

6 WORLD

- Iran retaliates to 2nd day of US strikes by firing at Gulf states, Jordan
- India 'closely monitoring' incident involving vessel off Oman port

8 NATION

- Third TMC MP quits, Kalyan targets Abhishek; Shatrughan, Sougata rally behind Mamata
- All 3 BJP candidates from MP elected unopposed to Rajya Sabha

US attacks 3 vessels with Indian crew members • Three persons killed **AFSPA removal from NE save 1 or 2 states assured**

These strikes must stop, asserts Delhi **MoU to facilitate mineral oil operations in the Assam-Nagaland boundary areas signed**

NEW DELHI, June 11: India on Thursday said three merchant ships with Indian crew members came under attack from American military off the coast of Oman in the last four days resulting in the death of three nationals and it has lodged a strong protest with the US over the strikes.

It was New Delhi's first public acknowledgement that US Navy targeted the three ships with Indian crew members. New Delhi asserted that these attacks must stop.

A Palau-flagged oil tanker, Marivex, carrying 24 Indian seafarers, was disabled by US forces on June 8. All crew members were safely rescued.

On June 10, US struck another Palau-flagged tanker Settebello, killing three out of the 24 Indian sailors on board. Another vessel 'Jalveer', a Guinea-Bissau-flagged tanker with 20 Indians, was attacked on Thursday.



External Affairs Ministry spokesperson Randhir Jaiswal said at a news briefing that the three separate strikes on the Settebello, Marivex and Jalveer "came from the US Navy".

Following the attack on Settebello on Wednesday that killed

particular attack on the ship Settebello occurred, we lodged a strong protest with the American side," Jaiswal said.

"We summoned the US Charge d'Affaires and he was conveyed our deepest concern over the ongoing incidents of attacks. We also registered our strong protest," he said.

Jaiswal emphasised that these attacks "must stop".

"We further conveyed that dialogue and diplomacy is the way forward for the peaceful resolution of the conflict, and that there should be unimpeded access through the Strait of Hormuz in accordance with international law," he said.

"Therefore, we made our position very clear on each of these points, while reiterating how important the lives of our people are, welfare and safety of our people are," he added. (CONTD. ON PAGE 2)

NEW DELHI, June 11: Union Home Minister Amit Shah on Thursday said that the Armed Forces (Special Powers) Act or AFSPA will be withdrawn from the entire Northeast next year, barring one or two states.

Speaking at the signing of a tripartite MoU between the Centre, Assam and Nagaland to facilitate mineral oil operations in the Assam-Nagaland boundary areas, Shah said that shrinking of areas covered under AFSPA is an indicator of peace.

"I am confident that barring one or two states, we will withdraw AFSPA from the entire Northeast next year," he said.

Underlining that the signing of the MoU was a "historic moment", Shah said it has removed the last hurdle in Prime Minister Narendra Modi's vision of a developed Northeast.

The MoU is aimed at undertaking oil and mineral explorations in the disputed area belt (DAB) along the



Assam-Nagaland border.

Exploration activities remained stalled for more than three decades in the region due to jurisdictional differences.

"This will open new avenues for mineral exploration in the Northeast. The area not only has oil and gas but huge mineral deposits, which could not be explored due to law and order issues," Shah said.

With just one MoU, the extraction capacity of 1,000-1,500 barrels per day can be increased by 10 times, he said.

"In one field alone, there are possibilities of recovery of more than ₹ 15,000 crore. If we extract the oil deposits spread across Nagaland, we would be able to reduce dependence on foreign countries for our oil needs," he (CONTD. ON PAGE 2)

Gogoi urges for impartial, transparent investigation into killing of 6 Naga civilians

GUWAHATI, June 11: Deputy Leader of Opposition in Lok Sabha Gaurav Gogoi on Thursday urged for a swift, impartial and transparent investigation into the killing of six Naga civilians in Manipur and said those responsible must be identified and brought to justice without delay.

Manipur continues to endure the effects of prolonged conflict, with peace and normalcy still remaining elusive more than three years later, Gogoi said in a post on X.

"The brutal killing of six Naga civilians in Manipur is a deeply distressing tragedy. My heartfelt condolences to the families of the victims as they cope with this immense loss", Gogoi, also the Assam state Congress president, said.

"Innocent lives continue to be



lost, while communities across the state remain burdened by fear and uncertainty," he said.

This tragic incident underscores the urgent need for lasting peace and accountability, he added.

"There must be a swift, impartial and transparent investigation into this heinous crime, and those responsible must be identified and brought to justice without delay," Gogoi asserted.

The Manipur Police on Wednesday said they found the mortal remains of six people, suspected to be of missing Naga men, who had been held hostage by armed groups in Kangpokpi district.

The recovery took place a day after 14 Kuki individuals who were abducted by armed groups in Manipur's Senapati district nearly a month ago were released. (PTI)

Zubeen case: Accused seeks reopening of firm, release of frozen accounts

Siddhartha challenges Fast Track Court order in HC

Staff Reporter

GUWAHATI, June 11: Siddhartha Sarma, one of the accused in the Zubeen Garg death case and former manager of the late Assamese singer, has moved the Gauhati High Court seeking reopening of his firm, Mahabir Aqua, and defreezing of bank accounts linked to the establishment.

According to legal sources, Sarma filed a petition challenging an order of the Fast Track Court and sought multiple reliefs related to the ongoing criminal proceedings.

In his plea, Sarma requested permission to resume operations of Mahabir Aqua, which has remained closed following the investigation into the case. He also sought the release of bank accounts frozen by investigating agencies during the course of the probe.

The petition further urged the High Court to consider findings and reports submitted by Singapore au-



thorities regarding the death of Assamese music icon Zubeen Garg. Sarma reportedly argued that the conclusions of the foreign investigation should be taken into account during the judicial proceedings in Assam.

The development comes a week after the Gauhati High Court de-

Govt committed to preserve, promote Assam's rich cultural traditions: Himanta

GUWAHATI, June 11: Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma on Thursday said his government was committed to preserving and promoting the rich cultural traditions of the state.

Congratulating the recipients of the Sangeet Natak Akademi Awards and Ustad Bismillah Khan Yuva Puraskar from the state, Sarma said Sattriya, folk traditions, theatre, music, and cultural roots define the people of Assam.

"Heartiest congratulations to Assam's artistes honoured with the Sangeet Natak Akademi Awards and Ustad Bismillah Khan Yuva Puraskar," the CM said in a post on X.

"As we accelerate Assam's development journey, we remain equally committed towards preserving and promoting our rich virasat of Sattriya, folk traditions, theatre and music, for our cultural roots define who we are," Sarma said.

The Sangeet Natak Akademi awards and Ustad Bismillah Khan Yuva Puraskar for the years 2024 and 2025 were announced on Wednesday.

The recipients of Sangeet Natak Akademi awards for the year 2024 are Prema Oja Borbayan for Sattriya dance and Bipul Chandra Das for Kathak dance.

The awardees for 2025 are Chetna Das for acting, Mallika Kandali for Sattriya dance and Bhaskar Jyoti Oja for Sattriya music.

The winners of the Ustad Bismillah Khan Yuva Puraskar for 2024 are Minakshi Das for Sattriya dance, Dilip Hira for folk music and Bidyut Kumar Nath for theatre direction.

The awardees for 2025 are Niranjan Saikia Borbayan for Sattriya dance, Debajit Saikia for Khol percussion and Hirak Jyoti Sarma for Tokari geet (folk music). (PTI)

Mutilated carcass of Royal Bengal Tiger found in Sonitpur district

TEZPUR, June 11: A mutilated carcass of a Royal Bengal Tiger, allegedly killed by poachers, was recovered from a sandbar along Gabharu River in Assam's Sonitpur district on Thursday, forest officials said.

The carcass with its tail and all four legs severed was found near Kochgaon under Thelamara police station area, Divisional Forest Officer Biswa Jyoti Das told PTI.

The tiger's body was disposed of in the river, raising suspicion that poachers killed the animal, removed valuable body parts, and then attempted to destroy the evidence.

"The carcass appears to have drifted downstream several days after the animal's death, but the manner in (CONTD. ON PAGE 2)

Himanta attends NITI Aayog meeting, reaffirms state's commitment towards Viksit Bharat

Staff Reporter

GUWAHATI, June 11: Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma on Thursday attended the 11th Governing Council meeting of NITI Aayog chaired by Prime Minister Narendra Modi and reiterated the state's commitment to contributing towards the vision of a developed India, or Viksit Bharat.

Taking to social media platform X after the meeting, the Chief Minister said that the Prime Minister highlighted the importance of stronger coordination among states, effective utilisation of India's demographic dividend, greater opportunities for youth, women-centric



governance initiatives and leveraging the benefits arising from India's expanding trade engagements with countries across the world.

Sarma said that Prime Minister Modi emphasised the need for states and the Centre

to work in close coordination to accelerate the country's growth trajectory and ensure that the benefits of development reach every section of society.

According to the Chief Minister, the Prime Minister

TU joins hands with LGBRIMH for advanced psychology

GUWAHATI, June 11: Tezpur University on Thursday said it has joined hands with Lokopriya Gopinath Bordoloi Regional Institute of Mental Health for advanced study and research in mental health and allied disciplines.

A memorandum of understanding (MoU) was signed between the university and the institute on Wednesday with the objective of fostering academic excellence, research collaboration and capacity building in the fields of mental health, education and allied disciplines, the central varsity said in a state-

ment.

The MoU will provide a framework for collaborative activities, including training and mentoring of research scholars, exchange of faculty and resource persons, joint research projects, internships and field exposure programmes, and the development of certificate and value-added courses, it added.

"The partnership is expected to create opportunities for interdisciplinary learning and research, while strengthening the academic and professional (CONTD. ON PAGE 2)

Guwahati researchers find science behind Zubeen Garg's immortal humming

GUWAHATI, June 11: Legendary musician Zubeen Garg mesmerised his innumerable fans for decades with his signature humming, but the real science behind it was acoustic properties carrying warmth and expressivity, according to a study by two researchers of Handique Girls' College.

Kishore Dutta and Jyotshna Saikia, both Assistant Professors of Physics, in their research paper 'Quantitative Acoustic Profiling of Zubeen Garg's Humming: Temporal Patterning and Spectral Balance' tried to look at the uniqueness of Garg's voice.

"Zubeen Garg's vocal style is known for its distinctive use of humming. His humming often functions as a musical signature that transcends linguistic boundaries and has been described in journalistic and listener accounts as 'soothing, soulful or magnetic'," the study said.

Its appeal arises not from linguistic meaning but from its underlying acoustic organisation and timbral expressivity, it added.

The article, published in 'Journal of Voice' -- the peer-reviewed official



medical journal of the Voice Foundation and the International Association of Phonosurgery, said that vocal humming occupies a distinctive position in Indian popular music as an emotive bridge linking melody, memory and mood.

"Zubeen Garg's characteristic humming style, noted for its fluidity and expressive warmth, invites systematic investigation of what acoustically defines its appeal," the researchers said in the paper.

The study presented a quantitative acoustic profiling of Garg's humming, focusing on how measurable voice parameters contribute to its distinct sonic character, they added.

Explaining the methodology, the duo said: "A detailed set of temporal, spectral and timbral features was extracted, including jitter, shimmer, harmonic-to-noise ratio, spectral centroid, rolloff, tilt, roughness and Mel-frequency cepstral coefficients (MFCCs)."

The analyses revealed characteristic temporal patterns and the statistical comparisons showed highly significant differences in fundamental frequency between Garg's humming and singing, and in jitter between his and other singers' humming.

"Multiple MFCCs also showed significant distinctions, indicating limited timbral differentiation in harmonic structure. Spectral features showed non-significant trends toward lower centroid and elevated roughness," it added.

These results indicated that a subset of temporal and timbral features contributes to an acoustic profile associated with Garg's humming, the paper said.

"While no perceptual testing was undertaken, interpretations are grounded in established psychoacoustic literature linking acoustic measures to perceived attributes such as tonal warmth and vocal steadiness," it added.

