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- EU leaders squabble over outreach to Moscow as Ukraine war rages on
- 2 men sentenced to prison for arson on property linked to UK PM Starmer

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- Thousands take out rally in Kohima demanding speedy justice in sexual harassment, rape cases
- Discussions started with several communities to restore peace in Manipur: CM

Fight between Israel and Hezbollah intensifies ● Iranian officials refuse to travel to Switzerland

US and Iran talks face Lebanon war roadblock

JERUSALEM, June 19: Talks between the US and Iran were called off on Friday after intense fighting between Israel and Hezbollah in southern Lebanon, three officials said, raising questions about a nascent agreement to end the war in Iran.

Iranian officials didn't travel as planned to Switzerland, insisting that the fighting in Lebanon must stop before the talks can take place, according to the officials, who spoke on condition of anonymity to discuss the ongoing mediation to try to get the talks rescheduled. US Vice President JD Vance also cancelled his trip.

Israel's military struck targets in southern and eastern Lebanon overnight, and Hezbollah reported intense fighting. Lebanon's Health Ministry said at least 21 people were killed, and Israel said four soldiers died.

The conflict between Israel and



Iran-backed Hezbollah is the most precarious part of the Iran deal. Neither Israel nor the militant group signed the agreement — but it is supposed to end their fighting, and Iran has signaled its willingness to risk renewed war in the region for the sake of its interests in

Lebanon and its most important regional ally.

Mediators are now scrambling to reschedule the meetings, which were supposed to begin addressing how to restrict Iran's nuclear program — the core issue over which Israel and the US went to war on

February 28.

The talks are also supposed to bring about a permanent end to the conflict. The interim deal has already reopened the Strait of Hormuz to international shipping, after Iranian attacks and threats all but stopped the flow of oil and natural gas through the waterway. A new Iranian authority charged with overseeing the strait issued guidance Friday calling on ships to register with it even as transits are currently free — signalling Tehran's intent to likely start charging.

The Israeli military said strikes were ongoing on Friday after four of its soldiers, including a lieutenant colonel, were killed in an attack on a tank in a village near the southern Lebanese city of Nabatiyeh. An explosive drone attack wounded another five, it added. Israel then launched multiple strikes (CONTD. ON PAGE 2)

Govt to expand power infrastructure: Himanta

Staff Reporter
GUWAHATI, June 19: Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma on Friday said the state government is intensifying investments in the power sector with the aim of transforming Assam into an energy-surplus state while strengthening transmission and distribution infrastructure to ensure reliable electricity supply.

Taking to X, Sarma highlighted the progress made in Assam's power sector and outlined several ongoing projects aimed at enhancing the state's electricity network. "We are striving to build Assam as an energy-surplus state through accelerated investments in the power sector. We are adding more stations, more capacity and more lines to take reliable power right to your home," the Chief Minister added.

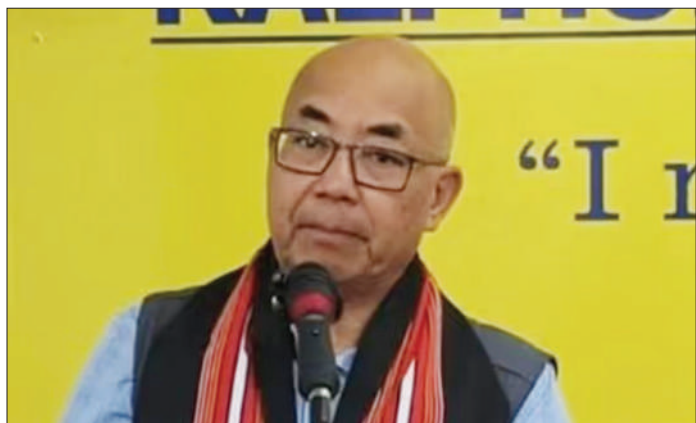
According to figures shared by Sarma, Assam currently has 82 op-



erational substations with a total grid capacity of 10,000 MVA. The state's transmission network has expanded to 5,300 circuit kilometres (CKM), significantly improving power evacuation and distribution capabilities. The Chief Minister also detailed

future expansion plans under the state's power infrastructure development programme. As part of the initiative, 16 new substations are planned across Assam, which are expected to add 6,340 MVA of grid capacity and further strengthen (CONTD. ON PAGE 2)

Mizoram RS member Lalitluangkima says support to NDA will be issue-based



AIZAWL, June 19: Newly elected Rajya Sabha member from Mizoram, K. Lalitluangkima, on Friday said he would extend support to the BJP-led NDA government at the Centre on issues related to the development of the state and the welfare of its people.

Lalitluangkima belongs to the ruling Zoram People's Movement (ZPM), a regional party founded in 2017 that is aligned with neither the NDA nor the opposition INDIA bloc.

Speaking to reporters here, the ZPM leader said he and the party's lone Lok Sabha member, Richard Vanlalhmangaiba, would remain neutral in Parliament.

"We will remain as neutral members in Parliament. However, our support to the central government will be issue-based," the 62-year-old leader said.

Vowing that he would work for the development of the state and welfare of its people, Lalitluangkima said he would give priority to secure the Centre's support to ensure that the state government's flagship schemes are successfully implemented.

The ZPM held a function on Friday to commemorate Lalitluangkima's election to the Upper House.

Speaking on the occasion, the newly elected MP described the recent contest as one of the most challenging political battles he had experienced.

Drawing a sharp contrast to the last Rajya Sabha poll, he said that the recent election was highly exhausting as they faced immense challenges, criticism and interference.

"This recent Rajya Sabha election was highly exhausting as we faced immense challenges and interference. During the previous RS poll, when ZPM was in the opposition, the candidate of the then-ruling party was allowed to contest smoothly without such interference. However, the tougher the goal, the sweeter the taste of victory," he said.

Lalitluangkima won the Rajya Sabha poll held on Thursday by securing 26 out of the 36 votes polled, while his opponent Zothansangi Hmar of the opposition Mizo National Front (MNF) received all 10 votes cast by her party's legislators.

The BJP and Congress, which have two and one legislators respectively, did not contest the poll, and their legislators also did not participate in the voting. ZPM legislator from Tuichang seat W. Chhuanawma also could not cast his vote due to health issues. (PTI)

With sustainable agriculture, NE has potential to become India's next growth engine: FM

BHOIRYMBONG (MEGHALAYA), June 19: Union Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman on Friday said the Northeast has the potential to become India's next engine of growth by leveraging its strengths in sustainable agriculture and premium organic produce.

She also asserted that Meghalaya is uniquely positioned to lead because of the trust it commands in global markets.

Inaugurating the Northeast's largest organic spice processing plant of the Eastern Ri-Bhoi Or-



ganic Farmer Producer Company Ltd here, Sitharaman said, "The future of agriculture increasingly belongs not to those who produce the most, but to those who produce the best — cleaner, more traceable, more

and more premium."

"When Meghalaya's farmers rise, the Northeast rises. And when the Northeast rises, India's growth acquires a new engine," she said, congratulating the Meghalaya government, women collectives and entrepreneurs for driving the state's organic farming movement forward.

Emphasising Meghalaya's competitive advantage, the finance minister said the state need not compete with large agricultural states in volume as the (CONTD. ON PAGE 2)

CM bats for hike in fund limits through externally aided projects

GUWAHATI, June 19: Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma on Friday urged Union Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman to allow the northeastern states to have access to enhanced funds through externally aided projects, citing "exceptional track record and honest implementation of schemes and projects" in the region.

He said that such projects, worth ₹ 53,000 crore, are underway in Assam alone.

"On behalf of Assam and our sister states in the northeast, I made a passionate appeal to Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman to allow our governments access to enhanced limits through Externally Aided Projects (EAP), keeping in view our exceptional track record and honest implementation of schemes and projects," Sarma said on X.

After attending a seminar on "Leveraging EAPS in North-Eastern States" in Shillong, he said that over the past few years, these projects, backed by multilateral financial agencies, have empowered Assam to initiate multiple mega transformative projects, which were initially considered unviable due to the high cost of capital. Currently, such projects worth ₹ 53,000 crore are underway in Assam alone, in sectors such as building bridges and embankments, hospitals, robotics, mega power and infrastructure projects, Sarma said.

"Needless to say, Externally Aided Projects also bring in vibrant project management skills and global best practices into our government machinery," he added. Sarma maintained that the inaugural session of the seminar was "an excellent platform to improve collaboration and planning in the implementation of such projects". The Chief Minister's (CONTD. ON PAGE 2)

115 people from Assam rescued from Bihar; 9 traffickers held

GUWAHATI, June 19: As many as 115 people, including many minors, hailing from different parts of Assam, have been rescued from the clutches of a suspected human trafficking network in Bihar, and nine persons have been arrested, a Sashastha Seema Bal (SSB) official said here on Friday.

He said all the victims have been brought back to Assam and are undergoing counselling.

"The racket was targeting financially

poor families in the state, especially along the Bhutan border in Assam. The victims were lured with the promise of government jobs," the SSB official, who was part of the rescue operation, said.

Many of the rescued victims, of whom 48 are females, are minors, he said.

The official said some parents of the victims had approached the SSB, Tezpur, after they could not contact their children, taken by the traffickers.

Coordinated operations conducted by multiple agencies, including the SSB and Bihar police, with the help of local intelligence network, led to the rescue from Samastipur district in the eastern state, the official said.

He added that nine suspected traffickers have been arrested so far.

"The victims have reached Assam and are currently undergoing counselling before heading back home," the SSB official said. (PTI)

NE's first integrated waste management facility inaugurated

HT Correspondent
DIBRUGARH, June 19: Dibrugarh MLA Prasanta Phukan on Friday inaugurated the Integrated Waste Management Facility (IWMF) at Lekai in Dibrugarh, the Northeast's first such facility, which will handle industrial, biomedical and other categories of waste.

The project has been developed at an estimated cost of Rs 25 crore.

Established under the Assam Waste Management Project, the facility has the capacity to process more than 1,000 metric tonnes of solid waste daily. It will serve not only Dibrugarh but also the neighbouring towns of Dulaijan and Chabua, creating a comprehensive regional waste management solution.

Industrial waste generated in Dulaijan and Naharkatia will also be processed at the facility.

"This facility marks a new chapter in Dibrugarh's journey towards becoming a model city. As Dibrugarh is being projected as

Assam's second capital, it is only fitting that we set the highest standards in urban infrastructure, and waste management is a critical part of that vision," Phukan said during the inauguration ceremony.

The event was attended by district commissioner Bikram Kairi, Pollution Control Board chairman Arup Kumar Mishra, member secretary Mousumi Bardalai and Dibrugarh Municipal Corporation (DMC) commissioner-in-charge Navas Das.

The inauguration comes amid the state government's increased focus on developing Dibrugarh as Assam's second capital, with urban infrastructure, civic amenities and environmental standards being upgraded to support the vision.

The IWMF is expected to significantly reduce unmanaged solid waste in the region, minimise environmental degradation and bring Dibrugarh in line with national waste-processing standards. Officials of the Dibrugarh Municipal (CONTD. ON PAGE 2)

3 killed in motorcycle-mini truck collision

RANGIA, June 19: Three persons, including two brothers, were killed after their motorcycle collided head-on with a mini truck in Assam's Tamulpur district, police said on Friday.

The collision took place on the Rangia-Bhutan road in Tarabari village on Thursday night, when the mini truck hit the two-wheeler, a senior officer said.

The driver of the vehicle is suspected to have been in an inebriated state and has been detained, he said.

The deceased were identified as Majrul (16) and Zubaid Hussain (14), and Sultan Ali (21), he said.

Majrul and Zubaid were brothers, the officer said, adding that Ali was working in a private establishment in Kerala and had come for Bakri Eid. He had purchased the motorcycle five days ago. The accident (CONTD. ON PAGE 2)

'Yoga teaches us mindfulness, respect and care for ourselves'

From its deep roots in ancient India, yoga has become truly universal: Guterres

UNITED NATIONS, June 19: Commemorating the International Day of Yoga, UN chief Antonio Guterres has said that from its deep roots in ancient India, yoga has become truly universal, helping millions of all faiths.

The Permanent Mission of India to the UN marked the 12th International Day of Yoga at the world body's headquarters on Thursday on the theme of 'Yoga for Healthy Ageing'.

Vibrant yoga mats were neatly arranged at the North Lawns of the UN headquarters in the vicinity of the iconic Gandhi statue, as yoga practitioners, diplomats, UN officials, members of the diplomatic corps and the Indian-American community participated in the Yoga Day celebrations.

On the stage, a special banner announcing India's candi-



dature as a non-permanent member of the UN Security Council for the 2028-29 term was also displayed with the message "#India4UNSC 2028-29 Peace, Planet, Progress."

In his message to mark the International Day of Yoga, Secretary General Guterres said that "we come together to celebrate an ancient practice

theme, 'Yoga for Healthy Ageing', Guterres said this speaks to the vital importance of physical and mental well-being, mobility and dignity as populations age across the globe.

"Yoga teaches us mindfulness, respect and care for ourselves, for our planet, and for one another. On this International Day, let us extend that care to the older members of our human family and build a world where every generation can lead a healthy life," Guterres said, concluding his message with 'Namaste'.

In his remarks, India's Permanent Representative to the UN Ambassador Harish Parvathaneni recalled that when Prime Minister Narendra Modi came up with the idea of commemorating International Day of Yoga 12 years ago, "it was his vision that it is something (CONTD. ON PAGE 2)

NEET re-exam: NTA issues safety advisory; shares admit card updates on WhatsApp

NEW DELHI, June 19: The National Testing Agency (NTA) on Friday said that it is sending reminder SMS messages, emails, and WhatsApp notifications to candidates, urging them to download their admit cards for the NEET-UG 2026 re-examination scheduled for June 21, while cautioning students against fraudulent messages and fake communications.

The NEET-UG exam for admissions into medical courses was originally held on May 3 this year, but was cancelled on May 12 due to allegations of a paper leak. The Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI) is currently investigating this issue.

"NTA is sending reminder SMS and emails to candidates to download their admit cards for the re-examination on Sunday, 21 June 2026," the agency said in a public advisory on X. The agency informed that legitimate

SMS messages would be sent from the official sender ID "NICPEP," and emails would originate from "no-reply.neet.nta@nic.in."

It also reiterated that only the official website for this process is <http://neet.nta.nic.in>; candidates are encouraged to enter this URL directly into their browsers.

"NTA will NEVER ask for any payment, send exam papers, answer keys, or 'leaked' material, or share your admit card via a link," the advisory said, adding, "If you receive any such message, do not click. Report it."

Additionally, the NTA mentioned that it would now send exam updates and centre information to candidates directly via WhatsApp for the re-examination.

Candidates should ensure that they see the blue verified tick and the name 'National Testing Agency' next to the sender; any message from an account without the

blue tick is NOT from the NTA, even if it appears to use their name, the advisory said.

The NTA clarified that the WhatsApp service is a "broadcast-only channel" and that it "will not ask you to reply, share OTPs/personal details, or pay."

Any message claiming to be from the NTA that requests such information is fraudulent.

Candidates who have already downloaded their admit cards for the June 21 re-examination do not need to download them again. "The SMS/Email/WhatsApp messages are primarily for those students who are yet to download their new Admit Cards," it said.

Furthermore, the NTA noted that the admit cards issued for the May 3 exam are no longer valid, as many students have been assigned new test centres in their preferred cities. "Downloading and printing the (CONTD. ON PAGE 2)

Jio files for Initial Public Offering

Reliance targets next growth wave through AI, satellite internet

MUMBAI, June 19: Billionaire Mukesh Ambani on Friday unveiled a sweeping roadmap for Reliance Industries Ltd's next phase of growth spanning artificial intelligence, satellite broadband, clean energy and consumer businesses, as its digital unit Jio Platforms filed draft papers for what could become India's largest-ever initial public offering.

Jio Platforms, the telecom-technology company that transformed India's digital landscape over the past decade, filed a draft red herring prospectus with market regulator SEBI for a fresh issue of up to 27 crore shares. Sources familiar with the matter said the offering could raise about Rs 37,700 crore (USD 4 billion), valuing the company at roughly USD 137 billion.

"The Board of Jio Platforms has approved the Draft Red Herring Prospectus earlier today, and it will be filed with SEBI today," Reliance Chairman Mukesh Ambani told shareholders at the company's 49th annual general meeting.

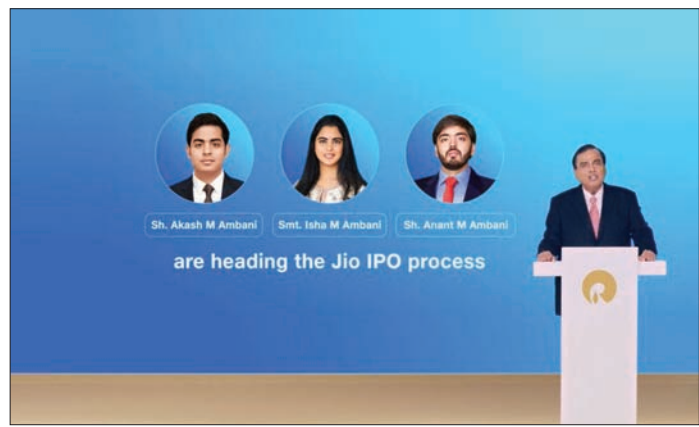
Shortly after Ambani ended his speech, the DRHP was filed with stock exchanges and market regulator SEBI.

