, basic legal drafting and standardized analytical work are increasingly being handled by AI-assisted systems. Companies still need experienced professionals to supervise outcome. But the pyramid beneath them is narrowing. That matters to the Indian middle class. It depends not only on elite jobs, but a steady pipeline of entry level employment. Such employment allows young workers to enter the system. Its service economy was built around structured, rule-based and English language tasks that AI performs well. The country's IT-services industry succeeded because it industrialized knowledge work.

Artificial intelligence may industrialise it further. But there would be fewer humans required in the chain. In all, 60 percent of entry level and repetitive technological jobs are threatened to be displaced by AI use. Major IT firms and outsourcing units are shifting from headcount-based hiring to outcome-based contracts. They are using coding and debugging co-pilots. Generative AI is disrupting Indian Business Processing Outsourcing (BPOs) and customer service. The BPOs employ 1.6 million people. Natural Language Processing (NLP) tools can now automate upto 80 percent of routine customer queries. Thereby, it reduces the need for human agents. The danger is not immediate mass unemployment. AI systems still suffer from reliability problems. Autonomous decision making remains risky in fields where errors in fields involving high financial, legal or reputational costs. High end computing infrastructure is also expensive.

If white collar employment loses the stability it once promised, economic anxiety would sharpen in India's densely populated urban centres. Bengaluru, Hyderabad, Pune and Gurgaon emerged symbols of aspiring India will be the worse-hit. Government has not yet grasped the scale of the transition. Public debate still rates AI as an innovation story. It is yet to be looked upon as a source of structural labour disruption. Technology is threatening to reduce large sections of routine knowledge work. Reskilling alone may not be enough. The AI will undoubtedly create wealth. Yet there remains an unanswered question. Will it also create enough human work?

Brain Drain and Assam's intellectual future

Human capital has always been the most valuable resource possessed by any society. Nations rise not merely because of their geographical advantages, natural resources, or economic strength, but because of the quality of minds they nurture and retain. The story of progress across the world has repeatedly demonstrated that knowledge, innovation, and intellectual capacity form the foundation upon which sustainable development is built. Assam, a land blessed with rich natural resources, vibrant cultural traditions, and immense human potential, today faces a challenge that threatens its future more profoundly than many visible economic or political problems. This challenge is the persistent outflow of talented individuals from the state, commonly referred to as brain drain. While migration in pursuit of education, employment, and better opportunities is a natural phenomenon in an interconnected world, the continued inability of Assam to retain or attract back its brightest minds has created an intellectual vacuum whose consequences are becoming increasingly visible. The issue extends beyond the departure of a few doctors, engineers, scientists, or scholars. It reflects a broader structural weakness in the state's educational, economic, social, and institutional environment. Every year, thousands of talented students leave Assam to pursue higher studies in metropolitan cities and foreign countries. Many among them establish successful careers and gain recognition in their respective fields. However, only a small fraction eventually return to contribute directly to the development of their homeland. As a result, Assam loses not only skilled professionals but also future innovators, researchers, entrepreneurs, policymakers, and intellectual leaders who could have played transformative roles in shaping the state's future. This continuous outflow has gradually weakened the intellectual foundation of society and raised serious questions about Assam's capacity to compete in an increasingly knowledge-driven global economy.

The roots of this problem lie deep within the structure of the state's educational and professional ecosystem. Education in Assam has traditionally been viewed as a pathway to secure employment rather than a means of fostering creativity, innovation, and critical thinking. From an early age, students are often encouraged to focus primarily on examination results and government job aspirations. Such a system rewards conformity rather than originality. As a consequence, many talented young people find limited opportunities to explore their unique abilities and intellectual interests. The situation becomes more complicated at the higher education level. Despite the presence of several universities and colleges, the state continues to face significant challenges in providing world-class research facilities, advanced laboratories, modern academic resources, and a dynamic intellectual environment. Research culture remains weak in many institutions, and opportunities for interdisciplinary exploration are limited. Talented students who aspire to engage in cutting-edge research or specialized professional training often find themselves compelled to leave the state. Once exposed to superior infrastructure, greater academic freedom, and wider professional networks elsewhere, many discover that returning to Assam may require sacrificing opportunities for growth and advancement. Furthermore, concerns regarding bureaucratic inefficiencies, limited funding for research, and occasional allegations of favoritism in appointments and promotions contribute to a perception that merit alone may not guarantee success within the local system. Such perceptions discourage talented individuals from investing their futures in the state. The result is a cycle in which the departure of capable individuals weakens institutions further, making them less attractive for future generations of talent. Over time, this cycle erodes intellectual vitality and creates a gap between Assam and regions that have successfully built knowledge-based economies through sustained investment in human capital.

The consequences of brain drain are visible across multiple sectors of Assamese society. Economically, the loss of skilled professionals limits the state's ability to generate innovation-driven growth. Modern economies increasingly depend on knowledge-intensive industries, technological advancement, and entrepreneurship. Regions that successfully retain and attract talent often become centers of investment, research, and industrial development. Assam, despite possessing abundant natural wealth, has struggled to fully harness these opportunities. The absence of a large pool of highly skilled professionals affects the growth of industries, start-ups, research organizations, and technological enterprises. Many businesses are forced to recruit expertise from outside the state, while local talent continues to seek opportunities elsewhere. This creates a paradox in which unemployment coexists with shortages of specialized skills. Beyond economics, brain drain also influences social and cultural life. Intellectual communities thrive through interaction, debate, and the exchange of ideas. When a significant proportion of scholars, researchers, writers, scientists, and innovators leave a region, the quality of public discourse can suffer. Serious engagement with complex issues may gradually be replaced by superficial discussions and short-term concerns. Institutions that once served as centers of intellectual leadership may struggle to maintain relevance. Cultural development can also be affected when talented individuals become disconnected from their linguistic and social roots. In Assam, concerns have emerged regarding the weakening connection between modern knowledge systems and the Assamese language. Many young professionals educated outside the state increasingly operate within environments where Assamese has limited functional relevance. While global engagement is undoubtedly beneficial, the absence of strong mechanisms to connect intellectual achievement with local cultural development risks creating a generation whose professional success remains detached from the advancement of their own society. This intellectual disconnect has broader implications for the preservation of cultural identity and the ability of society to address its unique challenges through locally grounded solutions.

Another critical dimension of Assam's intellectual future concerns the environment in which talent is expected to flourish. Retaining talent requires more than employment opportunities; it demands a social ecosystem that values knowledge, rewards innovation, and encourages independent thinking. Unfortunately, many talented individuals perceive a gap between aspiration and reality within the state. Creative ideas often encounter institutional resistance. Entrepreneurs face bureaucratic hurdles. Researchers struggle with limited resources. Professionals seeking to introduce new approaches may encounter skepticism rather than support. In such circumstances, ambitious individuals naturally gravitate toward environments where their abilities are more likely to be recognized and utilized. Social attitudes also play a significant role. Societies that celebrate intellectual achievement tend to inspire future generations to pursue excellence. However, when material success becomes the primary measure of accomplishment, intellectual pursuits may lose social prestige. Young people require role models whose achievements demonstrate the value of scholarship, innovation, and public service. Equally important is the need for strong civic infrastructure, quality healthcare, educational institutions, cultural opportunities, and a high quality of life. Talented professionals often make long-term decisions not only on the basis of salary but also on the overall environment available to their families and children. Assam's ability to create attractive urban centers, improve public services, and strengthen digital connectivity will significantly influence its capacity to retain skilled individuals. Furthermore, the state must recognize the potential of its diaspora. Thousands

of Assamese professionals living across India and abroad possess valuable expertise and networks. Instead of viewing migration solely as a loss, policymakers should develop mechanisms that enable these individuals to contribute through mentorship, collaboration, investment, research partnerships, and knowledge exchange. Advances in technology have made geographical distance less significant than ever before. Properly harnessed, the Assamese diaspora can become a powerful resource for intellectual and economic development.

Despite the seriousness of the challenge, the future is far from hopeless. Brain drain is not an irreversible phenomenon. Several regions around the world that once experienced significant talent outflows have successfully transformed themselves into hubs of innovation and opportunity. Assam can achieve a similar transformation through long-term vision, institutional reform, and collective commitment. Educational reform must occupy a central place in this process. Schools and universities should emphasize creativity, critical thinking, research, and problem-solving alongside academic achievement. Greater investment in higher education, research infrastructure, and innovation ecosystems is essential. Transparent and merit-based systems of recruitment and promotion can help restore confidence in public institutions. Policies that support entrepreneurship, start-up development, and technology-driven industries can create meaningful opportunities for talented youth within the state. Equally important is fostering a culture that respects intellectual achievement and encourages independent thought. Society must learn to celebrate scientists, teachers, researchers, writers, innovators, and social reformers with the same enthusiasm often reserved for political or financial success. The preservation and promotion of the Assamese language as a medium for intellectual discourse must also remain a priority. Translation initiatives, research publications, and public engagement in Assamese can help bridge the gap between global knowledge and local understanding. Ultimately, the future of Assam will depend not only on its natural resources or economic policies but on its ability to nurture, retain, and empower its people. Human intellect remains the most renewable and transformative resource available to any society. If Assam succeeds in creating an environment where talent can thrive, contribute, and find fulfillment, the current challenge of brain drain can be transformed into an opportunity for renewal. The state possesses immense potential, and its future need not be defined by the departure of its brightest minds. Instead, it can be shaped by a collective determination to build a society where knowledge is valued, innovation is encouraged, and every talented individual finds a reason to invest their abilities in the progress of their homeland.



DEGREE OF THOUGHT
By: Himangshu Ranjan Bhuyan

from investing their futures in the state. The result is a cycle in which the departure of capable individuals weakens institutions further, making them less attractive for future generations of talent. Over time, this cycle erodes intellectual vitality and creates a gap between Assam and regions that have successfully built knowledge-based economies through sustained investment in human capital.

The consequences of brain drain are visible across multiple sectors of Assamese society. Economically, the loss of skilled professionals limits the state's ability to generate innovation-driven growth. Modern economies increasingly depend on knowledge-intensive industries, technological advancement, and entrepreneurship. Regions that successfully retain and attract talent often become centers of investment, research, and industrial development. Assam, despite possessing abundant natural wealth, has struggled to fully harness these opportunities. The absence of a large pool of highly skilled professionals affects the growth of industries, start-ups, research organizations, and technological enterprises. Many businesses are forced to recruit expertise from outside the state, while local talent continues to seek opportunities elsewhere. This creates a paradox in which unemployment coexists with shortages of specialized skills. Beyond economics, brain drain also influences social and cultural life. Intellectual communities thrive through interaction, debate, and the exchange of ideas. When a significant proportion of scholars, researchers, writers, scientists, and innovators leave a region, the quality of public

Why the next Rajya Sabha MP from Arunachal Pradesh should be from the TCL region

By: Wangtum H. Lowang

Arunachal Pradesh is a land of remarkable diversity, home to more than 20 tribes and over 100 sub-tribes. While it is neither practical nor possible to ensure parliamentary representation for every tribe, it is both achievable and desirable to ensure that all major regions of the state are fairly represented in national decision-making.

Broadly, Arunachal Pradesh may be viewed as comprising four major regions: Western Arunachal (from Tawang to Pakke-Kessang), Central Arunachal (from Papum Pare to Upper Siang), Eastern Arunachal (from Dibang Valley to Namsai), and South-Eastern Arunachal comprising Tirap, Changlang, and Longding (TCL).

Since Arunachal Pradesh's first Rajya Sabha election in 1978, representation in the Upper House has come primarily from the Central and Eastern regions. Central Arunachal has produced five Rajya Sabha Members, while Eastern Arunachal has produced two. In contrast, the TCL region remains the only major geopolitical region of the state that has never been represented in the Rajya Sabha.

For nearly five decades, Tirap, Changlang, and Longding have remained absent from Arunachal Pradesh's Rajya Sabha journey despite their significant contributions to the state's development, security, and cultural heritage. Located along the international border with Myanmar, the region occupies a strategically important position and is home to vibrant indigenous communities whose perspectives deserve a place in national policymaking.

The call for a Rajya Sabha representative from TCL is not a demand for special treatment, nor is it directed against any tribe, district, or region. It is simply a call for equitable regional representation. Every major region of Arunachal Pradesh should have an opportunity to contribute its voice, aspirations, and experiences to the Parliament of India.

The present Rajya Sabha election offers a unique opportunity to correct this long-standing imbalance. Out of the twelve candidates who have filed nominations, eleven belong to regions that have already enjoyed Rajya Sabha representation. Only one candidate comes from the TCL region.

This fact carries special significance. Not only has TCL never sent a representative to the Rajya Sabha, but this is also among the very few occasions—if not the first—when the region has produced a serious candidate for consideration. As such, this lone candidature represents far more than an individual political aspiration. It symbolizes the hopes and aspirations of an entire region that has patiently waited for nearly fifty years to be included in the state's parliamentary representation.

Electing the next Rajya Sabha MP from TCL would therefore be more than the selection of a candidate. It would be a historic step toward ensuring balanced regional representation in Arunachal Pradesh. It would affirm the state's commitment to inclusivity, fairness, and equal participation, while sending a powerful message that every major region matters and deserves a seat at the national table.

The question before the electors is not merely who should occupy the Rajya Sabha seat. The larger question is whether the only major region of Arunachal Pradesh that has remained unrepresented since 1978 should finally be given its rightful opportunity to contribute to national policymaking.

After nearly five decades, the case for TCL's first Rajya Sabha representative is compelling. The time has come to complete the circle of representation in Arunachal Pradesh. The next Rajya Sabha Member from Arunachal Pradesh should be from the TCL region.

Birsa Munda's Enduring Legacy in modern India

AUTHOR

By: Dipak Kurmi



The foundational ethos of India's democratic landscape has been significantly enriched by the profound moral force emanating from the historic forests of Chotanagpur, epitomized by Bhagwan Birsa Munda. Revered across generations as Dharti Aaba, or the Protector of the Land, this legendary figure transcends standard historical classification to serve as a perpetual symbol of dignity, structural resistance, and tribal self-respect. His expansive vision dictated that indigenous identity must be aggressively preserved, socio-economic equality must possess genuine material substance, and the fruits of systemic development must reach the most marginalized segments of society through an unyielding framework of justice. In the current era of statecraft, following twelve years of a heavily renewed national emphasis on inclusive and targeted developmental policies, these core foundational ideals have transitioned from idealistic philosophies into active mechanisms of governance, thereby shaping the socio-economic contours and aspirations of a rapidly evolving nation.

For many decades, the historic legacy of Bhagwan Birsa Munda remained largely safeguarded within the intimate oral traditions, traditional songs, and collective memories of the various tribal communities spanning the vast expanse of the Indian subcontinent. A landmark shift in the institutional acknowledgment of this heritage occurred in 2021, when the Prime Minister formally elevated this local legacy to the highest echelons of national recognition by designating the fifteenth of November—the birth anniversary of Birsa Munda—as Janjatiya Gaurav Diwas. This institutional commemoration deepened considerably with the subsequent state-directed declaration of the Janjatiya Gaurav Varsh, which spanned from November 15, 2024, to November 15, 2025, to formally mark the historic occasion of his one-hundred-and-fiftieth birth anniversary. During this highly coordinated commemorative year, more than two lakh distinct public events were strategically organized across the country, successfully engaging over three crore citizens in a nationwide celebration aimed at elevating indigenous pride and documenting ancient heritage.

The sprawling nature of these celebrations illuminated the immense richness, cultural complexity, and geographical diversity inherent to contemporary Indian tribal life. High-profile national platforms seamlessly integrated diverse cultural expressions, ranging from the structurally intricate Hornbill Festival in Nagaland and the intellectually rigorous Tribal Literary Festival in Kerala, to the highly specialized National Tribal Film Festival in Jharkhand and the physically demanding Canoe Sprint Championship in Telangana. These comprehensive celebratory avenues effectively brought indigenous art, athletic prowess, and oral storytelling out of peripheral isolation and directly into the primary focus of national media and discourse. Collectively, these initiatives witnessed active, grassroots participation from more than eleven lakh tribal citizens who proudly represented highly distinct lineages, cultures, and regional communities, thereby serving as a definitive state declaration that tribal heritage constitutes a living, breathing component of modern statehood.

Building upon twelve consecutive years of highly sustained and deliberately focused state efforts toward indigenous empowerment and socio-economic inclusion, the Janjatiya Gaurav Utsav 2026 has systematically advanced this momentum through the implementation of four distinct thematic weeks designed to reflect the entire developmental spectrum. The third week of this commemorative assembly addresses a core philosophical and administrative dilemma crucial to the future trajectory of the nation: the precise methodology through which a state recognizes the marginalized historical actors who built its foundation, alongside the corresponding strategy required to intellectually equip the next generation to carry that legacy forward.

Rectifying historical oversight requires a systemic effort to restore the names and narratives of countless local tribal heroes whose vital contributions were conspicuously absent from mainstream, post-independence historical literature for several generations. To counter this historical omission, specialized Tribal Research Institutes are currently executing an expansive mandate across various states by rigorously documenting oral histories, recording complex indigenous ecological knowledge systems, and structurally preserving vulnerable tribal languages. At present, twenty-nine such specialized research institutes, operating across twenty-six distinct States and three separate Union Territories, are intensely engaged in this ethnographic and linguistic preservation work, which has already yielded the documentation of three hundred and fifty-five operational primers across two hundred and twenty-two distinct tribal languages. Simultaneously, this historiographical restoration is achieving permanent material form through the establishment of dedicated Tribal Freedom Fighters Museums, conceived by the Ministry of Tribal Affairs as physical zones of national memory. The Ministry has sanctioned eleven such state-of-the-art museums across ten states to systematically honor the armed and peaceful resistance led by tribal groups against colonial forces, with four premier institutions already fully inaugurated, including the landmark facilities dedicated to Bhagwan Birsa Munda in Ranchi and Shaheed Veer Narayan Singh in Nava Raipur.

From the solemn preservation of past histories, the state apparatus has deliberately shifted its institutional focus toward the material and intellectual empowerment of the

contemporary youth generation. This structural transition is most transparently visible within the geometric expansion of highly targeted scholarship allocations administered directly under the auspices of the central ministry. In the current academic cycle alone, an unprecedented total of twenty-six lakh, one thousand, nine hundred and seventy-nine tribal students have been financially supported through five highly specialized scholarship configurations, representing a massive consolidated national expenditure of thirty-eight hundred and twenty-five point five four crores. A significant percentage of these beneficiaries represent the absolute first generation within their respective familial lineages to successfully secure access to formal higher education, thereby carrying the collective developmental aspirations of historically isolated geographical enclaves. Notably, demonstrating a massive shift in gender parity within rural demographics, over fifty-six percent of these current academic scholarship beneficiaries are women.

This educational revolution is further underscored by the unprecedented spatial expansion of the Eklavya Model Residential Schools, which are meticulously designed to provide high-quality residential secondary education within remote tribal blocks. The total volume of sanctioned institutions has experienced a massive surge, increasing dramatically from a mere one hundred and sixty-seven schools in the 2013-14 fiscal year to an expansive network of seven hundred and twenty-three sanctioned institutions by the 2025-26 academic cycle, marking a monumental growth trajectory of over three hundred and thirty percent. Concurrently, the number of fully functional, operational campuses grew from one hundred and twenty-three to four hundred and ninety-nine within that identical timeframe, while active student enrollment witnessed a corresponding increase from thirty-four thousand to over one lakh fifty-six thousand individuals. By embedding these high-tier educational enclaves directly within deep tribal geographies, the state is successfully neutralizing historical spatial disadvantages and preparing a new cadre of indigenous leaders.

In tandem with this far-reaching educational paradigm shift, a highly consequential transformation is occurring within rural grass-

roots governance, engineered almost exclusively by the structural ascension of tribal women into positions of economic leadership. Representing a massive demographic bloc of five point two zero crore individuals, tribal women constitute nearly half of the entire indigenous population of India, and their systematic transition from domestic managers to formal economic leaders has become central to current local administration. This economic mobilization is executed through the widespread deployment of Van Dhan Vikas Kendras, which are designed to optimize the value-addition and market linkage of minor forest produce collected by indigenous groups. At present, forty-seven hundred and twelve such centers have been officially sanctioned by the state, of which thirty-three hundred and sixty-five are completely operational, directly providing sustainable livelihood generation for over twelve point nine lakh rural citizens, with women constituting more than half of the total registered workforce.