Within this interpretive framework, the findings suggested that Garg's humming exhibits an acoustically measurable combination of selected temporal and spectral characteristics that may be associated (CONTD. ON PAGE 2)

OM SHANTI

RAISMODI NUNISA
Died on : 12-06-1971

*We all remember you on your 55th Death Anniversary,
May your soul be in everlasting peace!*

:: SONS ::
Dr. Motilal Nunisa, Pradip Nunisa, Dr. Ruplal Nunisa and Dr. Bishnu Ram Nunisa

:: DAUGHTERS ::
Usha Hojai and Alo Thoasen

:: DAUGHTERS-IN-LAW ::
Jayanti Nunisa, Prabhati Nunisa,
Dr. Ritu Nunisa (W/o- Lt. Nirmal Nunisa (son)) and Anima Nunisa

:: SONS-IN-LAW ::
Ramesh Thoasen
and
All grand children

India continues to move forward on its growth trajectory amid global uncertainty: PM

NEW DELHI, June 11: India continues to move forward on its growth trajectory with confidence and determination, amid global uncertainty and instability, Prime Minister Narendra Modi said on Thursday.

As India progresses towards achieving the vision of Viksit Bharat, the country's collective responsibility becomes even greater, Modi said while chairing the 11th meeting of the Governing Council of NITI Aayog.

"The world is passing through a period of uncertainty and instability, yet India continues to move forward on its growth trajectory with confidence and determination," NITI Aayog said in a social media post on X, quoting Modi.

The Prime Minister said India has signed free

trade agreements with many countries to create new opportunities for growth and exports.

"These agreements also present a significant opportunity for our MSMEs, enabling them to prepare for global markets by adhering to international standards and enhancing competitiveness," he added.

Modi said India's demographic dividend is a historic opportunity that "we cannot afford to lose".

He emphasised that creating the right ecosystem for India's youth through quality education, demand-driven skilling and employment opportunities must remain a priority.

"Empowered youth will be the driving force behind our journey towards Viksit Bharat," the

Prime Minister said.

Modi noted that cooperation and dialogue should guide interactions among the States.

NITI Aayog can play an important role as a platform for collaboration, enabling states to exchange ideas and work together towards the vision of Viksit Bharat, he added.

The Prime Minister said women-led development is a cornerstone of the vision of Viksit Bharat.

"From farming and startups to science and innovation, Nari Shakti is contributing across the domains," he said, adding that states should prioritise education, skilling, safety and empowerment of women to unlock their full potential and drive India's development journey. (PTI)

Govt extends excise duty exemption to higher ethanol-petrol blends



NEW DELHI, June 11: The government has exempted higher ethanol-blended petrol grades from central excise duty to prevent double taxation on fuel blending activities, according to official notifications.

The Central Board of Indirect Taxes and Customs (CBIC) issued notifications exempting ethanol blended petrol (EBP) grades E22, E25, E27 and E30 - containing 22 per cent, 25 per cent, 27 per cent and 30 per cent ethanol, respectively - from applicable central excise duties, subject to excise duty having already been paid on petrol and GST having been paid on the ethanol used for blending.

"Ethanol blending with petrol is a manufacturing activity which can be subjected to excise duty. Petrol bears excise duty, and ethanol bears GST at their respective stages. When the two are blended, the resulting product may attract excise duty once again on the full quantity," an official statement said.

For ethanol blends of up to 20 per cent, excise duty on the blended petrol was exempted by the Ministry of Finance. The exemption ensures that the duties already paid are not charged a second time on the blend.

Government sources said the move is intended solely to remove a provision under the Central Excise law that could otherwise treat ethanol blending as a manufacturing activity and result in excise duty being levied a second time on the blended fuel.

"The objective is to avoid any incidence of double taxation," a government source said.

The exemption mirrors the tax treatment already available to existing ethanol-blended petrol grades such as E5, E10 and E20, and does not amount to a reduction in excise duty on petrol sold for domestic consumption, officials said.

The notifications came into force on June 10, the date of their publication in the Official Gazette.

Officials said the tax exemption is a regulatory measure that would facilitate the introduction of higher ethanol blends in the future if required, but does not by itself signal any immediate rollout of E22, E25, E27 or E30 fuels in the retail market.

The move, they said, should not be interpreted as an immediate rollout of higher ethanol blends in the retail market. The exemption is a regulatory requirement because blending ethanol with petrol at fuel depots is considered a manufacturing activity that could otherwise attract excise duty.

BIS standards for higher ethanol blends (E22, E25, E27 and E30) have recently been issued in May 2026. The same excise duty waiver has now been extended to E22, E25, E27 and E30 vide notification dated June 10, 2026.

"This is a preliminary prerequisite for higher blends, but doesn't convey anything about roll out of higher blends, which will only be done after extensive testing and consultation," the statement said. "The sole purpose of this notification is to avoid double levy of excise duty on ethanol-blended petrol."

The extension of the tax waiver to E22 (blend of 22 per cent ethanol and 78 per cent petrol), E25, E27 and E30 blends is a preliminary step that would facilitate any future introduction of higher ethanol-content fuels, officials said, adding any rollout would be subject to extensive testing and consultations before implementation.

India has accelerated ethanol blending in petrol as part of efforts to reduce crude oil imports, cut emissions and support the agricultural sector. Ethanol blending by state-run oil marketing companies has risen from 1.53 per cent in the ethanol supply year (ESY) 2014-15 to 20 per cent in ESY 2025-26, according to the statement.

The programme has generated payments of about ₹ 1.62 lakh crore to farmers since 2014-15, while helping save more than ₹ 1.91 lakh crore in foreign exchange through reduced crude oil imports. It has also resulted in crude oil substitution of about 31 million tonnes and reduced carbon dioxide emissions by an estimated 93.1 million tonnes, it added. (PTI)

NFR accelerates station redevelopment in Jalpaiguri district

HT Bureau

GUWAHATI, June 11: Northeast Frontier Railway (NFR) has accelerated redevelopment works at railway stations in West Bengal's Jalpaiguri district under the Amrit Bharat Station Scheme (ABSS), with works at Jalpaiguri Road Station already completed and modernisation projects at four other stations progressing rapidly.

Five stations in the district—Jalpaiguri, New Jalpaiguri, Dhupguri, New Mal Junction and Jalpaiguri Road—have been identified under the scheme aimed at transforming railway stations into modern, passenger-friendly transport hubs. Jalpaiguri Road Railway Station has been redeveloped with a range of upgraded facilities, including a redesigned circulating area with dedicated traffic lanes, structured parking spaces and pedestrian pathways for smooth passenger movement.

The station now features a new entrance porch, improved façade, upgraded booking counters, modern modular toilets, a refreshment



room-cum-cafeteria, a spacious waiting hall with a baby care room, enhanced platform surfaces, landscaped green zones and high-mast lighting systems.

Special emphasis has been given to accessibility through Di-vyangjan-friendly facilities, dedicated parking spaces and improved signage.

Passenger information systems have also been upgraded with modern display boards and public announcement facilities.

According to NFR, redevelop-

ment works at Jalpaiguri and Dhupguri stations are expected to be completed by December 2026, while projects at New Jalpaiguri and New Mal Junction are likely to be completed in early 2027.

The railway authorities said the initiative reflects Indian Railways' commitment to providing enhanced passenger amenities, improved accessibility and world-class station infrastructure while supporting regional development and improving the overall travel experience.

Contd. from Page 1...

These strikes must

Jaiswal said two of the three vessels were subject to sanctions administered by the US Treasury's Office of Foreign Assets Control (OFAC), while another had been classified as non-compliant.

The OFAC is the financial intelligence and enforcement agency of the US Treasury Department and it acts against vessels involved in violating US sanctions on the sale of Iranian and Russian oil.

"The three ships that have been involved in these incidents were foreign-flagged vessels. Two of them were Palau-flagged, while the third ship is Guinea-Bissau-flagged. They were not Indian-owned ships," the MEA spokesperson said.

US Central Command (Centcom) has confirmed strikes on Settebello and Marivex but is yet to comment on reported strikes on Jalveer.

Mukesh Mangal, Additional Secretary, Ministry of Ports, Shipping & Waterways, said evacuation of the seafarers on Settebello has commenced.

From Jalveer, all the remaining 25 crew members including 21 Indians, two Pakistani, one Russian and one Ukrainian have been safely evacuated, he said, adding the Seamen Welfare Fund Society has been asked to pay Rs 10 lakh to family of each deceased.

He said more than 18,000 Indian seafarers remained in the Gulf region, including 562 crew members aboard 13 Indian-flagged ships - 329 on vessels on the west of Strait of Hormuz and 233 on vessels in Gulf of Oman.

In its reaction, India also said that the continuing incidents of attacks on shipping are deeply worrisome and a direct result of the ongoing conflict in the region. New Delhi has been pressing for immediate de-escalation of tensions, and the conclusion of ongoing negotiations for a diplomatic solution.

"The targeting of commercial shipping and civilian infrastructure in the region must end, and free and unimpeded navigation and commerce through the international waterways in the region in keeping with international law must be restored at the earliest," the MEA said in a statement on Tuesday.

At a separate media briefing, Secretary (West) in the MEA Sibi George indicated that the evolving situation in West Asia as well as restrictions on shipping through Strait of Hormuz may figure in Prime Minister Narendra Modi's bilateral meetings on the sidelines of G7 summit in France next week. (PTI)

AFSPA removal from

said. Shah also said that since Narendra Modi took charge, he kept his focus on the Northeast and became the prime minister with the highest number of visits to the region.

Since 2019, 12 accords have been signed between various groups and state governments, which resulted in a significant drop of around 80 per cent in incidents of violence in the region, Shah said.

"The development of both Assam and Nagaland remained hampered for a long time because a consensus could not be reached for an MoU. The avenue that opened today will open doors for development for both states. It is the best example of cooperative federalism," he said. (PTI)

Siddhartha challenges

bail plea, citing the seriousness of the allegations and the ongoing investigation.

The case relates to the death of singer Zubeen Garg, who died on September 19 last year while swimming near Lazarus Island in Singapore, a day before he was scheduled to perform at an event organised under the North East International Festival (NEIF) banner.

A Special Investigation Team (SIT) of the Assam CID later investigated the case and filed a chargesheet against seven accused persons, including Sharma. While Singapore Police concluded that there was no evidence of foul play, Assam investigators have continued criminal proceedings based on evidence gathered during their investigation.

Mutilated carcass of

which the body was mutilated has led us to suspect foul play," Das said.

Forest personnel from the West Sonitpur Forest Division and Tezpur Forest Range, along with police officials, rushed to the site after receiving information about the carcass.

A team from the Wildlife Division and veterinary experts conducted a post-mortem examination and collected samples for forensic analysis to determine the exact cause of death.

Officials said the tiger measured approximately five feet in length.

Following the examination, the carcass was cremated this evening on the banks of the Gabharu River in accordance with wildlife disposal protocols, the official said.

The forest department has initiated an investigation and is awaiting the forensic report, Das added. (PTI)

Himanta attends NITI

world. He added that India continues to attract investments, innovation and talent from across the globe, reflecting growing international confidence in the country's economic potential.

The Chief Minister further stated that the spirit of cooperative federalism remains central to achieving the ambitious goal of transforming India into a developed nation by 2047.

He said that under the leadership of Prime Minister Modi, "Team India" would continue to work collectively to build a stronger, more prosperous and inclusive nation.

The NITI Aayog Governing Council, the apex body of the institution, brings together Chief Ministers, Lieutenant Governors and senior policymakers to deliberate on issues of national importance and chart the roadmap for India's long-term development.

TU joins hands with

capacities of students, faculty members and researchers of both institutions," the release said.

Both institutions expressed their commitment to working together in areas of mutual interest and leveraging their respective strengths to contribute to knowledge generation, skill development and improved mental health outcomes in the Northeastern region and beyond. (PTI)

Guwahati researchers find

with its perceived resonant quality. The celebrated singer died under mysterious circumstances in Singapore on September 19 last year while swimming in the sea. He had gone to the South Asian nation to attend the 4th edition of the North East India Festival (NEIF).