Describing the proposed listing as a landmark moment for the group, Ambani said, "The proposed listing of Jio will demonstrate to the world that India can build technology companies of global scale, global capability, and global value."

Ambani said the IPO process is being led by his three children - Akash Ambani, Isha Ambani and Anant Ambani - who are increasingly taking charge of the conglomerate's key businesses.

The offering aims to unlock value from Jio Platforms, whose telecom arm has grown into the world's second-largest mobile operator by subscribers in a single country after China Mobile. As of March 31, Reliance Jio served 524.4 million subscribers, including 268.5 million users on its 5G network.

Jio Platforms reported a revenue of Rs 1.47 lakh crore and profit after tax of about Rs 30,000 crore in FY26. The company counts Meta and Google among its largest strategic investors, alongside a roster of global finan-



cial backers, including KKR, Silver Lake, Mubadala, ADIA and Saudi Arabia's Public Investment Fund.

Beyond the IPO, Ambani used the annual meeting to outline what he described as Reliance's next generation of growth engines, with artificial intelligence emerging as a central pillar.

A year after announcing Reliance Intelligence, the group's AI venture, Ambani said the company was moving from planning to execution.

"Our objective is to build a profitable AI infrastructure, platform, and services business serving consumers, enterprises, and governments at scale," he said.

Reliance has partnered with Google, Meta and Nvidia to develop AI infrastructure and services tailored for India. Ambani drew parallels with Jio's telecom rollout a decade ago, saying, "Today, Reliance Intelligence promises AI to everyone, everywhere. And we shall deliver on this promise too."

The company plans to build an AI infrastructure capable of supporting services across Indian languages and sectors ranging from agriculture and healthcare to education and enterprise applications.

Reliance also highlighted satellite broadband as another major growth opportunity. The company is preparing to expand connectivity offerings beyond terrestrial networks, complementing its nationwide 5G rollout and fixed-wireless broadband services.

Jio's broader digital ambitions include migrating its entire subscriber base to 5G by 2030, expanding enterprise technology services and commercialising pro-

chemicals and new materials," he said. "I am confident that our new Oil-to-Chemicals & Materials business will become even more valuable than our current O2C business."

Consumer businesses are expected to provide another major growth driver.

Reliance Retail crossed 20,000 stores during the year and plans to expand manufacturing capabilities in food, apparel, electronics and consumer goods, while building an export platform for Indian brands.

The company also outlined plans to develop a broader export ecosystem, targeting USD 125 billion to USD 150 billion of exports by 2032 across sectors including consumer goods, manufacturing, agriculture and energy products.

Taken together, Ambani said the group's future growth would be driven by five major pathways: oil-to-chemicals and advanced materials, new energy, artificial intelligence, FMCG and consumer businesses, and exports.

"We doubled our EBITDA in the last five years," he said. "And as I look to the future, I am absolutely confident in our ability to double - indeed, more than double - our consolidated EBITDA over the next five years."

The annual meeting also offered the clearest update yet on succession at India's most valuable company.

"The generational transfer of day-to-day management at Reliance is almost complete," Ambani said.

He said Isha Ambani now leads consumer businesses, Akash Ambani oversees technology operations, and Anant Ambani heads the group's energy businesses, while a cadre of younger executives is being groomed across the organisation.

For investors, the transition comes at a pivotal moment as Reliance evolves from a fossil-fuel giant into a diversified conglomerate spanning telecommunications, digital services, artificial intelligence, retail, advanced manufacturing and clean energy.

"The future of your company is not only in safe hands," Ambani told shareholders, "but in hands that will take Reliance to far greater heights." (PTI)

proprietary software and network technologies in overseas markets.

Ambani also reiterated Reliance's aggressive push into clean energy, describing India as being at the beginning of an energy "supercycle" while remaining heavily dependent on imported fuels.

"Reliance is working on the most comprehensive, integrated, and future-focused plan by any Indian corporate to boost India's energy sources in every way possible," he said.

The conglomerate is investing across solar manufacturing, battery storage, green hydrogen, compressed biogas, bioenergy and underground coal gasification. Ambani said the company's long-term goal is to help India produce most of its energy requirements domestically while building globally competitive clean-energy businesses.

Reliance has already begun producing solar modules at its Dhirubhai Ambani Green Energy Giga Complex in Jamnagar and expects its battery manufacturing operations to commence this year. The company is targeting 20 GW of integrated solar manufacturing capacity and plans to scale battery production to 120 GWh annually.

"The world built its old energy on Middle Eastern oil. The world will now build its new energy on Indian sunshine," Ambani said.

The group's traditional oil-to-chemicals business remains its largest earnings contributor, but Ambani said Reliance is reshaping the segment to focus increasingly on chemicals and advanced materials rather than transportation fuels.

"In the long run, we will convert all the oil we refine into

repo rate and supported maintaining the neutral stance.

Saugata Bhattacharya said that given the multiple overlapping geo-economic shocks clouding the future, "I believe that risk management is now the most sensible approach to monetary policy responses; this has now been articulated by multiple central banks and academic research".

The chances of a policy mistake remain heightened given the two-way risks on the inflation-growth outlook, he said.

"However, given the MPC forecasts on growth and inflation, and factoring in the elevated and rising inflation expectations, we must now closely monitor second order input cost transmission getting embedded in retail inflation. This will depend on the intensity and duration of the energy shock," the external member said.

Ram Singh said as long as the West Asia conflict persists and the impact of El Niño remains unquantified, it makes sense for the monetary policy to retain all the flexibility needed to respond to evolving inflation and growth trajectories. "A 'neutral' stance provides the MPC with maximum operational flexibility without being constrained by previous commitments. If external shocks worsen or the second-round price effects spread widely, the neutral stance allows us to adjust policy to protect macroeconomic stability," he said.

On June 5, the central bank cautioned that rising costs could spill over into wages and inflation expectations. It also cited risks from a below-normal monsoon forecast and possible El Niño conditions, which could put pressure on food prices in the months ahead.

RBI lowered its growth expectations for the current fiscal, projecting real GDP growth at 6.6 per cent in 2026-27, below the 6.9 per cent forecast in April. The projection is also lower than 7.6 per cent estimated for 2025-26. It also forecast inflation to rise to 5.1 per cent in 2026-27.

Earlier this month, the MPC kept the repo rate unchanged at 5.25 per cent and also announced several measures to attract foreign capital and support the rupee amid growing risks to growth and inflationary pressure from the prolonged West Asia conflict. (PTI)

Contd. from Page 1...

US and Iran talks

against "Hezbollah infrastructure sites" in Nabatiyeh and other areas, according to a military statement, which accused the militant group of "blatant ceasefire violations." Later, the military said it also struck targets in the Beqaa Valley in eastern Lebanon, with Lebanese media saying the village of Douris was hit.

"Israel will not tolerate attacks on our soldiers or on our territory, and it will exact a very heavy price from Hezbollah for these attacks," Netanyahu said in a statement Friday.

Hezbollah acknowledged targeting Israeli tanks and said its attacks were in response to what it called Israel's own violation of the ceasefire. It said the attacks came after Israeli forces attempted to reach the northern side of Ali al-Tajer hilltop, a strategic point that overlooks Nabatiyeh and that Israeli troops have been trying to capture. In southern Lebanon, many were forced to flee their villages due to the Israeli attacks.

"The situation is lawless, we couldn't stay," said Mustafa Zain, who had his six daughters in a pickup truck as he was leaving Akaar through Tyre.

The fighting threatens to unravel the newly signed deal. Beyond ending the hostilities in Lebanon, the agreement calls for ensuring Lebanon's "territorial integrity and sovereignty."

It does not say whether that means Israel would withdraw from the large swaths of southern Lebanon it has occupied since Hezbollah joined the war in its early days by firing rockets and drones at northern Israel.

Iran has insisted Israel pull back, while Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu said Thursday that forces would remain in a "security zone" of southern Lebanon as long as "Israel's security needs require it."

Israel's actions in Lebanon have created a rift between Israel and the US, with Trump becoming increasingly critical of his close ally Netanyahu. Netanyahu is also facing increasing criticism at home — and from other quarters. Tehran is insisting that Israel's attacks in Lebanon cease before they send a delegation to Switzerland, according to the officials. The White House, however, blamed logistical issues when Vance put off his trip.

Two other regional officials, similarly speaking on condition of anonymity for the same reason, described Pakistan as being "stunned" by Iran's decision not to go to the talks.

The discussions in Switzerland are expected to focus on Iran's nuclear program. Tehran maintains it is peaceful, though it has highly enriched uranium that could be used to build multiple atomic bombs, should it choose to do so, according to the International Atomic Energy Agency. Those talks are expected to be extremely difficult. The 2015 nuclear deal, which Trump scrapped during his first term, took more than 18 months to negotiate. (AP)

Govt to expand

the transmission system. In addition, the government plans to commission 957 CKM of new transmission lines to improve connectivity between generation sources and demand centres while reducing transmission bottlenecks. The state government has been focusing on modernising power infrastructure to meet rising electricity demand driven by industrial growth, urbanisation and expanding rural electrification. Officials maintain that enhanced transmission capacity and grid reliability are essential for supporting Assam's long-term economic development.

The latest announcement comes amid the government's broader push to attract industrial investment and position Assam as a key economic hub in the Northeast, backed by robust infrastructure and uninterrupted power supply. The Chief Minister reiterated that the ongoing projects are aimed at delivering reliable and quality electricity services to households, businesses and industries across the state.

No tolerance for

that concerns are often raised on social media regarding erosion-control measures and embankment works, particularly temporary structures installed during the monsoon season. He explained that several ongoing interventions involve the use of geobags and other temporary protective measures aimed at preventing floodwaters and erosion from causing immediate damage.

The minister clarified that such works are not permanent solutions but emergency measures designed to provide short-term protection during the peak flood season.

"These geobag-based interventions are temporary in nature. Some bags may get displaced while others remain in place because they are being used as an immediate safeguard to prevent the Brahmaputra and other rivers from advancing into vulnerable areas," he added.

Borghoan said the government plans to undertake permanent erosion-control and river-management works after the monsoon season, particularly from November onwards, when weather conditions become more suitable for long-term engineering interventions. He stressed that the department is maintaining strict vigilance over all ongoing projects and reiterated that there would be no compromise on quality standards.

The minister said the state government remains committed to ensuring transparency, accountability and durability in flood-control infrastructure while protecting people living in erosion-prone and flood-affected regions of Assam.

With sustainable agriculture

future increasingly belongs to trusted quality and trusted producers. "The world is entering an age where trust commands a premium, and Meghalaya is uniquely positioned for this future because it possesses trust that is rooted in nature, community and generations of ecological knowledge," she said.

Sitharaman said the state's growing spice economy demonstrates that "economic growth and ecological stewardship can advance together", adding that development need not come at the expense of nature. "We have to live, cohabit with nature," she said. Referring to India's vision of becoming a developed nation by 2047, she said, "India's ambition for 2047 -- a Viksit Bharat -- requires the productive integration of every community, every region and every state into the national growth story, and the Northeast is central to this."

Recalling remarks by Meghalaya Chief Minister Conrad K Sangma, she said she wanted the Northeast not merely to keep pace with the rest of the country but to emerge as its leader.

"I heard the chief minister say that we want all states to develop and that the Northeast should not be left behind. I want the country to say that the Northeast will lead all of India," she said.

Painting a picture of inclusive development, Sitharaman said she envisioned a woman farmer from Eastern Ri-Bhoi growing turmeric using traditional methods inherited from her grandmother, processing it in a certified facility and seeing the product sold in retail stores in London, Paris or Singapore while earning enough to pursue her aspirations without leaving her homeland. (PTI)

CM bats for

Office (CMO), in a post on social media, said Sarma highlighted the transformative growth of Assam. Sarma cited the successful completion of the EAP-funded Lower Kopili Hydroelectric Project in just three-and-a-half years. He also mentioned projects such as the Kumar Bhaskar Varma Setu in Guwahati and the ongoing Dhubri-Pulbari Bridge as examples of the state's strong development momentum and effective utilisation of Externally Aided Projects, the CMO said. (PTI)

NE's first integrated

Corporation said the facility would operate in coordination with local bodies across the covered towns to ensure efficient waste collection and transportation.

"This plant is the first of its kind in the Northeast. It has been established to address environmental compliance issues and can handle waste generated across Assam. The facility has been set up to tackle the challenges posed by industrial and biomedical waste. We are hopeful that this project will provide a major boost to the government's solid waste management efforts," an official said.

3 killed in

occurred when the three were returning home after attending a marriage ceremony. (PTI)

NEET re-exam: NTA

21st June Admit Card, once is enough," the NTA added. The agency advised candidates to download admit cards only from the official website and report suspicious messages through the designated reporting platform or cybercrime helplines.

The clarification came after several users took to social media to express concern over "urgent" messages sent by the NTA asking students to download fresh admit cards for the June 21 re-examination.

Sharing a screenshot of the message on X, a user @YouthForPeace wrote, "A fresh admit card just 3 days before the NEET re-exam? The SMS says the exam centre and roll number may change, and old admit cards won't be valid. Last-minute changes only increase students' stress. Clear communication matters."

The message stated: "URGENT: NEET (UG) Re-exam is scheduled on June 21. Download your new fresh admit card from neet.nta.nic.in immediately. Note: Your city may be the same, but the exam centre and roll number may change. Old admit cards will not be valid."

Another user, @k9f2se, questioned the move, saying, "Dear @NTA_Exams, what exactly is happening? Sending an 'URGENT' SMS just days before the Re-NEET, asking candidates to download fresh admit cards because centres and roll numbers may change, is unacceptable. Many students have already printed admit cards and made arrangements." (PTI)

From its deep

that goes to all corners of the world, becomes not only an individual movement but a mass movement where people lead healthy lives, focus on wellness, and eventually it builds international cooperation."

Parvathani noted that the "simplest" yoga asana is 'Namaste', "symbolising the unity of mind and body, of humans and nature."

With this year's theme focused on yoga and ageing, Parvathani quipped to the gathering, "while all of you are young, some of us will need a greater focus on how yoga can help us in a smooth ageing process."

Addressing the gathering, 81-year-old Yogmata Keiko Aikawa, the first female Himalayan Siddha Master to achieve ultimate enlightenment, said "Yoga changed my life," as she recalled that she first tried yoga when she was 18 years old and suddenly developed acne on her face. Aikawa, who has practised yoga for more than 60 years, said that true health is not simply the absence of illness. "Likewise, longevity is not simply living a long life. It is living with purpose and gratitude, love, and vitality," she said.

As the world currently grapples with several challenges, including conflict, divisions, loneliness, environmental problems and mental stress, she underscored that peace is not an impossible dream.

"Peace begins with each one of us. When there is peace in our hearts, there is peace in our family. When family lives in peace, community becomes peaceful...In this way, inner peace leads to world peace. Yoga and meditation are powerful paths that guide us towards peace," she said.

On the occasion, instructors, including those from the Art of Living, led a special yoga session of asanas and exercises, breathing and meditation techniques for the attendees, who wholeheartedly participated under a clear blue sky on a sunny and breezy summer day. Recognising its universal appeal, in December 2014, the United Nations proclaimed June 21 as the International Day of Yoga. The draft UNGA resolution establishing the International Day of Yoga was proposed by India and endorsed by a record 175 member states. (PTI)

India's forex reserves decline: RBI data

MUMBAI, June 19: India's forex reserves dropped USD 9.985 billion to USD 671.625 billion during the week ended June 12 due to sharp drop in gold reserves, the RBI said on Friday.

In the previous reporting week, the overall reserves had dropped USD 711 million to USD 681.610 billion.

For the week ended June 12, foreign currency assets -- a major component of the reserves -- increased USD 846 million to USD 544.290 billion, the data released by the Reserve Bank of India (RBI) showed.

Expressed in dollar terms, the foreign currency assets include effects of appreciation or depreciation of non-US units, such as the euro, pound, and yen, held in foreign exchange reserves. (PTI)

MPC opts for 'wait-and-watch' amid growth, inflation uncertainties: RBI minutes

MUMBAI, June 19: All six members of the RBI's Monetary Policy Committee favoured a wait-and-watch approach as they voted for a status quo on benchmark interest rates earlier this month, citing high uncertainty over the trajectory of inflation and growth prospects due to the West Asia conflict, according to the minutes of the MPC meeting released on Friday.

The MPC meeting was held during June 3-5. Governor Sanjay Malhotra, who chairs the committee, as well as the five other members voted to keep the benchmark interest rates unchanged at 5.25 per cent.

During the meeting, Malhotra opined there was high uncertainty in the assumptions made for projections of both inflation and growth on account of reasons such as the duration of the West Asia conflict and the disruption in supply chains, the intensity and geographical spread of monsoon rains and their impact on energy, food and other commodity prices.

"I would prefer to adopt a wait-and-watch approach," he said. The minutes showed RBI Deputy Governor Poonam Gupta too felt the need to wait a bit more for global as well as weather-related uncertainties to play out over the coming months, before taking a call on whether and when to reverse the policy cycle.

"This is for two reasons. First, at the current juncture, with growth projected to decelerate and inflation yet to become entrenched, I do not see a case for policy tightening to rein in inflation or inflationary expectations. If anything, it could make the economic pain of the ongoing supply shock sharper," she said.

Secondly, Gupta said that once the West Asia conflict is resolved, the outlook, both for India as well as globally, could improve rapidly warranting a fresh look at the inflation-growth dynamics.

"Therefore, it would be prudent to adopt a wait and watch approach rather than make an early or preemptive policy pivot," she added. In April too, the MPC had kept the key policy rate unchanged.