Ultimately, these interconnected frameworks of historical remembrance, cultural preservation, massive educational funding, and female economic mobilization form cohesive components of a larger, evolving sovereign narrative wherein tribal citizens are directly steering the developmental trajectory of the state. Through advanced policy blueprints like the Dharti Aaba Janjatiya Gram Utkarsh Abhiyan and the Pradhan Mantri Janjati Adivasi Nyaya Maha Abhiyan, transformative structural changes are penetrating the most isolated topographies through an innovative administrative paradigm of inter-departmental convergence and institutional collaboration. The modern rise of indigenous scholars, the state-level recognition of previously unsung historical revolutionaries, and the vibrant leadership of tribal women collectively demonstrate that the foundational principles of Bhagwan Birsa Munda remain highly influential in contemporary governance. India's population of more than ten point five crore tribal citizens no longer occupy the passive margins of economic progress, but stand as primary, active contributors to the overarching macroeconomic vision of a developed nation, ensuring that the legacy of Dharti Aaba continues to walk forward with undisputed moral authority and structural strength. (The writer can be reached at dipakurmiglpd@gmail.com)

Missing indicators in NFHS-6 shield two Modi Govt flagship schemes from scrutiny

By: Banjot Kaur

The sixth round of the National Family Health Survey (NFHS-6) has some key indicators missing which would have revealed the performances of at least two flagship schemes of the Narendra Modi government.

The NFHS – the largest health survey of the country – is conducted by the International Institute for Population Sciences (IIPS), under the aegis of the Union health ministry. The NFHS-6 was carried out in 2023-24 and NFHS-5 in 2019-21. The fact-sheets of the NFHS-6 were released on May 29, 2026.

One among the missing indicators is access to clean cooking fuel.

The NFHS-5 had shown that more than 40% households did not have access to clean cooking fuel – something that questioned the efficacy of the Union government's Pradhan Mantri Ujjwala Yojana, which was supposed to ease the way for LPG connections to poor women. Similarly, it also showed that India was not close to being open-defecation free – an aim of the Swachh Bharat Mission.

It is noteworthy that after the release of NFHS-5, the then IIPS director K.S. James lost his chair.

What is also missing from NFHS-6 is the sex ratio at birth and infant and child mortality rates – although these two are reflected in other data-collection exercises of the government.

"The NFHS give district-wise data, unlike other health surveys conducted by the government. This district-wise data is important for fine-tuning policy making for different socio-economic groups and various districts," a former IIPS faculty-member said, anonymously.

NFHS' numbers also slightly differed from other health surveys conducted by the government.

The prevalence of anaemia indicator is also missing from this round of the NFHS. The high prevalence of anaemia, as presented in NFHS-5, had made news the last time. Now, the government's National Institute of Nutrition is going to measure its prevalence through a method different from what was deployed by IIPS. The IIPS' method, though, was also marked controversial by some experts.

Obesity and other ill

The sixth round of NFHS-6 also indicates a rise in obesity, high blood pressure, and diabetes among both men and women in the

country.

The NFHS-6 says that a little less than 30.7% of the female population aged 15 and above – 21.6 crore people – is obese. The jump in these figures in the NFHS-6 from the NFHS-5 is 6.7 percentage points.

Similarly, 27.3% of the male population of the country is obese – a jump of 4.4 percentage points from the figure of the NFHS-5. In absolute numbers, this translates into 20.4 crores males.

The increasing obesity of the male and female population is a continuance of trends as reflected in previous rounds of NFHSs as well. But what is significant is that the rise in obesity levels registered between the NFHS-6 and NFHS-5 is more than the rise which happened between the two previous rounds, i.e. NFHS-5 and NFHS-4.

Obesity, high blood pressure or hypertension, and diabetes are linked with each other. No wonder, therefore, that the proportion of the male population which has 'very high' levels of diabetes (more than 160 milligram per decilitre of blood) has risen by 3.8% points. The jump in the female population of this proportion is by 2.8 percentage points. This translates into very high absolute numbers – 8.15 crore crore for males and also 6.42 crore for females.

The hypertension picture also presents concern, with about 15% of the women population (10.5 crore) and 16% of the male population (12 crore) of the country suffering from mild to moderately high levels of the disease.

The rising trend of all these diseases, referred to as non-communicable diseases (NCDs), as reported in NFHS, is in line with all international reports on India. The country contributes more than half of the NCD deaths in Southeast Asia.

Though the government runs a dedicated programme to combat NCDs, their prevalence only seems to be going up.

"The bulk of NCD programmes in the public health sector are about measuring parameters like hypertension, diabetes, and monitoring heart problems. But preventive aspects are lacking," said Indranil, a health economist, who teaches at OP Jindal University.

"The NCD programmes are in nascent stages. It may be adding to the increase of the population being covered in terms of diagnosing these diseases but still quality primary care for NCDs is virtually absent in the public system, the

Ayushman Scheme is still at a nascent stage," he added.

Another correlation, which some of the public health experts draw in this context is of the lack of availability of a healthy diet for pregnant women and obesity.

"The offspring become obese if exposed to maternal nutrient-restriction in utero," says a 2013 study. In turn, when an obese mother gives birth to a child, it may adversely affect the metabolism of the progeny also, in the long-term. In scientific parlance, this is described as fetal programming.

The NFHS also shows that, on the one hand, the levels of obesity are going up and, on the other hand, the prevalence of being underweight is also rising among men and women. About 20% of women and 20% of men are underweight.

What is to be noted here is that the proportion of underweight men and women had declined between NFHS-4 and NFHS-5 periods. But the trend has been reversed in the latest NFHS-6 period.

Rajib Dasgupta, a professor of JNU's Centre of Social Medicine and Community Health said, in his personal capacity, that this paradox points towards what is called 'epidemiological polarisation'. In other words, it reflects the double burden of health issues which lie on opposite ends of the spectrum.

"So while one agenda of dealing with the underweight population is unfinished, the other problem of obesity is growing," he added.

Indranil, meanwhile, points to the affordability of a healthy diet.

"The availability of adequate and good quality food – and not just food – is very low in India. This contributes, on one hand, to underweight men and women, and on the other hand, people being subjected to eating unhealthy food contributing to obesity," Indranil explained.

Breastfeeding practices

Another trend which has been reversed in the period considered by the latest round of the NFHS is the rise in 'exclusive breastfeeding' till six months. This is important to ensure nutrition for a child, development of its long-term immunity, and proper hydration during this time period. The decline in this also indicates early weaning from breastfeeding.

Though the number of women who initiated breastfeeding within the first hour of birth of their child has gone up, the declining trend of exclusive breastfeeding indicates

this: While the rise in institutional delivery is leading to ensuring good practices, the trend is not able to continue after the mother goes out of the ambit of the healthcare system.

After the period of exclusive breastfeeding is over, that is six months after birth, the child is also supposed to eat semi-solid food along with their mother's milk.

One of the most remarkable statistics in NFHS-6 is in this category. Only 15.3% children in the category of 6-23 months are able to get an adequate diet which includes solid or semi-solid foods twice or thrice a day. "There is some improvement but still, access is abysmally low and very worrying," Dasgupta said.

This can contribute to long-term health problems for a child including malnutrition, low immunity levels, and development of metabolic diseases.

Meanwhile, the use of modern contraceptive methods has declined among women this time, which had actually gone up in the previous two rounds of NFHSs. The modern methods include female sterilisation, male sterilisation, pills, condoms and injectables.

Interestingly, as always, the proportion of female sterilisation far outweighs male sterilisation, thus pointing out the disproportionate burden of family planning on women, as far as this method is concerned.

Other indicators Health insurance coverage has gone up significantly. As many as 60.2% of households have a member covered under a health insurance or financing scheme as against the 41% previously.

However, despite the increasing insurance coverage, patients' out-of-pocket expenditure has gone up by 43.4% of the total health expenditure in 2022-23. It also went up from 39.4% in the previous year, as per the National Health Accounts report released by the government on May 28.

Insurance mostly covers admission costs while outpatient department costs remain largely uncovered which contribute to high out-of-pocket expenses. The OPD services form the bulk of healthcare sought by citizens of the country.

The proportion of women receiving four ante-natal health care (ANCs) check-ups during the course of pregnancy has gone up to 65.2% from 58.5%.

"There is an improvement in



coverage of four ANC visits but still more than one-third of pregnant women are not getting all four ante-natal care check ups and that is a glaring gap. The National Health Mission funds are being reduced, which constrains further expansions," Indranil said.

Institutional delivery rates, on expected lines, have gone up to a healthy 90% from 88.6%.

"Institutional delivery is a one-time engagement with the health infrastructure [a woman gets admitted for delivery and comes back] but complete ante-natal check-up, done during the entire course of pregnancy, requires continuous engagement with the health system," Indranil said.

This reveals that the long-term engagement of women is not as good as the one-time intervention – indicating the status of public health infrastructure, among other factors.

C-section birth rates have also risen in both public and private health facilities. As many as 54.1% of the deliveries in the private sector are done through this method while in public facilities, they remain confined to 16.9%.

"This trend may partly be explained by individuals with high income having better access to insurance schemes or ease of referrals, leading to higher caesarean delivery rates," says a study published in Lancet Southeast Asia, analysing the results of NFHS-5.

"[The] high rates are suggestive of overuse without medical necessity, which is associated with higher rates of adverse outcomes (infection, haemorrhage, surgical complications) and misallocation of resources," it says.

While there is a concern of unnecessary C-sections, the study

also points out that the cultural and social factors such as fear of normal childbirth, the desire to deliver on an auspicious day, and a preference for painless deliveries and smaller families, also potentially contribute to higher C-section rates

As per WHO norms, C-section deliveries should not be more than 10-15% of all deliveries.

The WHO clarifies that though there are no country-specific recommendations, in general, its studies say that a proportion beyond this is not beneficial in reducing child or maternal mortality.

"Every effort should be made to provide Caesarean sections to women in need, rather than striving to achieve a specific rate," the WHO says in the Lancet Southeast Asia study.

State-wise picture

There is large variation among states when it comes to the percentage of deliveries taking place through C-section in private facilities.

It ranges from 81.4% in Assam to 49.3% in Bihar and 47.3% in Uttar Pradesh.

Kerala has an interesting statistic. In almost all states, the percentage of C-section deliveries taking place in private and public health facilities show a sharp gap. It is much higher in private facilities. But Kerala is an outlier. The percentage there is very close as public health facilities register 39% C-section deliveries (of all deliveries conducted) while private facilities have 42.5%.

The NFHS is revealing when one looks at some of the least developed states of the country, like Bihar, Chhattisgarh, Uttar Pradesh and Odisha.

C-section deliveries in public health facilities are also a function

of better health infrastructure and the presence of trained personnel like gynaecologists and anaesthesiologists, especially in primary and secondary healthcare centres. Since Kerala has been traditionally known for good public health infrastructure, the public-private gap is not wide there.

Though Bihar has officially banned alcohol for more than 10 years now, its illicit consumption is often in the news. The consumption of alcohol among men has increased from 18.7% (NFHS-5) to 18.9% (NFHS-6) in Bihar.

Only 63% women aged 15-24 years use hygienic methods of protection during their menstrual period in Bihar.

While women's participation in the workforce has increased, gender-based violence has also decreased in Bihar.

The percentage of those aged 6-23 months receiving an adequate diet remains abysmally low in Bihar at 11.9%, though there is a jump of 1.1 percentage points.

The prevalence of hypertension has declined in Jharkhand, just like Bihar, but that of diabetes has significantly gone up among both men and women.

The trends of rising undernutrition levels and obesity hold true for Jharkhand also.

In Chhattisgarh, the consumption of tobacco has marginally increased among women while among men it has decreased. The consumption of alcohol among men has marginally increased. Only 72.7% of women in the state use hygienic protection methods during menstruation. In Odisha, only 43.9% of women have completed 10 or more years of schooling while only 49.1% men have done so. (Courtesy: The Wire)

'I identified instinctively with the working woman's concerns': Indira Jaising in a new book



By: Indira Jaising & Ritu Menon

I think it had a great deal to do with the fact that I was a woman and a first-generation lawyer. I had no role models to follow. There was no template for the kind of work I wanted to do. In many ways, that was my greatest advantage. I had the freedom to shape my identity, my practice and my choices entirely on my own terms.

When I began practising, there were no collectives of lawyers working on social and economic rights. There were no NGOs in the sense we know them today, and no meaningful system of legal aid. The legal profession was dominated by traditional, family-run firms focused almost entirely on commercial law. There were individual lawyers who took up public-interest work, but there was no institutional support for the marginalised. The Lawyers' Collective emerged from the need to collectivise legal services in the public interest and make them accessible to those who needed them most.

The generation of lawyers before me was largely preoccupied with the right to property. At that time, it was still a fundamental right, though it was later removed and reintroduced as Article 300A in 1978. Much of the litigation focused on challenging land reform laws and legislation affecting business and industry.

This is evident from the reported judgments of the period. What is striking is that there was not a single reported judgment dealing meaningfully with the rights of marginalised communities, and virtually none addressing women's rights.

Ironically, many litigants in these cases were women. But when a land reform law was challenged in a woman's name, I often found that she was merely a proxy for her family. The litigation had little to do with her rights and everything to do with protecting family property for male heirs. In those years, women's property rights were usually asserted only after their deaths, when heirs claimed inheritance from a mother who had inherited as a widow. Most such cases were initiated by upper-caste men. Even when women approached courts on their own, they were typically upper-caste women, sometimes challenging reservations for Dalits in public employment.

There were, of course, left-wing lawyers working on civil and political rights. A formative example was the challenge to the preventive detention of comrade AK Gopalan, a prominent Communist leader who had been incarcerated without trial and later detained under the Preventive Detention Act of 1950. In AK Gopalan vs State of Madras, the petition questioned the legality of his

continued detention. The case was argued by the Madras-based firm VG Rao and Company, known for its trade union work and civil rights advocacy. There has long been a tradition of left-wing activism around civil liberties: Lawyers such as KG Kannabiran, for example, exposed legal impunity and so-called encounter deaths during the Emergency and successfully challenged unlawful detention as well as loss of life and liberty. Their work set important precedents for civil rights litigation. Yet, social and economic rights – housing, work, dignity, livelihood – remained largely outside the legal imagination.

This was the environment in which I set up my practice. I had no chamber to join, no senior to rely on and no established network to fall back on. I found that freedom liberating. I began with a clean slate and could decide for myself what kind of lawyer I wished to be. I chose to focus on the concerns of working women because I instinctively identified with them. Even so, this kind of litigation carried its own burden of pain, and some of it even entered my own life. In the mid-1970s, I represented an Air India air hostess who had challenged her dismissal. While her case was still pending, she died by suicide. No one can say with certainty what drove her to it. But the fact that she did not see justice in her lifetime left a lasting grief in me. It was then I realised, in a visceral way, how brutal litigation can be for ordinary people – first, in the injustice they suffer, and then in the delays, expense, absence of effective legal aid and the courts' reluctance to confront State power and corruption.

Around the same time, I began to notice a quiet deference among judges to executive authority. There was a growing belief that the government knows best what serves the nation and, therefore, ought not to be questioned. Such deference effectively amounts to an abdication of judicial responsibility and reflects a failure to enforce the Constitution. Regrettably, this tendency remains deeply embedded in Indian judicial thinking...

We are taught, as lawyers, not to take our cases personally. We are told to main-

tain distance, to be objective. But, in practice, that barrier often collapses. One begins to suffer with one's clients, caught alongside them in a system that drains them. Many lawyers insist such identification is unwise. Seniors and peers advise keeping a safe distance. We are expected to accept that we cannot choose our cases selectively and must learn to be "objective" about our work.

This position is justified by invoking the "cab rank rule", the notion that a lawyer must take the next client who approaches, just as a taxi must take the next passenger. It is defended in the name of access to justice. But that is not the same as saying everyone is entitled to our particular service. In reality, it can become a self-serving rule, serving as a convenient cover for commercial practice.

I wanted the freedom to choose. I remember arguing on behalf of pavement dwellers that, when faced with the choice between homelessness and living on the pavements of Bombay, they had a right to reside there. It was a bold claim, born out of the legal doctrine of necessity...

Your question goes to the heart of how we understand the legitimate role of the judiciary in a democracy. As an institution, the judiciary emerged with the rise of liberalism in common-law countries and came to India through colonial rule. The idea of the rule of law has a 4,000-year history and is now accepted as the foundation of democratic governance.

In India, there was no concept of an independent judiciary in the modern sense before the Lockean idea of the social contract – a concept associated with the 17th-century English philosopher John Locke that recognises individuals as rights-bearing citizens and limits the role of the state – became widely accepted. Earlier, justice was dispensed by kings or, in certain contexts, by religious

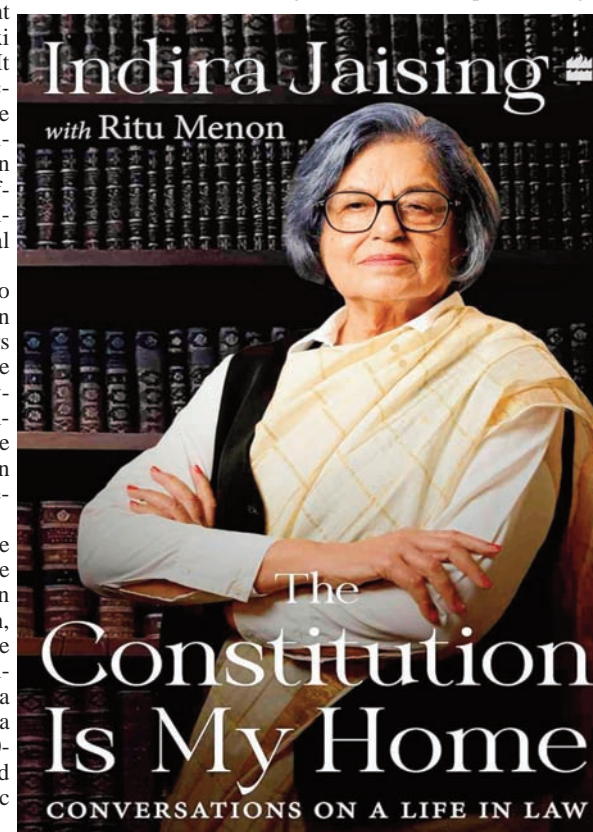
authorities. Over time, courts evolved into institutions empowered to adjudicate a wide range of disputes. Judges came to bear the responsibility of balancing individual rights against executive power. Gradually, the courtroom began to reflect the aspirations of the people and their claims upon the State – social, economic and political.

The law compels individuals to take responsibility for their actions. At the same time, it obliges the State to respect

social and economic rights. Litigation was not used as a tool for democratic norm-setting in these areas. There was only one important exception: the economic rights of the organised working class, particularly the right of proletarians to fair wages. This was in part because the Trade Unions Act of 1926 had already conferred legal recognition on trade unions, enabling them to register formally and represent workers in collective bargaining. The All India Trade Union Congress (AITUC), established in 1920 as one of the country's earliest national trade union federations, provided an organisational platform for labour activism. After Independence, most political parties developed affiliated trade unions of their own. These unions, in turn, had their own network of specialised labour lawyers. In that sense, the organised working class was relatively well represented in the courts. Yet these trade union lawyers rarely ventured into other areas of social justice. More broadly, left-wing lawyers tended to use the Constitution as a shield rather than a sword. They relied on it to defend rights, not to expand them.

Lawyers such as RK Garg and MK Ramamurthy regularly represented working-class interests before the Supreme Court. They were deeply committed constitutionalists, active in the defence of civil and political freedoms. But even they did not decisively enter the terrain of social and economic rights as a field for judicial norm-setting. Nor did they see courts as a legitimate forum for democratic discourse. It is in

that gap between constitutional promise and lived reality that democratic lawyering, as I understand it, begins. Here I parted company with the generation before me, who, often out of historical and political necessity, restricted their courtroom work to defending civil and political rights rather than advancing economic and social ones. (Courtesy: Scroll. In)



Iran's inflation hits World War II levels, deepening economic pain

DUBAI, June 2: Year-on-year inflation in Iran reached a level in May unseen since World War II, underlining the economic pain average Iranians face as the Islamic Republic worries about the war with Israel and the United States restarting.