The research paper stated that Garg's humming exemplified how micro-acoustic precision and spectral balance may contribute to a listener's impression of tonal warmth and vocal presence.

"The present analyses show that this perceived quality is associated with a tendency toward distinct temporal patterning combined with spectral balance and harmonic cohesion," it added.

These acoustic properties together may contribute to the perceived warmth and expressivity of his humming. Its appeal arises not from linguistic meaning but from its underlying acoustic organisation and timbral expressivity, it added.

"Despite its artistic and cultural significance, the acoustic structure of such humming has rarely been examined through a quantitative lens," the researchers said.

The study investigated the acoustic expressivity of humming, examining how measurable voice parameters jointly shape its perpetual distinctiveness, they added.

Dutta and Saikia in their research found that Garg's humming combines precise pitch centering with smooth spectral shaping and balanced harmonic richness, producing perceptually warm and resonant timbre.

"The study thereby establishes a reproducible, data-driven framework for interpreting artistic humming through measurable acoustic evidence. By profiling a singular voice, it connects acoustic analysis with broader musical context, showing how controlled temporal variability and spectral balance contribute to the expressive identity of humming in Indian popular music," they added.

The duo, however, acknowledged that the dataset in the research was limited in size and focused on a single artist's humming style.

"As a case study, these findings are not intended for population generalisation but rather to demonstrate a replicable analytical framework for quantifying stylistic individuality in expressive humming. Future studies with larger, controlled corpora are needed to validate and extend those observations," they added. (PTI)

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Wanted Cook/Chef for Fast Food Truck. Applications are invited from experienced Cook/Chef for a Fast Food Truck operating at Changlang Headquarters, Dist. Changlang, Arunachal Pradesh.

Requirements: Experience in preparing fast food items such as Burgers, Rolls, Chinese items, Biryani etc. Free accommodation & Food available. Competitive Salary (Negotiable based on experience). Contact: 9774183438. SV/PL006631/1

LOST

I, Nomita Sahu, D/O:- Kudi Ram Sahu, R/o: Pangaon, P.O: Jurahukuri, District:Hojai,Assam have lost my Registration Certificate, Marksheet and High School Leaving Certificate of H.S.L.C examination bearing Roll: B08-589 No.3316 issued by Board of Secondary Education, Assam in the year 2008. And, Registration Certificate, Marksheet, Admit Card and Pass Certificate of A.H.S.E.C examination bearing Roll: 0614 No. 10288 issued by Assam Higher Secondary Education Council in the year 2011.

জাননী

মৰিগাঁও জিলাৰ মায়ং ৰাজহচক্ৰ মনহা মৌজাৰ লাট নং ৫; জাগী গাঁৱৰ ১৮৬ নং পত্ৰাংক; ৯৩৮ দাগৰ" মৰিগাঁও কোঁচ; পিতা মুচুং কোঁচ। এই নামজাৰি কৰ্তন কৰিব বিচৰা হৈছে। গতিকে উক্ত নামৰ কোনো ওৱাৰিছ থাকিলে অহা ২০ দিনৰ ভিতৰত মায়ং ৰাজহচক্ৰত যোগাযোগ কৰিবলৈ জনোৱা হ'ল।

ENGAGEMENT OF FACILITATORS FOR ISSUING OF UN-RESERVED TICKETS THROUGH AUTOMATIC TICKET VENDING MACHINES OVER TINSUKIA DIVISION

Advertisement Notice No.: CM-ATVM Facilitator-TSK-26 dated 08.06.2026

The Senior Divisional Commercial Manager, Tinsukia Division, for and on behalf of President of India invites application from Retired Railway Employees, Spouse/Son/Daughter of Retired Railway Employees and General Public for engagement of Facilitators in 09 (nine) locations for issuing of Un-reserved tickets through Automatic Ticket Vending Machines (ATVM) installed in stations over Tinsukia Division. The engagement to work as a facilitator will be up to two years initially and will be extended from time to time as per extant policy guidelines. The selected applicant will not have any claim for employment in Railways by the virtue of engagement as ATVM facilitator. No remuneration/salary/wages will be paid by the Railway. The selected facilitator will be allowed to retain the bonus as applicable from time to time on ATVM Smart Cards. For further details, please refer Para No.3 Terms and Conditions on eligibility of Bonus.

The list of stations, No. of ATVMs and the number of facilitators to be engaged against each station are furnished below:

Sl. No.	Station Name	Code	Category	No. of ATVM	No. of Facilitators reqd.
1	Dibrugarh	DBRG	NSG-3	2	2
2	New Tinsukia	NTSK	NSG-3	2	2
3	Furkating	FKG	NSG-5	1	1
4	Simaluguri	SLGR	NSG-5	1	1
5	Tinsukia	TSK	NSG-5	2	2
6	Duliajan	DJG	NSG-5	1	1
7	Naharkatia	NHK	NSG-5	1	1
8	Murkongselek	MZS	NSG-5	1	1
9	Silapathar	SPTR	NSG-5	1	1

The advertisement notice and application form are available in the Northeast Frontier Railway website at www.nfr.indianrailways.gov.in. Retired Railway employees, Spouse/Adult child of retired Railway employee of Northeast Frontier Railway and General Public who are interested to work as facilitator to issue un-reserved tickets through ATVM shall submit their applications duly filling in all the columns in the application and signing on all the pages of the notifications. (a) The application forms with all relevant rules and conditions are available (starting from the date of notification) up to 13:00 hrs of 20.07.2026. The application can be obtained from the office of Sr. Divisional Commercial Manager, Tinsukia at any working days (Monday to Friday) from 10:00 hrs to 17:00 hrs. (b) Application Box for Dropping/Submission of Application will be kept in the Chamber of Assistant Commercial Manager-I/Tinsukia, Northeast Frontier Railway (c) Application can also be downloaded from Northeast Frontier Railway website at www.nfr.indianrailways.gov.in. (d) The cost of application form is Rs.100/- (Not refundable) which has to be deposited (i) At Booking Office, New Tinsukia for those who obtain the tender documents from the office of Sr. Divisional Commercial Manager, Tinsukia & the original Money Receipt has to be attached along with application form. (ii) In the form of Bank Draft/Demand Draft issued by any scheduled commercial bank equal to prescribed value of Rs.100/- drawn in favour of F&CAO, N. F. Railway, Maligaon for those who download the tender documents from the Railway website www.nfr.indianrailways.gov.in. The original DD has to be attached along with application form.

The application cover shall be super scribed as: "Application for ATVM facilitator at ----- Railway Station in the category of retired Railway Employee/ Spouse/Adult child of retired Railway employee of Northeast Frontier Railway and General Public" and to be submitted in a sealed cover addressed to Sr. Divisional Commercial Manager, N. F. Railway, Tinsukia Division, Tinsukia, Assam- 786125 on or before 15:00 hrs of 20.07.2026 in person or by Registered Post. Application received after 15:00 hrs of 20.07.2026 will not be accepted. Railway will not be held responsible for any postal delay.

1	The filled in Application forms will be received by this office	From 11:00 hrs of 15.06.2026
2	Last date for submission of applications	Up to 15:00 hrs of 20.07.2026
3	Place of submission of applications	Senior Divisional Commercial Manager's Office, DRM Building, Tinsukia, Assam- 786125
4	Opening date of tender	11:00 hrs on 21.07.2026

Note:- Application forms can be downloaded from www.nfr.indianrailways.gov.in website from 10:30 hrs of 15.06.2026. Divisional Commercial Manager (IC), Tinsukia

NORTHEAST FRONTIER RAILWAY
"SERVING CUSTOMERS WITH A SMILE"

First gold jewellery shipment from Kolkata to Oman sent under India-Oman CEPA

KOLKATA, June 11: Amid the Middle East crisis, the first shipment of gold jewellery from Kolkata to Oman under the India-Oman Comprehensive Economic Partnership Agreement (CEPA) was dispatched on Thursday, officials said.

This marked the commencement of direct duty-free exports from eastern India to the Gulf nation.

Kolkata-based jewellery manufacturer Wonder Jewels exported the maiden consignment via air cargo, which was flagged off in the presence of Pankaj Parekh, Gems and Jewellery Export Promotion Council (GJEPC) Eastern Region Chairman, and senior Customs officials.

The shipment comes days after the India-Oman CEPA came into force on June 1, providing duty-free access for Indian gold jewellery and diamonds in the Omani market and enhancing the competitiveness of Indian exporters.

The treaty also provides duty-free market access for a wide range of Indian products including textiles, leather, engineering goods, pharmaceuticals and agricultural products. The pact also covers services and investment.

Industry estimates suggest India's

India to remain fastest-growing major economy at 6.6 pc in FY27, down from 7.2 last year: World Bank

WASHINGTON, June 11: India will remain the world's fastest-growing major economy, expanding at 6.6 per cent in fiscal year 2026-27, a sharp moderation from 7.7 per cent in the previous year, the World Bank said on Thursday.

"Growth in India is projected to moderate to 6.6 per cent in fiscal year 2026/27 (April 2026 to March 2027), reflecting a slowdown in private demand growth owing to higher energy prices and other input costs," the World Bank said in its report on Global Economic Prospects.

Reduction in Goods and Services Tax rates should somewhat support consumer demand, the report said, adding that the economy is expected to rebound to 7.2 per cent projected growth in fiscal 2027-28.

Despite heightened uncertainty related to the conflict, economic activity in India remained robust early this year, supported by resilient domestic demand, the World Bank report said.

It said private consumption, particularly in rural areas, has been strong, with urban demand recovering.

Collections of taxes from domestic sales have also increased steadily, the report said, adding that to mitigate the price pressures arising from higher energy

gems and jewellery exports to Oman, currently valued at around USD 35 million, including nearly USD 10 million worth of gold jewellery, could increase to about USD 150 million over the next three years on the back of improved market access and rising demand for Indian jewellery.

GJEPC Chairman Kirit Bhansali said the industry had already witnessed the benefits of India's trade agreements, particularly the India-UAE CEPA and the India-Australia ECTA, in expanding market access and creating new opportunities for exporters.

"Despite geopolitical uncertainties and the challenges posed by evolving tariff regimes during FY 2025-26, the gems and jewellery sector delivered exports of nearly USD 28 billion, reflecting the resilience of the industry and the benefits of market diversification," he said.

Bhansali expressed confidence that the India-Oman CEPA would further strengthen India's presence in the Gulf region and open new avenues for export growth. He also thanked the Centre for its efforts in securing trade agreements that support the growth and global competitiveness of the industry. (PTI)

costs, as well as shortages of agricultural products, especially fertilizers, several measures have been implemented in India, including a reduction in fuel taxes.

"Reduced US tariffs and the expected implementation of free trade agreements will likely mitigate the impact of weaker external demand due to the conflict, particularly on merchandise exports," it said.

"Growth is then anticipated to rebound over the next two fiscal years, driven by firming domestic demand and a pickup in export growth," the report said.

In per capita terms, growth in Emerging Markets and Developing Economies (EMDEs) in 2026 is projected to slow to its weakest pace since the pandemic, with the conflict and lingering disruptions impacting EMDEs to varying degrees.

In EMDEs, excluding China and India, subdued per capita income growth is expected to lead to nearly a decade of lost income convergence with advanced economies by 2028.

Growth in the South Asia Region is expected to soften to 6.3 per cent in 2026, mainly reflecting the adverse impact of the conflict in the Middle East, including higher energy prices, reduced supplies of oil and natural gas, and disruptions to remittances and tourism. (PTI)

Quality and timely completion of projects on the agenda

Ajanta Neog reviews development works in Morigaon

HT Correspondent

MORIGAON, June 11: Assam's Women and Child Development, Tourism and Guardian Minister of Morigaon district, Ajanta Neog on Thursday reviewed the progress of various development projects during a District Development Committee meeting and directed officials to ensure quality execution and timely completion of all works.

Chairing the meeting, Neog emphasised that contractors must not compromise on the quality of any project and instructed engineers of all departments to regularly inspect ongoing works.

She directed that all road projects sanctioned between 2022-23 and 2024-25 be completed by December and asked the Public Works Department to ensure that roads across the district remain trafficable.