At the June meeting, RBI Executive Director Indranil Bhattacharyya said inflation projections are subject to several uncertainties in the present con-



text. While WPI inflation has spiked, one needs to wait for its pass-through to CPI inflation, he said, and added the spatial and temporal distribution of monsoon, which is critical for crop outlook, is not yet known. Further, Bhattacharyya said that while demand-pull inflation may call for pre-emptive action to effectively anchor inflation expectations, cost-push inflation induced by supply shocks warrants greater caution - gradualism - in policy making.

"In view of these factors, I feel it is prudent to wait for greater clarity to emerge from the data before deciding on any policy action. Accordingly, I vote for a pause on the policy rate while retaining the neutral stance," he said.

The MPC has three members from the RBI while three external members are appointed by the government. The three external members are Institute for Studies in Industrial Development Director and Chief Executive Nagesh Kumar, economist Saugata Bhattacharya and Delhi School of Economics Director Ram Singh.

According to the minutes, Kumar was of the view that notwithstanding the factors that make the Indian economy better equipped to withstand the current shock than the previous ones, the economic outlook has been adversely affected.

Growth and inflation projections are obviously subject to a lot of uncertainties surrounding the duration of the West Asia conflict, he said. In the highly uncertain current economic environment, he said prudence requires waiting for greater clarity to emerge on the impact before any monetary policy response.

"One needs to keep an eye on the evolving geopolitical situation in West Asia and its implications for the Indian macroeconomic outlook, especially the growth-inflation dynamics," Kumar said as he voted for the status quo on the

PROVISION OF MONSOON RESERVE STOCK IN LUMDING DIVISION

Tender Notice No.: SCL/Engg/51 of 2026; E-Tender are invited by the undersigned for the following work: **SN-1: Brief Description of Item:** Provision of MRS (Monsoon Reserve Stock) under the jurisdiction of ADEM/Badarpur Ghat, ADEM/Sairang & ADEM/Imphal. **Tender Value:** ₹2,20,86,504.40/-; **Earnest Money:** ₹4,41,700/-; **Date & time of closing of tender at 15:00 hrs. on 13-07-2026 and opening at 15:00 hrs. on 14-07-2026.** Complete information along with the tender document of above e-tender will be available up to 15:00 hrs. on 13-07-2026 in the website www.ireps.gov.in

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AFFIDAVIT

My son's actual name is Arnel Lakra, whereas his name was inadvertently written as "Arnel Urang" in his Birth Certificate Reg. No. 0106 dtd. 24/03/2021. Therefore, for all intent and purposes my son's name is "Arnel Lakra" and not "Arnel Urang" as recorded in the Birth Certificate.

Shri Armit Lakra,
S/o- Shri Kelerius Lakra, F/o- Arnel Lakra,
Vill.- Singibee, PO & PS- Mahadevpur,
Dist.- Namsai, Arunachal Pradesh,
Present Address:
Shri Armit Lakra,
S/o- Shri Kelerius Lakra, F/o- Arnel Lakra,
Manpangleng, PO/PS- Mahadevpur,
Dist.- Namsai, Arunachal Pradesh

ATASU stages protest against alleged anti-Assam policies of ONGC

Student body demands protection of local interests, employment opportunities and retention of ONGC offices in Assam

HT Correspondent

SIVASAGAR, June 19: The All Tai Ahom Students' Union (ATASU) staged a sit-in demonstration at Doulmukh Chariali in Sivasagar on Friday, alleging that recent policies of the Oil and Natural Gas Corporation (ONGC) were detrimental to the interests of Assam and its people.

The protesters raised slogans against the public sector undertaking and demanded immediate steps to reverse what they described as anti-Assam policies.

Among the key demands raised by the student body was a guarantee that ONGC offices functioning under the Assam Asset based in Nazira and Sivasagar would not be relocated outside the state.

The organisation also sought greater employment opportunities for indigenous Assamese youth and called for measures to ensure what it described as adequate representation of local people in the



company's workforce.

ATASU further urged ONGC to halt privatisation initiatives, improve access to clean drinking water in areas affected by its operations and strengthen environmental protection measures in oil-producing regions.

In a memorandum submitted during the protest, the organisation also demanded greater support for

the preservation of traditional arts and culture and the development of sports infrastructure in Sivasagar district.

The student body additionally called upon the Nazira-based ONGC administration to maintain greater oversight of contract allocations and ensure transparency in the process.

The demonstration was led by

ATASU president Basanta Gogoi, who also demanded the upgrading of infrastructure and services at the ONGC Hospital.

He criticised what he termed efforts to shift healthcare services away from the existing facility and called for strengthening medical services available to employees and local residents.

ATASU leaders stated that the concerns raised during the protest echoed resolutions adopted at a recent citizens' meeting convened by the organisation at Sivasagar Yuwadal.

The meeting had expressed dissatisfaction over what participants described as inadequate benefits reaching local communities despite decades of oil exploration and production activities in the district.

The organisation urged ONGC and the concerned authorities to address the issues raised and take steps to safeguard the interests of the people of the region.

'Assam records over 1.85 lakh beneficiaries under free admission scheme for UG students'



Staff Reporter

GUWAHATI, June 19: Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma on Friday said that more than 1.85 lakh undergraduate students across the state have benefited from the government's free admission initiative this academic year, describing the achievement as a reflection of the expanding reach of welfare schemes aimed at ensuring uninterrupted access to higher education.

In a post on social media platform X, the Chief Minister stated that admission fees for 1,85,796 undergraduate students have been paid under the state government's flagship education support programme so far this year.

"Zero admission fees paid by over 1.85 lakh UG students in Assam this year, till now. It's not a mere

statistic but a barometer of how wide the coverage of our welfare schemes are and how it is transforming the foundations of our society by ensuring seamless continuity in education," Sarma said.

The scheme, launched by the Assam government to reduce the financial burden on students and their families, covers admission fees for eligible learners seeking admission to undergraduate courses in government and provincialised institutions across the state.

Officials said the initiative has played a crucial role in encouraging students from economically weaker sections to pursue higher education without worrying about upfront admission costs.

The programme is also aimed at reducing dropout rates and improving enrolment in colleges, particularly in rural and underserved regions.

Education sector experts have often highlighted that financial constraints remain one of the key reasons for students discontinuing studies after completing school education.

By eliminating admission fees, the government hopes to improve access to quality higher education and create greater opportunities for youth.

The Chief Minister has repeatedly stressed that investments in education form a critical component of Assam's long-term development strategy.

The state government has in recent years introduced several measures, including scholarships, fee waivers and infrastructure development in educational institutions, to strengthen the higher education ecosystem.

With the latest figure crossing 1.85 lakh beneficiaries, the government sees the programme as a significant step towards making higher education more inclusive and accessible for students across Assam.

DDMA conducts training on social and behavioural change for disaster risk reduction



HT Correspondent

KOKRAJHAR, June 19: The District Disaster Management Authority (DDMA), Kokrajhar, organised a one-day training programme on Social and Behavioural Change (SBC) for Disaster Risk Reduction (DRR) on Friday, bringing together officials and stakeholders to strengthen community-based disaster preparedness initiatives.

The programme was inaugurated by Kokrajhar District Commissioner and Chairman of DDMA, Pankaj Chakravarty, in the presence of officials and participants from different sectors.

Addressing the inaugural session, Chakravarty highlighted the

importance of community engagement, interpersonal communication and effective community meetings in promoting risk-informed behaviour and strengthening disaster resilience.

A key feature of the programme was a series of interactive group exercises during which participants worked collaboratively to prepare Revenue Circle-level SBC Action Plans tailored to the specific needs and challenges of Kokrajhar district.

The exercise aimed to translate theoretical understanding into practical strategies for improving community awareness, preparedness and disaster response at the local level.

Speaking at the concluding session, Kamal Kishor Hazarika, District Project Officer, DDMA Kokrajhar, appreciated the active participation of the delegates and commended the efforts made in preparing detailed action plans for each Revenue Circle of the district.

Officials said the programme was part of DDMA's ongoing efforts to strengthen disaster preparedness through awareness, behavioural change and community participation, thereby enhancing the district's overall resilience to natural and man-made hazards.

importance of Social and Behavioural Change Communication (SBCC) in enhancing disaster risk reduction efforts and building resilient communities.

He urged participants to actively engage in the training and effectively utilise the knowledge and skills shared during the programme to improve preparedness and response mechanisms at the grassroots level.

The technical session was led by Rajib Dutta Choudhury, District Project Officer (DPO), DDMA Kamrup, who spoke on the role of Social and Behavioural Change Communication in disaster management.

He emphasised the importance

Allegations and counter-allegations surface after Kokrajhar man's death

HT Correspondent

KOKRAJHAR, June 19: The death of a Kokrajhar resident has triggered a family dispute marked by allegations and counter-allegations, with police investigating the circumstances surrounding the case.

Rakesh Brahma of Maibong Nagar died on Wednesday while undergoing treatment at a hospital in Guwahati.

He was initially admitted to MRM Hospital in Kokrajhar and was later shifted to a hospital in Bongaigaon before being referred to Guwahati for advanced treatment.

Following his death, Rakesh's mother, Parbati Brahma, alleged that her son's wife, Shiny Pal Brahma, had mixed poison in his food, causing him to fall seriously ill.

She lodged a complaint with Kokrajhar Sadar Police Station and demanded a thorough investigation into the matter.

Parbati Brahma further alleged that the incident was linked to her son's suspected extramarital relationship.

However, Shiny Pal Brahma has strongly rejected the allegations.

Addressing a press conference at the Kokrajhar Press Club, she described the accusations as baseless and claimed that her mother-in-law was attempting to gain control of family property.

Shiny asserted that doctors had informed her that Rakesh died due to pneumonia and not poisoning.

She also alleged that her husband had been involved in an extramarital relationship with a married woman from Bongaigaon. She further claimed that she was physically assaulted by family members and was prevented from paying her final respects to her husband.

Awareness programme on legal and social issues held at Khagarijan College



HT Correspondent

NAGAON, June 19: An awareness programme covering a wide range of legal, social and public safety issues was organised at the Conference Hall of Khagarijan College on Friday.

The programme, themed on "COTPA 2003, Road Safety, Anti-Narcotics, NALSA DAWN Scheme 2025, NALSA ASHA Scheme 2025, Cyber and Financial Safety and Anti-Ragging," was jointly organised by the District Legal Services Authority (DLSA), Nagaon, the District Tobacco Control Cell under the Joint Director of Health Services, Nagaon, and Khagarijan College. The event began with a felicitation ceremony.

In his inaugural address, Principal of Khagarijan College, Dr Ramesh Nath, highlighted the growing threat posed by narcotics and urged students to remain vigilant against substance abuse and its harmful consequences.

Deputy Superintendent of Police, Nagaon, Paramita Sarkar attended the programme as the keynote speaker.

She delivered a detailed presentation on various provisions of the Narcotic Drugs and Psychotropic Substances (NDPS) Act and outlined the measures being undertaken by Nagaon Police to combat

drug trafficking and abuse in the district.

Assistant Legal Aid Defence Counsel Jesmin Begum spoke on the Cigarettes and Other Tobacco Products Act (COTPA), 2003, and explained the legal restrictions and health implications associated with tobacco consumption.

Dr Smitakshi Phukan, Nodal Officer of Nagaon District Health Services, addressed participants on precautions relating to dog bites and rabies prevention.

She also handed over an awareness leaflet to the college authorities for dissemination among students.

Enforcement Inspector Biswajit Hazarika delivered a session on road safety, highlighting the importance of responsible driving and adherence to traffic regulations.

Galib M Ahmed spoke on the social impact of drug addiction and emphasised the need for collective efforts to address the growing menace of substance abuse.

The programme witnessed active participation from students, faculty members and volunteers of the National Service Scheme (NSS) and National Cadet Corps (NCC) units of the college.

The proceedings were conducted by Professor Mainul Haque Akand, Head of the Department of Political Science, Khagarijan College.

DDMA issues advisory after water release from Khandong Dam

HT Bureau

DIPHU, June 19: The District Disaster Management Authority (DDMA), West Karbi Anglong, has issued an urgent public advisory following the controlled release of excess water into the Kopili River from the Khandong Dam operated by the North Eastern Electric Power Corporation Limited (NEEPCO).

The advisory has been issued as a precautionary measure in view of the possibility of rising water levels in the Kopili River and adjoining low-lying areas.

According to the DDMA, residents living along the riverbanks, fishermen and livestock owners have been urged to remain vigilant

and strictly follow instructions issued by the district administration.

Livestock owners have been advised to immediately move cattle and other animals away from riverbanks and flood-prone areas to safer locations.

The administration has also cautioned people against bathing, swimming, fishing or venturing near the river until further notice.

The advisory further warned residents not to attempt crossing flooded roads, bridges or overflowing culverts, as such actions could pose serious risks to life and safety.

The DDMA has appealed to citizens to extend assistance to vulnerable groups, including children,

elderly persons and persons with disabilities, and to promptly report any sudden or unusual rise in river water levels to the nearest authorities. District officials stated that the situation is being closely monitored and urged the public to stay informed through official communication channels.

Residents have also been advised to rely only on verified information and refrain from spreading rumours that could create unnecessary panic.

The district administration reiterated its commitment to ensuring public safety and requested the cooperation of all citizens in preventing any untoward incidents during the period of heightened vigilance.

Two youths critically injured in road accident

HT Correspondent

BOKAJAN, June 19: Two youths sustained critical injuries in a head-on collision between a motorcycle and a Scorpio SUV near Sukhanjan Plywood under Bokajan Police Station on Friday afternoon.

According to reports, the accident occurred at around 1.30 pm when a motorcycle bearing registration number AS 05 AA 3074 was travelling towards Bokajan from the Hidipi area.

Preliminary information suggests that the rider allegedly lost control of the motorcycle before it collided head-on with an oncoming Scorpio SUV bearing registration number AS 01 GL 1303.

The impact of the collision was severe, leaving both the rider and the pillion rider seriously injured.

Local residents and passersby immediately rushed to the spot and shifted the injured youths to a nearby hospital for emergency treatment.

The identities of the injured persons could not be immediately confirmed.

Eyewitnesses claimed that the motorcycle was travelling at a very high speed before the accident occurred.

However, the exact cause of the mishap is yet to be officially established.

MDJA bids farewell to Morigaon DIPRO Pompy Devi

HT Correspondent

MORIGAOON, June 19: The Morigaon District Journalists' Association (MDJA) on Friday organised a farewell programme in honour of District Information and Public Relations Officer (DIPRO) Pompy Devi at the Morigaon Press Club.

The programme was held in a cordial atmosphere and attended by members of the journalist fraternity and well-wishers.

MDJA president Ajit Sarma felicitated the outgoing officer with a traditional gamosa and a memento in recognition of her service and cooperation with the media during her tenure in the district.

Earlier, MDJA secretary Guljarilal Sharma explained the objective of the meeting and highlighted the cordial relationship maintained between the Information and Public Relations Department and local media organisations over the years.

Pompy Devi has been transferred to Jorhat as District Information and Public Relations Officer and has also been attached as Public Relations Officer to Assam Minister for Women and Child Development Ajanta Neog. Addressing the gathering, Devi recalled her three-year tenure in Morigaon and expressed gratitude to journalists of the district for their support and cooperation in carrying out various official responsibilities.

She said the encouragement and assistance extended by media persons had greatly contributed to the successful dissemination of government information and public awareness initiatives during her posting in the district.

DTF reviews Pulse Polio preparedness in Kokrajhar

HT Correspondent

KOKRAJHAR, June 19: The District Task Force (DTF) for Pulse Polio Immunization on Friday reviewed the final micro-plan and preparedness measures for the upcoming Pulse Polio Immunization-National Immunization Day (NID) campaign during its second meeting held at the Conference Hall of the District Commissioner's Office in Kokrajhar.

The meeting was chaired by Kokrajhar District Commissioner Pankaj Chakravarty and attended by officials

from the Health and Family Welfare Department and representatives of various concerned departments and agencies. The meeting assessed the strategies and arrangements for the Pulse Polio campaign scheduled to be conducted on June 28, 2026, aimed at administering polio vaccine drops to all children below five years of age.

According to the district micro-plan, the campaign will cover areas under Balajan BPHC, Dotma BPHC, Kachugaon BPHC, Gossaigaon BPHC, Gossaigaon Urban and Kokrajhar Urban.

World Sickle Cell Day observed across West Karbi Anglong

HT Bureau

DIPHU, June 19: World Sickle Cell Day was observed across West Karbi Anglong on Friday with a series of awareness programmes, screening activities and public outreach initiatives organised jointly by the District Health Society and the National Health Mission (NHM).

The central programme was held at Hamren District Hospital, where healthcare professionals and district health officials highlighted the importance of awareness, early diagnosis and timely management of sickle cell disease.

Among those present were Joint Director of Health Services, West Karbi Anglong, Dr Jagat Sing Teron; Superintendent of Hamren District Hospital, Dr Altaf Husain; Deputy Superintendent in-charge Dr Mirdihun Teronpi; District Data Manager Sankar Chakraborty; District Pharmacist



Mizanur Rahman; and District Media Expert Rahul Deka.

During the seminar, medical experts conducted detailed sessions on the symptoms, genetic causes, prevention, diagnosis and treatment of sickle cell disease.

Speakers stressed that early screening, particularly among children and high-risk populations,

plays a crucial role in reducing complications and improving long-term health outcomes.