A report Monday by Iran's Central Bank represents the first official acknowledgment of what Iranians shopping, paying for a taxi or visiting a medical clinic already know: The rial currency is battered by the war and uncertainty around it resuming.

Meanwhile, longtime problems of economic mismanagement and government corruption also appear to be dragging down Iran's oil-backed economy as it remains under a US naval blockade.

Economic pressure in the past has sparked nationwide protests, something Iran's theocracy has been trying to avoid since a crackdown on demonstrators in January killed over 7,000 people, according to activists' estimates.

But even as hard-liners hold gun-handling workshops and organise



marrriages under the shadow of a ballistic missile to bolster spirits, experts note that new demonstrations could emerge if people find themselves priced out of feeding their families.

"I have no doubt that if Trump leaves (Iran without a formal peace deal) ... most probably, we will see something like January by the end of summer because of the economic

and social situations," analyst Mohsen Jalilvand said in a video published by Iran's Fararu news website.

"We will definitely have higher prices"

Iran's Central Bank said the consumer price index, which measures a basket of goods and services, reached 77.2 per cent in May compared to the year before. It added

the rate is 8.5 per cent higher than in April. Inflation in daily and general needs — like medicine, taxi fares, tobacco and communication fees — rose 113.8 per cent from the year before.

Iran only saw worse inflation in 1942 during World War II, sparked by the British and Soviets invading the country and taking over its railway, disrupting food supplies. The lack of food, worsened by a poor harvest, sparked hyperinflation and a famine. Hunger and a typhus outbreak killed many.

A private economic think tank in Iran, the Bamdad Institute of Economic Studies, described the current figures as "an unprecedented rate since World War II." Iran's Central Bank did not acknowledge the significance of the figures.

Airstrikes this year have greatly damaged Iranian businesses and its oil industry. Meanwhile, the US blockade has been targeting Iranian crude oil shipments trying to reach the international market, a key source of hard revenue.

Tax revenues have been depressed by businesses struggling

even after the fighting paused.

The rial, which traded at 32,000 to USD 1 in 2015, now trades at over 1.7 million to USD 1.

"We will definitely have higher prices," Iranian President Masoud Pezeshkian warned in May. "We are fighting and we must accept this hardship."

Past economic woes have led to protests

In 2017 into 2018, rising food prices sparked demonstrations that killed over 20 people and saw hundreds arrested. An increase in government-subsidised gasoline prices caused protests that saw over 300 people reportedly killed.

Then came the protests over the rial at the start of this year, the most intense demonstrations to shake the Islamic Republic since its 1979 revolution and chaotic years that followed.

Tehran-based economist Saeed Leilaz, speaking to The Associated Press, warned that annual inflation in Iran could reach 80 per cent.

"Iran's society cannot tolerate above 25 per cent" annual inflation, he said. (AP)

Ultra-orthodox protesters block roads and trains across Israel over military draft



JERUSALEM, June 2: Tens of thousands of ultra-orthodox demonstrated across Israel on Monday, blocking roads and trains and setting cars on fire to protest mandatory enlistment in Israel's military.

Israel's police said demonstrators blocked major intersections and attacked a soldier who disembarked from a bus near a protest. Police struggled to control the crowds with water cannons and horses.

The protest largely crippled the country's center, with highways closed and public transportation halted by the massive crowds in both Jerusalem and the Tel Aviv metro area.

Military service is compulsory for most Jewish men and women in Israel.

The politically powerful ultra-Orthodox parties have won exemptions for their followers to forgo military service and instead study in religious seminaries, but those exemptions are under threat.

Many Israelis are tired of the longstanding system that has allowed ultra-Orthodox men to skip military service at a time when the military is stretched to its breaking point and many have served multiple tours of reserve duty. The issue is tearing apart Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's governing coalition, possibly moving elections up by several weeks this fall after the ultra-Orthodox parties withdrew their support for Netanyahu.

Each year, roughly 13,000 ultra-Orthodox men reach the conscription age of 18, but less than 10 per cent enlist, according to a parliamentary committee.

Faced with severe shortages of soldiers, the military is looking to extend the period of mandatory service. Most Jewish men are required to serve nearly three years of military service, followed by years of reserve duty. Jewish women serve two mandatory

years. "This public is determined, they see this as a war for their lives," said Israel Tropper, a demonstrator in Jerusalem. "From their perspective, going into the Israeli army means giving up religion ... we don't want to give up our religion, so from our perspective it's a war for our lives." He added that there is no way to force tens of thousands of people vehemently opposed to the idea to serve in the military.

Some protesters held signs condemning Israel saying "We would rather die as Jews than live as Zionists" and "We refuse to serve an army for the sake of the Zionist religion."

The ultra-Orthodox, who make up roughly 13 per cent of Israeli society and are the fastest growing sector, have traditionally received exemptions if they are studying full-time in religious seminaries. The exemptions date back to the birth of the state in 1948, when a small number of students sought to revive the Jewish scholarship system after it was decimated by the Holocaust.

Those exemptions — and the government stipends many seminary students receive up to the age of 26 — have infuriated many Israelis. Israel is currently maintaining a simultaneous military presence in Gaza, Lebanon and Syria, in addition to fighting a war with Iran, which has stretched its robust military to the breaking point.

The Supreme Court said the exemptions were illegal in 2017, but repeated extensions and government delay tactics have left them in place.

Among Israel's Jewish majority, mandatory military service is largely seen as a melting pot and rite of passage. Many in the insular ultra-Orthodox community fear that military service would expose young people to secular influences. (AP)

9 students appear in court over Kenya school arson that killed 16 girls

NAIROBI, June 2: Nine students accused of planning and executing an arson attack that killed 16 girls at a school in central Kenya appeared in court Tuesday.

Investigators asked for more time to probe the deadly fire. The High Court in the town of Naivasha, 90 kilometres west of the capital, Nairobi, said it will issue a ruling on Wednesday on whether the girls could be detained for a month pending investigations.

The fire on May 28 ripped through the Utumishi Girls School dormitory that houses 202 students. The school matron failed to open an emergency door, forcing all students to scamper through a single door, according to investigators.

The accused girls have been in police custody for five days, during which interrogations revealed the fire was started by lighting a mattress at the dormitory's exit using a matchstick and paraffin. No motive has been revealed so far.

The results of DNA tests to determine the identities of some of the bodies that were charred beyond recognition are expected on Wednesday. CCTV footage obtained from the razed dormitory showed six students starting the fire moments before students woke up, rushing to escape the blaze that left 79 wounded. (AP)

Trump reconsidering USD 1.8 bn fund, AP source says, as Justice Department temporarily pauses it

WASHINGTON, June 2: US President Donald Trump is reconsidering whether to move forward with a USD 1.8 billion fund meant to compensate his allies, a person familiar with his thinking said Monday, as the Justice Department said it would temporarily pause its implementation to comply with a court order.

The potential retreat is a recognition of the legal setbacks the fund has encountered since it was announced two weeks ago as well as a mounting political backlash from Republicans concerned by a perceived lack of oversight of the money disbursement and the potential for payouts to participants in the January 6, 2021, riot at the US Capitol.

The Trump administration had defended the USD 1.776 billion "Anti-Weaponisation Fund," established to resolve Trump's lawsuit against the Internal Revenue Service over the leak of his tax returns, as an appropriate corrective measure to make up for what officials insist was weaponised law enforcement during the Biden administration.

Though some Trump supporters — including participants in the Capitol riot — celebrated the announcement of the fund, the reaction among Republicans in Congress has been decidedly more



hostile. The fund was one of the issues the president spoke about with House Speaker Mike Johnson, whom he met with Monday, according to a person who was granted anonymity to discuss a private discussion.

On Monday, a person familiar with the matter who insisted on anonymity to discuss the president's thinking, said Trump was reconsidering whether to move forward with the fund.

The Justice Department said separately that it would comply with a ruling by a federal judge in Virginia on Friday that halted plans for the fund pending additional arguments later this month, even as it noted that it "disagrees strongly" with that decision.

Lawmakers have raised concerns about the lack of oversight of the money and pushed the administration to either impose limits on the fund or scrap it altogether.

It especially complicated matters in the Senate, where Republicans defiantly left town 10 days ago without passing legislation to fund Trump's immigration enforcement agencies.

Republicans who returned to Washington on Monday said they won't have the votes to pass the Homeland Security spending bill until the White House works with them to place parameters on the fund.

Senate Majority Leader John Thune indicated Monday that he hoped the White House would move to drop the fund.

Netanyahu calls off Lebanon raid after 'heated' call with Trump



WASHINGTON, June 2: US President Donald Trump said he persuaded Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu to call off the strike on Beirut, following which the Israeli leader "turned his troops around".

Trump made the announcement on Truth Social on Monday evening amid reports that the conversation between the two leaders was "heated" and the US president telling Netanyahu that he would have been in prison but for his intervention.

"I had a conversation with Bibi Netanyahu today (Monday), asking him not to go into a major raid of Beirut, Lebanon. He turned his Troops around. Thank you Bibi," he said, referring to the Israeli prime minister by his widely used nickname.

Trump's phone calls with Netanyahu came after Iran threatened to end the negotiations with the US over Israel's attacks on Lebanon. Netanyahu had said Israel would hit "terror targets" in Beirut if Hezbollah did not stop attacking Israel.

The president said he also had a conversation with the representatives of the leaders of Hezbollah, who agreed to "stop shooting at Israel and its soldiers".

"I also had a conversation with Representatives of the Leaders of Hezbollah, and they agreed to stop shooting at Israel and its soldiers. Likewise, Israel agreed to stop shooting at them. Let's see how long that lasts — Hopefully it will be for ETERNITY," he said.

US media outlet Axios reported that tempers flew during Trump's phone call with Netanyahu.

"You're f---ing crazy. You'd be in prison if it weren't for me. I'm saving your a---. Everybody hates you now. Everybody hates Israel because of this," Axios reported, quoting an unnamed US official.

A second source told Axios that Trump was "pissed" and at one point yelled at Netanyahu: "What the f--- are you doing?" Another official told the outlet Trump had "steamrolled" Netanyahu during the call.

"Bibi said, 'OK, OK, just make sure everything is taken care of'," according to the official.

Earlier, Trump told NBC News that he had not been informed of the decision to suspend negotiations ahead of time, but "it's fine if they're done talking".

"It's an appropriate thing to say, because they're better negotiators than they are fighters," he said in a brief phone call with NBC News.

"But they haven't informed us of that. It doesn't mean we're going to go and start dropping bombs all over there," Trump said.

The US military and Iran exchanged strikes over the weekend and into Monday, threatening the nearly two-month-old truce agreed to by the warring sides.

Despite the truce, Israel has been pressing ahead with a military offensive in Lebanon, with its forces marking their deepest incursion into the country in 26 years over the weekend. (PTI)

5 American cruise ship passengers leave Nebraska quarantine facility

OMAHA, June 2: Five of the 18 American cruise ship passengers who have been staying at a national quarantine facility in Nebraska after being exposed to hantavirus are going home, US health officials said Monday.

The five people will complete their monitoring at home after remaining symptom-free and meeting criteria for monitoring outside the quarantine unit at the University of Nebraska Medical Center.

They are leaving Omaha about three weeks after they and the 13 other Americans arrived in Nebraska following a deadly outbreak of hantavirus on a cruise ship traveling in the South Atlantic Ocean.

Hantaviruses usually spread when people inhale contaminated residue of rodent droppings, but the hantavirus that has caused the current outbreak, called the Andes virus, may be able to spread between people in rare cases.

A total of 13 confirmed or probable hantavirus cases, including three deaths, have been linked to the ship, according to the World Health Organization.

No Andes virus cases have been confirmed in

the US, and the risk to the public remains low, health officials said.

None of the US passengers has shown any symptoms, a spokesperson for Nebraska Medicine said Monday.

Symptoms of hantavirus have taken as long as 42 days to appear in previous outbreaks, but some medical experts say most people who develop symptoms do so within 21 days.

The doctors in Omaha monitoring the passengers had said previously that they would work with each person individually to determine if it was appropriate for them to go home to finish their recommended 42-day quarantine period.

Federal officials arranged travel for the five people going home, in coordination with state and local authorities. Officials said the travel was not to be on commercial flights, with appropriate biocontainment measures in place. State health departments will continue daily symptom monitoring, maintain 24/7 oversight and provide guidance.

Two of the people returning to their homes live outside New York City, said city Health Commissioner Dr. Alistair Martin. (AP)

Canada is failing Jewish community and Jews are being targeted, Prime Minister Carney says

TORONTO, June 2: Canada is failing Jewish Canadians and the community is being brutally targeted by hate, Prime Minister Mark Carney said Monday.

Carney said across Canada, antisemitism has surged to levels not seen in the post-World War II era. He noted that last year over two-thirds of all religion-motivated hate crimes were directed at Jewish Canadians. Jews make up only 1% of the population.

"The horror and shame are global. Our actions must be local. They start with clearly admitting that Canada's civic compact is failing Jewish Canadians," Carney said at Holy Blossom Temple in Toronto. Carney said antisemites in Canada have fired bullets at Jewish schools and thrown firebombs at synagogues and attacked community centers.

He said they have targeted Jewish-owned businesses and drove Jewish students from common spaces on university campuses.

Carney said antisemitism plagues Europe, Australia and the United States. But he said the crisis of antisemitism in Canada is "specific, severe and demands a targeted re-

sponse." There has been a sharp rise in antisemitic incidents globally since the Israel-Hamas war began on October 7, 2023.

Noah Shack, the CEO of the Centre for Israel and Jewish Affairs, said before the speech that the Canadian government must do more to strengthen community security and combat hate.

Carney said his government has introduced legislation over the last year to combat antisemitism and other forms of hatred. He said \$75 million (USD 54 million) in funding will provide faith-based institutions with things like security infrastructure and additional security personnel. "It pains me that we had to commit \$75 million to this, any dollar to this," Carney said.

The prime minister announced the launch of a new Ministerial Advisory Council on Rights, Equality and Inclusion that will examine the nature, scale and drivers of antisemitism.

It will measure its impacts and investments in education, prevention and community safety will follow, his office said. (AP)

Ebola cases in Congo near 300 as more joyful stories from recovered medical workers emerge

BUNIA, June 2: At least 282 cases of Ebola disease have been confirmed in Congo's growing outbreak, the central African nation says, as more joyful stories from recovered medical workers emerge. One nurse spoke of his "incredible joy" at beating the illness.

The outbreak remains focused in eastern Ituri province, where 264 cases have been confirmed, the health ministry said. Congo has reported more than 1,000 suspected cases of the Bundibugyo virus, the species of Ebola that was confirmed weeks after the outbreak quietly began. There is no approved medicine to treat it, or vaccine.

The disease outbreak has killed 42 people in Congo and one person in neighbouring Uganda, according to health authorities in both countries.

The outbreak has spread to 22 health zones across three eastern provinces in Congo, government data shows, even as the World Health Organization has sought to highlight signs of progress, like new deliveries of supplies to deeply under-resourced health centres. Congo's health ministry says the



main challenges in containing the outbreak in the remote region include early detection and rapid isolation of cases, rigorous contact tracing, safe and dignified burials and strengthening infection prevention and control in health facilities.

Meanwhile, the Coalition for Epidemic Preparedness Innovations said Monday that it would commit up to USD 62 million to accelerate devel-

opment of three experimental vaccines targeting Bundibugyo. The three in development are from the International AIDS Vaccine Initiative, Moderna and the University of Oxford.

Health workers have been at high risk. WHO honored five of them as survivors over the weekend, during a visit by Director-General Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus, as he opened a

new Ebola treatment center in Bunia, capital of Ituri province.

Baraka Bulambulu, a nurse, said that he was thrilled after the final Ebola tests on him returned negative. "Coming out of this illness alive is an indescribable joy," Bulambulu said with a wide grin.

Ezo Etienne, another nurse who recovered, said that he had started feeling dizzy as he checked on patients.

"I called the team and told them, 'Something's wrong here,'" he recalled. "I decided to rest for a bit, and a few minutes later I started vomiting."

The virus is spread through close contact with sick or deceased patients' bodily fluids. Treatment has mostly targeted patients' symptoms, WHO has said.

"Your courage gives hope and your living story that this outbreak can be stopped," Tedros told the health workers on Sunday.

Despite challenges that include threats by armed groups and anger against health workers by some wary residents, the recoveries are "a victory worth celebrating," said Dr.

Dieudonne Mwamba Kazadi, director-general of Congo's National Institute of Public Health.

"It's a strong message that it is possible to recover from Ebola when seeking care early in a dedicated health facility," he said.

Uganda has reported nine cases of Ebola in this outbreak and closed its border with Congo, seeking to limit its spread. Although more than 20 Ebola outbreaks have taken place in Congo and Uganda, the Bundibugyo virus has been rare.

Attacks in the region by the Allied Democratic Forces, or ADF, a rebel organization allied with the Islamic State group, and a coalition of ethnic militias have also hindered the response.

ADF fighters killed 16 people Saturday in Beni, North Kivu province, an area also affected by the outbreak, the Congolese government said Monday in a statement.

The illness also has been reported in both North Kivu and South Kivu, south of Ituri, where the Rwanda-backed M23 rebel group controls many key cities, including Goma and Bukavu. (AP)

MoU signed with Centre for sustainable rural drinking water supply

JJM 2.0 to strengthen water security in Arunachal: Khandu

ITANAGAR, June 2: Arunachal Pradesh Chief Minister Pema Khandu on Tuesday said the signing of the Jal Jeevan Mission (JJM) 2.0 agreement with the Centre marks a major step towards strengthening drinking water services and ensuring long-term water security across the state.

Khandu made the remarks after the state government signed a reform-linked memorandum of understanding (MoU) with the Union Ministry of Jal Shakti for the implementation of JJM 2.0, aimed at improving rural drinking water infrastructure and ensuring sustainable tap water supply.

In a social media post, the chief minister said the initiative would help address water scarcity, improve service delivery systems and advance Prime Minister Narendra Modi's vision of a "Viksit Bharat" with safe and reliable tap water for every household.

The MoU was signed during a programme attended by Union Jal Shakti Minister C.R. Patil, Minister of State V. Somanna and senior officials of the Centre and the state government.

Khandu participated in the programme virtu-



ally along with the state Public Health Engineering and Water Supply Minister Mama Natung.

The agreement forms part of the Centre's re-

vamped JJM 2.0 framework, which focuses on long-term sustainability, improved service delivery and community-led management of rural water supply schemes, officials said.

Under the programme, states are required to undertake structural reforms, strengthen institutional mechanisms and encourage greater participation of local bodies, including village-level water and sanitation committees, in the operation and maintenance of water supply infrastructure, they said.

Approved by the Union Cabinet earlier this year, JJM 2.0 will be implemented till December 2028 with an enhanced financial outlay.

The mission aims to ensure reliable and sustainable drinking water services to rural households while improving water quality monitoring and accountability.

Arunachal Pradesh's participation in the reform-linked framework would enable the state to access central assistance tied to performance benchmarks and reform measures, besides accelerating efforts to provide safe drinking water to households in remote and difficult terrain areas, officials added. (PTI)

Mizoram govt launches Centre's programme to combat soil degradation

AIZAWL, June 2: The Mizoram government has launched the Centre's initiative to curb soil degradation, promote soil test-based fertiliser application and natural farming methods, officials said on Tuesday.

The Agriculture and Farmers' Welfare Ministry's programme 'Khet Bachao Abhiyan,' was rolled out by state Governor Vijay Kumar Singh at the Lok Bhavan on Monday, they said.

Under the month-long campaign, agricultural scientists, KVK officials and state representatives will conduct seminars and training programmes to educate farmers on reducing the excessive use of chemical fertilisers, particularly urea, the officials said.

Speaking on the occasion, Singh expressed concerns over the excessive use of chemical fertilisers and pesticides in pursuit of higher crop yields, as such practices have adversely affected agricultural land and human health.

He called for greater efforts to protect agricultural land through soil conservation, balanced fertiliser use and natural farming practices.

Highlighting the Centre's National Mission on Natural Farming, Singh stressed the importance of gradually shifting towards natural agricultural practices to safeguard both the environment and the quality of agricultural produce.

He said that regular soil testing is essential to identify nutrient deficiencies and ensure crops receive appropriate nutrition.