The minister also reviewed the progress of the Morigaon Medical College project and directed officials to complete its construction by March next year.

She stressed the need to avoid unnecessary delays in project implementation due to minor issues and called for prompt resolution of bottlenecks.

Reviewing the functioning of the Water Resources Department, Neog instructed officials to expedite flood and erosion control schemes ahead of the monsoon season.

She also directed the District Commissioner to arrange for an expert team from



Guwahati to assess the quality of ongoing development works.

During the review of the Panchayat and Rural Development Department, the minister said the Zila Parishad should play a more active role in strengthening the Panchayati Raj system.

She urged elected representatives to regularly visit development sectors and create awareness about government welfare schemes among the public.

Highlighting the potential for fisheries development in the district, Neog directed the Fisheries Department to formulate large-

scale plans to boost fish production.

She also instructed the Women and Child Development Department to conduct awareness programmes in collaboration with the Education Department under the Beti Bachao Beti Padhao Mission.

The minister reviewed disaster preparedness measures and urged officials to remain prepared for possible flood situations during the rainy season.

To improve the financial condition of the Morigaon Municipal Board, Neog suggested several revenue-generating measures, including improving sanitation services, introducing a nominal monthly fee for garbage collection and implementing income-generating projects.

She called upon all departments to work in coordination to establish Morigaon as one of the leading districts of Assam and assured her full support as the district's guardian minister.

The meeting was attended by Morigaon MLA and Chairman of the Upland Tribal Development Corporation Ramakanta Deuri, Laharigat MLA Asif Mohammad Nazir, Morigaon Zila Parishad President Pranati Kalita Deka, District Commissioner Anamika Tewari, Superintendent of Police Prakash Sonowal, District Development Commissioner Arpa Baglari, CEO of Morigaon Zila Parishad Ananta Gogoi, additional district commissioners and heads of various departments.

Dibrugarh legal fraternity questions police probe, seeks enhanced security after advocate assault



HT Correspondent

DIBRUGARH, June 11: The alleged assault on Advocate Rajesh Kesari inside the premises of the Dibrugarh Bar Association has triggered strong reactions from the legal fraternity, with lawyers questioning the police investigation and demanding enhanced security within court and Bar premises.

The incident, in which Kesari was allegedly attacked by his client, Ganga Sagar Paswan alias Gama Paswan, has sparked widespread concern among advocates across the district.

Members of the Dibrugarh Bar Association have alleged that the assault appeared to be pre-planned and have raised questions regarding the circumstances under which the accused reportedly secured bail.

Addressing the media, Dibrugarh Bar Association General Secretary Satyabarta Sarma claimed that the accused was accompanied by another individual who allegedly recorded the incident on a mobile phone while the assault was taking place.

"The presence of another individual who was allegedly filming the attack raises serious questions. This does not appear to be a sudden act committed in the heat of the moment. It appears to have been planned in advance," Sarma alleged.

According to members of the Bar, Advocate Kesari sustained severe blows to the neck and upper body.

Lawyers claimed that timely intervention by fellow advocates prevented the situation from escalating further.

The Bar Association expressed dissatisfaction with the police investigation, alleging that important aspects of the case, including the alleged premeditated nature of the attack and the role of the person who reportedly recorded the incident, were not adequately considered.

Sarma also questioned the provisions invoked in the case and sought clarification regarding the circumstances that enabled the accused to obtain bail.

He demanded a thorough review of the investigation by senior authorities.

The Dibrugarh Advocates' Association and the Dibrugarh Bar Association have jointly called for a comprehensive and impartial probe, including examination of the alleged video footage and identification of all individuals involved in the incident.

The legal bodies have also renewed their demand for strengthened security measures within court and Bar premises, including enhanced surveillance and access control mechanisms, to ensure the safety of advocates while discharging their professional responsibilities.

Describing the incident as an attack on the legal fraternity, the associations warned that any failure to take stringent action could undermine confidence in the justice delivery system and embolden anti-social elements.

The incident has intensified calls for improved security arrangements and a transparent investigation as advocates continue to seek accountability and justice in the case.

CM Vigilance probes alleged irregularities in Nagaon

HT Correspondent

NAGAON, June 11: A team from the Chief Minister's Vigilance Cell has launched an investigation into alleged irregularities in the implementation of a rainwater harvesting scheme in parts of Nagaon district, including Dhing and Batadroba.

According to sources, the vigilance team has been camping at the PWD Inspection Bungalow in Batadroba for the past three days and is conducting field-level verification of projects implemented under the scheme in schools and religious institutions.

The investigation pertains to a rainwater harvesting programme undertaken during the previous Congress government.

Officials are examining records and inspecting project sites to verify whether the scheme was implemented as per approved guidelines and whether public funds were utilised properly.

As part of the inquiry, the vigilance team visited several schools and religious establishments in the area and collected relevant documents related to the execution of the projects.

Sources said the probe is focusing on alleged financial irregularities and possible lapses in the implementation of the scheme.

The investigation is also examining the role of officials and others associated with the execution of the project.

Youth hacked to death in KA; family dispute angle under probe

HT Correspondent

BOKOLIAGHAT, June 11: A youth was allegedly hacked to death by unidentified miscreants at Cham Pathar in Bokoliaghat area of Karbi Anglong district on Wednesday evening, triggering panic and tension among local residents.

The deceased has been identified as Sanjeev Teron.

According to reports, Teron was out for a walk when two motorcycle-borne assailants intercepted him and attacked him with sharp weapons before fleeing the scene.

Seriously injured in the attack, Teron was immediately rushed to Diphu Medical College and Hospital (DMCH) for treatment.

Amri MLA offers special prayers for PM Modi at Diphu temple

HT Bureau

DIPHU, June 11: Amri MLA Habbey Teron on Thursday offered special prayers for Prime Minister Narendra Modi at Shiv Mandir (Phu Inglong Kiri Adovan) in Rongmongjir, Diphu, marking the completion of 12 years of the Prime Minister's tenure in office.

Teron was welcomed at the temple by the priestess, who presented him with a traditional Karbi turban.

He spent nearly an hour at the shrine along with devotees, praying for the Prime Minister's good health, prosperity and long life.

Speaking to reporters after the prayer ceremony, the MLA said Prime Minister Modi had achieved a historic milestone by becoming the longest-serving continuously elected Prime Minister of India.

"Modi has become the longest continuously serving elected Prime Minister. I came here to pray for his wellbeing and

long life so that he can continue serving the people of the country," Teron said.

He attributed the Prime Minister's popularity and long tenure to his focus on good governance, women empowerment and welfare-oriented development initiatives.

Teron also said that the Prime Minister has consistently paid attention to the development needs of Karbi Anglong and other hill areas.

"May the Almighty continue to bless our Prime Minister with strength and guidance as he leads the nation towards greater prosperity and progress," he said.

To mark the occasion, Teron's wife, Khemi B. Ronghangpi, led the lighting of 108 ceremonial lamps at the temple and offered prayers for the Prime Minister's continued health and leadership.

The MLA was accompanied by Lawrence Teron, former VDC Chairman of Duar Amla and social worker Ranjit Teron during the visit.



Free health camp organised at Howraghat

HT Correspondent

HOWRAGHAT, June 11: A free health consultation and medical check-up camp was organised at Kirat Bhavan in Howraghat on Thursday, providing residents of the region access to specialised healthcare services. The camp was jointly organised by the Howraghat Regional Students' Union, Sonapur Kidney Hospital and ERC Hospital, Nagaon, with the objective of offering expert medical consultation and health screening facilities to the public.

Renowned medical specialists, including Dr Arup Kumar Nath of Sonapur Kidney Hospital and Dr Kalpana Deka of ERC Hospital, Nagaon, attended the camp and provided consultations to patients.

A large number of people from Howraghat and adjoining areas participated in the programme and availed themselves of the free health check-ups and medical advice offered by the doctors.

The organisers said the initiative was aimed at improving access to quality healthcare services and creating awareness about preventive healthcare among the people of the region.

Rehabilitation centre sealed over alleged irregularities

HT Correspondent

NAGAON, June 11: The Nagaon district administration on Thursday temporarily sealed the Precious Rehabilitation Centre at Madhya Shialmari near Nagaon town following allegations of serious irregularities and discrepancies in its records.

The action came amid recurring complaints regarding the functioning of several de-addiction centres in the district.

Families of inmates have alleged inadequate medical care, poor food quality, unhygienic conditions and instances of physical and mental harassment despite the collection of substantial fees from patients.

A joint team comprising officials from the district administration, Nagaon Police, the Department of Social Justice and Empowerment and the Health Department conducted a surprise inspection of the rehabilitation centre.

The raid was led by an Executive Magistrate.

During the inspection, officials reportedly found major discrepancies in the centre's records.

While 27 inmates were present at the facility, official records reflected only 16 residents. The team also identified shortcomings in infrastructure and documentation.

Following the inspection, the administration sealed the facility and directed the management to submit all relevant documents and records within three days.

over her demise and paid heartfelt tributes to the departed soul.

The student body conveyed its condolences to the bereaved family and prayed for eternal peace of her soul.

During the final farewell ceremony, ABSU president Khwrm-dao Wary, assistant general secretary Dinesh Brahma and treasurer Saranjit Narzary visited the bereaved family and paid their last respects.

ABSU remembered Lambeswari Narzary's sacrifices as the mother of martyr Sujit Narzary, who is regarded as the first martyr of the Bodoland movement, and expressed solidarity

Daimary reviews handloom, textile and sericulture sector devp in Kokrajhar

HT Correspondent

KOKRAJHAR, June 11: Assam Cabinet Minister Biswajit Daimary on Thursday chaired a review meeting with senior officials of the Handloom, Textile and Sericulture Department to assess the progress of ongoing schemes and discuss strategies for the development of the sector.

The meeting reviewed the implementation status of various departmental programmes and deliberated on the roadmap for future initiatives.

Special emphasis was laid on strengthening Assam's traditional handloom and silk industries, which continue to play a vital role in preserving the state's cultural heritage and supporting rural livelihoods.

Daimary stressed the need to enhance the growth of the silk sector, increase production and create better market opportunities for weavers, silk growers and entrepreneurs.

He underscored the importance of prioritising initiatives that would contribute to the economic empowerment of artisans and stakeholders associated with the handloom and sericulture sectors.

Meanwhile, a separate review



meeting on sericulture activities under the Bodoland Territorial Council (BTC) was held at the Bodoland Silk Park, Adabari in Kokrajhar.

The meeting, chaired by BTC Executive Member Karmeswar Ray, reviewed the progress of Eri, Muga and Mulberry sericulture across the Bodoland Territorial Region (BTR).

Discussions focused on measures to improve productivity, strengthen the sericulture value chain and expand livelihood opportunities for farmers and silk growers.

Participants also deliberated on promoting scientific farming practices, enhancing silk produc-

tion and ensuring better support for beneficiaries engaged in sericulture activities.

The meeting highlighted the need to develop sericulture as a sustainable source of income for rural households.

Baokhungri MLA Rupam Chandra Roy, BTC Secretary and officials of the Sericulture Department attended the meeting and shared their views on the development and promotion of the sector.

The BTC has been actively promoting Eri, Muga and Mulberry cultivation as part of its efforts to strengthen the rural economy and generate employment opportunities across the BTR.

DDMA conducts disaster preparedness awareness programme at St. Mary's High School

HT Bureau

DIPHU, June 11: The District Disaster Management Authority (DDMA), Karbi Anglong, conducted an awareness programme on disaster preparedness and emergency response at St. Mary's High School, Diphu on Thursday.

The programme was led by DDRF volunteers and focused on various aspects of disaster preparedness, emergency response mechanisms, safety measures during disasters and the proper use of fire extinguishers.

Students and teachers actively participated in the session and gained valuable insights into disaster risk reduction and emergency management.

During the programme, participants were also sensitised about the Cell Broadcast System (CBS), a technology used for disseminating emergency alerts.

The volunteers explained the importance of paying attention to official warnings and following safety instructions during emergencies.