Health professionals explained that sickle cell disease is an inherited blood disorder in which red blood cells become hard and crescent-shaped, restricting blood flow and potentially leading to severe pain, infections and damage to

vital organs.

As part of the district-wide observance, awareness programmes, screening camps and counselling sessions were also organised at several healthcare institutions, including Dongkamokam BPHC, Baithalanso BPHC, Tumpreng SHC, Mailoo SHC, Bhoksong MPH, Taradubi MPH, Hanlokrok MPH and Kolonga SD.

Health workers encouraged community members to seek medical advice, undergo screening where necessary and make use of government-supported testing facilities for early detection of the disease.

Officials stated that the observance aimed to increase public understanding of the hereditary disorder, reduce stigma associated with the condition and promote timely intervention through awareness and screening initiatives.

QUOTE OF THE DAY

Consult not your fears but your hopes and your dreams. Think not about your frustrations, but about your unfulfilled potential. Concern yourself not with what you tried and failed in, but with what is still possible for you to do - Pope John XXIII

Trump-Modi talks in France

When Prime Minister Narendra Modi and President Donald Trump met on the sidelines of the G7 summit in France this week, the mood was noticeably different. The warmth remained. The theatrics did not. Instead, the two leaders sat down amid a relationship facing one of its most complicated moments in recent years. Between them stood a growing list of irritants: American tariffs, India's continued pursuit of strategic autonomy, disagreements over energy supplies, and, most emotionally, the deaths of three Indian sailors during U.S. naval operations linked to the enforcement of a blockade around the Strait of Hormuz. Yet neither leader arrived in Évian seeking confrontation. They came to salvage momentum. The prize is enormous: an ambitious bilateral economic partnership that aims to raise annual India-U.S. trade to \$500 billion by 2030, nearly quadrupling current levels and transforming one of the world's most consequential strategic relationships into an even deeper commercial alliance. The current trade negotiations trace their origins to Modi's February 2025 visit to Washington shortly after Trump's return to the White House. That meeting was filled with optimism. Trump and Modi announced an ambitious target of reaching \$500 billion in bilateral trade while expanding cooperation in defense manufacturing, energy, artificial intelligence, critical technologies and supply-chain resilience. Both sides agreed to pursue a phased bilateral trade agreement designed to remove longstanding irritants.

But translating political enthusiasm into commercial reality proved difficult. American negotiators demanded wider access to India's protected agricultural and manufacturing sectors. They pressed New Delhi to reduce tariffs on a range of American products, from automobiles and industrial goods to agricultural exports. India, meanwhile, sought preferential treatment for labour-intensive exports such as textiles, pharmaceuticals, engineering products and information-technology services. New Delhi also wanted assurances that future U.S. tariff actions would not suddenly undermine Indian competitiveness. The negotiations advanced in fits and starts throughout 2025 and early 2026. Then came new complications. Washington imposed additional tariff measures on several trading partners. Trump administration officials repeatedly criticized India's energy dealings and broader trade policies. Simultaneously, tensions in the Gulf escalated, culminating in U.S. military actions around Iranian-linked shipping routes and increased enforcement activities in and around the Strait of Hormuz.

Modi's message to Trump was straightforward: whatever broader strategic objectives Washington pursued in the Gulf, the safety of civilian sailors and commercial shipping had to remain paramount. India's concerns were not merely humanitarian. Hundreds of thousands of Indian citizens work across global shipping networks, while India's economy depends heavily on uninterrupted maritime trade through the Gulf. Trump reportedly expressed sympathy regarding the deaths and reaffirmed America's commitment to maritime security. While neither side publicly described the exchange as contentious, diplomats familiar with the relationship say it represented one of the more serious discussions the two leaders have had in recent years.

Women: The Silent Cultivators of a Sustainable Future

By: Mowsam Hazarika

Across the fields and villages of India, women have always been the silent strength behind agriculture. From sowing seeds to harvesting crops, they play an indispensable role in sustaining rural livelihoods. In recent years, as the world increasingly turns towards organic and sustainable farming, women have emerged as the key drivers of this transformation. Their traditional knowledge, eco-friendly practices, and commitment to family and community well-being make them natural custodians of sustainable agriculture.

Long before the modern concept of "organic farming" gained popularity, rural women practiced eco-friendly agriculture out of necessity and instinct. They relied on compost, cow dung, and plant-based manures instead of chemical fertilizers. Women have traditionally been seed selectors and preservers—carefully choosing, saving, and sharing seeds suited to local climates and soil. This practice not only ensures biodiversity but also strengthens food security at the community level. In many tribal and agrarian communities, women possess invaluable knowledge about medicinal plants, mixed cropping, and soil conservation. Their farming techniques, passed down through generations, embody the principles of sustainability—working with nature rather than against it.

Across India, women's self-help groups and cooperatives have taken a leading role in promoting organic agriculture. In states like Sikkim, which became India's first fully organic state, women farmers were the real change-makers on the ground. Similarly, in Assam and other northeastern states, women's participation in organic tea, turmeric, and vegetable cultivation has been growing steadily. Organizations and NGOs working on sustainable agriculture often find that women are more receptive to organic methods because they understand their long-term benefits—both for health and for the environment. Many women farmers now actively participate in training programmes, certification processes, and marketing of organic produce.

Women's interest in organic farming is not limited to production—it is deeply connected with their concern for the

health of their families. They realize that chemical pesticides and fertilizers, while offering short-term gains, harm soil fertility and contaminate food and water sources. By adopting organic methods, women are ensuring safer food, cleaner surroundings, and healthier generations. In many households, kitchen gardens managed by women serve as examples of micro-level sustainable farming. These small green spaces not only provide fresh vegetables but also demonstrate how sustainability begins at home.

Despite their immense contribution, women farmers often remain invisible in agricultural policies and statistics. They face several challenges—limited access to land ownership, credit facilities, training, and technology. In many areas, women are still seen as "helpers" rather than full-fledged farmers, which limits their decision-making power. There is also a need to recognize and support women's role in marketing and value addition. While they may produce organic crops, men often dominate the selling process. To achieve true empowerment, women must be given equal opportunities in every stage of the agricultural chain—from production to profit-sharing.

Promoting women's leadership in organic and sustainable farming is essential for building resilient food systems. Policymakers should ensure gender-sensitive agricultural programs, provide training and access to organic certification, and strengthen women's cooperatives. Encouraging the use of local seeds, traditional composting, and eco-friendly pest control can help women farmers become agents of climate resilience. Educational institutions and extension agencies can also play a role by documenting women's indigenous farming knowledge and integrating it into training modules. Supporting rural women with better infrastructure, digital access, and fair markets will go a long way in strengthening the organic movement.

Women are not just participants but pioneers in organic and sustainable farming. Their deep understanding of the land, sense of care for the environment, and dedication to community welfare make them natural leaders in the quest for a greener future. Recognizing and empowering women in agriculture is not only a matter of justice—it is a necessity for the sustainable progress of our planet.

Kalaguru's Enduring Impact on Assamese Society

The history of Assam in the twentieth century is illuminated by the lives and contributions of a few extraordinary individuals whose influence extended far beyond the boundaries of their own professions. Among them, Kalaguru Bishnu Prasad Rabha occupies a unique and enduring position. He was not merely a cultural icon, a gifted artist, or a celebrated public figure. He was a visionary whose ideas, artistic creations, and social commitments shaped the consciousness of generations. Few personalities have touched so many dimensions of Assamese life with such intensity and purpose. As a lyricist, composer, singer, actor, playwright, dancer, painter, writer, social reformer, and political thinker, Rabha transformed every sphere he entered. Yet his true greatness lay not in the diversity of his talents but in the manner in which he used them to serve society. His life was dedicated to the upliftment of the people, the preservation of culture, the strengthening of social harmony, and the creation of a more just and enlightened society. Even decades after his passing, Assamese society continues to draw inspiration from his ideals, making him one of the most relevant figures in the state's cultural and intellectual history.

Bishnu Prasad Rabha emerged at a time when Assam was experiencing profound social and political change. Colonial rule had altered traditional structures, economic inequalities were becoming more visible, and questions of identity were beginning to occupy an important place in public life. In such circumstances, Rabha developed a vision that combined cultural pride with social responsibility. He understood that a society cannot progress merely through political institutions or economic development. True progress, in his view, required the awakening of the human spirit and the cultivation of a shared cultural consciousness. Inspired by the humanistic teachings of Srimanta Sankardev, Rabha believed that Assam's strength lay in its diversity. He saw the state as a meeting ground of numerous communities, tribes, and ethnic groups whose collective contributions had created a distinctive civilization. Rather than promoting narrow identities, he sought to nurture a broader sense of belonging that could unite people across differences. This vision remains one of his most significant contributions to Assamese society. At a time when divisions based on ethnicity, language, and political affiliation continued to challenge social harmony, Rabha's emphasis on unity through cultural understanding offers an enduring lesson.

The impact of Rabha's ideas can be seen most clearly in the sphere of cultural identity. Assamese society has always been characterized by remarkable diversity, encompassing a wide range of languages, traditions, customs, and beliefs. Rabha recognized this diversity not as a source of weakness but as a foundation of strength. Through his songs, paintings, writings, and speeches, he consistently celebrated the contributions of indigenous communities and emphasized their role in shaping the cultural landscape of Assam. He rejected the notion that any single group could claim exclusive ownership over Assamese identity. Instead,

he advocated a vision of society in which all communities could coexist with dignity and mutual respect. This inclusive understanding of identity remains highly relevant in contemporary Assam, where questions concerning indigeneity and cultural belonging continue to generate debate. Rabha's perspective reminds society that genuine unity cannot be achieved through exclusion. It must be built upon recognition, respect, and a shared commitment to collective progress.

Language was another area in which Rabha left a lasting impact. He possessed a deep love for the Assamese language and regarded it as a vital expression of the people's cultural consciousness. Yet his approach to language was never rigid or exclusionary. He understood that Assamese had evolved through centuries of interaction with numerous dialects and linguistic traditions. Consequently, he welcomed diversity within the language itself and sought to enrich it through creative expression. His literary works demonstrated the beauty, flexibility, and expressive power of Assamese while simultaneously reflecting the cultural influences of various communities. In an era marked by globalization, migration, and rapid technological change, concerns about linguistic preservation have become increasingly important. Rabha's balanced approach offers valuable guidance. He showed that a language can preserve its unique character while remaining open to new influences and experiences. This lesson continues to resonate with contemporary efforts to strengthen Assamese language and literature.

The cultural life of Assam owes an immeasurable debt to Bishnu Prasad Rabha. His contributions to music alone would have secured him a permanent place in history. The songs he composed and performed continue to occupy a cherished place in the hearts of Assamese people. These compositions are remarkable not only for their artistic quality but also for their emotional depth and social relevance. They address themes of freedom, equality, humanity, cultural pride, and social justice. Through music, Rabha transformed art into a vehicle for education, inspiration, and collective awakening. His songs gave voice to the aspirations of ordinary people and encouraged them to dream of a more just society. Even today, they remain powerful expressions of hope and resilience. Generations of artists continue to draw inspiration from his work, ensuring that his influence remains alive within Assam's cultural traditions.

Rabha's impact extended far beyond music. His contributions to theatre, dance, painting, and literature helped shape the cultural foundations of modern Assam. He viewed artistic expression as a means of engaging with society rather than an escape from it. His plays explored social realities and encouraged critical reflection. His paintings captured the lives, customs, and experiences of diverse communities, creating a visual archive of Assam's cultural richness. As a dancer and performer, he demonstrated the power of artistic discipline and creativity.

Through these various forms of expression, Rabha cultivated a deeper appreciation of culture among the people and inspired countless individuals to engage with artistic pursuits. The contemporary cultural landscape of Assam, with its vibrant traditions and dynamic artistic community, bears the unmistakable imprint of his contributions.

Equally significant was Rabha's commitment to social justice. Unlike many cultural figures who remained detached from the struggles of ordinary people, he immersed himself in the realities of everyday life. He believed that culture and social transformation were inseparable. For him, the purpose of art was not merely to entertain but also to awaken consciousness and inspire action. He identified with peasants, workers, and marginalized communities, recognizing their struggles as central to the broader quest for justice and equality. His songs and writings frequently celebrated the dignity of labour and challenged systems of exploitation. He encouraged people to recognize their own strength and collective power. In a world where economic inequality continues to affect millions, Rabha's message remains strikingly relevant. His life serves as a reminder that cultural advancement must be accompanied by social responsibility and a commitment to human welfare.

One of Rabha's most enduring contributions was his faith in the transformative potential of youth. He regarded young people as the builders of the future and devoted considerable effort to inspiring them. Through his artistic works and public engagement, he encouraged youth to cultivate knowledge, discipline, creativity, and a sense of social responsibility. He believed that cultural awareness and intellectual curiosity were essential for personal growth and collective progress. At the same time, he warned against complacency and passivity, urging young people to participate actively in the shaping of society. These ideas remain deeply relevant in the contemporary era. Today's youth face unprecedented opportunities as well as complex challenges, ranging from technological disruption and economic uncertainty to cultural homogenization and social fragmentation. Rabha's emphasis on critical thinking, cultural rootedness, and civic engagement continues to offer valuable guidance for navigating these realities.

The preservation of cultural heritage was another area where Rabha made a lasting impact. He possessed profound respect for the legacy of Sankardev and Madhavdev and recognized the importance of preserving Assam's traditional art forms. His efforts to promote Borgeet, traditional theatre, and indigenous cultural practices reflected a broader commitment to safeguarding the state's cultural inheritance. Yet Rabha was never a traditionalist in the narrow sense of the term. He did not seek to preserve culture by isolating it from contemporary influences. Rather, he believed that tradition and innovation should exist in dialogue with one another. This dynamic approach enabled him to bridge the gap between the past and the present. In today's rapidly changing world, where globalization often threatens local tra-

ditions, Rabha's example demonstrates how cultural heritage can be preserved without resisting progress.

The influence of Bishnu Prasad Rabha also extends into the realm of public ethics and civic values. Throughout his life, he demonstrated an unwavering commitment to principles rather than personal gain. Despite facing hardships, political setbacks, and periods of uncertainty, he remained faithful to his convictions. His integrity earned him the respect of people across social and ideological boundaries. In an age when public life is often marked by cynicism and opportunism, Rabha's example offers a powerful reminder of the importance of moral courage. His life illustrates how individuals can contribute meaningfully to society through dedication, honesty, and service. Such qualities remain essential for the health and vitality of any democratic society.

Perhaps the most enduring aspect of Rabha's legacy is his humanism. Beneath his cultural activism, artistic achievements, and political engagement lay a profound belief in the dignity and worth of every human being. He rejected discrimination and division in all forms. His vision of society was founded upon compassion, equality, and mutual respect. He understood that cultural identity and human solidarity were not opposing principles but complementary values. This humanistic outlook enabled him to connect with people from diverse backgrounds and to build bridges where others saw barriers. In a world increasingly characterized by polarization and conflict, such a perspective remains urgently needed.

The continued relevance of Bishnu Prasad Rabha is therefore not merely a matter of historical admiration. His ideas address many of the challenges facing contemporary Assamese society, including questions of identity, cultural preservation, social justice, youth empowerment, and communal harmony. He represents a tradition of thought that seeks unity without erasing diversity and progress without abandoning cultural roots. His life demonstrates that art, culture, and public service can work together in the pursuit of a more humane and inclusive society. The values he championed continue to inspire scholars, artists, activists, and ordinary citizens alike.

Kalaguru Bishnu Prasad Rabha remains one of the most influential architects of modern Assamese consciousness. His contributions transcend the boundaries of time because they are rooted in universal human aspirations: dignity, justice, creativity, and unity. Generations have passed since his voice echoed across the villages and towns of Assam, yet the message he carried continues to resonate. His songs are still sung, his ideas are still discussed, and his vision continues to guide those who seek a stronger, more harmonious, and culturally confident society. As Assam confronts the challenges of the twenty-first century, the enduring impact of Kalaguru Bishnu Prasad Rabha serves not merely as a source of pride but as a source of direction. His legacy remains a living force within Assamese society, reminding each generation that cultural strength, social justice, and human unity are inseparable foundations of lasting progress.

Bishnu Rabha's Vision of True Liberation

By: Lalit Nath

In the twentieth century, among the stalwarts who shaped the trajectory of Assamese national life through their extraordinary intellect, revolutionary consciousness and dedicated lives, Kalaguru Bishnu Prasad Rabha stands out prominently. He was not merely an artist, a litterateur, an essayist, a lyricist, a poet, an actor, a playwright, or a music composer, he was, above all, a lifelong crusader for the liberation of the exploited, deprived, oppressed and marginalized proletariat—a true 'People's Artist'. The common masses were the primary source and inspiration for his artistic pursuits. Hence, with profound humility, he once remarked:

"The masses are an inexhaustible storehouse of art and culture. It is by being close to those people, by becoming a part of their hearts, the soul of their chests and the core of their existence—by immersing myself in the vast ocean of their love—that I have attained this essence of the goddess of art and learning."

At a time when a feudal mindset and colonial mentality were deeply entrenched in Assamese society, Rabha realized that true culture could not remain confined to the drawing rooms of the elite or the luxurious stages of urban societies. The soul of culture, he believed, resides in the sweat and toil of farmers, laborers and the most backward classes of society. He viewed the creativity of the working class as the primary driving force of society.