Singh urged agricultural scientists and experts to actively support farmers in adopting sustainable farming techniques.

Noting that agriculture remains the backbone of Mizoram's economy, the governor said the state could achieve self-sufficiency in food production and maximise farmers' incomes through coordinated efforts by experts and Krishi Vigyan Kendras (KVKs).

He pointed out that Mizoram's crops are unique due to the continued practice of jhum cultivation on hilly slopes, where maintaining nutrient balance is particularly challenging.

Singh also called for continuous farmers' training in modern scientific techniques, stronger market linkages for better sale of produce and greater emphasis on producing healthy, high-value organic crops.

Central Agricultural University, Imphal Vice-Chancellor Anupam Mishra, who spoke on the occasion, also underscored the need to reduce energy consumption in foodgrain production. The event was attended by state Agriculture and Farmers' Welfare Minister P. C. Vanlalruata, officials from various departments and farmers from across the state.

The initiative will also promote green manuring, bio-fertilisers and organic nutrient sources to improve soil health while helping farmers access targeted government support schemes, they said. (PTI)



3 militants arrested on extortion charges

IMPHAL, June 2: Three militants were arrested on charges of extortion in Manipur, police said on Tuesday.

Two cadres of the proscribed Peoples' Liberation Army were arrested from Imphal East district on Monday, they said.

The suspects were identified as Maibam Arun Singh (49) and Thangiam Surankumar Singh (30), they added.

A member of the Kanglei Yawol Kanna Lup was arrested from an office complex in Imphal West district.

He was identified as Brahmachariyama Sana Sharma alias Ibungo alias Manisana (38), police said. These militants used to threaten locals and small businesses, demanding money, they said. (PTI)

Tripura: 6 forest personnel injured in attack by suspected timber smugglers

AGARTALA, June 2: Six forest personnel, including a range officer, were injured as suspected timber smugglers attacked them in a remote area of North Tripura, officials said on Tuesday.

Two vehicles of the Forest Department were extensively damaged in the attack that happened in the Kanchapur police station area on Monday night, they said.

Acting on a tip-off, a team of the department tried to intercept a timber-laden vehicle near Chandipur around 11 PM. As the driver did not stop the vehicle, the forest personnel chased it on a jeep, they said.

"A few kilometres away, the driver fled, abandoning the timber-laden vehicle. But shortly after, a group of about 50 smugglers returned with dao and sticks, and attacked the forest personnel. To save their lives, the personnel took shelter in the dense forest," said Sub-Divisional Forest Officer (SDFO) Suman Mitra.

"Six personnel, including a ranger officer, were injured in the attack and two departmental vehicles were vandalised," he said. A case has been lodged in connection with the attack, Mitra said, adding that no arrest has been made so far. (PTI)

Pasighat launches Anti-Malaria Month 2026

HT Bureau
PASIGHAT, June 2: Anti-Malaria Month (AMM) 2026 was formally launched at the Pasighat Municipal Council (PMC) Conference Hall on Monday with a strong call for collective action to eliminate malaria and strengthen public awareness on vector-borne diseases.

The programme was organised by the District Vector Borne Disease Control Programme (DVB-DCP), East Siang, under the theme "Driven to End Malaria: Now We Can, Now We Must." The month-long campaign will be observed from June 1 to June 30 across the district through various awareness and outreach activities.

Er T. Darang, MLA of 38th Pasighat East Constituency, graced the occasion as the

Chief Guest. Tagom Padung, Chief Councillor, Pasighat Munic-



ipal Council, attended as the Guest of Honour, while Kamin Logo, Deputy Chief Councillor, PMC was present as the Special Guest.

Speaking on the occasion, the dignitaries emphasized the importance of public participation, environmental sanitation, early diagnosis, timely treatment and community awareness in achieving the goal of malaria

elimination. They urged citizens to actively support preventive measures and maintain cleanliness in their surroundings to curb mosquito breeding.

A detailed presentation on malaria prevention, control strategies and the current status of malaria in the district was delivered by officials of the District

Vector Borne Disease Control Programme.

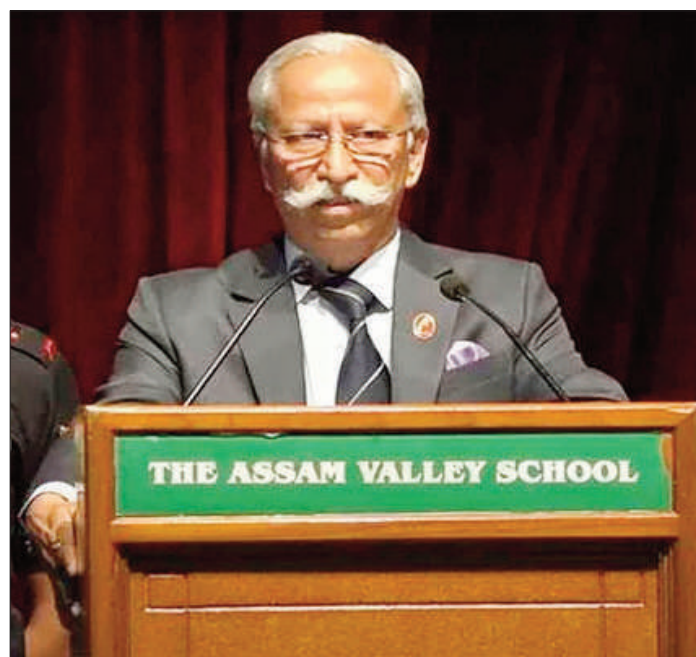
The presentation highlighted the need for sustained vigilance and community involvement in combating the disease.

The launch ceremony was attended by Dr Y. Y. Pertin, District Medical Officer, East Siang;

J. Pertin, Municipal Executive Officer (MEO), Pasighat Municipal Council; programme officers of the Health Department; councillors; officers and officials of the Pasighat Municipal Council and District Medical Office; healthcare workers and students of Government UPS School, Gumin Nagar, Pasighat.

The enthusiastic participation of elected representatives, municipal officials, healthcare personnel and students reflected a shared commitment towards creating a malaria-free East Siang district.

Arunachal Governor calls for stronger people-to-people ties at foundation days event



ITANAGAR, June 2: The foundation days of Telangana, Sikkim and Goa were celebrated at Arunachal Pradesh Lok Bhavan on Tuesday, with Governor Lt Gen K. T. Parnaik (Retd) underscoring the spirit of national integration and cultural unity under the 'Ek Bharat Shreshtha Bharat' initiative.

Extending his greetings to the people of the three states, the governor lauded their contributions to the country's development and cultural heritage, an official statement said.

He highlighted Telangana's progress in innovation and economic growth, Sikkim's commitment to environmental

conservation and sustainable development, and Goa's rich cultural and historical legacy.

Parnaik said Arunachal Pradesh shares several commonalities with the three states, including respect for indigenous traditions, vibrant tribal cultures, rich handloom and handicraft heritage and significant tourism potential.

Despite geographical distances, he said, the states are connected by shared values of community living, cultural pride and harmony with nature.

Describing 'Ek Bharat Shreshtha Bharat' as a visionary initiative of Prime Minister Narendra Modi, the governor said it has strengthened people-to-people connections, promoted cultural understanding and reinforced the spirit of unity in diversity.

A cultural programme marked the occasion, featuring traditional dances and songs from Arunachal Pradesh, Telangana, Sikkim and Goa.

The governor commended the participants for their performances and presentations.

Audio-visual messages from Sikkim Governor Om Prakash Mathur and Telangana Governor Jishnu Dev Varma were screened during the programme. (PTI)

Dibang Valley conducts workshop on Solid Waste Management Rules, 2026

HT Bureau
ANANI, June 2: The Department of Panchayati Raj, Dibang Valley, organised a District-Level Workshop on the implementation of the Solid Waste Management Rules, 2026 at Circuit House, Anani. Deputy Commissioner Bekir Nyorak attended the programme as the Chief Guest.

At the outset, District Panchayat Development Officer (DPDO) Lijum Ete, APCS, presented the district's preparedness and action plan for the effective implementation of the Rules. The workshop was attended by Eta Mihu, ZPM, Siyo Mihu, ZPM, Heads of Departments, Member Secretaries and PRI Members. Deliberations focused on strengthening waste management systems in rural areas in compliance with the directions of the Supreme Court, with emphasis on coordinated and sustainable efforts.

The DPDO directed PRI Members to identify and geographically map campsites and other vulnerable locations prone to solid waste accumulation by 31 October 2026. He also called for Panchayats to promote source segregation and responsible waste disposal practices.

Further, concerned authorities were instructed to conduct detailed surveys and submit proposals for scientific solid waste management and door-to-door waste collection systems to ensure cleaner and healthier villages across the district.

Nagaland villages asked to segregate waste at source

HT Correspondent
DIMAPUR, June 2: The Nagaland government has directed all villages in the state to strictly follow waste segregation at the source at home, as per the guidelines in the Solid Waste Management Rules 2026.

The state home department issued a notification in this regard on Tuesday in pursuance of Rule 5 (b) of the Solid Waste Management Rules 2026 as notified by the Union ministry of environment, forest and climate change, which came into force on April 1.

As per the notification, every household will separate and store waste generated by them in four separate streams at source.

They include wet waste such as kitchen waste, food scraps, vegetable peels, flowers and biodegradable items, which should be kept in green bin, dry waste such as plastic, glass, metal, rubber and non-biodegradable items, which should be kept in blue bin, sanitary waste such as used diapers, sanitary towels or napkins, tampons, condoms, incontinence sheets and sanitary pad, which should be wrapped securely in the pouches provided by the manufacturers or brand owners of these

products or in a suitable wrapping material as instructed by the local bodies or authorities and will be placed in the sanitary waste bin separate from bins meant for dry waste or wet waste or special care waste and special care/household hazardous waste such as discarded paint drums and paint cans, pesticide cans or containers or bottles, compact fluorescent lamp or bulbs, tube lights, expired medicines, broken mercury thermometers, waste batteries, used or waste needles and syringes and contaminated gauge, cleaning agents, insecticides, expired medicines and electricity bulbs or any other waste generated at the household level as notified by Central Pollution Control Board from time to time and they should be kept in red bag.

The government directed the district administrations to ensure that the four-stream source segregation of waste be initiated and implemented in all villages in coordination with the departments of rural development, PHE and urban development and municipal affairs in respective districts and also ensure conduct of adequate sensitisation exercise with all village authorities to promote sustainable waste management.

Centre of Excellence for Kiwifruit in Nagaland

HT Correspondent
DIMAPUR, June 2: Moving a step further for its proposed Centre of Excellence (CoE) for Kiwifruit at Pflutero in Phek district, the Nagaland government, led by its water resources development and horticulture minister Salhoutounoo Kruse, held a high-level meeting with an 11-member delegation from New Zealand and New Delhi in Kohima.

The meeting, held on May 31, mainly focused on the installation of a weather station at the proposed CoE site. The facility, the first of its kind under the Nagaland horticulture department, will collect real-time weather, water and soil data to support precision farming practices and enhance kiwifruit productivity in the state.

Besides establishing the weather station, New Zealand's Bioeconomy Science Institute (BSI) will conduct preliminary surveys for the centre and interact with kiwifruit growers across Nagaland to assess existing cultivation practices and identify opportunities to improve yield and fruit quality.

During the meeting, minister Kruse expressed appreciation to the Union ministry of agriculture and farmers welfare and the New Zealand delegation for their support and interest in the project.

She also proposed the possibility of future exchange programmes that would enable farmers from Nagaland to visit New Zealand for hands-on training in advanced kiwifruit cultivation techniques.

The meeting was also attended by Nagaland's commissioner and secretary of horticulture Akumla Chuba, along with officials from the department, while the New Zealand delegation included six technical experts and scientists from BSI, representatives from the New Zealand Embassy in New Delhi and an official from the Union ministry of agriculture and farmers welfare.

Initiatives aim to boost farmers' income through value addition and MSP for key crops

Mizoram CM launches ginger mission, price support scheme to boost farmers' income



AIZAWL, June 2: Mizoram Chief Minister Lalduhoma on Tuesday launched the Mizo Ginger Mission Selling Proposition (USP) mission project and a price support scheme for certain crops, including arhar, sesame and sunflower to boost the state's agricultural economy.

He rolled out the initiatives during a Ginger Export Awareness Workshop organised by National Cooperative Exports Limited (NCEL) in Aizawl.

Speaking on the occasion, Lalduhoma revealed the recognition of ginger, which is one of Mizoram's most important cash crops, as the state's Unique Selling Proposition (USP) under the Ministry of Devel-

opment of North Eastern Region (DoNER). Though smaller in physical size than commercial varieties grown elsewhere, the superior quality and pharmaceutical-grade standards of Mizoram's organic ginger give it a distinct advantage in domestic and international markets, he said.

Lalduhoma emphasised the urgent need to move beyond selling raw ginger and focus on processing and value addition to increase farmers' income and ensure sustainable cultivation practices.

According to the chief minister, the state government has launched a sustainable cultivation and post-harvest management project with the support of the DoNER Ministry. Under the project, four modern ginger processing units are being established in East Mizoram's Champhai district, the state's largest ginger-producing region bordering Myanmar.

The project, which was launched with a ₹ 30.13 crore financial support from the DoNER Ministry, is expected to benefit around 20,000 ginger-growing farmers and generate about 100 jobs, he said.

Lalduhoma said the government is

working to position Mizoram ginger in national and global markets by capitalising on its superior quality and Geographical Indication (GI) status. Plans are also underway to develop high-value products such as ginger oil and other processed ginger-based commodities, he said.

To strengthen export readiness among farmers and producer groups, the government has partnered with National Cooperative Exports Limited to conduct training and awareness programmes on export procedures and market access, he said.

The chief minister also announced the implementation of the PM-AASHA Price Support Scheme in Mizoram for arhar (tur), sesame and sunflower from the current harvest season. The Minimum Support Prices (MSP) have been fixed at ₹ 84.50 per kg for arhar, ₹ 103.46 per kg for sesame and ₹ 83.43 per kg for sunflower.

Procurement will be carried out by the National Agricultural Cooperative Marketing Federation of India (NAFED) in collaboration with the Mizoram Agricultural Marketing Board through designated collection centres, according to officials. (PTI)

NO.MMB/MARKET TENDER-4/2026-27/141

TENDER NOTICE

Dated Muzhalpur, the 22nd May, 2026

Sealed tender affixing court fee stamp of Rs 8.25 (Rupees eight and twenty five paise) only are invited from intending individuals, co-operative societies, companies etc. for lease settlement of the following Markets under Muzhalpur Municipal Board for a period of 12 (Twelve) months only for the year 2026-27 w.e.f. 01-07-2026 to 30-06-2027. The details are as follows:-

Sl. No.	NAME OF MARKET	SCHEDULE RATE 2026-27	EARNEST MONEY TO BE DEPOSITED
1	MUSHALPUR BI-WEEKLY MARKET	Rs. 2,64,349.00 (Rupees Two lakh sixty four thousand three hundred forty nine only.)	2% FOR GENERAL CATEGORY AND 1% FOR SC/ST CATEGORY OF SCHEDULE RATE
2	MUSHALPUR DAILY MARKET	Rs. 33,514.00 (Rupees thirty three thousand five hundred fourteen only)	2% FOR GENERAL CATEGORY AND 1% FOR SC/ST CATEGORY OF SCHEDULE RATE
3	BATHOUPHURI DAILY MARKET	Rs. 29,311.00 (Rupees twenty nine thousand three hundred eleven only)	2% FOR GENERAL CATEGORY AND 1% FOR SC/ST CATEGORY OF SCHEDULE RATE
4	BATHOUPHURI WEEKLY MARKET	Rs. 21,060.00 (Rupees twenty one thousand sixty only)	2% FOR GENERAL CATEGORY AND 1% FOR SC/ST CATEGORY OF SCHEDULE RATE

Bidders should enclose Rs. 2000/- (Rupees Two Thousand only) money payment receipt as non-refundable tender form fee along with tender form and terms and conditions.

Willing bidders may submit their tenders in the tender box between 11:00 A.M. to 1:00 p.m. on 16-06-2026 at office of the Muzhalpur Municipal Board, Muzhalpur. No tenders will be received after 1:30 p.m. on that day under any circumstances. Tenders will be opened at 2:00 p.m. on 16-06-2026 in presence of the tenderers or their representative/ authorized agents.

It is further informed that the defaulters of the lease markets for the financial year, 2025-26 or before will not be allowed to take part in the 2026-27 Tender. Even if they submit the tender the same will be rejected without scrutiny.

The detailed information in this regard may be collected from office of the Muzhalpur Municipal Board during office hours between 22-05-2026 to 16-06-2027.

Sd/-
Chairman,
Muzhalpur Municipal Board, Muzhalpur

Sd/-
Executive Officer,
Muzhalpur Municipal Board, Muzhalpur

IPR(BTC)/C/2026-27/410

Shivakumar, Siddaramaiah meet Cong top brass ahead of new Karnataka cabinet

NEW DELHI, June 2: Karnataka chief minister-designate D K Shivakumar and his predecessor Siddaramaiah held deliberations with the top brass of the Congress on Tuesday on giving final shape to the new cabinet in the state.

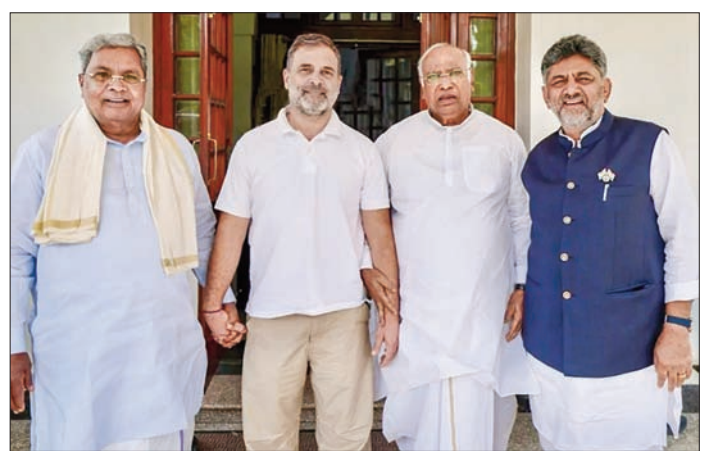
Sources said Shivakumar will take oath along with a small new cabinet initially and expand it later. He will be sworn in on June 3 in Bengaluru, where former party chief Rahul Gandhi will be present.

Shivakumar and Siddaramaiah also met Congress chief Mallikarjun Kharge and Gandhi and held talks on the new cabinet formation. Congress general secretary (organisation) K C Venugopal and AICC general secretary-in-charge of Karnataka Randeep Surjewala were also present.

The two Karnataka leaders are meeting Venugopal and Surjewala again to chalk out the finer details. Thereafter, a final meeting will be held later in the evening when a final shape will be given to the new cabinet, the sources said.

Shivakumar, who is also the Karnataka Congress president, is scheduled to be sworn in as chief minister along with some members of the Council of Ministers at 4.05 pm on June 3 at the Lok Bhavan premises.

He was officially elected leader



of the Congress Legislature Party in Karnataka on May 30.

Earlier in the day, Shivakumar expressed gratitude to the Gandhi family for their role in his political journey and thanked them for the faith they had placed in him at different stages of his life.

Shivakumar and Siddaramaiah arrived in the national capital on Monday to hold consultations with the Congress high command over the composition of the new state cabinet.

With Karnataka's council of ministers capped at 34 -- including the chief minister -- and a swelling pool of aspirants vying for limited berths, Shivakumar faces one of his first and most consequential

tests as chief minister-designate.

Aspirants have reached the national capital in numbers, with former ministers and legislators seeking audiences with both Shivakumar and Siddaramaiah to press their claims.

Party sources indicate the new cabinet is likely to be a blend of familiar faces and fresh entrants, with careful attention paid to caste arithmetic, regional balance and loyalty equations -- particularly towards the Siddaramaiah camp.

Speculation is rife that the new government could have multiple deputy chief ministers, including a Dalit. Among the frontrunners include G Parmeshwara and Priyank Kharge.

Sources add that Siddaramaiah, Shivakumar and Kharge camps are pushing for their confidantes for a berth in the new cabinet.

Siddaramaiah's son Yathindra, who is an MLC, is also hopeful of a cabinet berth.