The awareness programme was organised as part of DDMA Karbi Anglong's ongoing initiative to strengthen disaster preparedness and build resilience among communities, particularly school students, through regular training and awareness activities.

ABSU pays tribute to mother of Bodoland movement's first martyr Sujit Narzary

HT Correspondent

KOKRAJHAR, June 11: Lambeswari Narzary, a noted social worker and the mother of Bodoland movement's first martyr Sujit Narzary, passed away on Wednesday evening at a private hospital in Kokrajhar following age-related ailments. She was 75.

A resident of Bhatipara in Kokrajhar district, Lambeswari Narzary was widely respected for her contributions to society and for the sacrifices made by her family during the Bodoland movement.

She breathed her last at around 5 pm.

The All Bodo Students Union (ABSU) expressed deep sorrow

with the family during their time of grief.

Several organisations and prominent individuals also mourned her passing. Among them were United People's Party Liberal (UPPL) president and Rajya Sabha MP Pramod Boro and former minister Urkhao Gwra Brahma, who extended their condolences and recalled the significant contributions and sacrifices made by the family for the Bodoland movement.

The demise of Lambeswari Narzary has been widely mourned across the Bodoland Territorial Region, with many remembering her as a symbol of resilience and sacrifice.



QUOTE OF THE DAY

A lot of people attack the sea, I make love to it.
- Jacques Yves Cousteau

INDIA bloc and unity

The INDIA bloc's meeting on June 8, 2026 in New Delhi has reset a broader consensus on national politics to take on the BJP despite its regional conflicts that surfaced with DMK keeping away from and AAP declaring that it was not part of it. Nevertheless, as many as 25 political parties participated, the Congress President and the Leader of the Opposition in Rajya Sabha said, adding that they reached a collective resolve on five key issues. INDIA bloc runs differently, there is no regimentation but democracy, no single leader but collective leadership, and no political autocracy but political federalism. INDIA bloc tries to achieve "unity in diversity" and there is no structural regimentation, which its detractors try to project as structural fragility. Every political party in INDIA bloc has its own regional or national interests and it is not a small achievement that 23 political parties participated in the meet along with two other political individual personalities after a series of setbacks in the last two years after the Lok Sabha election 2024. The meet decided to meet regularly from now on, the next meeting to be held in August in Hyderabad. Regular coordination matters, which amount to a reset of the INDIA bloc.

The other achievements of the INDIA bloc meet are its five key resolutions. It resolved that the bloc would write to the Chief Justice of India, flagging concerns over the Special Intensive Revision (SIR) and the alleged 'vote loot'. It demanded the immediate resignation of Union Minister of Education Dharmendra Pradhan, stating that he had "presided over the betrayal of lakhs of youth who appeared for NEET and CBSE exams". These two issues are very sensitive, and has political implications for the ruling establishment, given that the third and final phase of SIR in the country has already been announced by the Election Commission of India (ECI), while the youth of the country under the banner of Cockroach Janata Party (not a political party but a non-political front) has threatened nationwide agitation if Pradhan does not resign or is not removed this week.

The third important resolution of the INDIA bloc has called on the Union Government led by PM Narendra Modi to convene an all-party meeting to discuss the "current critical economic situation" in the country including inflation and price rise, unemployment crisis among youths, and farm sector distress. The fourth important decision taken in the meeting was to hold coordination meetings every two months, and the fifth and last, but not the least, that the participating political parties committed themselves to daily parliamentary coordination during sessions.

India on track to become the world's third-largest economy

India is undergoing a massive structural shift toward future-ready sectors. Under the vision of self-reliance, the nation is actively positioning itself as a global leader in defense production, renewable energy, electric vehicles (EVs) and green hydrogen. This diversification has fundamentally altered global supply chains, making the world increasingly reliant on India as a dependable manufacturing hub. Concurrently, India's vibrant startup ecosystem—now the third-largest in the world—has fostered a deep culture of innovation and entrepreneurship, empowering millions of youth

In 2026, one of the most discussed topics in the global economy is India's remarkable economic rise. Even as the world navigates multifaceted challenges like geopolitical tensions, wars, supply chain disruptions and inflation, India has successfully established itself as the fastest-growing major economy. According to the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and various global economic institutions, the Indian economy has already surpassed Japan and is almost certain to overtake Germany in the near future to firmly secure its position as the third-largest economy in the world. Currently, a nominal GDP of approximately \$4.15 trillion and a robust economic growth rate of around 7.7% are driving the nation toward this historic milestone.



DEGREE OF THOUGHT
By: Lalit Nath

The primary engine behind this unprecedented growth is India's massive domestic market. With a population exceeding 1.46 billion, the rising middle class, rapid urbanization and the expanding purchasing power of the youth have built a resilient economic foundation. Consistent demand in sectors such as automobiles, electronics, housing, healthcare, tourism and FMCG continues to power both the manufacturing and service sectors. While external crises have pushed many global nations into recession, India's strong domestic demand provides exceptional stability.

Simultaneously, digital transformation has added a new dimension to this economic journey. Breakthrough platforms like UPI, Jan Dhan Yojana, Aadhaar-based services and digital governance have achieved widespread financial inclusion, bringing hundreds of millions of citizens into the formal economy.

This digital expansion among small businesses, farmers and the self-employed has transformed India into a global leader in digital transactions and significantly boosted overall productivity. Although the Indian Rupee has experienced some depreciation against the US Dollar, it has not stalled this momentum. True economic strength lies in production, investment, consumption and innovation rather than just exchange rates—and in terms of Purchasing Power Parity, India is already the world's third-largest economy.

This economic stability is further backed by a formidable foreign exchange reserve of approximately \$650-\$700 billion. The foundation is continuously strengthened by robust IT and software exports, high inward remittances from the diaspora and steady Foreign Direct Investment (FDI). Moreover, the global shift toward the 'China Plus One' strategy by multinational corporations has opened a golden window of opportunity. The central government's 'Make in India' initiative and Production Linked Incentive (PLI) schemes have acted as major catalysts. Global giants like Apple and Samsung are rapidly expanding their manufacturing footprints in the country, leading to increased exports and large-scale employment.

Alongside this manufacturing boom, India is undergoing a massive structural shift toward future-ready sectors. Under the vision of self-reliance, the nation is actively positioning itself as a global leader in defense production, renewable energy, electric vehicles (EVs) and green hydrogen. This diversification has fundamentally altered global supply chains, making the world increasingly reliant on India as



a dependable manufacturing hub. Concurrently, India's vibrant startup ecosystem—now the third-largest in the world—has fostered a deep culture of innovation and entrepreneurship, empowering millions of youth. The ripple effects of financial inclusion are also revitalizing the rural economy, effectively narrowing the commercial divide between urban centers and rural heartlands.

This national technological renaissance is providing a massive economic impetus to Assam. Historically centered around tea, oil and traditional agriculture, the state's economy is now directly plugging into the global tech-driven market. The mega semiconductor project by the Tata Group at Jajirao has placed Assam prominently on the global high-tech industrial map. This is not merely an industrial unit, it represents a gateway to world-class technical education and high-value employment for the state's youth. The localized development of such advanced technology creates a powerful multiplier effect, stimulating small and medium enterprises across the region.

Furthermore, the expansion of robust digital infrastructure has enabled Assam's indigenous handloom, muga silk industries and unique agricultural products to seamlessly integrate with global e-commerce platforms. Under the central government's Act East Policy, structured efforts like the Multi-Modal Logistics Park at Joghigopa, new bridges over the Brahmaputra, improved national highways,

and modernized transport networks are paving the way for Assam to become the critical economic gateway to Southeast Asia and the hub of the entire Northeast.

Despite this spectacular progress, deep-rooted challenges remain, as India's per capita income is still low compared to developed nations. The biggest hurdles moving forward will be bridging economic inequality, addressing the shortage of skilled human resources and generating quality employment. There is an urgent need to upgrade the education system to foster skills in Artificial Intelligence (AI), IT and modern industries among the youth. In Assam's context, climate change poses a severe threat to its agricultural economy. To ensure agriculture remains stable and profitable amidst annual floods, droughts and weather uncertainties, technology-driven farming and scientific planning are vital, alongside decentralizing industrial growth to ensure regional balance.

Ultimately, India's current economic ascent is not merely a statistical success, it reflects a deep, structural transformation. To realize the vision of a 'Developed India' (Viksit Bharat) by 2047, the immediate priority must be to make this economic journey more inclusive, sustainable and people-centric. If high-potential states like Assam can actively participate in this historic transformation, India's economic rise will become even more resilient, enduring, and meaningful for every citizen.

The social impact of digital addiction

The modern world runs on screens. They wake us up in the morning, guide us through the day, and often remain the last thing we see before sleep. Smartphones, social media platforms, video-sharing applications, online games, and streaming services have become inseparable from contemporary life. Their presence is so ordinary that many people rarely stop to question how deeply they influence everyday behaviour. Technology has undoubtedly brought remarkable advantages. Communication across continents takes seconds, information is available instantly, and countless services can be accessed with a few taps on a screen. Yet beneath these conveniences lies a growing social concern. Digital addiction has emerged as one of the defining challenges of the twenty-first century. Unlike addictions associated with substances, digital addiction often disguises itself as normal activity. Checking messages, browsing social media, watching videos, or playing online games appear harmless when viewed individually. The problem develops gradually when these activities begin consuming excessive amounts of time and attention. What makes the issue particularly significant is that its effects are not limited to individuals. They extend into families, schools, workplaces, communities, and society as a whole. Across cities and villages alike, people are becoming increasingly connected through technology while simultaneously experiencing a decline in meaningful human interaction. The contradiction is striking. Humanity possesses more communication tools than ever before, yet loneliness, social isolation, and emotional detachment are becoming common experiences. The social consequences of digital addiction deserve serious attention because they influence not only personal well-being but also the quality of relationships and the health of communities in contemporary society.

Perhaps the most visible effect of digital addiction can be seen within human relationships. Families often occupy the same physical space while living in separate digital worlds. Parents scroll through social media feeds, children watch videos, teenagers engage in online conversations, and meaningful communication becomes increasingly rare. Moments that once encouraged interaction have gradually been replaced by screen engagement. Family dinners, social gatherings, and community events frequently reveal groups of people sitting together while paying greater attention to devices than to one another. This change may appear minor, yet its long-term implications are profound. Relationships are built through conversation, shared experiences, emotional understanding, and sustained attention. Digital addiction weakens these foundations by constantly competing for human focus. Friendships have also undergone noticeable transformation. Social media platforms create the impression of extensive social networks, but online connections do not always translate into genuine emotional support. Many individuals maintain hundreds of online contacts while struggling to find a few people with whom they can share their concerns honestly. The pursuit of likes, comments, and digital approval has introduced new forms of social pressure. People increasingly measure their worth through online reactions, often comparing themselves to carefully curated images of others. Such comparisons rarely reflect reality, yet they shape perceptions and emotions. The result is a society where appearances sometimes matter more than authenticity. As digital engagement expands, empathy and attentive listening risk becoming casualties of an environment dominated by rapid scrolling, brief interactions, and

constant distraction.

Young people face particularly complex challenges in this digital environment. Children and adolescents today are growing up surrounded by devices that provide endless entertainment and stimulation. Unlike previous generations, many have never experienced life without smartphones or social media. Their social development unfolds alongside continuous digital exposure. While technology offers educational opportunities and access to information, excessive use can interfere with healthy growth. Teachers in many educational institutions report difficulties maintaining students' attention during lessons. The rapid pace of digital content conditions young minds to expect constant stimulation, making sustained concentration increasingly difficult. Long reading assignments, thoughtful discussions, and activities requiring patience often struggle to compete with short videos and instant entertainment.

The influence extends beyond academics. Social media platforms have become important arenas where young people form identities and seek validation. Online popularity frequently carries emotional significance, creating pressure to present idealised versions of themselves. The fear of missing out has become a defining feature of youth culture. Every photograph, status update, and online interaction can contribute to feelings of exclusion or inadequacy. Cyberbullying adds another layer of concern. Unlike traditional bullying, digital harassment can continue beyond school hours and follow victims wherever they go. The emotional consequences may include anxiety, low self-esteem, depression, and social withdrawal. When such experiences become widespread, they shape not only individual lives but also broader social attitudes. A generation raised under constant digital observation may develop different expectations regarding privacy, communication, and personal identity, influencing the future character of society itself.