The hardships, tears and agony of the common people transformed Bishnu Prasad Rabha into a fierce fighter and an uncompromising revolutionary. In his quest for a correct theoretical path for social transformation and upon the advice of his close associates, he extensively studied the philosophies and writings of Karl Marx, Friedrich Engels and Vladimir Lenin. The revolutionary wisdom and towering personalities of these great thinkers created an unprecedented stir in his intellectual world. This led him to express to the renowned artist and writer Hemanga Biswas: "Marxism-Leninism has brought the fulfillment and depth of an ocean-confluence to my restless, unstable artistic life."

Initiated into Marxist ideology, he actively joined the Revolutionary Commu-

nist Party of India to fight for the economic and social liberation of the oppressed, downtrodden and voiceless working class. Not relying merely on slogans or speeches, he was determined to sacrifice everything for a radical transformation of the exploited society. Warning the wealthy landlords and feudal lords who stood as obstacles in this noble journey toward a classless society, he sang:

"Dhoni! Mohajon! Jomidar! / —Huxiar! Huxiar! / Xex jidhor ami ronua / Prithibir halowa bonua / Hom bijoyi ami dukhya."

Rabha did not view revolution merely as an armed struggle. In his eyes, revolution was the most beautiful medium for rebuilding society. He firmly believed that revolution is an art, a medium through which true artistic pursuit can be realized and human values can be awakened. Embracing this timeless ideal of revolution as an art form, he plunged into the harsh struggles of real life, which naturally made him the target of severe wrath from the contemporary ruling regime.

Evading the authorities, he spent a long time in hiding, moving stealthily from village to village. During this period of underground life, he secretly organized meetings among the common peasants and laborers. He explained the true political situation and the nature of economic exploitation to the simple rural folk in clear, lucid language, igniting a wave of mass consciousness among them. To spark a revolutionary spirit in the disillusioned hearts of the common people during those turbulent times, he created many timeless and inspiring revolutionary songs. One of his legendary compositions aimed at awakening the power of peasants and workers stands out:

"Bol bol bol / Krishok xokti dol / O bonua xomoniya / Agbaxi jao bol."

"Jag jag jag jag / Mojdur no-juwan / Nirjatorit niporhit / Krishok xoktiam..."

There was a magical potency in Rabha's songs, every word instilled courage in the hearts of the oppressed villagers. Inspired by his songs and ideals, thousands of ordinary people overcame all fear and spontaneously stepped forward to become travelers on the arduous revolutionary path toward building a new society.

Rabha's voice and pen possessed a mesmerizing power to awaken the



young. He powerfully stimulated the younger generation of Assam to build a fierce protest and struggle against social injustice, inequality and exploitation. Calling upon the youth power to awaken, he sang:

"O Oxomiya dekadol / O Oxomiya dekadol / Aji tur tejal bodon / Molin kiyo bol?"

In addition to composing revolutionary songs, Rabha deeply studied Assamese art and culture for organizational needs and authored a foundational book titled 'Asomiya Kristir Chomu Abhas'. Through this work, he strived to introduce the vibrant culture of Assam to the global stage with a distinct dignity. Furthermore, to strengthen the foundation of organization among all sections of society, he composed and staged a dance drama titled 'Muktir Deul'. He clearly understood that a greater and stronger Assamese nation could only be forged through the harmonious assimilation of the arts and cultures of all ethnic communities, including the Bodo, Mising, Karbi, Tai-Ahom, Rabha, Koch, Garo, Khasi, Nath, Kalita, Kaibarta and Brahmin.

His organizational acumen successfully united the agrarian peasants of rural Assam as well as the industrial working class. He built robust organizations among tea garden laborers, oil refinery and coal mine workers and even daily-wage earners engaged in road construction. He resorted to songs to awaken awareness and assert the rights of the workers. Depicting the harsh environment of factories and the pathetic life of the laborers, he sang—

"Karkhana chitir humuniyah / Kolor ghorhoroni buku kumpowa / Xuni xuni kahor maat kothuwa / Kande dukhya bonua."

Through these songs, he ushered in a new dawn of consciousness and awak-

ening in the hearts of the working masses.

When the country achieved independence on August 15, 1947, this visionary revolutionary expressed his deep anger and proclaimed in a thunderous voice, "Yeh azadi jhootha hai". Rabha envisioned a land of true economic and social liberation, where there would be no exploiters and where labor would receive its due dignity. Fighting uncompromisingly for this goal, he became 'Most Wanted' in the eyes of the government. Yet, the daring revolutionary movement he led in various disguises remains legendary in the history of Assam.

In contemporary times, when our collective society is being consumed by intense self-interest, religious-ethnic divisions and a growing cultural crisis, the relevance of the icon Bishnu Rabha has increased manifold. In today's globalized and consumerist social order, we have almost forgotten the fields, manual labor and the marginalized populace. Art and culture are being weighed solely on the scale of commercial profit and loss for a specific class. The core purpose and aesthetics of art are on the verge of disappearing amidst cheap popularity and technical gimmicks.

At such a critical moral and cultural crossroads, Rabha's absolute sacrifice, selfless public service and people-centric art can guide us onto the right path. The noble ideal of harmony he demonstrated is the only way to reunite today's fragmented and divided Assam.

Regrettably, today we often confine the architects of our national life to the formalities of specific days. Every year on June 20, observed as 'Rabha Divas,' we tend to conclude our national duty by singing a few popular songs, delivering emotionally charged speeches, or paying formal tributes on social media. However, restricting Rabha within emotional slogans or the formalities of an annual calendar does grave injustice to his timeless consciousness.

Today, there is a pressing need to deeply understand his egalitarian thoughts, his immense love for the working-class people, and his dream of fashioning the multi-ethnic Assamese society into a vast, inclusive family. If we fail to translate that revolutionary consciousness into the thought process of the new generation, the endangerment of our national existence in the near future is certain.

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How to Solve Conflicts at Workplace?

By: Smita Nag

Dealing with conflicts at the workplace is a common challenge, but it doesn't have to be overwhelming.

Understanding the types of conflict in the workplace and having effective strategies to resolve them can transform a tense office into a harmonious one.

In this blog, we'll explore the various conflicts that can arise in professional settings and provide you with practical approaches to navigate and resolve them.

From interpersonal clashes to structural disputes, we'll equip you with the tools you need to create a more peaceful and productive work environment.

Why do conflicts at the workplace take place?

Workplace conflicts can arise from a variety of factors and situations. Understanding the underlying reasons for conflict is crucial for effectively managing and preventing it.

Here are some common reasons why workplace conflict arises:

- Communication Issues:** Miscommunication, poor communication, or lack of communication can lead to misunderstandings and conflicts. This includes issues such as unclear instructions, misinterpreted messages, and failure to listen actively.

- Personality Clashes:** Differences in personalities, work styles, and temperaments among employees can lead to friction. For example, introverts and extroverts may have different communication preferences, which can cause tension.

- Conflict of Interest:** Employees may have competing interests or goals, especially in situations where limited resources or promotions are at stake. These conflicts of interest can lead to competition and disputes.

- Role Ambiguity:** When roles and responsibilities are not clearly defined, it can result in conflicts over who should be doing what. This is particularly common in matrix organizations or when job descriptions are unclear.

- Lack of Resources:** Competition for limited resources, such as budget, equipment, or time, can lead to conflicts between departments or team members vying for these resources to accomplish their tasks.

- Unresolved Past Conflicts:** If previous conflicts were not properly resolved, they can fester and resurface in future interactions. Lingering resentment and unresolved issues can exacerbate new conflicts.

- Cultural and Diversity Differences:** Differences in cultural backgrounds, val-

ues, and perspectives can contribute to misunderstandings and conflicts. Cultural clashes or insensitivity to diversity can lead to tension in multicultural workplaces.

- Workload and Stress:** High workloads, tight deadlines, and stress can lead to frayed nerves and increased irritability, making employees more prone to conflicts with colleagues.

- Leadership and Management Issues:** Poor leadership, favoritism, inconsistent management practices, or a lack of direction can create an unhealthy work environment and contribute to employee conflicts.

- Organizational Changes:** Major changes, such as reorganizations, mergers, layoffs, or shifts in company culture, can disrupt the workplace and trigger conflicts as employees adjust to new circumstances.

- Personal Issues Impacting Work:** Personal problems outside of work, such as health issues, family concerns, or financial stress, can spill over into the workplace and affect an employee's behavior and interactions with colleagues.

- Discrimination and Harassment:** Discrimination, harassment, or bias based on characteristics such as gender, race, age, or religion can create hostile work environments and lead to conflicts, as affected employees seek justice or support.

- Competitive Work Environments:** Highly competitive cultures that prioritize individual achievement over teamwork can foster conflicts as employees vie for recognition and success.

What are the types of conflict in the workplace?

Workplace conflicts can take various forms, each with its characteristics and dynamics.

Understanding the types of conflicts that can occur in the workplace is essential for effectively managing and resolving them.

Here are some common types of workplace conflict:

- Interpersonal Conflict:** Interpersonal conflict arises between individuals or colleagues who have disagreements, differences in personality, communication styles, or personal clashes. These conflicts are often based on personal perceptions, emotions, or past interactions.

- Role Conflict:** Role conflict occurs when there is ambiguity or disagreement regarding job roles and responsibilities. Employees may dispute their own or others' roles, leading to confusion, duplication of efforts, or gaps in tasks.

- Conflict of Interest:** Conflict of interest conflicts emerge when employees have competing interests or goals. This can occur when team members are vying for limited resources, promotions, or recognition.



- Structural Conflict:** Structural conflicts are rooted in organizational structures, systems, or processes. Examples include disputes over resource allocation, decision-making authority, or departmental boundaries.

- Value-Based Conflict:** Value-based conflicts arise from differences in core values, beliefs, or ethical principles. These conflicts can be particularly challenging to resolve as they often touch on deeply held convictions.

- Cultural Conflict:** Cultural conflicts occur in diverse workplaces when employees from different cultural backgrounds clash due to differing customs, communication styles, or expectations. Sensitivity and cultural awareness are key to resolving these conflicts.

- Leadership Conflict:** Leadership conflicts involve disagreements or disputes with supervisors, managers, or leaders. These can stem from perceived favoritism, inconsistent management practices, or disagreements over leadership decisions.

- Workload Conflict:** Workload conflicts arise when employees perceive an unfair distribution of tasks or responsibilities within a team. Unequal workloads can lead to resentment and tension among team members.

- Policy and Procedural Conflict:** Conflicts related to policies and procedures occur when employees believe that organizational policies are unfair, outdated, or not being applied consistently. Disagreements may revolve around HR policies, performance evaluation methods, or disciplinary procedures.

- Discrimination and Harassment Conflict:** These conflicts arise when employees experience discrimination, harassment, or bullying based on their gender, race, age, religion, or other protected characteristics. Such conflicts can lead to legal and ethical issues for organizations.

- Team Dynamics Conflict:** Team dynamics conflicts occur within work teams or departments and can result from issues such as lack of trust, poor communication, or disagreements about team goals and priorities.

- Client or Customer Conflict:** Conflict can also arise when employees have disputes or disagreements with clients or cus-

tomers. This type of conflict can affect customer relationships and requires careful handling to maintain business integrity.

- Intragroup Conflict:** Intragroup conflicts take place within a specific group or team and can be due to differences in opinions, leadership styles, or competing interests among group members.

- Change-Related Conflict:** Change-related conflicts stem from resistance to organizational changes, such as restructuring, downsizing, or shifts in company culture. Employees may feel uneasy about the uncertainty created by these changes.

- Personal Conflict Impacting Work:** Personal conflicts in employees' personal lives can spill over into the workplace, affecting their behavior and interactions with colleagues. These conflicts may include family issues, health problems, or financial stress.

Strategies to resolve conflict in the workplace

Conflict is a natural part of any workplace, but how managers handle it can make all the difference in maintaining a productive and harmonious work environment.

Effective conflict resolution not only prevents issues from escalating but also promotes teamwork and employee satisfaction. Here are some critical tips to help managers navigate and resolve conflicts at work.

- Actively Listen**
Active listening involves giving your full attention to the parties involved in the conflict. This means maintaining eye contact, nodding to show understanding, and refraining from interrupting.

- It's essential to create an atmosphere where employees feel heard and valued. By listening actively, you gain insights into their concerns and emotions, which can guide your conflict resolution efforts effectively.

- Stay Neutral**
Staying neutral as a manager means refraining from taking sides or showing favoritism. It's crucial to avoid any perceived bias, as it can undermine trust and credibility.

- Emphasize your role as an impartial mediator and ensure that both parties feel they have an equal opportunity to express their views and grievances.

- Identify the Root Causes**
To uncover the root causes of conflict, engage in probing conversations with the employees involved.

- Ask open-ended questions to explore deeper issues, such as miscommunications, personality clashes, or differences in expectations.

- Understanding these underlying factors is essential for finding lasting solutions.

Encourage Open Communication

Encourage employees to engage in open and honest conversations. Explain the importance of using "I" statements to express their feelings and concerns without blaming others.

Create a safe space where employees can speak freely without fear of retaliation or judgment.

Set Clear Expectations

Clearly define your organization's expectations for employee behavior, performance, and teamwork.

Ensure that these expectations are communicated and documented, so employees understand the standards they should meet. When conflicts arise, refer back to these expectations to help guide discussions and solutions.

Mediation Skills

Develop your mediation skills by learning conflict resolution techniques. This might include active listening, reframing issues, and facilitating compromise.

The goal is to guide employees through a structured process that encourages them to work together to find common ground.

Focus on Solutions, Not Blame

Shift the conversation from assigning blame to problem-solving. Encourage employees to brainstorm potential solutions to conflict and work collaboratively.

Emphasize that the goal is to improve the situation and prevent future conflicts, rather than dwelling on past mistakes.

Implement Conflict Resolution Training

Consider investing in conflict resolution training for your team. These programs can provide employees with the skills and strategies needed to address conflicts independently.

Training might cover communication skills, emotional intelligence, and effective negotiation techniques.

Follow Up

After a resolution is reached, it's crucial to follow up with the parties involved. Ensure that the agreed-upon solutions are being implemented and that any lingering issues or tensions are being addressed.

Regular check-ins demonstrate your commitment to resolving conflicts and maintaining a positive work environment.

Document Everything

Maintain detailed records of all conflict-related interactions and outcomes. Include notes from meetings, email exchanges, and any formal resolutions.

This documentation can serve as a valuable reference in case similar conflicts reemerge or if you need to take further action, such as disciplinary measures or policy adjustments.

Incorporating these detailed conflict resolution strategies into your managerial toolkit can help you effectively address

and resolve workplace conflicts, fostering a more harmonious and productive work environment.

Create a Structured Conflict Resolution Process

Develop a structured conflict resolution process that employees can follow when conflicts arise.

This process should outline the steps to take, from reporting the conflict to seeking mediation or involving HR. A well-defined process ensures consistency and transparency in handling conflicts.

Offer Individual Coaching and Feedback

Recognize that some conflicts may result from skill gaps or performance issues.

Offer individual coaching and feedback to employees who require improvement in areas such as communication, teamwork, or problem-solving.

Providing guidance can help prevent recurring conflicts.

Consider Alternative Dispute Resolution (ADR) Methods

Explore alternative dispute resolution methods, such as peer mediation, arbitration, or facilitated dialogue.

ADR approaches can be effective for resolving complex conflicts or situations where traditional methods have not yielded solutions.

Address Cultural and Diversity Factors

Be sensitive to cultural differences and diversity-related conflicts within the workplace. Encourage employees to share their perspectives and experiences and educate the team on cultural awareness and inclusivity.

Promoting diversity and inclusion can reduce tensions and improve overall team dynamics.

Monitor and Analyze Conflict Trends

Keep track of conflict trends and patterns within your organization. Analyze data to identify recurring issues or departments prone to conflicts.

This proactive approach allows you to implement preventive measures and tailor conflict resolution strategies accordingly.

By implementing these additional conflict resolution strategies, managers can further enhance their ability to handle workplace conflicts effectively and create a more harmonious work environment.

Conflict resolution is a critical skill for managers in any workplace. By actively listening, staying neutral, identifying root causes, and fostering open communication, managers can create a positive work environment where conflicts are effectively resolved.

These tips will help managers navigate and resolve conflicts while promoting a more productive and harmonious workplace. (Courtesy-NaukriBlogs)

SBI PO Recruitment 2026 – 1500 Probationary Officer Posts, Online Apply

Last Date 08th July 2026

SBI PO Recruitment 2026

State Bank of India (SBI) has released an employment notification for the recruitment of 1500 Probationary Officer (PO) Vacancy. Interested and eligible candidates may check this article for detailed official notification, educational qualification, age limit, salary details, and application procedure to be followed.

SBI PO Recruitment Details

Name of post: Probationary Officer (PO)
No of posts: 1500 posts
Category-wise vacancy:

SC: 234 ST: 144 OBC: 390 EWS: 144 GEN: 588

Exam Centres (Assam): Dibrugarh, Guwahati, Jorhat, Silchar, Tezpur
Pay scale: Rs 48480-2000/7-62480-2340/2-67160-2680/7-85920. The approximate CTC at initial scale of pay at Mumbai Centre is Rs.21.97 Lacs.

Eligibility Criteria of SBI PO Recruitment

Age Limit: Candidates age should not be below 21 years and not above 30 years as on 01.04.2026 i.e. candidates must have been born not later than 01.04.2005 and not earlier than 02.04.1996 (both days inclusive).

Age Relaxation: The category-wise age relaxation is as mentioned below.