After meeting Shivakumar on Sunday, he had expressed confidence about a cabinet berth, saying the party high command has already assured him of a ministerial position.

Sources said the top Congress leaders are still pressing Siddaramaiah to take up a Rajya Sabha seat, even though the former chief minister has expressed his desire to remain active in the state and not take up a role in national politics.

Sources add that party leadership is also contemplating forming a joint coordination committee led by Siddaramaiah to ensure better and effective coordination between the party and the government in Karnataka.

The Delhi parleys were also expected to address the question of who succeeds Shivakumar as Karnataka Pradesh Congress Committee president.

Senior MLA and former minister Satish Jarkiholi is said to be the frontrunner -- though he is reportedly seeking a cabinet berth along with the organisational post, complicating the arithmetic further. (PTI)

Nepal's ruling RSP chief meets BJP president

NEW DELHI, June 2: Nepal's Rashtriya Swatantra Party (RSP) chairman Rabi Lamichhane met BJP national president Nitin Nabin here on Tuesday.

The delegation of Nepal's ruling party, comprising its senior leaders, was accorded a grand welcome at the BJP headquarters on its arrival.

"Welcoming the delegation, Nabin highlighted the close and historic ties between India and Nepal, rooted in shared civilisational heritage, cultural bonds and strong people-to-people relations," BJP foreign affairs department in-charge Vijay Chauthaiwale said in a

statement. The RSP delegation, led by Lamichhane, is on a visit to India following an invitation by BJP chief Nabin. It arrived in New Delhi on Monday afternoon.

Nabin underlined that such interactions help strengthen "democratic dialogue and deepen party-to-party engagement" between the BJP and the RSP, he added.

Chauthaiwale further said that Nabin shared insights into the BJP's journey, ideology, organisational structure and its people-centric approach to political engagement. (PTI)

Mehbooba, Omar spar over call for political unity in J-K

SRINAGAR, June 2: A call for political unity in Jammu and Kashmir devolved into a public spat on Tuesday after PDP president Mehbooba Mufti claimed Chief Minister Omar Abdullah ignored her meeting requests, a charge Abdullah swiftly denied and accused her of misrepresenting facts to score political points.

In a letter posted on social media addressed to the chief minister and leaders across the political spectrum, including the BJP, Mehbooba urged Jammu and Kashmir's fractured political leadership to take a cue from Ladakh's recent success and unite to safeguard the region's special identity and constitutional rights.

However, the call for solidarity was immediately overshadowed by a war of

words over political etiquette.

In her letter, Mehbooba claimed she was forced to write publicly because she had sought an appointment with Abdullah, but "due to his preoccupation, it has not been possible."

"Therefore, I am taking the liberty of writing to you since time is running out and we cannot afford to delay things any further," the former chief minister said.

Abdullah hit back swiftly, accusing the PDP chief of misrepresenting facts to score political points. "Mehbooba Mufti Sahiba, I spoke on Saturday when you asked to meet. I told you I was in Pahalgam on Sunday and would get in touch on Monday or Tuesday to fix to meet.

"Your letter gives the impression that

I've kept you waiting for an appointment for weeks on end, which is clearly not the case. Be that as it may, your letter to me is now in the public domain," he said in a post on X.

The chief minister added that he would formally respond to her proposal only after consulting senior leaders of his National Conference (NC) party and route it "similarly", an indication that he will post his reply on social media only. Senior NC leaders alleged that Mehbooba was deliberately attempting to misrepresent the facts only to score political points.

Mehbooba's unity call comes after the recent breakthroughs achieved by Ladakh's Leh Apex Body and Kargil Democratic Alliance in their negotiations

with the Centre.

Arguing that "only dialogue can deliver meaningful outcomes", she said Jammu and Kashmir finds itself at a historical crossroads gripped by "despair and disillusionment." "Given the fact that disagreements and squabbling between regional parties have been detrimental to the collective interests of Jammu and Kashmir, a reasonable consensus especially post-2019 is the only solution. If Ladakh could do it, so can we," she wrote.

Mehbooba emphasised that the chief minister's backing is a prerequisite for the success of this proposed political platform and urged Abdullah, as the head of the state, to set the ball rolling by convening an official meeting of all stakeholders to

forge a united outreach to Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Home Minister Amit Shah. Reiterating that the initiative should not become a matter of "appropriating political credit or point-scoring", she pleaded with leaders to put contrarian views on the back-burner.

Reflecting her push for an all-inclusive front, Mehbooba sent identical letters to a diverse group of political and civil society leaders, including BJP's Sunil Sharma (Leader of Opposition in J&K), Tariq Hameed Karra (JKPCC president), Mohammad Yousuf Tarigami (CPI-M leader), Sajad Gani Lone (People's Conference chairman), Engineer Rashid (member of Parliament) and Sanjay Tickoo (Kashmiri Pandit Sangharsh Samiti president). (PTI)

BJP won Bengal polls by rigging counting in 177 seats: Mamata

KOLKATA, June 2: Trinamool Congress supremo Mamata Banerjee on Tuesday alleged that the BJP "rigged" counting in 177 of the 294 seats, which went for polls to win the recently concluded West Bengal elections.

Banerjee asserted that she would not abandon TMC workers in "these difficult times", referring to large-scale arrests of leaders on charges of corruption, intimidation and extortion, and the alleged torture of party workers after the TMC's defeat in the recent assembly polls.

Addressing TMC supporters at a day-long dharna in central Kolkata to protest against alleged post-poll attacks on party workers and leaders following the BJP's victory in recent assembly elections, Banerjee said anti-BJP parties would soon formulate a country-wide opposition programme.

"Very soon, all anti-BJP parties will meet in Delhi. Wait for a few days and we will soon announce our country-wide course of action," the TMC chief said, referring to the scheduled INDIA bloc meeting next week.

Banerjee reached the dharna site at Esplanade's Y-channel after the TMC's appeal to hold the protest at the adjacent Rani Rashmoni Road was turned down by the Kolkata Police.

In a post on X, Banerjee called the sit-in protest a programme "against post-poll violence, eviction of hawkers without rehabilitation, irregularities/ fraud in the NEET examination, and the vindictive actions of the BJP government".

"We were not permitted to hold our programme at the place we requested. At the alternative site, the police did not allow us to set up a stage or use microphones," Banerjee said, while addressing the crowd using a hand-held megaphone. "We will move court if



other parties are allowed to hold political programmes at the venue where we were denied permission to protest, or if they are allowed to hold meetings with microphones. Law cannot be imposed with discrimination," she added.

The protest was marked by intermittent chaos, with TMC workers shouting slogans amid the former chief minister's speech.

"Those who have arrived here, ignoring police intimidation, should know that the men in uniform are being used by the BJP dispensation to do things they are not supposed to do. Threatening TMC workers is not part of their job profile," Banerjee alleged.

The TMC supremo was seen accompanied by the party's old guards Firdad Hakim, Madan Mitra, Kalyan Banerjee, Sobhan Deb Chattopadhyay, Chandrima Bhattacharya and Dola Sen, amid the conspicuous absence of most of the fresh faces who won the assembly seats on TMC tickets.

The party supremo, however, asserted that the dharna, to protest Saturday's attack on her nephew and TMC MP Abhishek Banerjee, alleged post-poll violence and hawker eviction, will continue till the evening as scheduled.

Banerjee alleged that the recent

assault of Abhishek at Sonarpur was carried out in a planned manner.

"The BJP had smuggled in its workers from before, fed them and even tutored them how to act and talk. Had a TMC worker not supplied Abhishek with a helmet, the injury from the stone hurled at him could have turned fatal," she alleged.

She further accused that the private hospitals where Abhishek was taken to were brought under "immense pressure" of the Suwendu Adhikari establishment to not allow admission to the injured leader.

"Modi has left Bengal in the hands of anti-socials and bulldozer-happy politicians, pushing the state into darkness," she said.

Speaking on the controversy over signatures of TMC MLAs endorsing Sobhan Deb Chattopadhyay as the Leader of Opposition, Banerjee maintained that the MLAs had signed the party's meet attendance book in accordance with the decision taken at the meeting convened.

"The Assembly Speaker should have conducted forensic tests of the signatures if he had confusion about their authenticity. The BJP is playing a dirty game," she said. (PTI)

Kerala launches 'Operation Toofaan' to combat drug abuse

THIRUVANANTHAPURAM, June 2: Kerala Chief Minister V D Satheesan on Tuesday launched 'Operation Toofaan', an anti-drug initiative of the Home Department. He stated that substance abuse is one of the biggest challenges faced by the state.

In his inaugural address, Satheesan said that over 60 per cent of the state's population consists of young people, who form Kerala's demographic dividend, and warned that the drug mafia is actively targeting them. He said the impact of drugs on youth is evident from the changing nature of crimes, which have become more cruel and brutal. The CM stated that, under the influence of drugs, youngsters have even killed their parents or other close family members.

He emphasised that the initiative requires the involvement of not only the Home Department but also the Excise and Education departments, along with other government agencies, schools, and parents, in efforts to eradicate drugs and dismantle their networks across the state.

The mission has two components: enforcement by the police and Excise Department with full government support, and awareness about the harmful effects of drugs, he said.

"Parents, schools, teachers, police, Excise officials, and local bodies will all play a part in creating awareness among young people about the dangers of drug use," he added while announcing the launch of 'Operation Toofaan: The Narco Hunt'. The CM urged students attending the event to become ambassadors of the operation. Satheesan and state Home Minister Ramesh Chennithala also unveiled the English and Malayalam logos of the initiative.

Speaking on the occasion, Chennithala said that the operation was an "integrated war" against narcotics, where all branches of the government would work together to "uproot" the drug network in the state. He also warned drug mafias to stop their activities or be prepared to face the full force of the law. (PTI)

India, South Africa should strive to take trade relationship to higher level: Murmu

NEW DELHI, June 2: Citing the USD 15.5 billion trade between India and South Africa, President Droupadi Murmu on Tuesday said that both countries should strive to take the bilateral trade relationship to a higher level.

Murmu also said that India will work closely with the African Union Commission to reconvene the India-Africa Forum Summit at an early date.

Her assertion came during a meeting with Deputy President of the Republic of South Africa, Shipokosa Paulus Mashatile, who had called on Murmu at the Rashtrapati Bhavan here.

Welcoming Mashatile on his first visit to India, the president said the two countries share a special friendship that is both historic and contemporary.

Noting that the bilateral trade between India and South Africa is about USD 15.5 billion, she said the potential is much greater, and "we should strive to take our trade relationship to a higher level".



"We should continue to provide a conducive policy environment that enables companies from both countries to expand their investments and business activities in each other's markets," Murmu said.

The president said India remains fully committed to its partnership with Africa and will work closely with the African Union Commission to reconvene the India-Africa Forum Summit at an early date, according to a statement issued by her office.

India and the African Union had last

month postponed the summit scheduled for May 28-31 in New Delhi in view of concerns over the spread of the Ebola virus.

During the meeting, the two leaders agreed that closer cooperation between India and South Africa can bring immense benefits to our peoples.

"Our multi-faceted partnership is founded on shared values and mutual respect. South Africa was the very first country with which India established a strategic partnership in 1997," Murmu said. The president said India and South Africa have always been leading voices of the Global South.

"We share a common history of anti-colonial struggle. Through our close cooperation in multilateral forums such as the United Nations, the Non-Aligned Movement, and the G20, we seek to promote peace and prosperity not only for our own peoples but also for the broader Global South," she said. (PTI)

GOVT. OF ASSAM
OFFICE OF THE PRINCIPAL
DISTRICT INSTITUTE OF EDUCATION AND TRAINING
KARBI ANGLONG, DIPHU-782460
Email: dietkarbianglong in email.com/office website: www.dietkarbianglong.in

NOTICE

DISTRICT LEVEL "BAL VAIGYANIK PRADARSHANI 2026"

The District Institute of Education and Training, Karbi Anglong, is organizing the District Level "Bal Vaigyanik Pradarshani 2026" under the theme "STEM for Vikasit and Aatmanirbhar Bharat".

All students of Class 6 to 12 from Govt., Govt. Aided and Private Schools under Karbi Anglong district are hereby invited to participate in the science exhibition (District Level Bal Vaigyanik Pradarshani).

Please download the guideline from website

Details:

- Date: 8th and 9th June, 2026
- Venue: DIET, Karbi Anglong
- Time: 10:00 AM onwards
- Eligibility: Students of Class 6 to 12.

Guidelines:

1. Each school can send a maximum of 1 teams. Each team may have 2 student participants + 1 escort teacher.
2. Guidelines and Registration form can be downloaded from www.dietkarbianglong.in
3. Registration form, write up and explanation demo video (mp4 format) need to be submitted on exhibition day.
4. For registration and further details, contact the DLBVP Coordinator, DIET, Karbi Anglong. Ph: 8638083131/7002187932

Selected models will be forwarded to the State Level Exhibition.

Sd/-
Principal
DIET, Karbi Anglong, Diphu
Date

Not a monarchy; mother wants one house, son desires another: Bihar CM

SHEIKHPURA (BIHAR), June 2: Bihar Chief Minister Samrat Choudhary on Tuesday took a veiled dig at the RJD, the main opposition party in the state, which has been indignant over the allotment of the bungalow occupied by former CM Rabri Devi to a minister.

Choudhary referred to the tiff without mentioning the opposition party or its leaders by name and remarked, "It is not a monarchy... The mother wants one house, and the son desires another."

The CM was addressing a gathering at Sahyog camp, recently launched by the state government to ensure prompt resolution of people's grievances concerning different departments, in Sheikhpura.

Notably, Rabri Devi has been living at 10, Circular Road, refusing to shift to 39, Hardinge Road allotted to her in her capacity as the leader of the opposition in state legislative council.

Her son Tejashwi Yadav, the leader of the opposition in the state assembly, is the occupant of 1, Polo Road.

Choudhary, who had been a deputy CM for two years before becoming the first BJP leader to head a government in Bihar, claimed, "I have never lived in a government bungalow for the last several years. I have been living in my private house."

The CM claimed he agreed to start working from 1, Anney Marg, the official residence of the chief minister which his government has rechristened as Lok Sevak Bhavan, only upon the insistence of his predecessor Nitish Kumar who gave up the top post to enter Rajya Sabha.

"Nitish Kumar ji set an example by taking no time in vacating his official residence. And I must say that the day my leaders tell me to step down, I will pack my bags and leave, without batting an eyelid," Choudhary said.

The BJP leader, who is often teased by the RJD with the reminder that he began his political career as a minister in Rabri Devi's cabinet, trained his guns at the opposition party, saying, "Some think a bungalow is a sort of inheritance (bapauti). One



house is needed for the mother and another for the son. This is not a monarchy."

Explaining about Sahyog camps, organised at panchayat levels across the state, on Tuesday, the CM said, "Such camps will ensure prompt resolution of people's grievances concerning government departments in the state. The government

has already launched 'Sahyog portal' for the purpose." The camps are being organised on the first and third Tuesday of every month.

The CM also made it clear that strict departmental action, including suspension, would be taken against officials who fail to dispose of applications listed on the 'Sahyog portal' and issue orders within 30 days.

"Problems will be resolved within 30 days by organising Sahyog camps at the panchayat level. Resolving problems of the common people is the top priority of the Bihar government. Every application will be disposed of within 30 days, and compliance details will be uploaded on the Sahyog portal," the CM said.

The objective of the Sahyog camp initiative is to resolve citizens' problems in an integrated and transparent manner, Choudhary said.

The state government is continuously striving to resolve the problems of ordinary citizens effectively and within a fixed timeframe, he said.

If the officer concerned fails to dispose of an application and issue an order within 30 days, or shows negligence, he will automatically be suspended on the 31st day, he added.

Asserting that the police have been given a 'free hand' to take action against criminals, the CM said that if any criminal dared to challenge the security personnel, the police would respond within 48 hours. "There will be no compromise on good governance... the rule of law prevails in the state," he said.

In an apparent reference to the RJD's national working president Tejashwi Yadav's recent allegation that police action was targeting people belonging to a particular caste, the CM said, "Such allegations don't make any sense at all. We believe in good governance. There will be no compromise with law and order and we will take action against criminals. Anyone trying to disturb law and order should be dealt strictly as per law. There is no caste of criminals." (PTI)

Extension of services of two special trains to accommodate extra rush

HT Bureau

GUWAHATI, June 2: To clear the additional footfall of passengers during the summer rush, services of train no 05932/05931 (Dibrugarh - Kolkata - Dibrugarh) and 03407/03408 (Bhagalpur-Katihar-Bhagalpur) has been extended for additional eight & three trips respectively in both directions. Also, train no. 05630 (Guwahati-Tirupati) and train no 05862 (Rangapara North-Vijayawada) has been decided to run for one trip as one way special train.

Train No 05932 (Dibrugarh - Kolkata) Special has been extended to run from 6th of June till 25th of July, 2026. While in return direction, train no. 05931 (Kolkata - Dibrugarh) special has been extended to run from 8th of June till 27th of July, 2026. The trains will operate with the existing schedule of service, timings, composition and stoppages for eight additional trips.

Train No 03407 (Bhagalpur - Katihar) Special has been extended to run till 4th June, 2026 while in return direction, train no 03408 (Katihar-Bhagalpur) special has been also extended to run till 4th of June, 2026. The trains will operate with the existing schedule of service, timings, composition and stoppages for three additional trips.

Additionally, it has been decided to run two one way Special trains for one trip on 4th June.

2026. Both the trains, i.e. Train no 05630 (Guwahati-Tirupati) and train no 05862 (Rangapara North-Vijayawada) will run on Thursday. Overall, these special train services will improve connectivity, facilitate smoother passenger movement and ensure a more comfortable travel experience during the summer rush period. The details of stoppages and timings of these trains are available at IRCTC website and social media platforms of NFR. Passengers are requested to verify the details before undertaking their journey.

If not 'boli', miscreants forced to mend ways through 'goli' in UP: CM Adityanath

KUSHINAGAR (UP), June 2: Uttar Pradesh Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath on Tuesday said his government had dealt firmly with miscreants in the state, asserting that those who did not mend their ways through 'boli' (words) were compelled to do so through the 'goli' (bullets).

Addressing a public gathering after inaugurating and laying the foundation stones of 278 development projects worth more than Rs 424 crore in Kushinagar district, Adityanath contrasted the state's past image with what he described as its present transformation under the BJP-led governments at the Centre and in UP.

"The earlier governments had made Uttar Pradesh known for 'katta' (country-made pistols) and bombs. Today, the same Uttar Pradesh is manufacturing BrahMos missiles for the country's security," the chief minister said.

Referring to criminals and anti-social elements, he said, "We have set these 'shohde' (miscreants) right. Those who did not improve, those who did not listen to words, ultimately listened to bullets."

The chief minister alleged that the previous governments had failed to ensure public safety and had allowed criminal activities to flourish, adversely affecting traders, farmers and women. Without naming any political party, he referred to the previous government

(before 2017) as "jungle party".

"There was terror of 'jungle party' and mafias ruled the roost," he said.

The chief minister said the "double-engine government" had effectively tackled both encephalitis and organised crime, creating an environment conducive to development, security and employment.

"We have ended both 'mafia and macchar'. The encephalitis disease has almost been eliminated, just as mafia rule has been eliminated from Uttar Pradesh.

"Mosquitoes brought disease and mafias brought unemployment. The double-engine government has addressed both problems," he said.

The chief minister said Kushinagar is no longer a symbol of backwardness. It is emerging as a symbol of a new UP moving ahead at bullet speed.

The chief minister said Kushinagar, associated with Lord Ram's son Kush, Lord Buddha and Lord Mahavira, has undergone significant transformation over the past decade.

"Nine to ten years ago, Kushinagar was grappling with an identity crisis, encephalitis, mafia rule, hunger, unemployment and administrative disorder. Mining mafias were active, farmers were exploited and people did not receive fair prices for their produce," he said. (PTI)

Dust storm fury in Rajasthan: Folk artist, 2 kids killed; solar plants

JAIPUR/JAISALMER, June 2: A powerful dust storm accompanied by rain tore through western Rajasthan on Monday night, killing a young folk artist and two children and injuring several others, besides leaving a trail of destruction across Jaisalmer, Barmer and Phalodi districts.