The impact of digital addiction extends beyond households and educational institutions into the wider community. Healthy communities depend upon participation, trust, cooperation, and regular interaction among citizens. Historically, people spent time engaging with neighbours, attending local events, participating in cultural activities, and contributing to civic life. Today, however, increasing amounts of leisure time are devoted to digital consumption. Hours once spent in community engagement are often absorbed by social media platforms, online entertainment, and virtual interactions. This shift has implications for social cohesion. Communities thrive when individuals feel connected to one another and share a sense of collective responsibility. Excessive screen time can weaken these connections by reducing opportunities for face-to-face engagement. Digital spaces often encourage interaction among like-minded individuals, creating environments where people encounter fewer differing viewpoints. Such patterns may contribute to social division and ideological polarization. Individuals become deeply immersed in digital communities that reinforce existing beliefs, sometimes at the expense of broader social understanding. Moreover, online communication lacks many of the social cues present in direct conversation. Tone, body language, and emotional nuance are easily lost, increasing the likelihood of misunderstanding and conflict. The rise of digital addiction therefore influences not only personal habits but also the quality of public discourse. In societies already facing political, cultural, and economic tensions, declining interpersonal engagement can further erode trust and

social solidarity. The consequences may not always be immediately visible, but they accumulate over time, affecting the strength and resilience of communities.

The workplace has also been reshaped by the growing dependence on digital technology. Modern organisations rely heavily on electronic communication, virtual meetings, and digital collaboration tools. While these innovations have improved efficiency, they have also created environments where employees remain connected almost continuously. Many workers feel pressure to respond quickly to messages, monitor emails outside office hours, and remain available through various communication platforms. The boundary between professional and personal life has become increasingly blurred. Constant connectivity may appear productive, yet it often contributes to stress, burnout, and declining concentration. Digital addiction encourages frequent task-switching as employees move between notifications, messages, and work responsibilities. This pattern fragments attention and reduces the ability to engage in deep, focused work. Beyond productivity concerns, workplace relationships can suffer as well. Face-to-face conversations are frequently replaced by digital exchanges, limiting opportunities for genuine interpersonal connection. Team cohesion, trust, and collaboration often develop most effectively through direct human interaction. When communication becomes excessively mediated by screens, organisational culture may become more transactional and less personal. Employees may feel connected to systems but disconnected from colleagues. The social consequences extend beyond individual workplaces because employment remains one of the central institutions through which people form relationships, develop identities, and contribute to society. A workforce increasingly shaped by digital dependency may face challenges related to mental well-being, social engagement, and overall quality of life.

Digital addiction also raises important questions about the future of culture and human behaviour. Modern culture is increasingly shaped by algorithms designed to maximise engagement. Entertainment, news, advertising, and even social interaction are filtered through systems that continuously compete for attention. In this environment, attention itself has become a valuable commodity. The longer people remain engaged with digital platforms, the more successful those platforms become. Consequently, users are exposed to endless streams of content tailored to their preferences and habits. While personalisation offers convenience, it can also narrow perspectives and reduce exposure to diverse ideas. Cultural experiences that once united large groups of people are becoming fragmented across countless digital spaces. Shared public conversations are increasingly replaced by isolated content ecosystems. At the same time, the demand for constant stimulation is altering social expectations. Patience, reflection, and sustained focus often struggle to survive within environments built around speed and immediacy. Young and old alike are adapting to communication patterns characterised by brief messages, rapid responses, and continuous updates. The long-term implications remain uncertain, but the direction is clear. Digital addiction is influencing how people think, communicate, form relationships, and participate in society. Technology itself is not the enemy. The challenge lies in maintaining control over tools that are increasingly designed to capture and retain human attention. As contemporary society continues its digital journey, the need for balance becomes ever more urgent. The future will depend not on rejecting technology but on ensuring that human values, meaningful relationships, and community life remain stronger than the screens that increasingly dominate everyday existence.

The dawn of Zero poaching era: How Assam protected its Rhinos



By: Sauravjyoti Nath

Assam has often been called the heartland of the one horned rhinoceros. The state animal of Assam, the one horned rhino, holds a place of pride in the identity and culture of the state. Listed under Schedule I of the Wildlife Protection Act, 1972, the one horned rhino is an endangered species. Internationally, trade in rhino horn is banned under the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora.

But for decades, the one horned rhino has faced relentless poaching pressure in Assam. The high value of the rhino horn in illegal international markets, particularly in parts of East Asia, made it a persistent target that challenged its survival. The data from the Anti Rhino Poaching Task Force shows the long trajectory of this crisis.

Between 2000 and 2021, organised international syndicates repeatedly targeted protected areas such as Kaziranga National Park, leaving hundreds of rhinos dead. The situation was especially alarming in 2013 and 2014 when 27 rhinos were poached in each of those years. The horn trade had created a deeply entrenched network that crossed borders and operated with sophisticated weapons and coordination.

The turning point began when the state adopted a zero tolerance approach to wildlife crime under the leadership of Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma. Anti poaching operations were restructured and a dedicated Anti Rhino Poaching Task Force was formed in June 2021. This was also the advent of a shift towards technology and intelligence driven policing supported by inter agency coordination.

Senior IPS officer Gyanendra Pratap Singh, who led the Anti Rhino Poaching Task Force, described this fight not as routine enforcement but as a coordinated dismantling of a criminal ecosystem. His approach brought Assam Police and the Forest Department into a single operational framework where intelligence based reporting and field action worked as one chain. The focus shifted from catching poachers to breaking the networks that enabled them.

The Assam Police worked closely with the Forest Department and local stakeholders to build a real time intelligence network. Surveillance infrastructure was strengthened across vulnerable habitats including Kaziranga National Park, Orang National Park, Pobitora Wildlife Sanctuary and Manas National Park.

Technology became a major force multiplier. Drone monitoring, thermal sensors, surveillance towers, animal movement detectors and real time communication systems connected anti poaching camps. Automatic number plate recognition systems along the highway added another layer of security. At the same time, intelligence gathering was expanded to track interstate and international poaching networks.

Equally important was the role of local communities. Forest villagers, boatmen and youth groups living around forest fringes were brought into the protection network. Information sharing thus became faster and more effective through these local communication channels which helped the authorities to respond quickly to threats.

The combined impact of such technical and strategic enforcement along with community participation soon began to show results. In 2022, Assam recorded zero rhino poaching for the first time in 45 years, a milestone once thought impossible by conservation experts. The success continued in the following years, with reports confirming zero rhino killings in 2025. This marked a historic shift from decades of loss to a phase of complete protection.

This transformation has also contributed to a steady rise in the rhino population across Assam. With reduced poaching pressure and improved habitat protection, the one horned rhino has begun to reclaim its ecological space in the floodplains of the Brahmaputra valley.

Thus, this success story of the rhino in Assam is not just about saving a species. It reflects a larger shift in governance, enforcement and community participation that has turned conservation into a shared responsibility and a measurable achievement.

Children deserve education, safety and dignity-Not labour

World Day Against Child Labour – 12 June 2026

By: Lalit Garg

Every year, 12 June, observed as the World Day Against Child Labour, is not merely a symbolic occasion; it is a moment that shakes the conscience of humanity. It reminds us that no child is born to become a labourer. A child's hands are meant to hold books, toys, colours, dreams and opportunities—not tools, bricks, utensils, hammers, garbage sacks or factory machines. Childhood is the golden phase of life during which the foundations of personality, values, education and future aspirations are laid. If this precious period is sacrificed to labour, exploitation and deprivation, it is not only a child's future that is damaged, but also the future of society and the nation.

The International Labour Organization (ILO) initiated this observance in 2002 to raise global awareness about the severity of child labour and to accelerate efforts toward its elimination. In 2026, the day arrives at a time when the world is reaching unprecedented heights in technological innovation, artificial intelligence and economic advancement. Yet, paradoxically, millions of children remain deprived of education and a carefree childhood. This contradiction poses a serious question to modern civilization. Whenever we see a young child working at a roadside eatery, tea stall, factory, garage, brick kiln, farm or traffic signal, our compassion may awaken briefly before we return to our daily routines. But the question remains: how long will we continue to accept this tragedy as normal? Can we not hear the silent cries of a childhood being stolen and lost in the darkness of labour?

Even today, millions of children across the world are engaged in various forms of child labour. A significant number

work in hazardous environments where their physical, mental and emotional development is severely compromised. Poverty, illiteracy, unemployment, social inequality, displacement, trafficking, armed conflicts, natural disasters and weak social protection systems are among the principal causes of child labour. Families facing economic hardships often send children to work instead of school. However, the solution to poverty is not child labour; it is the provision of dignified employment opportunities and robust social security for families. Child labour is not merely an economic issue—it is a grave violation of human rights. It robs children of their childhood, education, health, recreation, self-confidence and future prospects.

A child who should be sitting in a classroom but is instead working in a factory reflects not just an individual tragedy but a collective societal failure. Child labour also perpetuates the cycle of poverty, as uneducated children often grow into adults confined to low-income occupations, forcing subsequent generations to endure the same deprivation. Many countries, including India, have enacted laws to combat child labour. Internationally, ILO Convention No. 138 on minimum age for employment and Convention No. 182 on the worst forms of child labour provide important frameworks for protection. In India, the Child and Adolescent Labour (Prohibition and Regulation) Act and the Right to Education Act seek to safeguard children's rights. However, laws are only as effective as their implementation. Despite legal provisions, child labour often continues in hidden and informal forms.

The need of the hour is not merely stronger legislation but the transformation of the fight against child labour into a powerful social movement. Govern-

ments, educational institutions, religious organizations, civil society groups, media and industry must work together to create widespread awareness. Just as global consciousness has evolved regarding environmental protection and women's rights, a similar worldwide commitment must emerge for children's rights. A troubling contradiction persists in many societies. Governments and political leaders frequently describe children as the nation's future, yet millions continue to be denied education and childhood through labour. In India, for instance, certain legal provisions permit children between the ages of four and fourteen to assist in family enterprises under specific circumstances. This raises critical concerns. At an age when children should be learning, playing and developing socially, many are instead absorbed into family occupations, often at the cost of education and normal childhood experiences.

Under the pretext of teaching self-reliance, society sometimes risks turning children into instruments of economic survival, pushing them toward a future of limited opportunities. Such practices deserve serious reflection and reform. In the digital age, technology can become a powerful ally in eliminating child labour. Transparent monitoring of industries and supply chains, online complaint portals, rapid-response mechanisms and artificial intelligence-based surveillance systems can help identify and prevent exploitation. Multinational corporations must ensure that no form of child labour exists within their supply chains. Companies found violating these standards should face stringent legal and financial consequences.

The most effective long-term solution to child labour is quality, inclusive and accessible education. Building schools



alone is not enough. Education must be engaging, practical and capable of fostering the holistic development of every child. Scholarships, nutrition programs, healthcare services and social welfare initiatives for disadvantaged families are equally essential. When basic family needs are met, the compulsion to send children to work diminishes significantly. It is equally important to understand that childhood is not merely about survival. Childhood means the freedom to dream, the opportunity to learn, the right to play, a nurturing environment and the promise of a secure future. A society where children cannot smile can never claim genuine progress. Towers of economic development remain incomplete if they

stand upon the crushed dreams of children. As Nelson Mandela once said, "There can be no keener revelation of a society's soul than the way in which it treats its children." Nelson Mandela If we truly aspire to build a developed, compassionate and civilized society, we must transform our perspective toward children. They should not be viewed as objects of charity but as holders of fundamental rights.

Today, governments must adopt a policy of zero tolerance toward child labour, strengthen international cooperation, dismantle trafficking and bonded labour networks, and ensure universal access to education, safety and protection. Equally, every citizen must pledge not to support

child labour in any form and to raise their voice whenever such exploitation is witnessed. The World Day Against Child Labour carries a profound message: protecting childhood is not merely a social responsibility—it is a commitment to safeguarding the future of humanity itself. Every child who receives education, healthcare, protection, values and opportunities becomes a responsible citizen, a compassionate human being and a builder of the nation. The truth is simple yet powerful: saving childhood means saving the future. Only when every child in the world is free from fear, exploitation and labour—and free to learn, play and dream—will the journey of human development achieve its true meaning.