SC/ST: 5 years

OBC: 3 years

PwBD: 10 years

PwBD (OBC/NCL): 13 years

PwBD (SC/ST): 15 years

Ex Servicemen: 5 years

Educational Qualification: Candidates must be a Graduate in any discipline from a recognised University or any equivalent qualification recognised as such by the Central Government.

Final Year Students: Those who are in the Final Year/ Semester of their Graduation may also apply provisionally subject to the condition that, if called for interview, they will have to produce proof of having passed the graduation examination on or before 30.09.2026.

Other Professional Degree Holder: Candidates possessing qualifications such as Medical, Engineering, Chartered Accountant, Cost Accountant would also be eligible.

Application Fee: Category-wise application fee is as mentioned below

Category Fee Amount

UR/ EWS/ OBC Rs 750/-

SC/ ST/ PwBD NIL

Payment Mode

Debit Card/ Credit Card/ Internet Banking

How to Apply for SBI PO Recruitment ?

Interested and eligible candidates can apply online through the SBI Career website <https://bank.sbi/careers> or <https://www.sbi.co.in/careers> starting from 18th June 2026. To apply online they may follow below mentioned steps.

#Scroll down, go to Important Web-Links section .

#Click on Online Application Form link .

#A new webpage will be opened.

#Enter all your personal and educational details as required .

#Upload your passport sized photograph and signature and other required documents.

#Pay the application fee as per your category and at the end click on submit button .

#Don't forget to take a print of submitted application form .

Important Dates of SBI Recruitment 2026

Starting date of online application submission: 18th June 2026

Last date of online application submission: 8th July 2026

Date of release of preliminary exam admit card: 2nd / 3rd week of July 2026 onwards

Date of preliminary exam: August 2026

Declaration of Result of Preliminary Examination: August / September 2026

Date of main exam: September 2026

Declaration of Result of Main Examination: September / October 2026

Date of Psychometric Test, Group Exercises & Interview: October / November 2026

Selection Process of SBI PO Recruitment

The selection for Probationary Officers consists of a three phase process. All stages are as mentioned below:

Preliminary Examination (Phase I)

Preliminary Examination consisting of Objective Test for 100 marks will be conducted online. The test will have of 3 Sections (with separate timings for each section) as follows:

Section	No. of Questions	Duration
English Language	40	20 Minutes
Quantitative Aptitude	30	20 Minutes
Reasoning Ability	30	20 Minutes
Total	100	60 Minutes

Main Examination (Phase II)

Main Examination will be conducted online and will consist of Objective Tests for 200 marks and Descriptive Test for 30 marks. The Descriptive Test will be conducted immediately after conclusion of the Objective Test and candidates will have to type their Descriptive Test answers on the computer.

Objective Test: The duration of objective test is 3 hours and it consists of 4 Sections of total 200 marks. There will be separate timing for every section.

Section	No. of Questions	Max. Marks	Duration
Reasoning & Computer Aptitude	40	60	50 Minutes
Data Analysis & Interpretation	30	60	45 Minutes
General Awareness/ Economy/ Banking Knowledge	60	60	45 Minutes
English Language	40	20	40 Minutes
Total	170	200	180 Minutes

Descriptive Test: The duration of Descriptive Test is 30 minutes. The Descriptive Test will be administered immediately after conclusion of the Objective Test and candidates will have to type their Descriptive Test answers on the computer. It will be a Test of Communication Skills: Emails, Reports writing, Situation Analysis & Precis Writing with total 30 marks.

Interview (Phase III)
The Bank may conduct a Psychometric test for personality profiling, of those candidates who will be shortlisted for Phase III. The finding of the test may be placed before the Interview panel for having a thorough perspective on the candidates.

The 3rd Phase may comprise of Interview (30 marks) & Group Exercises (20 marks).
Candidates will have to score minimum qualifying marks in Phase-III to be considered for final selection. The minimum qualifying marks will be decided by the Bank.

Final Selection
The candidates will have to qualify both in Phase-II and Phase-III separately. The marks obtained in Main Examination (Phase-II), both in the Objective Test and the Descriptive Test, will be added to the marks obtained in Phase-III for preparing the final merit list. The marks obtained in the Preliminary Examination (Phase-I) will not be added for preparing the final merit list for selection.

JSB Infrastructures Recruitment – 12 Posts, Online Apply

JSB Infrastructures, a leading real estate company in Upper Assam has released an employment notification for the recruitment of following posts for their Jorhat Project. Interested and eligible candidates may check this article for detailed official notification, educational qualification, age limit, salary details, and application procedure to be followed.

It is an excellent opportunity for the candidates looking for Private Jobs in Jorhat, Private Jobs in Assam, Construction Jobs in Assam, Real States Jobs in Assam, etc

JSB Infrastructures Recruitment Details

1. Sales Manager

No of posts: 2

Educational Qualification: Graduation

Experience: Minimum 4 years in the sales sector

Age Limit: 25-45 years

2. Sales Executive

No of posts: 2

Educational Qualification: Graduation

Experience: Minimum 2 years in the sales sector

Age Limit: Upto 45 years

3. Office Assistant

No of posts: 2

Educational Qualification: Class 12 (Higher Secondary)

Experience: Minimum 2 years of relevant experience

Age Limit: Upto 45 years

4. Back-Office Executive

No of posts: 2

Educational Qualification: Graduation

Experience: Minimum 2 years of experience in banking or office administration work

Age Limit: 45 Years

5. Site Supervisor

No of posts: 2

Educational Qualification: Class 12 (Higher Secondary)

Experience: Minimum 2 years of experience in construction-related work

Age Limit: Upto 45 Years

6. Site Engineer

No of posts: 2

Educational Qualification: B.Tech in Civil Engineering or ITI with 5 years experience

Experience: Minimum 2 years of relevant experience

Age Limit: Upto 45 Years

Job Location: Jorhat, Assam

Other Criteria

- Candidates must possess the required experience in their respective fields.

- Proficiency in the Google ecosystem is mandatory, including:

- # Google Docs

- # Google Sheets

- # Google Drive

- # Google Cloud

- Strong communication, organizational, and teamwork skills will be preferred.

- Candidates must be willing to relocate to and stay in Jorhat, Assam, if required by the organization.

How to Apply for JSB Infrastructures Recruitment ?

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EU leaders squabble over outreach to Moscow as Ukraine war rages on

BRUSSELS, June 19: European Union leaders have been unable to agree on setting up a back-channel with Moscow to ensure that the bloc's interests are protected should progress be made in negotiations to end Russia's war on Ukraine, some of them said on Friday.

European Council President António Costa, who chaired their two-day summit, had directed his office to reach out to the Kremlin and proposed a senior official to make contact. Costa said his aim was not to mediate or set up a parallel negotiating track to the one led by the United States, which is making little progress.

Debate has been swirling around Europe in recent months about whether to appoint a mediator for talks with Russia to help get things moving again, but this has been largely rejected as many believe that Russian President Vladimir Putin would be unlikely to negotiate anyway.

Instead, the 27 EU countries have focused on concessions that Russia should make to secure peace.

Speaking to reporters, Czech



Prime Minister Andrej Babiš said the leaders had failed to resolve their differences over the approach overnight. "Europe is unable to agree even on whether there will be negotiations or who will lead them," he said.

Irish Prime Minister Micheál Martin said that "opening up a channel is not a mistake in our view, and I trust António Costa."

"What was very clear last evening is that any negotiations

would have to be first and foremost between Ukraine and Russia, but there are no indications that Russia is coming to the table at all," he said.

Putin has tried to cut out Europe and Kyiv from its negotiations with the United States over Ukraine's future. But the Kremlin said Friday that it would be open for talks with Europe if it abandons its desire to talk to Moscow from the position of force.

"We are ready for contact, we were not the ones who initiated cutting such contacts, terminating them completely," said spokesperson Dmitry Peskov. "If forces emerge that realize the need to resume dialogue with Russia, not to lecturing it or, worse, to issue ultimatums ... then President Putin and the Russian side would certainly be open to it."

As the leaders left their meeting overnight, Belgian Prime Minister Bart De Wever joked that Costa would be the envoy to Moscow. "I was just talking about you, António," De Wever said while laughing and shaking Costa's hand. "I was full of praise, saying you are the only one who can represent us and that we will send you to Moscow."

Margus Tsahkna, foreign minister of Estonia — a nation on the EU's eastern flank that has faced drone incursions and was once occupied by the Soviet Union — said that "Europe must not assume the role of a neutral mediator" and instead buttress Ukraine's position to "force the Kremlin into serious negotiations." (AP)

2 men sentenced to prison for arson on property linked to UK PM Starmer

LONDON, June 19: A British court sent two men to prison Friday for setting fire to property linked to British Prime Minister Keir Starmer in a plot orchestrated by a mysterious Russian-speaking figure.

Ukrainian national Roman Lavrynovych, 22, and Stanislav Carpiuc, a 27-year-old Romanian citizen, were jailed for 7 years and 2 years, respectively, after being found guilty of conspiracy to damage property by fire.

The men targeted a car and two properties linked to Starmer over three nights in May 2025 on the orders of a Russian-speaking figure going by the name of "El Money," according to prosecutors. El Money communicated on the messaging app Telegram with Lavrynovych. Their identity was never revealed and they were not charged.

The court heard how Carpiuc was a middleman tasked with facilitating payment — which never came — and recruiting someone to film the fires.

Addressing Lavrynovych in the dock, Judge Justice Neil Garnham said he agreed to carry out this "mindless piece of arson for money."

Lavrynovych was to El Money a "useful idiot, a fool who could be manipulated to his advantage," Garnham said. The plot fits the description of Russian state-backed sabotage, Cmdr. Dominic Murphy has said previously. He oversaw the initial investigation into the fires as head of the counterterrorism team at the Metropolitan Police before retiring in March.

He said evidence gathered by police showed that El Money spoke Russian and is "likely to be in Russia." El Money's methods were "very similar" to those known to be used by Russian intelligence services acting in the UK. Such plots, he said, often have "very senior sign-off."

Western officials say Russia is carrying out a sabo-

tage campaign against European countries that support Ukraine. The Associated Press has tracked at least 192 attacks across Europe since the 2022 invasion of Ukraine that include arson and cyberattacks as well as attempted assassinations.

When asked by AP in June if Russia is waging a covert war against the West, President Vladimir Putin brushed the allegations off.

Speaking in court Friday, Lavrynovych's defense lawyer James Scobie said his client was "low-hanging fruit" used by El Money to deliberately target the prime minister. Lavrynovych, he said, had brought shame on his family in Ukraine where his father worked with the military before he died.

"You are not a man of great principle. And you were easily bought," Garnham said. He told the court that Lavrynovych is a man of "significantly low level intellectual functioning," and was therefore vulnerable to manipulation.

The UK Home Office called the fires an "abhorrent attack" and said those responsible have been brought to justice. It did not respond to requests for comment about whether the British government planned to attribute the fires to Russia.

Lavrynovych was tasked with setting and filming the fires over several days in May 2025, according to evidence presented during his six-week trial.

El Money recruited him online and sent detailed instructions, including the locations of the targets and how to mix flammable liquids from a hardware store.

The attacks did not cause injuries or major damage, but the prime minister's sister-in-law, Judith Alexander, said she was left "struggling to breathe" after smoke filled her house in the third attack. She and her family were staying at the residence, which had been Starmer's home before he became prime minister. (AP)

Sri Lanka to closely monitor imports

COLOMBO, June 19: Sri Lanka will closely monitor imports under a new regulatory framework aimed at preventing foreign exchange leakages, Deputy Finance Minister Anil Jayantha Fernando said on Friday.

"The aim is not to restrict imports but to monitor the importation process closely to tackle any wrongdoings", he told reporters in Colombo, referring to a government notification issued last week that prescribed stricter requirements for importers.

"All importers will now have to furnish their personal information, their company identifications, their bank account details", said Fernando, adding that there have been cases of fraudulent import practices such as fake company registrations.

Under the new rules, each import transaction will be assigned a separate identification number. (PTI)

Vance delays Switzerland trip for talks with Iranian negotiators

WASHINGTON, June 19: US Vice President JD Vance has put off his visit to Switzerland for talks with Iranian negotiators, with the White House citing logistical issues. The negotiations, aimed at working out the technical aspects of the Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) signed between the US and Iran, were scheduled to take place in Switzerland on Friday.

However, Vance had raised doubts about travelling to Lucerne in Switzerland for talks, with Iranian negotiators saying the date was yet to be fixed.

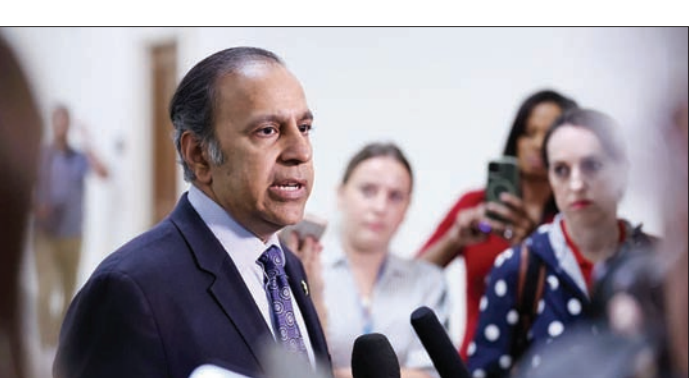
"As the Vice President said at his press conference, the plans for the upcoming technical talks have not been finalised, and the US delegation has been prepared to depart at the first available opportunity," a White House spokesperson said on

Congressman Krishnamoorthi flags incidents of anti-India hate in US

WASHINGTON, June 19: Congressman Raja Krishnamoorthi has voiced concern on the increase in anti-India hate incidents in the US and urged Americans to stand against bigotry, prejudice and discrimination.

In a social media post on Thursday, the Democratic lawmaker cited an incident in Frisco city in Texas where a group of White supremacists shouted anti-India slogans and tore the Indian flag in front of City Hall.

"I want to sound the alarm on the rise of anti-Indian hate in the United States. Just a couple of weeks ago, in Frisco, Texas, a group of white supremacists appeared in front of City Hall and said the following: they said, 'Go back to India, stop the Hindu takeover of Texas, and you will not replace us,'" said the



Congressman from Illinois. He said hate has no place in the United States.

"I don't care if it's directed toward Hindus, Muslims, Jews, regardless of your religion, regardless of nationality. We have to stand shoulder to shoulder against big-

otry, prejudice, and discrimination toward anybody. I hope you'll pay attention to this issue," the Indian-American lawmaker said.

In May, Krishnamoorthi and other Democratic lawmakers had introduced a resolution in the US Congress condemning President

Donald Trump's amplification of "racist rhetoric" targeting Indian and Chinese Americans.

The resolution, moved by Congressmen Krishnamoorthi and Ted Lieu and Congresswoman Pramila Jayapal, condemned Trump's amplification on Truth Social of a racist post by radio host Michael Savage attacking birthright citizen-

ship.

According to the resolution, the post used "derogatory language about India and China, questioned immigrants' loyalty, and trafficked in harmful stereotypes targeting Indian Americans and Chinese Americans".

The resolution was co-sponsored by Congresswomen Grace Meng and Judy Chu and Congressmen Shri Thanedar, Suhas Subramanyam and Ami Bera. (PTI)

Cambodian SC upholds incitement conviction of opposition politician, sparking anger

PHNOM PENH (CAMBODIA), June 19: Cambodia's Supreme Court on Friday upheld the incitement conviction of a prominent opposition politician while suspending the remainder of his sentence, keeping him out of prison but unable to practice politics for years and renewing questions about the government's efforts to quash criticism.

The decision against Rong Chhun, a top adviser to the Nation Power Party, was met with anger by some 300 supporters from around the country who had gathered outside the Supreme Court complex in Phnom Penh.

"Even though he is not in prison, I'm saddened that his freedom has been restricted and he has become a sub-citizen, meaning he has no right to vote or participate in politics," said Nek Rathna, a 55-year-old from the capital.

"The verdict is hard for us to accept because he is not free, and he has done nothing wrong."

The 56-year-old had been found guilty last year of inciting social unrest after meeting with villagers displaced by government construction projects, in what was widely seen as one of many legal moves taken by the government of Prime Minister Hun Manet to stifle criticism.

Rong Chhun told his supporters the verdict was "completely unfair" and accused the court of following orders of the government rather than the rule of law.

"If the powerful leader wants black, the court will paint it black for them," he said. "And if the powerful wants white, the court will paint it white for them."

Bryony Lau, deputy Asia director for Human Rights Watch, said the ruling demonstrates Cambodia's courts "lack of independence from the ruling party."

"Hun Manet's government should stop using the courts to silence the political opposition and

instead reopen space for parties and civil society groups to operate freely ahead of next year's election," she said.

Cambodia's Minister of Information Neth Pheaktra did not immediately respond to a request for comment on the allegation that the court system was under government influence.

Under almost four decades of autocratic former Prime Minister Hun Sen, Cambodia was widely criticized for human rights abuses that included suppression of freedom of speech and association. He was succeeded in August 2023 by his American-educated son, Hun Manet, but there have been few signs of political liberalization.

Sophal Ear, a Cambodian political scientist in the U.S., called the decision against Rong Chhun "evidence of continuity rather than change under the transition from Hun Sen to Hun Manet."

"A high-profile case like this inevitably becomes a test of how much political space exists under the current leadership and whether the transition has produced any meaningful changes in governance," he said. "Many people will conclude that the leadership transition has so far produced more continuity than reform."

Under the decision, Rong Chhun will be prohibited from any involvement in politics for five years, including voting or standing as a candidate, and will be banned from traveling abroad for three years, the remainder of his original four-year sentence, his attorney Em Chantha told reporters. He had also been free while his appeal was pending.