The storm uprooted hundreds of electricity poles, damaged solar power infrastructure, flattened tin sheds, blocked roads and disrupted power supply to several villages, officials said.

Among the dead was 25-year-old folk artist Swaroop Khan, who was performing at a desert resort in Jaisalmer's popular Sam tourist area. A concrete wall

collapsed during a cultural programme when a strong dust storm struck the area late Monday night.

Swaroop Khan, a resident of Barisyaia village and a member of the Manganiyar community of traditional musicians, suffered severe head injuries and died on the spot. Three other performers, including two women dancers, were injured. They were initially taken to a nearby hospital, shifted to the district hospital in Jaisalmer and later referred to Jodhpur for specialised treatment.

Resort owner Baroch Khan said around 40 tourists were present for an evening cultural programme when the storm hit.

The performance was

stopped after winds intensified, and tourists were moved to safer locations. Shortly afterwards, a concrete wall behind the open-air stage collapsed on the performers.

Jaisalmer Collector Anupama Jorwal said the storm also caused major disruption to infrastructure across the district. "It was a strong storm that affected the power supply in several areas. An electricity tower also collapsed, disrupting supply in multiple locations," she told PTI.

Jorwal said restoration work had started and rebuilding the damaged transmission tower could take around four days. Revenue officials have been directed to conduct a detailed assessment of losses. (PTI)

'Malicious actors' attempted to disrupt re-evaluation portal services: CBSE

NEW DELHI, June 2: The CBSE on Tuesday said "malicious actors" attempted to disrupt services on its re-evaluation portal through a barrage of cyberattacks, including a denial-of-service attack that caused 1.5 million hits on the platform within two minutes and more than one lakh attempts at unauthorised file access.

The board said the portal is currently supporting over 8,000 concurrent users, and more than 16,000 students have successfully completed their submissions as of 3 pm.

"While thousands of students accessed the CBSE re-evaluation portal today, malicious actors attempted to disrupt services through a barrage of cyberattacks," the board said on X.

"The most recent being a denial of service attack attempt causing 1.5 million hits on the portal within a matter of 2 minutes and more than 1 lakh attempts of unauthorised file access," it added.

Based on student feedback, the CBSE said it has further refined the platform, including extending session time limits, to make the process more convenient and seamless. "Our teams remain vigilant and responsive to ensure our dearest students are facilitated in all ways possible," the board said. Earlier in the day, the CBSE opened the online portal for verification of issues observed in scanned copies of answer books and re-evaluation of answers for students dissatisfied with their board exam evaluation.

According to the board, the facility is available only to those students who have obtained scanned copies of their evaluated answer books. "The portal for applying for verification of issues observed in supplied scanned copy of answer book and re-evaluation of answers has been made live on June 2, 2026. Students can avail the facility of verification of issue(s) ob-



served in supplied scanned copy of answer book, if any and re-evaluation of answer(s) if not satisfied with the evaluation," the CBSE said.

The portal will remain open from June 2 to June 6 (midnight), and no offline applications or requests submitted after the deadline will be accepted.

Students will have to log in through the CBSE website using their Aadhaar number and submit applications online. The board said the entire process, including payment of fees, will be conducted digitally. For verification of issues in scanned copies of answer books, students can report concerns such as missing pages, missing supplementary sheets, missing maps or graphs, blurred pages, incorrect answer books or evaluation against a different question paper set.

"Students are advised to ensure that all requests across subjects are included before final submission," the board said.

The board said the fee for verification of issues observed in supplied scanned copies of answer books is Rs 100 per answer book, while re-evaluation of answers will be charged at Rs 25 per question.

The fee can be paid only through online modes such as UPI, credit card, debit card and net banking, it said.

"Students may submit only one application each for verification of issues/re-evaluation and are therefore advised to decide in advance whether to apply for one or multiple subjects," the board said.

The CBSE said once the "Freeze and Proceed to payment" button is clicked, the details will be locked and cannot be edited. Hence, students are advised to ensure that all details are correct.

The board said applications will be treated as successfully submitted only after online payment is completed. It also said that only one application each for verification of issues and re-evaluation will be permitted.

"Students may also apply online for re-evaluation of one or more questions across one or more subjects by providing the required details, including question number, page number, as the case may be," the board said.

The CBSE said the outcome of the requests will be communicated after completion of the process and advised candidates to submit their applications within the stipulated timeline.

A visual guide and a tutorial video have also been made available to help students complete the process. The CBSE also said Aadhaar-based verification has been introduced for security reasons while applying for verification of issues and re-evaluation of answers.

"For children who do not have Aadhaar, the parent's, relative's or guardian's Aadhaar details may be used," the board said.

"In this case, the Aadhaar name, date of birth and gender must be of the person whose Aadhaar number is used," it added. The portal was launched after a delay, with the CBSE having earlier said that applications for verification and re-evaluation of answer books were expected to begin by May 29. (PTI)

No. ACEH/E(G)/10/2025-2026/35

Dated Diphu, the 02nd June, 2026

CORRIGENDUM

In continuation of the earlier Notice vide No. ACEH/E(G)/10/2025-26/31, Dated 01/06/2026 regarding Viva-voce interview & Computer test for shortlisted Lower Division Assistant (Jr. Asst.) & Section Assistant (S.A.) in the office of the Directorate-Cum-Additional Chief Engineer, PWD(R&B), Hills, Assam, Diphu, it has come to my notice that due to typographical error some eligible candidate's Roll No. of Lower Division Assistant (Jr. Asst.) & Section Assistant (S.A.) were inadvertently omitted from the list of shortlisted candidates. Accordingly, the following additional candidates are hereby included in the shortlist.

Sl.	Name of Post	Roll No. of Candidates	Venue for Viva-voce & Computer Test	Date & Time
1	Lower Division Assistant (Junior Assistant)	0125, 0131, 0617	Office of the Directorate-Cum-Addl. Chief Engineer, PWD (R&B), Hills, Assam, Diphu	11/06/2026, 10 AM to 5 PM
2	Section Assistant (S.A.)	0360, 0686, 0874		12/06/2026, 10 AM to 5 PM

N.B.: All terms and conditions mentioned in the Admit Card shall remain unchanged. The inconvenience caused is deeply regretted.

Sd/-
Director-Cum-Addl. Chief Engineer,
PWD(R&B), Hills, Assam, Diphu.

IPRD/ KA/ 2026-27/33

GOVT. OF ASSAM DIRECTORATE-CUM-ADDITIONAL CHIEF ENGINEER, PWD, (R&B),HILLS, ASSAM,DIPHU.

NO.ACEH/E(G)/10/2025-26/

Dated Diphu, the 01st June '2026.

Notice

It is hereby informed to all concerned candidates that the written examination's result of different category of Grade-III posts of PWD under KAAC, Diphu which was conducted on 28/09/2025 against the advertisement vide No. ACEH/E(G)/10/2025-26/06, Dated 01/07/2025 for filling up of Grade-III and Grade-IV Posts is hereby declared. Consequently, the Viva-Voce interview and Computer test shall be held at the Office of the Directorate-Cum-Additional Chief Engineer, PWD(R&B), Hills, Assam, Diphu as per schedule given below:-

NAME OF POST: LOWER DIVISION ASSISTANT (Jr. Asst.)

TABLE No. 1														
Date: 11/06/2026						Time:10:00 AM to 5:00 PM								
0021	0022	0024	0052	0075	0079	0095	0135	0136	0141	0143	0148	0149	0152	0155
0156	0163	0173	0174	0184	0214	0217	0232	0237	0240	0243	0256	0259	0274	0283
0292	0322	0323	0340	0359	0362	0376	0383	0385	0387	0389	0396	0401	0403	0404
0422	0430	0435	0446											

TABLE No. 2 Date: 11/06/2026 Time:10:00 AM to 5:00 PM

0471	0473	0474	0475	0495	0498	0509	0510	0518	0520	0522	0523	0525	0548	0571
0585	0586	0594	0601	0606	0622	0626	0635	0641	0648	0649	0655	0665	0673	0705
0728	0737	0781	0805	0806	0819	0843	0856	0874	0882	0891	0901	0908	0924	0925
0936	0977													

NAME OF POST: SECTION ASSISTANT (S.A.)

TABLE No. 1														
Date: 12/06/2026						Time:10:00 AM to 5:00 PM								
0018	0026	0031	0033	0034	0035	0037	0038	0044	0045	0046	0047	0053	0055	0057
0060	0062	0063	0071	0073	0084	0089	0090	0099	0101	0104	0105	0106	0109	0113
0121	0122	0123	0131	0133	0138	0139	0140	0142	0147	0149	0151	0156	0157	0159
0172	0187	0190	0201	0211	0214	0236	0241	0243	0244	0245	0249	0255	0256	0257
0258	0260	0261	0262	0265	0266	0267	0273	0282	0289	0290	0292	0293	0294	0295
0296														

TABLE No. 2 Date: 12/06/2026 Time:10:00 AM to 5:00 PM

0298	0300	0306	0307	0308	0321	0322	0324	0326	0329	0333	0335	0336	0341	0348
0350	0356	0365	0366	0367	0370	0373	0376	0377	0382	0392	0393	0397	0402	0403
0414	0416	0424	0426	0427	0429	0430	0436	0437	0443	0453	0458	0462	0463	0464
0469	0473	0477	0479	0485	0488	0491	0493	0494	0504	0508	0509	0510	0512	0513
0515	0519	0520	0531	0532	0544	0547	0562	0573	0586	0587	0597	0611	0612	0615
0617														

TABLE No. 3 Date: 12/06/2026 Time:10:00 AM to 5:00 PM

0619	0623	0626	0631	0638	0641	0647	0650	0651	0656	0661	0664	0675	0679	0681
0683	0684	0689	0692	0703	0705	0708	0710	0717	0725	0737	0742	0744	0749	0752
0755	0756	0757	0763	0785	0786	0787	0790	0795	0797	0802	0805	0816	0822	0835
0840	0841	0845	0846	0848	0849	0864	0870	0871	0875	0876	0878	0885	0894	0895
0902	0907	0908	0909	0920	0922	0928	0929	0935	0942	0969	0970	0986	0987	0988
0993	0999	1000												

Further, the Viva-Voce interview for Grade-IV Peon post shall be held from 15/06/2026, 16/06/2026 and 17/06/2026, the post of Chowkidar will be held on 18/06/2026 and for the post of Roller Handyman shall be held on 19/06/2026 from 10:00 AM to 05:00 PM at the office of the Directorate-Cum-Additional Chief Engineer PWD (R&B)Hills, Assam, Diphu. All Eligible candidates applied for the post of Peon, Chowkidar and Handyman may collect their Admit cards / Calling letter from the office of the undersigned from 08/06/2026 to 12/06/2026 during office hours.

No separate calling letter shall be issued for the Viva-Voce in Grade-III post of Lower Division Assistant (Jr.Asst.) and Section Assistant (S.A.). Candidates are also directed to bring all original testimonials, Admit cards of written examination and valid identification proof for verification.

Sd/-
Director-Cum-Addl. Chief Engineer,
PWD(R&B),Hills, Assam, Diphu.

Dated Diphu, the 01st June '2026.

Memo No.ACEH/E(G)/10/2025-26/31 -A,

IPRD/ KA/ 2026-27/25

“The Voice of Hind Rajab”, the Oscar-nominated true-story about the killing of a five-year-old Palestinian girl by Israeli forces in Gaza, has finally received a censor certificate, paving the way for its theatrical release on June 19.

The movie was initially set to release in India in March but was stuck with the Central Board of Film Certification (CBFC), the body that certifies theatrical releases.

Nominated in the best international film category at the 98th Academy Awards, the film was acquired for release in India as well as Pakistan, Sri Lanka, Maldives, Afghanistan and Bangladesh by distributor Manoj Nandwana of Jai Viratra Entertainment Limited.

“We would like to begin by expressing our sincere gratitude to the Central Board of Film Certification (CBFC), India, for granting certification without any cut to ‘The Voice of Hind Rajab’ and enabling Indian audiences to engage with this important cinematic work.”

“At Jai Viratra Entertainment Limited, we firmly be-

lieve that cinema serves as a powerful medium for storytelling, dialogue, and understanding diverse human experiences. We appreciate the thoughtful consideration extended by the CBFC in evaluating the film and facilitating its release in India,” Nandwana said in a statement on Tuesday.

The film, directed by Tunisian filmmaker Kaouther Ben Hania, sheds light on the tragic story of Hind Rajab, whose killing during the Israel-Gaza war sparked international outrage.

“The Voice of Hind Rajab” is a deeply moving story that reflects the human cost of conflict and the resilience of the human spirit. We hope the film fosters empathy, understanding, and constructive conversations among viewers. Film is releasing in cinemas on 19 June 2026,” Nandwana added.

Hind Rajab was fleeing Gaza City in January 2024 with her family when their car came under fire from Israeli forces, leaving all her relatives dead. When the emergency services operated by Palestinian Red Crescent tried to contact those in the car, Rajab

‘VOICE OF HIND RAJAB’ SET TO RELEASE ON JUNE 19 IN INDIA AFTER CLEARANCE FROM CENSOR BOARD



picked up the call and pleaded to be rescued.

The bodies of Rajab and her family and the two rescue workers were found later within metres of each other. Hania cast actors to play real life Palestinian Red Crescent members but used Rajab’s real voice recordings to tell the harrowing true story.

In an interview with PTI in March, Hania said she had secured funding for another film when she first heard snippets of Rajab’s voice on social media and that changed her trajectory.

“When I heard the voice of Hind Rajab, it was so powerful and it set me in this state of anger and sadness. I couldn’t unhear it and go on with my daily life. So I stopped the other film. I said, ‘No, it’s not the moment to do it’. Because not doing anything was like being complicit in this war crime. So I did it out of this feeling, but also out of anger and out of emergency,” Hania said in the interview.

“You know, we can’t live in a world where if you have the biggest gun, you rule the world. It’s not possible and it’s not good for our children,” she added. (PTI)



Manipuri film Boong emerges big winner at New York Indian Film Festival, takes home 3 awards

BAFTA-winning Manipuri film Boong took home three awards at the just-concluded New York Indian Film Festival (NYIFF), including the best child actor honour for its young protagonist.

The New York Indian Film Festival 2026 concluded its four-day run Sunday with an awards ceremony, honouring the finest in Indian cinema across ten competitive categories.

The festival, held from May 28 to 31, showcased a diverse slate of films across 15 languages, “underscoring the growing dominance of regional storytelling in contemporary Indian cinema”, bringing together filmmakers and artists at North America’s longest-running festival dedicated to Indian independent cinema.

This year’s edition of the film festival, presented by the Indo-American Arts Council (IAAC), included 19 narrative (features), four documentaries (features) and 27 shorts (narratives and documentaries) including several world premieres, and a special LGBTQ shorts program.

Baksho Bondi (Shadowbox) won the festival’s top honour, winning Best Film, while Boong, the Manipuri film that created history by winning the prestigious BAFTA award in the Best Children’s and Family Film category in February this year, emerged as the biggest winner of the evening with three awards - the Best Debut Film (selected by the Film Critics Circle of India), the Best Director for

Lakshmi Priya Devi, and the Best Child Actor for Gugun Kippen.

Nikhil Yadav was named the Best Actor for his performance in Vimukt, while Meenakshi Jayan took home the Best Actress award for Victoria. The Best Screenplay honour went to Nikhil Mahajan and Prajakt Deshmukh for Tighee. In the non-fiction categories, Déjà vu won Best Documentary Feature and Waai claimed Best Documentary Short, while Jo’s Turn won Best Narrative Short.

The festival concluded with the glittering awards ceremony attended by prominent members of the Indian-American diaspora community, filmmakers and movie enthusiasts.

The festival, which showcased the 4K restored version of cult classic Sholay, opened with a special screening of Boong on May 29.

IAAC chairman Dr Nirmal Mattoo said before the commencement of the festival that NYIFF stands as a powerful cultural bridge. “The 2026 lineup and nominations reaffirm our commitment to showcasing the richness, diversity, and artistic excellence of Indian cinema on an international stage.” Festival director Aseem Chhabra had said that the films nominated at this year’s edition represented the range and depth of storytelling in India today.

“From human dramas to comedies, and narratives that reflect the angst of Millennials and Gen Z, these works reflect a cinema that is both rooted and globally resonant,” he had said. (PTI)

Anna Kendrick to direct adaptation of The Seven Husbands of Evelyn Hugo

Actor-filmmaker Anna Kendrick has been tapped to direct Netflix’s highly anticipated adaptation of Taylor Jenkins Reid’s bestselling novel The Seven Husbands of Evelyn Hugo, marking a major development for a project that has faced several creative changes since it was first announced, according to Variety.

Kendrick will helm the film after previous directors Maggie Betts and Leslye Headland exited the project for undisclosed reasons. Based on Reid’s 2017 novel, The Seven Husbands of Evelyn Hugo centers on a reclusive Old Hollywood icon who decides to grant one final interview to an unknown journalist. During the candid conversation, Evelyn Hugo reveals the truth behind her seven marriages and shares untold stories of fame, ambition, betrayal, and scandal that shaped her life and career, as per the outlet.

Netflix acquired the rights to the novel in 2022, but the adaptation has taken time to move forward. Casting details for the film have not yet been announced. The book’s devoted fanbase has long championed Jessica Chastain for the role of Evelyn Hugo, a glamorous Hollywood star known for her striking red hair. However, Chastain

previously shut down speculation about her involvement, saying there was “zero possibility” of her playing the character.

The screenplay was initially penned by Liz Tigelaar, known for Tiny Beautiful Things and Little Fires Everywhere. Francesca Sloane, whose credits include Mr. & Mrs. Smith, Atlanta, Fargo, and the upcoming third season of Big Little Lies, is currently revising the script, according to Variety.

The adaptation marks the second of Reid’s novels to receive a screen treatment following Amazon’s 2023 limited series Daisies Jones & the Six, which was inspired by the story of a fictional rock band and loosely drew from the history of Fleetwood Mac’s iconic album ‘Rumours.’ Reid will serve as an executive producer on the project alongside Margaret Chernin. Producers include Liza Chasin for 3Dot Productions and Brad Mendelsohn for Circle Management + Productions. (Agencies)

Kendrick is widely known for her performances in the Pitch Perfect franchise and the Twilight films. She made her directorial debut with Woman of the Hour, a thriller that Netflix acquired in a multimillion-dollar



deal following its premiere at the 2023 Toronto International Film Festival, as per the outlet. The actor-director will next be seen in Chris Rock’s drama Misty Green and Lauren Miller Rogen’s comedy Babies, according to Variety. (Agencies)

After Berlinale, Arundhati Roy’s ‘In Which Annie Gives It Those Ones’ heads to Shanghai

Author and activist Arundhati Roy’s acclaimed 1989 film In Which Annie Gives It Those Ones will be screened at the 28th Shanghai International Film Festival, the Film Heritage Foundation (FHF) announced on Tuesday.

The film, restored in 4K by the Shivendra Singh Durgapur-led FHF, features a screenplay by the Booker Prize-winning author, who also played a significant role in the television movie.

The restored version of the film, directed by Roy’s then husband Pradip Krishen, was screened at the Berlin International Film Festival in February.

“In Which Annie Gives It Those Ones goes to Shanghai! FHF’s 4K restoration of Pradip Krishen and Arundhati Roy’s In Which Annie Gives It Those Ones (1989) is headed to the Shanghai International Film Festival and will be screening between June 12 - 21, 2026,” FHF said in a post on X.

Set in an architecture school in Delhi in the mid-1970s, In Which Annie Gives It Those Ones is a whimsical campus comedy that was originally made for Doordarshan and later attained cult status among film enthusiasts. The film captured the spirit and anxieties of student life during the period.

The story follows Anand Grover, nicknamed Annie by his friends, a misguided visionary who lands in trouble after making fun of principal Y D Billimoria, known as Yamdoot. Blending humour with sharp social observation, the film was partly inspired by Roy’s experiences as a student at the School of Planning and Architecture in Delhi.

The film marked Roy’s first screenplay. She had earlier collaborated with Krishen on his debut feature, the 1985 colonial-era drama Massey Sahib. The duo later reunited for 1992’s Electric Moon, with Roy once again writing the screenplay and Krishen directing.

Apart from Roy, the film starred Arjun Raina and Roshan Seth in lead roles. Bollywood star Shah Rukh Khan and actor Manoj Bajpayee, then emerging performers in the Delhi theatre circuit, appeared in small but significant roles.