Fake degrees and broken trust

By: Dr Satyawan Saurabh

India today boasts one of the world's youngest populations. This youthful energy is considered its greatest asset. Every year, millions of students in the country undergo rigorous competitive examinations, university courses, and vocational training. They work day and night to fulfill their dreams. Families invest their savings, time, and hopes in their education. But when reports of fake degrees, paper leaks, cheating mafias, and educational corruption emerge, not only the credibility of certain institutions or individuals is tarnished, but trust in the entire education system begins to waver. This is why the issue of transparency and quality in education has become not just a matter of academic debate but a matter of national concern.

In recent years, numerous cases have surfaced in India in which universities, colleges, and training institutes have been accused of irregularities. Some have reported the issuance of fake mark sheets, others have alleged the awarding of degrees without adequate teaching and evaluation, and others have alleged rigging in recruitment and entrance examinations. These incidents have raised the question of whether our education system is truly merit-based or whether loopholes have emerged within it that some individuals are exploiting to advance unfairly.

The fundamental purpose of education isn't merely to issue certificates. Education provides individuals with knowledge, skills, discretion, and responsibility. A doctor's degree isn't merely a piece of paper, but rather proof that they have acquired the knowledge and training necessary to protect human life. An engineer's degree assures them of their ability to design safe buildings, bridges, and technical structures. A teacher's degree is considered a guarantee that they are capable of guiding the next generation. If the credibility of these degrees is ques-

tioned, society's entire trust system begins to weaken.

The biggest problem is that the harm of fake degrees isn't limited to those who obtain them. They impact society as a whole. If an unqualified person becomes a doctor, patients' lives could be endangered. If an unqualified engineer gains a technical position, the quality of public projects could be compromised. If unqualified teachers are appointed to educational institutions, the intellectual capacity of future generations could be affected. Therefore, this isn't just a matter of fraud, but also a question of public safety and social trust.

Higher education in India has expanded rapidly. This was necessary, as providing education to millions of young people was a major challenge. However, the pace of expansion has often been faster than quality control. As a result, some institutions have become mere degree-dispensing centers. Adequate attention has not been paid to teaching, research, laboratories, libraries, and trained faculty. When education is viewed as a business rather than a service, such crises are bound to arise.

Incidents of paper leaks have exacerbated this problem. Reports of question papers being leaked for recruitment and entrance exams have surfaced periodically in various states across the country. Millions of students prepare for years, but some individuals, through money and influence, obtain question papers. This causes the greatest harm to talented young people who are working honestly. The value of their hard work is diminished, and they develop a distrust of the system.

The biggest challenge facing the young generation today is to prove their worth. However, if the system is not fair, talent is discouraged. When a hardworking student begins to realize that success is achieved not through merit but through connections, corruption, or fraud, their motivation weakens. This situation gradually gives rise to social dis-

content. Many talented young people decide to leave the country, or, disappointed with the system, compromise their dreams.

India's global identity has long been based on its knowledge and talent. Thousands of Indian-origin scientists, engineers, doctors, and technologists work in leading institutions around the world. They are not only building their individual careers but also enhancing India's reputation. Indians working abroad send significant amounts of foreign exchange to India each year, which is vital to the country's economy. If international doubts grow about the credibility of Indian degrees and certificates, it could impact employment, visas, and global opportunities.

It's important to note that the entire country's education system cannot be dismissed based on the mistakes of a few institutions or individuals. India has numerous excellent universities, research institutes, and professional educational centers that meet international standards. Millions of students earn their qualifications through honesty and hard work. The problem is that a few negative examples tarnish the image of the entire system. Therefore, taking strict action against the culprits is as important as encouraging honest and quality institutions.

To improve education, transparency must be strengthened first. A digital record of all degrees and certificates should be created, which can be verified by any employer or institution. Digital verification systems can play a vital role in identifying fraudulent documents. This will also increase trust between students, institutions, and employers.

Another important step is regular academic reviews of universities and colleges. Instead of awarding accreditation solely based on buildings and infrastructure, actual teaching quality, research work, examination systems, and student performance should be evaluated. Strict action should be taken against institutions that fail to meet stan-

dards. Third, the examination system must be made completely secure and technology-based. Security of question papers, digital monitoring, cybersecurity, and swift punishment of offenders are essential. Incidents like paper leaks should be viewed not as simple crimes but as a threat to national resources and the future of our youth.

Fourth, skills-based assessment must be promoted in employment and recruitment processes. Reducing the reliance on degrees alone and emphasizing actual competence and practical knowledge will be crucial. This will reduce the blind pursuit of certifications and strengthen a culture of learning.

The role of society is also crucial. Parents, teachers, and students must understand that the purpose of education is not simply to obtain a job. If a degree becomes merely a ticket to employment and knowledge is diminished, the true purpose of education is lost. Therefore, it is essential to foster a culture of learning, research, and skill development.

At the political level, this issue also needs to be addressed beyond partisanship. Fake degrees, cheating, paper leaks, and academic corruption are not limited to any one state, government, or ideology. This problem has existed in various forms for years. Therefore, its solution is possible only through collective political will, administrative efficiency, and social awareness.

Today, when young people demand reform, transparency, and accountability in the education system, their voices must be heard seriously. This demand is not part of any political agenda, but rather a question of future security. If public trust in the education system is weakened, its impact will not be limited to universities. It will also impact the economy, employment, social trust, and national development.

If India is to become the world's leading knowledge economy, it must make its education system fair, transparent, and credible. A degree should not be just a piece of paper, but a testament to competence, hard work, and ethics. Until integrity and quality become paramount values in the education system, the gap between talent and opportunity will never be fully bridged.

The future of the country lies in the hands of its youth, and their future depends on education. Therefore, the fight against fake degrees and educational corruption is not merely a campaign to reform the system, but a pledge to secure India's future. This is the path that will restore faith in education, respect talent, and make India even stronger on the global stage. (Dr Satyawan Saurabh, PhD (Political Science), is a poet and social thinker)

Protecting India's Children in the Age of Data

By: Dipak Kurmi

The modern childhood experience has undergone a profound transformation, moving rapidly from physical playgrounds to vast, interconnected digital landscapes. Today, children are entering the digital world at an unprecedentedly early age, with smartphones, online gaming platforms, social media applications, and virtual classrooms becoming inseparable components of their daily lives. This digital transition was drastically accelerated by the COVID-19 pandemic, an unprecedented global crisis that pushed millions of students overnight toward online learning and remote digital interaction out of sheer necessity. While this sudden technological shift undoubtedly expanded access to education, democratized information, and enabled continuous communication during times of isolation, it simultaneously exposed children to unprecedented risks within the unregulated digital sphere. A growing number of children are now unknowingly sharing highly personal information across various gaming platforms, social media applications, and educational websites without recognizing the long-term consequences of their digital footprints. In the vast majority of these cases, neither the children nor their parents fully understand how such sensitive data is being collected, stored, aggregated, and subsequently used by corporate entities. The meteoric rise of targeted advertising, sophisticated behavioral tracking, and complex online fraud has collectively made children one of the most vulnerable, easily manipulated groups in the contemporary data-driven economy.

In this increasingly perilous digital context, the enactment of the Digital Personal Data Protection (DPDP) Act, 2023, assumes critical importance as India's primary legislative framework governing data privacy. The Act establishes a formalized legal structure that delineates specific roles within the digital ecosystem, defining a Data Principal as the individual whose personal data is being processed, and a Data Fiduciary as the entity, such as an application, platform, or organization, that determines the purpose and means of collecting and using that data. Recognizing the inherent vulnerabilities of minors, Section 9 of the DPDP Act introduces special safeguards specifically designed to protect children's online data from commercial exploitation. This particular section strictly mandates that digital platforms and data handlers must obtain verifiable consent from a parent or a lawful guardian before processing any personal data belonging to a child under the age of eighteen. Furthermore, the statute imposes stringent restrictions on predatory corporate practices, explicitly prohibiting behavioral tracking, targeted advertising directed at children, and any form of data processing that may cause an adverse impact on a child's physical or psychological well-being. In principle, these robust legislative provisions aim to ensure that young citizens are not reduced to mere data sources for

corporate monetization, effectively shielding them from manipulative digital designs.

While the underlying intent of the DPDP Act, 2023, is undeniably protective and progressive, its practical implementation within the diverse reality of Indian households raises significant operational concerns. The theoretical concept of verifiable parental consent presupposes a uniform level of digital awareness, technological literacy, and active parental supervision that simply does not exist across the socio-economic spectrum of the country. In reality, many parents themselves lack a fundamental understanding of how modern digital platforms covertly collect, harvest, and monetize personal data through complex algorithms. Consequently, parental consent is frequently given mechanically through quick, thoughtless approvals of lengthy terms-of-service agreements rather than through an informed, critical understanding of potential privacy risks. At the same time, children have become highly active, deeply habituated users of online games, social media platforms, and educational technology (EdTech) applications, many of which are explicitly engineered using persuasive design loops to encourage constant user engagement. In such an immersive and addictive environment, distinguishing between meaningful, informed consent and routine, automated digital acceptance becomes increasingly difficult for families, thereby creating a profound gap between the law's protective intention and its real-world effectiveness.

A significant portion of this enforcement challenge emerges directly from the rapid, institutionalized digitization of the education sector itself. Modern schools and EdTech platforms now rely heavily on automated digital tools for everyday tasks such as attendance tracking, assignment submissions, standardized assessments, and direct communication with parents. While these systems have undeniably improved administrative efficiency and broadened institutional access, they have also led to the large-scale, systematic collection of children's personal data, often without a clear understanding among students, parents, or even educators regarding where this information is stored or how it might be utilized. Many educational applications routinely track and store highly specific behavioral data, including user login patterns, the exact time spent on specific tasks, detailed academic performance analytics, and granular interaction histories. In many documented instances, this highly personal information is utilized not just for academic tracking or institutional reporting, but is fed back into corporate algorithms for product improvement, user retention analytics, and engagement strategies. This raises a critical ethical concern, as data generated within the private confines of the classroom is increasingly becoming part of a broader, commercial digital ecosystem, blurring the traditional boundaries between public education and corporate data profiling.

Beyond the structured domain of educational platforms, children's daily digital exposure is heavily shaped by social media applications and highly immersive online gaming environments. These commercial platforms are deliberately designed around sophisticated, engagement-driven algorithms that encourage prolonged usage by constantly analyzing user behavior, micro-preferences, and real-time emotional triggers. For developing children, this translates into continuous, unmediated exposure to highly tailored content streams designed specifically to keep them online for as long as possible, usually without any comprehension of how these underlying systems operate. In these pervasive entertainment ecosystems, behavioral tracking becomes an omnipresent, routine occurrence where every click, pause, social interaction, and viewing pattern contributes to an expansive digital profile used to predict and influence future behavior. The DPDP Act, 2023, legally seeks to restrict targeted advertising and behavioral tracking for minors, yet enforcing these strict boundaries within fast-moving, globally hosted digital environments remains an extraordinarily complex technical challenge. The ultimate result is a highly commercialized digital space where children are active, enthusiastic participants, yet remain largely unaware subjects of extensive, ongoing data collection.