Supreme Court decisions are final, but Rong Chhun said he and his attorney would study the verdict in detail to decide whether there would be a chance to ask Cambodia's King Norodom Sihamoni for a pardon. (AP)

India-UK FTA more than just about trade: Foreign Secretary Vikram Misri

PARIS, June 19: The India-UK Free Trade Agreement (FTA) goes beyond just trade and technology to open many doors for the people in both countries, Foreign Secretary Vikram Misri has said.

Addressing the media on Thursday, Misri highlighted trade, technology, regional and international security as the key pillars of Prime Minister Narendra Modi's visit across a range of bilateral discussions on the sidelines of the G7 Summit in Evian.

During a meeting with British Prime Minister Keir Starmer, both leaders announced July 15 as the date for the Comprehensive Economic and Trade Partnership (CETA) to enter into force.

"The India-UK Comprehensive Economic and Trade Agreement, which was signed last year in the presence of the two Prime Ministers in the UK, will enter into force from July 15. So, a major development so far as bilateral relations with a major trading partner are concerned," Misri said.

He went on to highlight that the impact of CETA, which is expected to significantly boost annual bilateral trade from the current annual estimate of 48 billion pounds, will be felt on the wider India-UK relationship.

"Now that a date for entry into force has been announced, I am sure that businesses on both sides have been gearing up for some time to get into this," he told PTI.

"The UK is one of our largest trading partners, an important technology partner. And this agreement is about more than just trade and technology. It speaks to mobility between the two countries as well. And I think it will open very important doors for people in both countries," he said.

The Foreign Secretary noted that businesses in both countries have been "quite eager" to have the agreement enter into force at an early date so that they can roll out their expansion and growth plans.

Trade talks with the European Union (EU) also pro-

gressed during this week's visit, where Prime Minister Modi met jointly with both European Commission President Ursula von der Leyen and European Council President António Costa. The conclusion of negotiations towards an India-EU FTA took place earlier this year in New Delhi, with an agreement expected before the end of this year.

"This is something that came up in their meeting in Evian on the sidelines of the G7 meetings, and they once again reaffirmed their desire and instructed the respective teams to do whatever was necessary to make this signing happen before the end of the year," Misri told reporters.

Prime Minister Modi concluded his tour of France on Thursday evening with an address to the Indian community in Paris.

The foreign secretary characterised the Indo-French relationship as one of the "strongest bilateral relationships on the global scale".

He said: "It is a relationship that is present in some of the most important areas of our national endeavour... defence area, the nuclear area and the space area. These are all areas in which there is a history of very close and fruitful collaboration between the two countries, and are also areas where there is active collaboration and discussions ongoing as we speak."

"Beyond that, I think there is a lot of alignment in I won't say every single view, but a lot of our views on the global scale. Certainly, in multilateral organisations and on a lot of regional issues, India and France have very, very similar approaches. And, finally, I would say France is a resident power in the Indo-Pacific, and that creates another very rich vein of possibilities for India and France to cooperate with each other."

India calls Pakistan a 'Frankenstein state' at UN; accuses it of supporting terrorism

'No technical arrangement can remain frozen in time while the world around it is transformed'

UNITED NATIONS, June 19: India has slammed Pakistan at the United Nations, calling it a "Frankenstein state" that gets shocked when its "own monster bites back", as it accused Islamabad of "hosting, training and deploying" terrorists.

The remarks were made by Anupama Singh, First Secretary at India's Permanent Mission to the United Nations, on Wednesday, after Pakistan and the Organisation of Islamic Cooperation (OIC) raised the issue of Jammu and Kashmir during the Interactive Dialogue on the UN High Commissioner's annual report.

"India is compelled to exercise this right of reply in response to references made to it by Pakistan and the OIC. We categorically reject the baseless and malicious allegations made by Pakistan," Singh said.

The diplomat further said: "We also categorically reject the references to Jammu and Kashmir made by the OIC... For the record, Jammu and Kashmir was, and will always remain an integral and inalienable part of India. The only unresolved issue is Pakistan's illegal occupation of Indian territories and their return." She also said that Pakistan is a



country whose sitting defence minister "boasts of hosting, training and deploying terrorists as state policy".

"This should surprise no one. An illegal and illegitimate occupation can be sustained only through force," Singh said. "This is the country with the sitting Defence Minister boasts of hosting, training, and deploying terrorists and state policy, and yet Pakistan calls itself a victim of terrorism."

deed, a paradox which only Pakistan could sustain. It is a living example of a Frankenstein state, which is shocked when its own monster bites back," she said.

She also said that "denial of basic freedoms has brought matters to a point where even demand for bread, electricity, rights, and dignity are met with bullets and brutality."

Singh also mentioned the Indus Water Treaty with Pakistan, calling it "outdated".

"Our position on the Indus Water Treaty is well known. It defies logic that a state which exports terror as an instrument of policy continues to demand the privileges of cooperation predicated on goodwill and friendship," Singh said.

The decades-old treaty was suspended after the Pahalgam terror attack in April 2025 that killed 26 civilians.

"It is equally undeniable that the treaty is now outdated. No technical arrangement can remain frozen in time while the world around it is transformed," the diplomat said.

Singh also said that a treaty negotiated in 1960 cannot be treated as a perpetual entitlement "insulated from accountability, detached from present-day realities and untouched by the profound changes of the past six decades".

The Indus Waters Treaty, brokered by the World Bank, has governed the distribution and use of the Indus River and its tributaries between India and Pakistan since 1960. Singh added: "instead of coveting Indian territories, Pakistan would serve itself and its people far better by putting its own house in order." (PTI)

Thousands take out rally in Kohima demanding speedy justice in sexual harassment, rape cases

KOHIMA, June 19: Thousands of women, along with men, representatives of youth organisations and members of non-Naga communities, braved heavy rain on Friday to stage a rally in Nagaland's capital Kohima, demanding an end to prolonged delays in sexual harassment cases and seeking speedy justice for survivors.

Organised by the Tribal Women Bodies of Kohima (TWBK), the protesters assembled at the Old MLA Hostel Junction and marched to Lok Bhavan, where they submitted a memorandum addressed to the Chief Justice of the Gauhati High Court.

The protest centred on delays in proceedings in a sexual harassment case involving suspended IAS officer Reny Wilfred, pending since 2021, as well as recent cases of rape and sexual violence in the state.

Carrying placards with slogans such as 'Justice delayed is justice denied', 'Sexual harassers behind bars, not behind desks' and 'Your influence cannot silence the truth', the demonstrators alleged that repeated legal manoeuvres had delayed trial proceedings and denied justice to survivors.

Addressing the gathering, Angami Women Organisation president and Rally Organising Committee convener Neithono R Sothi said the rain symbolised "showers of blessing" in the collective fight for justice and asserted that women would remain united until survivors received justice and perpetrators were held accountable.

The rally drew support from several civil society organisations, tribal bodies, student groups and youth organisations, including



the Investment and Development Authority of Nagaland (IDAN), Naga Students' Federation, Kohima Ao Telongjem, Angami Youth Organisation, Kohima Lotha Hoho, and representatives of Khiamniungan and Yimkhung organisations.

In the memorandum, the TWBK expressed concern over what it termed persistent attempts to delay proceedings in the sexual harassment case involving Wilfred, alleging that repeated adjournments undermine public confidence in the justice delivery system and embolden offenders.

The memorandum stated that the accused allegedly molested two minor girls while serving as deputy commissioner of Noklak, leading to the registration of a police case

under sections of the IPC and the Protection of Children from Sexual Offences (POCSO) Act. It noted that despite the POCSO Act mandating speedy disposal of such cases, the trial remains unresolved nearly five years after the case was registered.

The women's bodies also referred to another FIR lodged on April 2, 2025, alleging sexual harassment of women employees while the accused was serving as joint secretary of IDAN.

They claimed that several contractual employees who filed complaints had since lost their jobs, while the accused continued to pursue multiple legal remedies that resulted in repeated delays in trial proceedings.

According to the memorandum, the ac-

cusor unsuccessfully challenged the FIR before the Gauhati High Court and later the Supreme Court. It alleged that a subsequent criminal revision petition filed before the high court led to the postponement of the recording of evidence, originally scheduled for June 9 and later deferred to July 14.

The protesting organisations submitted a three-point charter of demands, seeking no further delays in the proceedings and completion of the trial in a fair, impartial and time-bound manner, continuation of the accused's suspension pending final adjudication, and permanent disqualification from government service and public office in Nagaland if convicted.

Expressing concern over rising crimes against women and children, the memorandum cited recent cases, including the alleged repeated rape of a minor in Dimapur, sexual harassment of a minor by a church leader in Kohima, the alleged rape of an elderly woman in Kiphire by a law enforcement personnel, and the alleged rape of a minor by a truck driver.

Condemning such incidents, the women's bodies demanded exemplary punishment for offenders and speedy disposal of all pending cases, warning that prolonged delays in trials contribute to a growing sense of impunity.

"The prompt and impartial administration of justice is indispensable to safeguarding the dignity and security of women and children and restoring public confidence in the rule of law," the memorandum stated, urging the judiciary to ensure early delivery of justice. (PTI)

Discussions started with several communities to restore peace in Manipur: CM



IMPHAL, June 19: Manipur Chief Minister Y. Khemchand Singh on Friday said discussions have started with several communities for the restoration of peace in the state and that conflict can only be addressed through talks.

Singh was speaking at the inauguration of Mission Blind School at Heikakpokpi in Tengenoual district, mainly inhabited by Kuki and Naga communities.

The chief minister said a united Manipur is the only way forward for all communities of the state.

"Many groups of different communities visit me at my official residence to discuss how to bring peace. If Meitei, Kuki and Nagas continuously think about themselves only and continue to fight, the state will never develop," he said.

The chief minister had recently said that peace is unlikely in the state unless all people in possession of illegal weapons are disarmed.

"Since historical times, only when the 36 communities in the state united, was it able to defend itself against others, including against the Burmese. The present boundaries of the state were built and defended by all communities. We should love and honour these lands handed down by our ancestors," Singh said.

Myanmar, which was earlier known as Burma, shares its boundaries with Manipur.

"As there is no other way than to live together, we must think and work to live with cooperation and understand the plights of others. Today, many of our brothers visit Imphal to use flights from the air-

port to travel," he added. Imphal Valley is home to the Meitei community, while the Kuki and Naga communities live in the hills. During the peak of the unrest, hill people used to avoid the Imphal airport and availed the facility in neighbouring Mizoram's Aizawl.

Singh also said that due to fresh conflict in hill areas, the peace process has been delayed, and appealed to the people that no solution can be brought by conflict and has to be concluded through talks.

"Even in a household, conflict does take place. But we must forget and forgive the past and think of the next generation," the chief minister said.

Later, in a social media post, Singh said, "I visited Laiching Heikakpokpi in Tengenoual district and inaugurated the Girls' Hostel of the Mission Blind School. This facility will greatly enhance the accommodation and convenience of visually impaired students, supporting their educational journey and overall well-being."

Referring to the diverse communities residing around Heikakpokpi, the chief minister stressed that the state can progress only through unity, mutual respect and peaceful coexistence.

Drawing a comparison with Singapore, Singh said that development is possible only when people rise above community divisions and work together with a shared identity.

He also said, "Guided by the vision of Hon'ble Prime Minister Narendra Modi and the spirit of '12 Years of Vishwas, Vikas and Jan Kalyan', our Government remains dedicated to inclusive growth and the welfare of every citizen of Manipur."

Appealing for lasting peace, Singh said that the state's economy has been hit hard due to the unrest.

He, however, noted that signs of normalcy have begun to emerge after more than three years of conflict and called upon everyone to safeguard the ongoing peace process.

"Without peace and love, no land can develop and prosper. If Meiteis, Kukis and Nagas fight continuously, the state can never develop," he said. (PTI)

Mizoram CM Lalduhoma seeks higher EAP allocation for Northeast

AIZAWL, June 19: Mizoram Chief Minister Lalduhoma on Friday urged the Centre to enhance the ceiling for Externally Aided Projects (EAPs) available to Northeastern states to accelerate infrastructure creation and socio-economic growth across the region, an official statement here said.

Addressing a seminar-cum-workshop on "Leveraging Externally Aided Projects (EAPs) in the North Eastern States" in Shillong, Lalduhoma highlighted Mizoram's success in utilising externally funded projects and underscored their transformative impact on the state's development.

The event, organised by the Department of Economic Affairs (DEA), of the Finance Ministry, was inaugurated by Union Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman and attended by chief ministers of all Northeastern states, senior government officials, and representatives of international development agencies.

In his address, Lalduhoma said EAPs provide financial assistance but also bring valuable technical expertise, as specialists from partner institutions study local challenges and share their knowledge and experiences to improve project



implementation.

He said that Mizoram is among the leading states in the Northeast in accessing EAP funding.

He also outlined several major projects, including the Aizawl-Thenzawl-Lunglei road project, funded by international development partners.

The chief minister also highlighted externally funded interventions in urban infrastructure, water supply, agriculture, healthcare and

energy.

He noted that the FOCUS Project, supported by the International Fund for Agricultural Development, has improved the livelihoods of around 55,000 rural households, increasing incomes by approximately 43 per cent while promoting environmental conservation.

In the healthcare sector, Lalduhoma said the World Bank-assisted Health System Strengthening Project enabled 62

government health facilities and hospitals in Mizoram to secure National Quality Assurance Standards (NQAS) certification.

He pointed out that the state had no NQAS-certified facility before the project's implementation.

The chief minister highlighted the ongoing construction of a Super Speciality Cancer Centre with support from the Japan International Cooperation Agency, the implementation of a Universal Health Care Scheme backed by ADB funding, and the revival of the 24 MW Tuirini Hydroelectric Project with assistance from the New Development Bank.

Emphasising the importance of EAPs in creating quality infrastructure and accelerating economic growth, Lalduhoma said Mizoram requires greater access to such projects and called for increased funding limits for Northeastern states.

The seminar was organised to strengthen the capacity of Northeastern states in implementing externally aided projects, facilitate the sharing of best practices, and explore ways to design more effective development initiatives for the region, the official statement said. (PTI)

Lalduhoma assumes charge of personnel and admin reforms portfolio

AIZAWL, June 19: Mizoram Chief Minister Lalduhoma has assumed the charge of the personnel and administrative reforms portfolio, an official said on Friday.

The department was earlier held by K. Sapdanga, who also handled home, urban development and poverty alleviation portfolios.

According to a notification issued by the political and cabinet department on Thursday, the portfolio was assigned to the chief minister in the interest of public service with immediate effect, thereby relieving Sapdanga of the charge.

The development comes amid allegations of an internal rift within the ruling Zoram People's Movement (ZPM), a charge denied by the chief minister.

Leader of Opposition Lalchandama Ralte alleged on Thursday that the ZPM was facing internal differences that could affect the party's functioning.

However, Lalduhoma rejected the claim, saying there was no discord within the party and that its legislators remained united. (PTI)

India emerged as global leader under Modi's leadership: Arunachal CM

ITANAGAR, June 19: Arunachal Pradesh Chief Minister Pema Khandu on Friday said India has undergone a remarkable transformation under Prime Minister Narendra Modi's leadership over the past 12 years, emerging as a global leader in technology, innovation, diplomacy and humanitarian outreach.

In a series of posts on X, he highlighted the country's achievements under the Modi government.

"Over the past 12 years, under the visionary leadership of Prime Minister Narendra Modi, India has transformed from a technology importer to a nation building its own chips, drones, and advanced defence systems," the chief minister said.

He said the 'Made in India' initiative has evolved into a symbol of national confidence and self-reliance.

"Made in India is no longer just a label, it is a symbol of national pride and the confidence of a New India," the chief minister remarked.

Khandu further asserted that India's growing technological capabilities, manufacturing strength and innovation-driven development have helped position the country among the world's emerging economic and strategic powers. (PTI)

8 militants arrested for extortion, supply of arms in Manipur



IMPHAL, June 19: Security forces arrested eight militants belonging to two factions of a proscribed outfit for their alleged involvement in extortion activities and supply of arms and explosive items to various parts of Manipur's valley districts, police said on Friday.

Four members of the banned KCP (Peoples' War Group) were apprehended from several locations in Imphal East district for allegedly supplying hand

grenades, a police statement said.

All are residents of Imphal East, the police said. Security forces also arrested four active members of the outlawed KCP (MFL) from Kakching district for allegedly being involved in extortion activities and the supply of arms.

Chief Minister Y. Khemchand Singh recently said that peace is unlikely in the state unless all the people who have illegal weapons are disarmed.

The illegal weapons, including firearms, looted from the security forces and those purchased illicitly, have been used since the beginning of the ethnic violence in Manipur in 2023.

Security forces have been conducting search operations in Manipur since ethnic violence broke out two years ago.

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

Sikkim BJP holds 'Jan Kalyan Shivir' in Gangtok CM health scheme covers nearly 96 pc of Nagaland households: Official

GANGTOK, June 19: The BJP Sikkim unit on Friday organised a Jan Kalyan Shivir at M G Marg here as part of the nationwide celebrations marking 12 years of the Narendra Modi-led government at the Centre, facilitating enrolment and awareness drives for several flagship welfare schemes of the Central government.