The film won two National Awards — best screenplay for Roy and best feature film in English.

The restoration was carried out by the Film Heritage Foundation at L’Immagine Ritrovata’s laboratory in collaboration with the National Film Development Corporation (NFDC), the National Film Archive of India (NFAI) and Krishen. The restoration was completed using the original 16 mm camera negative along with a 35 mm print.

The 28th Shanghai International Film Festival is scheduled to be held from June 12 to June 21. (Agencies)

Nobody knows about their contribution: Manoj Bajpayee on playing a bureaucrat in ‘Governor’

Actor Manoj Bajpayee says his upcoming film “Governor” highlights the behind-the-scenes efforts of people, who helped the country sail through extreme financial hardship over three-decades ago.

Based on true events, the film dives deep into the financial turmoil that shook India during the 1990s economic collapse, and features Bajpayee in the role of an RBI governor, a role inspired by former RBI governor S Venkitaramanan.

Directed by Chinmay Mandlekar of “Inspector Zende”, the film also features Adah Sharma and Madhoo.

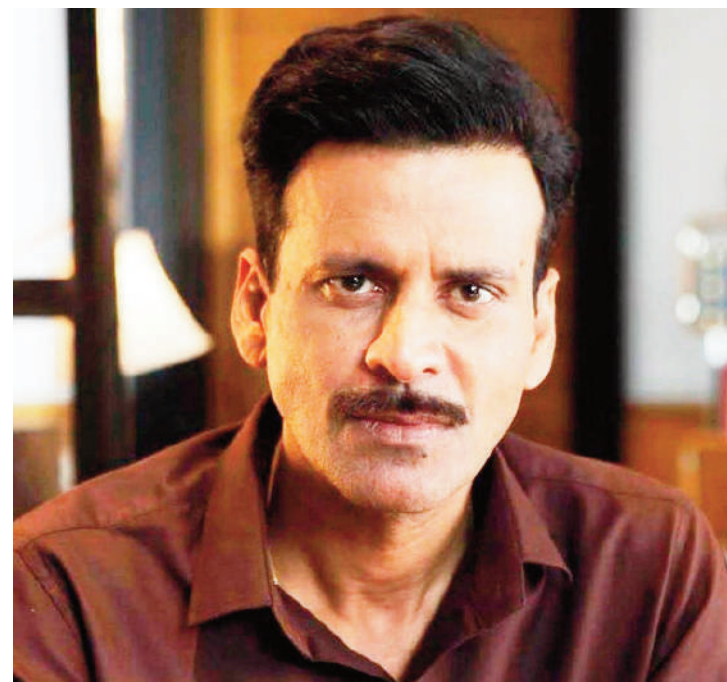
Recalling the 1991 economic crisis that hit India, Bajpayee said he was a theatre actor in Delhi at the time and closely followed developments through newspapers.

“I was always a news junkie. So, I know for a fact that it happened. But I don’t have any knowledge of what went on behind the closed doors, and who were the people responsible for getting India out of that crisis,” the actor told PTI in an interview.

“The Family Man” star said as a struggling theatre artist, he was living completely broke at the time and would often worry about his next meal.

“A poor person’s life goes on but it is obvious that when the value of a rupee decreases, everyone has to bear the burden. Even at that time, the situation was like that. But that decision gave India great relief. After that, it was a warning for India, which helped India think about its market in a new way.”

The actor highlighted the contribution of key



figures such as former RBI governor S. Venkitaramanan, economist Manmohan Singh and then Prime Minister Chandra Shekhar in navigating the financial crisis amid political instability.

“Nobody knows about the contribution of these people at that time, and that is where a filmmaker or a screenwriter comes in to take those incidents,

make them cinematic and dramatic, take them to the people, and find some drama there,” he said.

Known for his intense preparation for playing a character, Bajpayee said for his role as an RBI governor, he relied primarily on observation, imagination and personal interactions with bureaucrats.

The actor, who has played real-life characters in films like “Inspector Zende”, “Sif Ek Banda Kaafi Hai”, and “Aligarh”, said he reached out to his old Delhi University roommates—many of whom had studied for the UPSC exams and were now working as top civil servants—to understand how government officials think and operate.

He described officers in finance and economics as “quiet, reserved and occupied with numbers”.

“Their life (as RBI governor) is very different from all the other IAS and IPS officers, it is not that interesting. They are only busy with the files, the data and the numbers and we are talking about a time when computers were not in vogue. So,

everything was on files and paper.”

When asked if the film takes any side, Bajpayee said they have remained as authentic as possible.

“... You will see all those main people of that time coming on the screen and expressing their opinion about it, and everything is there on paper, on record. So, when you go deep into your Google research, you’ll find those incidents, you find the dimension of those personalities and their reservations and their cooperation also in supporting the RBI governor, S. Venkitaramanan,” he said.

Regarding the crisis, and particularly the current slowdown in Hindi cinema, the actor voiced concern over the film industry’s growing fixation with box office performance.

“The day we stop worrying about the box office numbers and start worrying about the subject matter we are making, cinema will improve. People from all sectors will show interest in coming to theatres. If you are showing only one kind of film, then the footfalls will get affected,” Bajpayee said, adding, that the box-office numbers are often manipulated to project false success.

“If the film is engaging, it shows in the excitement of the audience and that is not a lie, it reaches everyone. Manipulating the opinion of the people, manipulating the numbers, these are all the points or elements that will only make this industry or cinema of our country suffer a lot,” the actor said.

Produced by Vipul Amrutlal Shah, the film is co-produced by Aashin A. Shah, the movie is set for release on June 12. (PTI)

Serena Williams is coming back to tennis at 44, returning to the sport she dominated



PARIS, June 2: Serena Williams is coming back to professional tennis at the age of 44, returning to the sport she dominated for two decades before famously "evolving" away from the daily grind of competition.

First up for the 23-time Grand Slam singles champion is the doubles tournament at Queen's Club. But Wimbledon and the U.S. Open could be next.

"It seems like she's trying to work her way up maybe to the U.S. Open, and those fans would be so ready to see her back on a singles court there," former No. 1 Lindsay Davenport said at the French Open after the WTA Tour announced Monday that Williams has accepted a wild-card invitation to play doubles at next week's grass-court tournament in London.

Williams won seven Wimbledon titles and six at the U.S. Open before stepping away from the game in 2022. In doubles, she won six titles at Wimbledon and two at

the U.S. Open — all with her older sister Venus Williams.

"She's a legend. It's inspiring to see," top-ranked Aryna Sabalenka said. "I'm excited to see her play and probably face her. ... It's very good news for tennis."

John McEnroe suggested Williams could compete in singles at Wimbledon, which starts June 28.

"She's not getting any younger but she's Serena Williams so I bet you she would tell me about wanting to win the whole damn thing," McEnroe said in Paris. The Queen's Club tournament starts next Monday and the WTA said Williams will play "with a partner to be announced in due course."

"Queen's Club feels like the perfect place to begin this next chapter," Williams said in a statement. "Grass has given me some of the most meaningful moments of my career and I'm excited to be back competing on one of the sport's most iconic stages."

Williams has not competed since bidding farewell at the 2022 U.S. Open. At the time, Williams said she didn't want to use the word "retiring" and instead declared that she was "evolving" away from tennis.

Davenport said some current women's players went down to Florida to practice with Williams recently.

"I don't think anyone's admitted to that, but I do know that some of them were," Davenport said. "So I think she has kind of a handle on where the level is. But I don't know if she's been playing a two-hour singles match, right? We'll have to see how she can handle that physically."

Williams, who has won 14 Grand Slam doubles titles overall in her storied career, became eligible to compete in February after re-registering with tennis' mandatory anti-doping program six months earlier — which is the first step toward a comeback.

Djokovic is competitive at 39

Davenport noted how Novak Djokovic is still competitive at 39 — having recently pushed 19-year-old Joao Fonseca to five sets before getting beaten in the third round in Paris.

"It's not going to be easy. If anyone could do it, certainly it could be her," Davenport said of Williams. "We're seeing kind of an unprecedented time with players and how they train now, being able to play better longer, play at a level that we never expected."

Williams sisters were role models for Osaka

Four-time major champion Naomi Osaka, who beat Williams in the 2018 U.S. Open final for her first major title, was excited at the prospect.

"It will bring people to watch tennis," Osaka said Thursday. "I'm going to be tuned into the first match, for sure. I think a lot of people are. Everyone knows Serena and Venus were my role models growing up, so

it's going to be cool to see her on the grounds again." Williams recently posted a video on Instagram showing herself training on a hard court with her daughter: "Rumor has it...I got a new trainer," Williams said in the post.

Williams' second daughter was born in 2023.

Gauff never got to play Williams

"One of my biggest regrets was not being able to play her," defending French Open champion Coco Gauff said.

Added fellow American player Madison Keys: "Serena Williams playing tennis is only good for tennis. Let's be real. We all want to watch Serena play tennis."

Women returned to Queen's after more than 50 years

A women's tournament rejoined the men's competition at Queen's last year after an absence of more than 50 years, meaning Williams will be making her debut at the historic grass-court tournament. (AP)

Kohli, Anushka visit Premanand Maharaj's ashram in Vrindavan

MATHURA (UP), June 2: Cricketer Virat Kohli and his actor-wife Anushka Sharma visited the ashram of Vrindavan-based Sant Premanand Maharaj on Tuesday to seek his blessings and express their gratitude following Royal Challengers Bengaluru's successful Indian Premier League campaign.

According to ashram sources, the couple, wearing face masks, arrived by car at around 7 am at Shri Hit Radha Keli Kunj Ashram on the Vrindavan Parikrama Marg. They met Premanand Maharaj, received his blessings and spent nearly two hours at the ashram.

When they emerged from the private meeting room, both had sandalwood paste and a tripath (three horizontal lines) on their foreheads. The couple was also presented with a book by the ashram, which they were seen carrying with them.

Later, Kohli and Sharma visited the ashram of Swami Hit Govind Sharan to seek his blessings as well. The couple had also travelled to Vrindavan in April on the occasion of Akshaya Tritiya.

Kohli played a match-winning knock of an unbeaten 75 as Royal Challengers Bengaluru chased down a target of 156 to defeat Gujarat Titans by five wickets in the IPL final in Ahmedabad on May 31. (PTI)

Liverpool opens talks with Andoni Iraola to become the coach

LIVERPOOL, June 2: Liverpool has begun negotiations with Andoni Iraola to be the new coach, a person with knowledge of the situation told the Associated Press.

The person spoke on the condition of anonymity because nothing has been formally agreed.

Former Bournemouth coach Iraola was quickly identified as the favorite to succeed the fired Arne Slot, with Liverpool wanting its next appointment to play a more attacking style of soccer.

Liverpool sporting director Richard Hughes has led the recruitment process.

Spanish coach Iraola led Bournemouth to European qualification this season and then walked away. Under him, Bournemouth was one of the most entertaining teams in the Premier League and punched above its weight to regularly upset high profile opponents despite limited spending power.

Iraola honed talents like Antoine

Lalthantluangi, Dabas earn maiden call-ups

NEW DELHI, June 2: Young defenders Lalthantluangi and Shilpi Dabas will once again be a part of Salima Tete-led national team which will take part in the FIH Hockey Women's Nations Cup New Zealand scheduled to begin in Auckland from June 15 to 21.

India have been placed in Pool A of the tournament alongside Japan, United States and Uruguay, with Pool B comprising hosts New Zealand, Chile, Korea and France.

India will open their Nations Cup campaign against the United States on June 15, before facing Japan a day later. They will round off their pool stage with a clash against Uruguay on Thursday, June 18. The semi-finals are scheduled for Saturday, June 20 and the final on June 21.

Tete will continue to lead the side for the tournament. Savita and Bichu Devi Kharibam will provide the team with reliable and experienced options for goalkeeping.

In defence, seasoned Sushila Chanu Pukhrabam, Ishika Chaudhary, Nikki Pradhan and Jyoti will be joined by Lalthantluangi and Dabas, both of whom earned their maiden senior call-ups during the recently concluded tour of Australia and will be eager to continue their development at this level.

The midfield will be marshalled by Salima, who will draw on the expertise of Neha, Sunelita Toppo



FIH Women's Nations Cup

and Sakshi Rana around her.

They will be joined by Deepika Soreng, who also impressed during the friendly series in Australia.

In the forwardline, Navneet Kaur will be supported up front by Deepika, Rutuja Dadaso Pisal, Annu and Ishika besides seasoned attacking midfielders Lalremisiami and Sonam.

Collectively they bring a blend of pace, creativity and clinical finishing to the forward line.

The Indian squad heads into the Nations Cup on the back of a productive tour of Australia, where the side played a four-match friendly series in Perth in the lead-up to the FIH Hockey Women's Nations

Cup New Zealand 2025-26.

The series provided the team with invaluable experience, giving Chief Coach Sjoerd Marijne an opportunity to test the squad. India held the hosts to a 2-2 draw in the series after four competitive matches.

Chief coach Sjoerd Marijne underlined the importance of the team's preparations ahead of a crucial phase, beginning with the Nations Cup, followed by the FIH World Cup and the Asian Games.

"The Nations Cup is an important tournament for us. We want to go there and play with ambition to set a standard for ourselves that we can build on," Marijne said.

Diphu gripped by FIFA WC fever ahead of tournament

DIPHU, June 2: With less than two weeks remaining before the start of the FIFA World Cup 2026, football fever has already swept through Diphu town, where enthusiastic supporters have begun celebrating the world's premier football tournament by decorating homes, shops and vehicles with the flags of participating nations.

Across the town, flags of various countries can be seen fluttering atop residences, hotels and commercial establishments, while football-themed decorations, jerseys and team logos have added to the festive atmosphere.

Vehicles, including cars and motorcycles, have also been adorned with the colours of fans' favourite teams.

Football lovers are eagerly counting down to the tournament opener, scheduled to kick off on June 11. One of the most prominent displays is at LB's Bakery & Confectionery on Church Road, Rongnihang, where the premises have been decorated with flags of participating nations. Small handheld flags are also being sold to football enthusiasts. Bakery proprietor Rohila Engtipi said the FIFA World Cup is a special occasion that deserves celebration.

"The opportunity comes only once in four years, and we should celebrate this greatest football carnival of the world," she said. Engtipi revealed that she would be supporting France in this edition of the tournament, citing her admiration for French star Kylian Mbappe's perfor-

mances during the 2022 World Cup.

She also named Germany, Croatia, Japan and South Korea among her favourite teams.

Karbi Anglong Sports Association (KASA) Football Secretary and KASAF manager Horen Engti Kathar, a former district and state footballer, said he would be cheering for Japan.

"Japan is one of the strongest teams in Asia and has shown remarkable improvement over the years. I believe they have the potential to make a deep run in the tournament," he said.

Waisong Bey, manager and coach of Karbi Anglong Morning Star FC, which finished fourth in the Indian Football League-2 during the 2025-26 season, said he would be supporting France and Portugal.

"Both teams have several talented and world-class players and are among the strong contenders for the title," he said.

Among the town's most dedicated football supporters is Putul Bora of Rongpirbi, who has become known locally for his elaborate World Cup celebrations.

A lifelong supporter of Germany, Bora traditionally transforms his residence into a football fan zone during every World Cup. Preparations are already underway at his home, where banners, national flags, photographs of football legends and tournament memorabilia will soon be displayed.

Praggnanandhaa, Gukesh, Divya keep India's title hopes alive with wins



OSLO, June 2: Indians struck back in style in Round 7 as D Gukesh and R Praggnanandhaa delivered crucial victories while Divya Deshmukh bounced back from her previous-round setback to beat compatriot Koneru Humpy, reigniting the country's challenge as the Norway Chess title race entered its decisive phase here.

World champion Gukesh salvaged 1.5 points from his clash against American Grandmaster Wesley So, securing victory in the Armageddon tie-break after letting a winning opportunity slip in the classical game, to move to eight points overall.

He, however, remained rooted to the bottom of the six-player double round-robin standings.

Praggnanandhaa, meanwhile, handed French Grandmaster Alireza Firouzja a second successive classical defeat to collect the full three points and climb to nine, but the gains did little to alter the standings, with the young Indian GM remaining fifth and Gukesh sixth.

However, both Indians stayed within touching distance of the leaders and could yet make a late charge with three rounds still to be played.

Wesley So continued to lead the standings with 12.5 points, while Alireza held second place on 10. A tightly packed chasing group of three players — Praggnanandhaa, world No. 1 Magnus Carlsen and Germany's Vincent Keymer — shared third spot on nine points, keeping the title race wide open heading into the final three rounds.

Seven-time champion Carlsen, meanwhile, continued his resurgence after an inconsistent start, defeating Keymer in the Armageddon tie-break to stay firmly in contention.

Few would discount the Norwegianian from the title race, given his proven ability to recover from early setbacks and mount late surges, a trait that has underpinned many of his triumphs over the years.

Gukesh, playing with the white pieces, had worked his way into a winning position by activating his king and steadily pressing his advantage, but severe time trouble — with just 18 minutes remaining compared to So's hour on the clock — proved costly as the American defended well to force a draw in the classical game.

The world champion, however, made amends in the Armageddon tie-break, where the Indian displayed sharp calculation to seal victory with a courageous pawn grab on the queenside.

Praggnanandhaa, also playing with the white pieces, seized the initiative by the 26th move when he won an extra pawn and gradually tightened his grip.

With Alireza increasingly under time pressure, the Indian kept probing for weaknesses before unleashing a full-blooded attack at the critical juncture of the game.

Reduced to just two minutes on his clock, the French GM had little chance of mounting an effective defence as Praggnanandhaa converted his advantage into position of command.

Results: (Round 7)
Open: R Praggnanandhaa (Ind, 9) bt Alireza Firouzja (Fra, 10); Vincent Keymer (Ger, 9) lost to Magnus Carlsen (Nor, 9); D Gukesh (Ind, 8) bt Wesley So (USA, 12.5).

Women: Koneru Humpy (Ind, 6.5) lost to Divya Deshmukh (Ind, 10); Ju Wenjun (Chn, 9) lost to Anna Muzychuk (Ukr, 9.5); Bibisara Assaubayeva (Kaz, 12.5) bt Zhu Jiner (Chn, 7). (PTI)

Aryna Sabalenka ends Naomi Osaka's fashion show in Paris and advances to French Open quarterfinals

PARIS, June 2: Naomi Osaka may have had the edge in the fashion contest. In the tennis department, though, top-ranked Aryna Sabalenka was the winner.

Sabalenka beat Osaka 7-5, 6-3 on Monday to reach the French Open quarterfinals and move one step closer to finally winning the clay-court Grand Slam, where she lost last year's final to Coco Gauff.

It was the first women's night match at Roland Garros in three years and Osaka entered the court wearing a golden bomber jacket over her gold sequin playing dress, trailing a tiered train with puffs of tulle.

Sabalenka wore more standard tennis attire: A slightly sheer black flared tennis dress with a red underlayer; plus diamond necklaces.

In the matchup of four-time Grand Slam champions, Sabalenka improved to 3-1 in her career against Osaka, who was playing in the fourth round at Roland Garros for the first time.

Sabalenka overpowered Osaka from the baseline, and produced a huge forehand return winner on her first match point that Osaka barely got her racket on.

Tournament organizers had been criticized for not scheduling more women's matches at night, with Roland Garros officials responding that women's best-of-three set matches don't occupy enough time for TV broadcasters. The men play best-of-five set matches.

Sabalenka won in 1 hour, 27 minutes.

"The atmosphere and the attention that this match brought (is) going to show them that probably for the future they should consider putting at least sometimes women matches at night," Sabalenka said.



Sabalenka's quarterfinal opponent will be Dina Shnaider, who beat Madison Keys — the last American woman remaining in contention — 6-3, 3-6, 6-0.

French hopes were dashed following Diane Parry's 6-3, 6-2 loss to 114th-ranked Maja Chwalinska of Poland.

Chwalinska had never been beyond the second round of any major, and her run is even more impressive considering she came through three qualifying rounds.

Chwalinska's quarterfinal opponent will be Anna Kalinskaya, who surprised even herself by reaching the last eight after defeating Anastasia Potapova 6-4, 2-6, 7-6 (10-7).