The camp, which commenced at 10 am, witnessed the participation of beneficiaries from Gangtok and adjoining areas who availed services related to social security, healthcare and livelihood programmes. The initiative was organised by BJP Sikkim in coordination with the state government and other stakeholders. (PTI)

KOHIMA, June 19: The Chief Minister's Health Insurance Scheme (CMHIS) now covers nearly 96 per cent of households in Nagaland, with the state government bearing a substantial financial burden to sustain the programme amid rising insurance premiums, an official said on Friday.

Addressing a seminar on CMHIS jointly organised by the High Court Bar Association (HCBA), Gauhati High Court's Kohima Bench, and the Nagaland Health Protection Society (NHPS), NHPS Joint CEO Dr Kikameren Longkumer said the scheme was launched in 2022 to bridge healthcare gaps under the Ayushman Bharat-Pradhan Mantri Jan Arogya Yojana (PM-JAY).

He said while PM-JAY covers around 2.59 lakh families in Nagaland, CMHIS extends health insurance coverage to government employees, pensioners and the "missing middle" not covered under existing schemes.

Under the scheme, government employ-

ees and pensioners are entitled to health insurance coverage of Rs 20 lakh per family annually, while another component provides coverage to uninsured households in the missing middle category.

According to Longkumer, CMHIS currently covers around 97,185 households of government employees and pensioners and another 20,000 households under the missing middle category, taking overall coverage to about 96 per cent of the state's 3.97 lakh households.

He said government employees and pensioners contribute 50 per cent of one month's Dearness Allowance annually, generating around Rs 60 crore. However, the insurance premium has risen sharply from about Rs 1,500 per family initially to Rs 9,670 at present.

Against annual collections of around Rs 60 crore, the premium payable has increased to nearly Rs 94 crore, requiring an additional state contribution of Rs 30-34 crore, he said.



Besides this, the state contributes about Rs 40 crore towards PM-JAY and another Rs 10 crore for CMHIS coverage of the missing middle category.

Longkumer said the scheme currently covers only hospitalisation expenses due to financial constraints, though outpatient

department (OPD) services may be included in future.

Beneficiaries can avail cashless treatment at empanelled hospitals both within and outside Nagaland. Around 60 to 70 hospitals outside the state have been empanelled, with only NABH-accredited in-

stitutions included to ensure quality healthcare, he said.

He added that emergency treatment is covered even at non-empanelled hospitals. Urging beneficiaries to obtain their CMHIS cards, Longkumer said NHPS operates a 24x7 toll-free helpline to receive complaints against hospitals charging beyond approved package rates. Hospitals found violating scheme guidelines face suspension from the empanelled network, he added.

Speaking at the seminar, Gauhati High Court Kohima Bench Judge Justice Nelson Saulo described healthcare as a constitutional right under Article 21 and said CMHIS has significantly expanded healthcare access beyond government employees to the general public.

Calling a robust healthcare system the backbone of a thriving society, he said the scheme protects families from financial hardship while improving public health and quality of life. (PTI)

Jonathan David's hat trick propels Canada to its first World Cup win, 6-0 over Qatar

VANCOUVER, June 19: Jonathan David scored three goals and Canada won its first World Cup match while all but securing a spot in the knockout round with a 6-0 victory over Qatar on Thursday.

Qatar was reduced to nine players because of red cards in the chaotic match. Assim Madibo was handed a red early in the second half after a tackle on Ismaël Koné, who was stretched off with a serious injury to his lower left leg. Homan Ahmed was sent off in the first half for a challenge on Tajon Buchanan.

Canada Prime Minister Mark Carney attended the match after missing the team's opener in Toronto last week because of the G7 summit in France. He sat with FIFA President Gianni Infantino.

Cyle Larin scored his second goal of the tournament on a rebound in the 16th minute. Qatar goalkeeper Mahmoud Abunada punched away David's volley but it fell to Larin, who pointed to his ears in celebration as the red-clad crowd roared.

David doubled the lead with a right-footed volley in the 29th, for his first goal in the run of play in more than a year.

Ahmed was sent off with a red card in the 33rd. The official initially pointed to the penalty spot,



Canada made it 3-0 in first-half but after video review Canada was given a free kick just outside the box and the initial yellow card handed to Ahmed was changed to red.

Canada made it 3-0 in first-half

Canada's players surrounded Koné in concern when he suffered the scary-looking injury early in the second half, and Madibo was clearly distraught before he was ejected.

Nathan Saliba, who came in as a substitute for Koné, scored on a free kick in the 64th to make it 4-0. Mohamed Manai deflected a shot past his goalkeeper for an own goal in the 75th.

David completed the hat trick in stoppage time, joining Argentina's Lionel Messi as the only players with three goals in a match in this World Cup.

Canada captain Alphonso Davies was available after he missed the opener while recovering from a hamstring injury. Moïse Bombito was also available after missing Canada's opening World Cup match, a 1-1 draw against Bosnia-Herzegovina on Friday in Toronto. Neither Davies or Bombito played.

Qatar scored a stoppage-time goal to earn a surprising 1-1 draw with Group B favorite Switzerland in its opener. The Persian Gulf country was still looking for its first World Cup win after losing all of its group matches four years ago as the host.

Switzerland defeated Bosnia-Herzegovina 4-1 earlier in the day in Group B. (AP)

Mexico becomes first country to reach knockout stage of World Cup, beating South Korea 1-0



GUADALAJARA (MEXICO), June 19: Mexico took advantage of a defensive blunder by South Korea to win 1-0 and become the first team to advance to the knockout stage of the World Cup.

It marks a major triumph for a team that failed to get out of the group stage in 2022 and now has won twice on home soil in front of jubilant crowds. Mexico players celebrated at midfield and waved to the fans who cheered and sang from the packed stands at Estadio Akron.

Luis Romo scored in the 50th minute after South Korea goalkeeper Kim Seung-gyu collided with defender Lee Gi-hyuk and dropped the ball inside the area. Romo easily found the open net after picking up the loose ball.

The South Koreans nearly equalized in the 87th minute when Mexico goalkeeper Raúl

Rangel stopped a header from close range by Cho Gue-sung, then made an even better save of Yang Hyun-jun's attempt on the rebound, extending his right arm to keep the ball from crossing the line.

"We've been doing very well," Mexico coach Javier Aguirre said. "It wasn't a great match, but I think that our opponent didn't let us do too much. But we still were able to score, on that mistake, in addition to another two or three opportunities."

Aguirre said it felt good for the players to guarantee their spot in the next round back in Mexico City.

"It relieves some of the pressure," he said. "But not for me, for the players. They are euphoric, they are very happy."

Mexico won Group A with six points in two matches, three more

than South Korea and five more than the Czech Republic and South Africa, who drew 1-1 earlier Thursday in Atlanta.

The top two teams from each group move on to the knockout stage, along with the best eight third-place teams. A round of 32 is being played for the first time at the World Cup after the tournament was expanded to 48 teams.

Mexico opened with a 2-0 win over South Africa, while South Korea rallied for a 2-1 victory over the Czechs.

Mexico closes group play on Wednesday against the Czech Republic in Mexico City, while South Korea takes on South Africa in Monterrey.

Mexico had never won a World Cup game on home soil outside Mexico City. Before 2026, all but one of its nine World Cup matches at home, spanning the 1970 and 1986 tournaments, had been played at Estadio Azteca, with five wins and three draws. When it played in Toluca in 1970, it lost 4-1 to Italy in the quarterfinals.

Thursday's match got off to a lackluster start, with neither team creating significant scoring opportunities and both squads getting loudly booed after the halftime whistle.

Mexico, ranked 13th, was eliminated in the group stage four years ago in Qatar. That followed seven straight eliminations in the round of the 16. (AP)

Vaibhav can revive Test cricket if he succeeds in longer format: Srikanth

CHENNAI, June 19: Teenage batting sensation Vaibhav Sooryavanshi could trigger a "revival of Test cricket" if he fulfills his potential in the longest format, said former India captain Krishnamachari Srikanth, urging fans and experts to stop over-analysing the youngster's performances.

Riding on his IPL exploits, Sooryavanshi has earned his maiden call-up in the Indian T20 set-up. The teenager has been picked for the seven-match tour of Ireland and England, comprising two games against Ireland and five against England, beginning in Belfast on June 26.

Srikanth said the 15-year-old possesses a rare ability to attract audiences and should be allowed to develop naturally without being burdened by expectations.

"What I like about Vaibhav Sooryavanshi is he has an appetite to score runs and an appetite to dominate. At the same time, he could stay there and play also," Srikanth told PTI at his residence here on Thursday.

"If he progresses beyond T20 cricket to one-day cricket, and then to Test cricket, and if he clicks in Test cricket, which he will, I am sure then you will see a revival of Test cricket.

"You need that kind of cricketer today. People switch on the TV just to watch Sooryavanshi. I switch on the TV to watch Sooryavanshi. That is the aura he has created around himself. And he is something amazing."

Don't worry about what people talk, just play your natural game Srikanth cautioned against "too much assessment, scrutiny and advice" after the youngster's modest returns on the recent India A tour of Sri Lanka.

"Vaibhav, don't worry about what people talk about you, just play your natural game," the former selection committee chairman said.

"In one series, you don't judge a person. Come on. That happens. Poor boy. It doesn't matter. You just give him time. Don't be in a hurry. In the IPL, he was just amazing. In his second year in the IPL, he won all the awards beating all the top cricketers in the world.

"I think he is amazing. He has amazing shot making capability, an amazing eye, and amazing reflexes. I think that boy is tremendous for India's future."

He is the future of Indian cricket, let's mould him beautifully Srikanth said Sooryavanshi should be nurtured carefully rather than burdened with expectations.

"That boy needs a lot of time. You give him lot of encouragement. He is a guy who can win matches single-handed. So, I believe that he should be given a very, very, very long rope," the former India opener said.

"And I don't think you should mess up with him. Let's mould him beautifully. And if you give him ample chances and if you mould him well, he will be simply outstanding for Indian cricket."

Srikanth also welcomed Sooryavanshi's exposure to the senior Indian set-up. (PTI)

3rd India vs Afghanistan ODI: Jaiswal, Rahul, Rana in focus

CHENNAI, June 19: Along with a dominance-extending series clean sweep, India will eye substantial runs from KL Rahul and Yashasvi Jaiswal in the third and final ODI against Afghanistan here on Saturday.

While Rahul's spot in the one-day squad has never really been in doubt, Jaiswal would welcome a heavy knock to stake his claim for a space in the already-crowded top-order.

Jaiswal was brought back to the 50-over format for the first time since December 2025, and he was dismissed for 4 in the second match against the Afghans at Lucknow.

The left-hander had made an unbeaten 116 against South Africa at Visakhapatnam in his previous appearance but since then the return of Ishan Kishan has added one more contender to the top-order positions.

Kishan did no harm to his reputation with a hundred at Lucknow, and skipper Shubman Gill dropped himself to No. 3 to accommodate Jaiswal.

But once Virat Kohli returns to the side after recovering from his hamstring injury, the batting superstar is certain to occupy the No. 3 slot.

It leaves Gill with no other option but to return to opening the innings alongside Rohit Sharma. With Kishan and Shreyas Iyer occupying the No. 4 and 5 respectively, Jaiswal force needs to make use of the limited opportunities that come his way.

It's a tight and uncomfortable space for any batter, let alone for a hugely talented cricketer like Jaiswal but the team combination rigmarole is an all-consuming maze



at this point.

It's also imperative for Jaiswal to score big because India's ODI squad to tour England for three matches will be announced soon, and another slip-up might just not be taken kindly by a ruthless and fast-moving selection panel headed by Ajit Agarkar.

If they can omit Suryakumar Yadav not very long after guiding the team to a T20 World Cup triumph no less, other players too might not be spared the axe.

So, it will not be an exaggeration to think that Jaiswal needs to make his fortune all by himself, and stay in contention for an ODI berth particularly in the case of a fitness worry to anyone in top three.

Rahul offers a different case altogether. The return of Iyer to the India set-up after a lengthy hiatus means that the 34-year-old will now have to bat largely at No. 6, unless Kishan, the current No. 4, moves up to opening for some reason, allowing the team management the pro-

vision to automatically promote the duo higher up the order.

For long, No. 5 has been Rahul's comfort zone, evident in his glittering numbers — 1517 runs from 38 matches at an average of 63.2 overs with three hundreds and 10 fifties.

It constitutes for nearly half of his career stats. But another claimant has come for that place, and Rahul's numbers at six — 332 runs from 15 matches at 41.5 with a solitary fifty — are good without being sparkling.

It's primarily because of the limited number of overs he will get to play from the No. 6 slot, but he needs to adapt to making those quick fifties, or find solace in extrapolating the team total with the cameos.

Rana returns India have added Harshit Rana into the squad ahead of Chennai ODI after completing rehabilitation at BCCI Centre of Excellence, and the pacer might come in for Arshdeep Singh, who has played two

matches in this series.

It will also give India the luxury of having a handy batter down the order in the absence of injured Nitish Kumar Reddy, besides the management and selectors can assess his readiness in a game situation ahead of the UK tour.

Gurnoor Brar has also played two matches, but the bigwigs might want to take an extended look at the pacer in various conditions.

On the other hand, Afghanistan have been totally outplayed in this series in both the red and white ball formats so far.

They will be eager to sign off the series showing more fight, if not with a victory. So far, their outings in both the ODIs have been a blot on their reputation as a wily white ball outfit.

But for that, the tourists will need to show more gumption in batting and bowling departments.

Teams (from) India: Shubman Gill (Captain), Rohit Sharma, Shreyas Iyer (vice-captain), KL Rahul (wicket-keeper), Ishan Kishan (wicket-keeper), Nitish Kumar Reddy, Washington Sundar, Kuldeep Yadav, Arshdeep Singh, Prasidh Krishna, Prince Yadav, Gurnoor Brar, Harsh Dube, Yashasvi Jaiswal, Harshit Rana.

Afghanistan: Hashmatullah Shahidi (c), Rahmanullah Gurbaz (wk), Ibrahim Zadran, Sediqqullah Atal, Darwish Rasooli, Rahmat Shah, Ikram Alikhil (wk), Mohammad Nabi, Azmatullah Omarzai, Rashid Khan, Nangyal Kharotai, AM Ghazanfar, Zia Ur Rahman Sharifi, Fareed Malik, Bilal Sami.

Match starts at 1.30 pm. (PTI)

Renowned surgeon Dr Dinshaw Pardiwala to lead IOA's anti-doping medical panel

NEW DELHI, June 19: Indian Olympic Association's (IOA) Chief Medical Officer (CMO) and renowned sports surgeon Dr Dinshaw Pardiwala will be heading the body's anti-doping medical panel that will coordinate with national federations to educate athletes on the perils of banned substances.

The aggressive push to tackle doping has been triggered by India's continuous poor record, which includes three years at the top of World Anti-Doping Agency's list of biggest violators. The problem threatens to throw India's plans of becoming an Olympic host in 2036 haywire.

On the sidelines of the IOA Athletes Forum here, the body's CEO Raghuram Iyer said Pardiwala will have a team working under him to coordinate with the National Sports Federations (NSFs).

"...there is a very strong medical panel which is going to be there and which is going to be ensuring that whatever information that goes out is absolutely correct," Iyer said. (PTI)

NEW DELHI, June 19: The deliberations on India's roadmap for the 2027 World Cup are "not meant for public consumption", BCCI secretary Devajit Saikia said in an interview to PTI, refusing to be drawn into any discussion on individual players and their much-speculated future in the team.

Veterans Rohit Sharma and Virat Kohli dominate the chatter whenever there is any talk around the Indian team's 2027 global campaign but Saikia is categorical that "strategic discussions in the board room" are best left inside.

While both former skippers are determined to play the mega-event, chairman of selectors Ajit Agarkar and head coach Gautam Gambhir have been non-committal on whether the squad will have space for the white-ball legends.

Asked if the BCCI has had any internal conversations on the matter, Saikia said all stakeholders are aligned in their views in what is essentially an ongoing process.

"We have a very well-knit team and a lot of experts. All stakeholders are taken on board," Saikia told PTI during an exclusive interaction.

"Whatever decisions that are made involve the cricket committee, the selectors and all other stakeholders, including the sup-



port staff, the head coach and the players concerned.

"There are regular conversations taking place. For that reason, we do not need any special session of interaction. This is an on-going process," the secretary said, keeping all his cards close to his chest.

He maintained that he would not divulge any board room information.

"I do not think I should disclose anything before the media or the public because these

are strategic discussions. I am not authorised to speak about them before the media."

"Secondly, these are matters that should remain within the boardroom."

BCCI to follow government diktat on Bangladesh

The Indian cricket team had postponed its white-ball tour of Bangladesh last year due to unrest in the neighbouring nation.

India's eastern neighbours now have an elected government in place.

The Bangladesh Cricket Board too has a new president in former skipper Tamim Iqbal, who is keen on resumption of bilateral cricketing ties with India.

Asked if the BCCI's stance would now change, Saikia replied: "The BCCI is a cricketing controlling board, and we have nothing to do with what is going on politically in other countries."

"As the BCCI, we follow whatever policy the Government of India has in place regarding participation in bilateral and multinational sporting events. Whatever regulations and policies the central government frames, we follow them, just like any other sports federation, whether it is football, athletics or any other sport," he explained.

Saikia made it clear that it doesn't concern the BCCI as to which party is running the government in Bangladesh.

"We are not concerned with who is running the government in a particular country, whether it is democratically elected, undemocratically elected or an autocratic government. That is none of our business."

"Our job is to run cricket. Whenever there is a scheduled tour to a foreign country for bilateral matches, we will proceed according to our plans and schedules," Saikia said. (PTI)