"Thinking two weeks ago that I will be here, I wouldn't believe it," Kalinskaya said. "I would probably laugh with my team." (AP)

PARIS, June 2: John McEnroe was 14 when the New York Knicks last won the NBA title.

Now 67, the former top-ranked tennis player and basketball fan is anxious to get back home from his TV commentating duties at the French Open in time to attend the Knicks' first home game of the NBA Finals.

"You can't ask for anything better. I've been waiting only 53 years," McEnroe said. "So, time has come. It's going to be awesome because (Victor) Wembanyama is out of this world. Can't ask for a better matchup. It is like a dream matchup, it's like getting your best guys to do their thing."

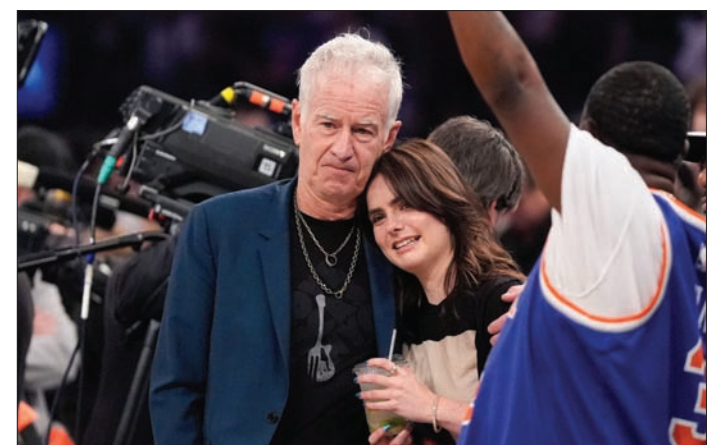
The French Open ends Sunday. Game 3 of the NBA Finals is in New York the next day.

"Hopefully I'll be there," McEnroe said in Paris on Monday.

A French reporter asked McEnroe if he's afraid of Wembanyama — the Frenchman who leads the San Antonio Spurs.

"No, he doesn't know who the hell I am," McEnroe snapped back. Still, how can the Knicks stop

John McEnroe is anxious to wrap up French Open duties and cheer on the Knicks



Wembanyama?

"I don't know if you stop him. It's probably impossible to stop him," McEnroe said. "You just try to slow him down a little bit, I'm guessing, just make other guys beat you. But they got some great other players."

The Knicks won their only titles in 1970 and 1973.

"I loved Clyde. He was my favorite," McEnroe said of Walt "Clyde" Frazier.

Sairaj Bahutule appointed India's spin coach

MUMBAI, June 2: Former India leg-spinner Sairaj Bahutule was on Tuesday appointed as the spin bowling coach of the men's national team, having worked in the India U-19 and India A set-up earlier.

Bahutule, who represented India in two Tests and eight ODIs, was seen in the Punjab Kings jersey in the recently concluded IPL.

"The Board of Control for Cricket in India (BCCI) is pleased to announce the appointment of Mr Sairaj Bahutule as the Spin Bowling Coach of the Indian Cricket Team (Senior Men)," the BCCI said in a statement.

A distinguished performer on the domestic circuit, the 53-year-old claimed 630 wickets and tallied 6,176 runs in first-class cricket that spanned nearly two decades.

Following his retirement, Bahutule built an impressive coaching resume, serving as head coach of Vidarbha, Kerala, Gujarat and Bengal. He also worked as spin-bowling coach with IPL franchises Rajasthan Royals and most recently Punjab Kings and was associated with the BCCI's National Cricket Academy, now known as the Centre of Excellence, between 2021 and 2024. (PTI)

World champion Gukesh has the edge in experience over Sindarov: Norway Chess arbiter

OSLO, June 2: Anemone Kulczak, the chief arbiter at Norway Chess, has been a constant presence since the tournament's early days in 2013 -- quietly observing its evolution, its innovations, and the shifting fortunes that have marked every edition.

A seasoned French arbiter with years of experience overseeing hundreds of elite clashes carries the authority that comes from long exposure to top-level chess events, and she is rarely quick to overstate conclusions. Even so, in her view, reigning world champion D Gukesh remains the clear favourite to defend his crown later this year.

"Javokhir Sindarov also has experience but as a world champion, you know, Gukesh has more experience, I would say. So, yes, for me he has more experience but the world championship games are really interesting to follow," says Kulczak, a mother of a young daughter who works in a biology lab in Nice, speaking in a strong French accent with a measured tone.

Gukesh will take on Kazakhstan's Sindarov later this year to defend his title, with critics pointing to a dip in form since his 2024 world title triumph and suggesting he has not looked quite the same player. Meanwhile, Sindarov is being tipped as a potential dark horse in the championship showdown.

Kulczak, who has been part of Norway Chess through most of its modern history apart from a brief break when her four-year-old daughter was born, has witnessed its full evolution -- from the era of five-time world champion Viswanathan Anand to Magnus Carlsen's rise as a seven-time Norway Chess winner, and the introduction of women's



chess, along with the challenges of the COVID pandemic.

She has also been the arbiter in moments that went viral, including when Carlsen banged the table in Stavanger after a loss to Gukesh in a round-robin game last year.

When asked in a lighter vein if Carlsen or any other player had ever caused her problems over the years, she says, "It was me who was watching the Armageddon tie-break when he (Carlsen) played against Gukesh... and when he knocked the table.

"It was the last game to finish that day so he was not disturbing anyone when he did it so as an arbiter I did not say anything but had some more games been ongoing on other boards I would have told him please do not do this again because you are disturbing

other players," says Kulczak.

On whether officiating a superstar like Carlsen brings added pressure, Kulczak is unequivocal. For an arbiter, she says, the rules matter more than reputations, especially under the glare of cameras and constant media scrutiny.

Arbiters, she explains, are constantly multitasking -- monitoring the games, ensuring the live broadcast matches, the moves on the board, keeping the playing hall free of distractions and stepping in whenever players need clarification.

The pressure only intensifies in time trouble, when every second counts.

"When players have less than five minutes, they can stop writing the moves," she says.

"Then we have to make sure the opponent continues to record them."

In a tournament where fortunes can swing on a single move, even the smallest detail can become an arbiter's responsibility, she adds.

She still fondly remembers the inaugural edition of Norway Chess in 2013, when Anand was among the participants. Mentioning the Indian great brings a smile to her face as she says, "I guess I remember that I arbitrated him."

Kulczak, who was also an arbiter at the 2014 Chess Olympiad in Norway, began officiating at just 18 and earned her International Arbiter title six years later, says the COVID pandemic was among the most challenging periods in the tournament's history.

"I was here during COVID and we all had to arrive before the tournament because of quarantine rules," she recalls.

"After every game, we had to clean and sanitise all the pieces. Every table had to be sprayed with disinfectant. It was meticulous, very meticulous."

Kulczak is full of praise for the Indian contingent, saying players such as Praggnanandhaa, Gukesh, Divya Deshmukh and Koneru Humpy are an arbiter's delight because they consistently follow the rules.

"Yes, it's easier to arbitre them," she says with a smile.

As for Carlsen's longevity and whether he can surpass Garry Kasparov's record of spending 20 years as the world No. 1 in classical chess, Kulczak believes the answer lies largely with the Norwegian himself.

"I think it depends more on his spirit. If he wants to, I'm sure he's capable of doing what Garry Kasparov did," she signs off. (PTI)

Indian national anthem in Greece Atiqa Mir races to most dominant win of her career



THESSALONIKI (GREECE), June 2: Eleven-year-old Atiqa Mir reinforced her status as India's leading racer on the world stage with the most dominant performance of her career in Round 2 of the Champions of the Future Academy Program, making a clean sweep of qualifying, heat races and the finals here.

Atiqa, the first Indian to be supported by the Formula 1 Academy, set the benchmark in a highly competitive field in the OK-NJ category (age 12-14). It is remarkable what she has managed to achieve in her first season in this category, giving the more experienced drivers (mostly male) a hard time on the track.

Be it the qualifying, heats or the two finals, Atiqa was in a league of her own throughout the weekend. With her sensational

show, she became only the third driver to in the series' history to sweep the qualifying, heats and finals.

While she led with admirable poise and calm on track all through the week, the little girl in her understandably got emotional when the Indian national anthem as she stood atop the podium. Atiqa is aiming to become the first female in Formula 1 since the early 1990s.

She won Round 2.2 by a more than 2.6 seconds, a massive margin in motorsport considering all 25 drivers were running on the same equipment.

Born in Mumbai with family roots in Jammu and Kashmir, Atiqa bagged the pole position in qualifying with a record time of 56.77, almost three tenths ahead of the second place driver, demonstrating skill well beyond her age and experience.

In Heat Race 1, Atiqa dominated the race from start to finish. In Heat Race 2, she bossed the field again, winning by more than a second ahead of her nearest competitor, putting her in P1 grid position for the final.

In the gruelling 15 lap final, Atiqa took control of the race at the start and demonstrated a racing masterclass, pulling away to a 3.9 seconds advantage in merely eight laps. (PTI)

Sindhu advances to second round of Indonesia Open

JAKARTA, June 2: Two-time Olympic medallist PV Sindhu battled her way into the second round of the Indonesia Open with a straight-game win, while former world No. 1 Kidambi Srikanth suffered an opening-round exit here on Tuesday.

Sindhu was made to work hard by Thailand's Busanan Ongbamrungphan before prevailing 25-23, 21-16 in a 51-minute women's singles round of 32 contest of the Super 1000 badminton tournament.

The former world champion displayed her trademark attacking game to edge a closely fought opening game before carrying the momentum into the second to complete a straight-game win.

The unseeded Indian is now likely to face reigning Olympic champion and world No. 1 An Se-young, who she had lost to in the quarterfinals last week in Singapore last week, in the second round. Sindhu has a dismal 0-9 head to head record against An.

However, it was a disappointing day for Srikanth, who bowed out after a 19-21, 15-21 defeat to Japan's Yushi Tanaka in the men's singles opening round.

Malvika Bansod too made a first round exit. She was outclassed by seventh seed Pornpawee Chochuwong. The Thai shuttler dominated throughout to register a 21-12, 21-10 victory. (PTI)

Seamers Auqib, Prince among 6 picked as net bowlers ahead of Afghanistan Test

MULLANPUR, June 2: Jammu and Kashmir seamer Auqib Nabi Dar, whose non-selection in the Indian Test squad invited widespread criticism, has been summoned by the team management along with five others to bowl in the nets ahead of the one-off Test against Afghanistan starting June 6.

Besides Auqib, wily UP leg-spinner Zeeshan Ansari, who plays for Sunrisers Hyderabad in the IPL, has also been asked to bowl in the nets as the Afghanistan team is expected to have a few wrist spinners.

The other players called to bowl in the camp are left-arm wrist spinner Shivang Kumar, left-arm pacer Gurjapneet Singh, find of IPL Prince Yadav, and off-spinner Saransh Jain.

"Gurjapneet Singh, Auqib Nabi, Prince Yadav, Saransh Jain, Zeeshan Ansari and Shivang Kumar have joined the Indian squad as net bowlers to assist the team in the build up to the Test," a BCCI release stated.

"Yes Auqib Nabi has been asked to join the India nets. It is not just Auqib but there are six others, who have also been called to join the India nets. Due to extreme weather conditions, the two premier fast bowlers Mohammed Siraj and Prasidh Krishna can't go flat out in the nets after a gruelling three



games in seven days with travel. The batters would need adequate practice," a BCCI source privy to the development told PTI.

Both Siraj and Prasidh played Qualifier 1, 2 and final in a space of five days including travelling to Dharamsala, Chandigarh and Ahmedabad respectively.

Auqib, who got 60 wickets to become highest wicket-taker while guiding Jammu and Kashmir to Ranji Trophy triumph, was piped by gangly Punjab pacer Gurnoor Brar in the Indian team.

The J&K medium pacer's omission had caused a furore with former India skipper and ex-chairman of selection committee Dilip Vengsarkar questioning the sanctity of Ranji Trophy if performances in the tournament weren't

rewarded.

It is understood that Auqib hasn't yet been included in the 15-member squad but he is among the stand-bys.

Mohammed Siraj, Prasidh Krishna and Gurnoor Brar are three pacers in the 15 and only if one of the three has a niggles, will Auqib be included in the 15.

The Indian team will have its first practice session on Tuesday afternoon but all the players, who were part of the IPL final, are unlikely to train on the opening day.

For the record, seven Gujarat Titans players (skipper Shubman Gill, B Sai Sudharsan, Gurnoor Brar, Prasidh Krishna, Mohammed Siraj, Manav Suthar and Washington Sundar) are part of Test squad. (PTI)

NEW DELHI, June 2: Former India pacer Atul Wassan sees shades of a young Sachin Tendulkar in Vaibhav Sooryavanshi, saying the teenager's maturity, audacity and fearless approach remind him of the batting great's early days during India's 1989 tour of Pakistan.

Sooryavanshi emerged as the breakout star of the recently concluded IPL season, topping the batting charts with 776 runs from 16 innings at an impressive strike rate of 237.30. The 15-year-old impressed with his fearless performances against some of the world's premier bowlers, including Jasprit Bumrah, Kagiso Rabada and Pat Cummins.

"He is a one in a million generational talent. Can you imagine the maturity and audacity of this boy? He reminds me of 16-year-old Sachin Tendulkar.

"I saw Sachin and that game maturity and audacity to take the bull by the horns (during the 1989 tour of Pakistan). God has blessed him with X factor along with the game & power," Wassan told PTI in an exclusive chat on Tuesday.

A 16-year-old Tendulkar had made his international debut against a fiery Pakistan bowling attack that included Wasim Akram, Waqar Younis, Abdul Qadir and Imran Khan in 1989.

Tendulkar impressed everyone with his straight and on-drives. The grace and timing with which he struck those boundaries showed he was a star in the making.

"Though he has a long way to go. I hope everything falls into place just like it did for Sachin. The same God gifted X factor talent I see in Sooryavanshi."

Wassan stressed that Sooryavanshi's long-term development would depend on proper guidance and whether he is encouraged to become a "complete cricketer" rather than merely a T20 specialist.

"The only thing that bothers me is that he is being mentored enough to aspire for the Test cap? He is king of this format (T20). He has got the game. But does he have more talent than just hitting sixes?" Wassan said.

The former Delhi captain warned against burdening the teenager with expectations of record-breaking feats at such an early stage of his career.

"It will be unfair to put the burden of breaking records. He should not be thinking or made to think about the records. He should aspire to become complete players like Tendulkar, Rahul Dravid and Virat Kohli.

"They took their game to a higher and higher level with

longevity. There will be a time when you have to change your game.

"During challenging times, if he can go back to the basics and ethos of the game then he will emerge as a great player. So it all depends upon who all mentor him and how. Guys like (Anil) Kumble and Dravid can keep in good stead."

Wassan opined that a batter's true standing in the game is ultimately determined by performances in Test cricket.

"Test" is the real test. A player gets respect from Test cricket only. You could hit those sixes as the grounds were a bit short. But when there will be three slips, no restrictions on bouncers, big grounds and tough conditions, if you do well there, you earn respect before the eyes of your contemporaries."

Drawing comparison with former West Indies great Chris Gayle, Wassan said even one of the most destructive T20 players gained greater recognition when he proved himself in the longest format.

"If you have a range of Chris Gayle. Gayle is Gayle because he scored a triple hundred in Test cricket. Gayle is arguably among one of the greatest T20 batters.

Wassan added that Sooryavanshi was already match ready for Team India. (PTI)

ICC suspension unexpected, but corrective measures underway: Cricket Canada

TORONTO, June 2: Cricket Canada has termed the ICC's decision to suspend its membership as "unexpected" and said it has initiated comprehensive corrective measures to address the governance and financial deficiencies flagged by the sport's global governing body.

The ICC, at its Board meeting in Ahmedabad on Sunday, suspended Cricket Canada with immediate effect for what it described as "serious breaches" of membership obligations. However, the world body clarified that Canadian national teams would continue to remain eligible for ICC events to safeguard the interests of players.

Responding to the decision, Cricket Canada said it respected the ICC's ruling and remained committed to fulfilling all compliance requirements.

"The suspension was unexpected. Nevertheless, Cricket Canada respects the ICC's decision and is fully committed to meeting all compliance requirements. The Board has directed the Committee to accelerate its investigative and reform mandate to ensure that governance, financial oversight, and reporting systems are strengthened without delay," Cricket Canada said in a statement to 'Sportsnet'.

The governing body added that it has begun implementing remedial measures after receiving communication from the ICC.

"Since receiving ICC's notice, Cricket Canada has undertaken immediate, comprehensive, and structured corrective measures to remedy the governance, financial oversight, and administrative deficiencies identified in the ICC's correspondence," it said in the statement to the leading Canadian sports news organisation.

Cricket Canada also said it takes the concerns raised by the ICC seriously and remains focused on improving governance standards while supporting the growth of the sport in the country.

The suspension comes amid an ongoing ICC investigation into allegations of corruption involving Cricket Canada, which were highlighted in the CBC documentary 'Corruption, Crime and Cricket' earlier this year.

Cricket Canada maintained that it operates within the ICC's anti-corruption framework and remains compliant with applicable requirements of the apex body, while asserting that any findings would be based on verified facts and due process. (PTI)

AHMEDABAD, June 2: The English conditions are no longer "alien" for the Indian women's cricket team, who will start as favourites at the upcoming T20 World Cup, says former captain Anjum Chopra.

The 'Women in Blue' begin their T20 World Cup campaign against arch-rivals Pakistan in Birmingham on June 14.

"England conditions are not alien. Few of them or most of them have already played there, at least the core of this Indian team.

"For Nandini (Sharma), yes, she is playing there. But in a very small career of Shree Charani, this is her second tour to England in less than 12 months," Chopra told PTI in an exclusive interaction.

"For me, India will always remain one of the favourite sides. Obviously, I want them there. Not only in the top four. I want them in the top two and then the top team," she added. One of the biggest positives for India in the lead-up to the World Cup has been the return of wicketkeeper-batter Yastika Bhatia from a lengthy injury layoff.

The left-hander made an immediate impact on her comeback, scoring a fluent 54 off 40 balls in the opening T20 against England, a match in which skipper Harmanpreet Kaur was rested.

With Yastika staking a strong claim to the No. 3 spot and Jemimah Rodrigues moving down the order, Chopra feels the Indian team management may need to embrace greater flexibility in its batting line-up.

"It's very good that she (Yastika) is scoring runs and she scored in the first 20.



Though she missed out on a long innings in the second. But what it also does is that it's not about just balancing out Jemmy and Harman and Yastika.

"I think Indian team will probably need to be a little more open about flexibility in the batting order," she noted.

"I am not saying that they will not be because right now, it's just a series against England. But in less than a couple of weeks they will play their first World Cup game. I feel there needs to be a little more adaptability to the flexibility."

India has been drawn in a challenging

Group 1 alongside Australia, South Africa, Pakistan, Bangladesh and the Netherlands, with only the top two teams progressing to the semifinals.

"Even Pakistan has been playing some very good cricket. And India does not know how Netherlands would come out. They've also made it to the World Cup."

"And why should we just forget the fact that there is an Australian team and a South African team in the same pool. So, only two of the teams can qualify for the semi-finals from that pool. So, it's not going to be very easy."

Patidar has got all skills to get India

T20I call up

Fresh off leading Royal Challengers Bengaluru to a second successive IPL title, Rajat Patidar has done enough to force his way into India's T20I reckoning, according to Chopra.

"He will definitely find a place in the squad of the Indian T20 team, undoubtedly. He has always had the skill. Even when he made the Test debut for India, it was just one of those opportunities."

"It's just that the Indian team is so full in that middle order or in the top order right now. If you look at any batter to get an opportunity, it's a tough one to break through, but Patidar has always been very skillful, very talented.

"It's not just about winning IPL. It's just a confirmation about him being a leader and the franchise winning."

Handling the spotlight will be Sooryavanshi's biggest test

Teen batting sensation Vaibhav Sooryavanshi has become one of the biggest talking points in Indian cricket after his stunning IPL campaign, but Chopra believes his toughest challenge now lies away from the cricket field.

"If it (spotlight) has to go to his head, he has to balance it out. The fandom is there for everyone to see. The following is there for the sport," she said.

"It is just upon him how he handles it or around him, people who are there, how they educate him to handle all this," she explained. (PTI)