The ultimate challenge, therefore, is not merely about the existence of a robust legal framework like the Digital Personal Data Protection Act, 2023, but about ensuring its meaningful, practical implementation within a rapidly evolving digital ecosystem. Effectively protecting children online cannot depend solely on formal, legalistic consent mechanisms that can be easily bypassed or mechanically approved; it must be systematically supported by a massive upgrade in digital literacy among parents, educators, and children themselves. Schools and educational institutions must be strongly encouraged or legally compelled to adopt transparent data practices, while technology platforms must be held strictly accountable for designing child-centric, privacy-respecting systems by default. Concurrently, comprehensive awareness campaigns regarding digital footprints, data sharing, and algorithmic manipulation must become an essential, non-negotiable part of early childhood education curricula nationwide. Without these complementary, grassroots structural measures, the idealized notion of verifiable parental consent risks becoming a mere procedural formality and a checkbox compliance exercise rather than a genuine safeguard for the youth. Safeguarding children's digital presence ultimately requires a massive, collective effort where statutory law, institutional education, and technological design work in perfect alignment, ensuring that India's youngest internet users are not merely passive participants in the digital economy but are adequately protected citizens within it. (the writer can be reached at dipakkurmipltd@gmail.com)



Iran retaliates to 2nd day of US strikes by firing at Gulf states, Jordan

DUBAI, June 11: The US and Iran traded strikes for a second day, pushing the Middle East closer to the resumption of a full-scale war.

The American attack, which lasted into Thursday morning in Iran, appeared more intense and wider than the day before, but Tehran released little information on the extent of the damage. An Indian official said a US attack on an oil tanker allegedly trying to violate Washington's blockade on Iranian ports killed three Indian mariners, underscoring the danger to seafarers.

It was the third time this week that back-and-forth strikes have rattled the Middle East. The first involved attacks between Iran and Israel, followed by the two rounds of fire between the US and Iran, which hit countries in the region that host American bases.

The new exchange of fire came as efforts to negotiate an end to the war appeared stuck, with US President Donald Trump warning that Tehran would "pay the price" for stalled negotiations. Iran's Foreign Ministry said in a statement Thursday that the US attacks had "effectively rendered the ceasefire ... meaningless," without saying it was abandoning it.

Central to the negotiations is Iran's stranglehold on the Strait of Hormuz, which has disrupted

global energy supplies, driven up fuel prices and made food and other basics more expensive well beyond the region.

Iran announced Thursday that the strait was closed, but it was unclear what that meant since it has severely restricted traffic through the waterway since early in the war, and only a trickle of ships has gotten through. The US military's Central Command disputed the claim — and Trump said Wednesday that the US has undertaken a secret mission in recent weeks to sneak ships through the passage.

The two sides also remain at odds over Iran's nuclear program, which Tehran insists is peaceful but which the US and Israel fear could be used to build an atomic weapon due to its stockpile of highly enriched uranium. The US and Israel said a major reason they went to war on Feb. 28 was to ensure that Iran would never be able to do that.

US strikes Iran and Iran fires back at Gulf states

Central Command said its latest round of airstrikes came "in response to Iran's unwarranted and continued aggression" and targeted "Iranian military surveillance capabilities, communication systems and air defence sites." It did not elaborate on the damage done by the strikes, which it said ended just



before sunrise Thursday in Iran.

Explosions from the strikes echoed around Iran's capital, as well as the port city of Bandar Abbas and other southern areas along the Strait of Hormuz. Iran's paramilitary Revolutionary Guard later said sites hit included a manufacturing complex, a military barracks and a local Guard base outside of Tehran.

Iran said it fired back at Kuwait, Bahrain and Jordan, as it had a day before.

Kuwait closed its airspace for several hours because of the attack, but did not elaborate on any damage. Jordan said it intercepted 20 Iranian missiles fired toward an area that is home to a base hosting

US troops, though no one was hurt.

Bahrain's Interior Ministry said an 11-year-old girl was hurt and cars and homes were damaged by debris from interceptions responding to the Iranian attack.

Meanwhile, Israel warned residents in the country's north to seek shelter after the detection of suspected incoming fire from Lebanon, where Israel is fighting the Iran-allied Hezbollah militant group.

Trump says US is sneaking oil through the Strait of Hormuz

Iran's ability to control the Strait of Hormuz has proved a strong bargaining chip since the narrow waterway's effective closure has severely disrupted the global econ-

omy.

Trump said Wednesday that the US military has undertaken a mission since last month to sneak oil shipments past Iran's forces in the strait, aided by the destruction of Iranian radar equipment.

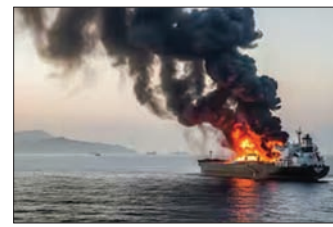
Trump said that as a result, more than 100 million barrels of oil have evaded Iran's chokehold. There was no immediate confirmation of that figure, which equals roughly five days of oil shipments through the waterway before the war began.

But the seas remain dangerous for mariners. The US Navy targeted the Palau-flagged tanker Settebello on Tuesday. The US military's Central Command had accused the Settebello of having "violated the ongoing blockade by attempting to transport oil from Iran." American forces fired into the ship's engine room to stop it on Wednesday.

The leader of the International Maritime Organisation, a United Nations agency, condemned the attack.

Another tanker near where the Settebello was struck off Oman experienced a fire in its engine room on Thursday, according to the British military's United Kingdom Maritime Operations centre. It wasn't immediately clear what sparked the blaze. (AP)

India 'closely monitoring' incident involving vessel off Oman port



DUBAI, June 11: Amid heightened tensions in the Gulf region, the Indian Embassy in Muscat on Thursday said it is closely monitoring an incident involving a vessel off Oman's Shinas port and that evacuation of its crew is underway.

In a post on X, the Indian Embassy said: "We have learnt of an incident involving a vessel off Shinas port of Oman, earlier today. We are closely monitoring the situation and coordinating with the local authorities for further details."

In a subsequent update, it said: "Evacuation of crew from MT Jalveer to Shinas port is being coordinated with assistance from Royal Navy of Oman, and shall soon be completed."

The embassy did not provide details about the nature of the incident or the crew members on board the vessel MT Jalveer.

The Forward Seamen's Union of India earlier posted photographs showing thick smoke billowing

from a vessel it identified as MT Jalveer and said it could have Indian seafarers on board.

But it could not be immediately verified what really happened to the vessel.

The latest alert by the Indian mission came a day after a commercial vessel identified as MT Settebello came under US military attack off the Oman coast. India summoned the US charge d'affaires and lodged a strong protest after the incident.

MT Settebello had 24 Indian crew members onboard, of which 21 were rescued, and three were reported missing.

On Thursday, Union Minister for Ports, Shipping and Waterways Sarbananda Sonowal confirmed that the three Indian seafarers, who were missing after Wednesday's attack, were found dead.

Earlier, on Monday, all 24 Indian crew members of a merchant tanker - identified as MT Marivex - were rescued in coordination with Oman authorities following a missile attack on the vessel off the Oman coast.

The US military imposed a blockade on Iranian ports after Iran effectively shut the Strait of Hormuz during the ongoing West Asia conflict. (PTI)

Maritime trade should neither be 'impeded nor endangered': Jaishankar in Bulgaria

SOFIA, June 11: External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar has said that securing maritime trade and diversifying supply chains were essential responses to global economic risks, amid heightened tensions in the Gulf region.

Speaking at a press conference in Sofia after his talks with Bulgarian Foreign Minister Velislava Petrova-Chamova on Wednesday, Jaishankar said there was a "meeting of minds" between India and Bulgaria on several issues.

"It is particularly important that maritime trade is neither impeded nor endangered. On behalf of the Global South, India has also repeatedly underlined concerns of energy, food, and fertilisers," Jaishankar said.

"Where economic risks are concerned, the answer is in supply chain resilience and in further diversification."

His remarks came against the backdrop of mounting tensions in the Gulf, where Indian seafarers have come under repeated threat in recent days.

Jaishankar said India and Bulgaria shared long-standing ties and that the task now was to "refashion that into a contemporary and forward-looking relationship."

On the economic front, he said India's annual growth of 7-8 per



cent "offers many new opportunities, both global and international."

Jaishankar listed sectors such as pharmaceuticals, engineering, digital and defence as areas of opportunity within India, and said Indian companies were also making new investments abroad and seeking further collaborations to enhance their competitiveness and market access.

The minister noted that the Sofia University had one of the oldest Indology departments in Europe, and that Yoga and Ayurveda were gaining popularity in Bulgaria.

He also recalled that well-known Indian films had been shot on location in the country in the past.

"As India emerges as a signifi-

cant hub of global creative investment, this tradition can surely be revived, and I invite the Bulgarian creative industry to come to India," Jaishankar said.

He underlined the importance of connecting the youth of both countries through hackathons, exchanges and sports.

On India-EU ties, Jaishankar recalled the Free Trade Agreement concluded earlier this year, along with a security and defence partnership and a mobility framework, saying together these "have the potential of transforming the quality of our cooperation."

"Economic opportunities will be explored by each EU member state individually," Jaishankar said.

He invited Bulgarian businesses

to undertake initiatives in India, as Indian businesses would do in return.

During the bilateral talks, the two sides reviewed the full spectrum of India-Bulgaria relations and explored new avenues for co-operation, particularly in the context of the India-EU FTA, the Strategic and Defence Partnership and the Comprehensive Mobility Cooperation Framework.

The India-EU Free Trade Agreement, concluded in January 2026 after nearly two decades of negotiations, is seen as a landmark pact covering a market of two billion people and accounting for roughly a quarter of global GDP.

Jaishankar arrived in Bulgaria on Wednesday and held high-level talks with PM Rumen Radev and Foreign Minister Petrova-Chamova, with discussions focused on expanding bilateral cooperation and strengthening India's engagement with Bulgaria and the European Union.

Following his visit to Sofia, Jaishankar will travel to Finland on Thursday to participate in the 14th edition of the Kultaranta Talks, themed 'A World in Transition: Global, Regional and Local Perspectives'. He will also meet his Finnish counterpart and other senior leaders. (PTI)

Firmly opposed to attacks on merchant shipping: India tells UNSC amid Iran conflict

UNITED NATIONS, June 11: India voiced its firm opposition to attacks on merchant shipping amid the ongoing Iran conflict, as it told the UN Security Council that several of its nationals have died or are missing due to attacks in the region.

"We expressed our deep concern at the conflict in Iran and the Gulf region that unfortunately began in the holy month of Ramadan and urged all sides to exercise restraint, avoid escalation and prioritise the safety of civilians," India's Permanent Representative to the UN Ambassador Harish Parvathaneni said Wednesday.

Addressing the UN Security Council open debate on 'Maintenance of International Peace and Security: Advancing Political Solutions in the Middle East: Mediation and Dialogue for Lasting Peace', Parvathaneni said India is firmly opposed to attacks on merchant shipping, as many of its nationals are prominent in its global workforce.

"Many Indian nationals have lost their lives or are missing as a result of attacks against countries of the region and against merchant vessels and sea lanes of communication," he said.

Parvathaneni's remarks in the Security Council came just hours

after India summoned US charge d'affaires Jason Meeks in New Delhi and lodged a strong protest over a US attack on commercial tanker Settebello with 24 Indian crew members off the coast of Oman.

Three of the 24 crew members on board the vessel went missing following the attack.

The attack on Settebello came two days after a Palau-flagged vessel with 24 Indians came under attack of the US Navy as the ship tried to evade the US blockade of Iranian ports.

Parvathaneni noted that there are almost 10 million Indian citizens who live and work in the Gulf region and underscored that their safety and well-being are of utmost priority to India.

"Our trade and energy supply chains are dependent on stability in the region and any major disruption has serious consequences for the Indian economy," he said, adding that the intensification of the Iran conflict and its spread to other nations have evoked great anxiety.

"The mounting destruction and deaths and cessation of normal life and economic activities have deeply impacted India, a proximate neighbour with critical stakes in the security and stability of the region,"

he said.

India strongly reiterated its call for dialogue and diplomacy, avoiding impeding freedom of navigation and commerce, avoiding military targeting of commercial shipping, avoiding targeting of the civilian population and infrastructure, and seeking an early end to the conflict. New Delhi also expressed its support for all efforts aimed at the peaceful resolution of issues.

India voiced deep concern over the ongoing conflicts in the Middle East, noting the immense humanitarian and human toll in terms of loss of lives, injuries and large-scale displacement of vulnerable civilian populations, impediments to freedom of navigation and consequent impact on global flow of commerce, including massive disruptions to established supply chains and global energy supplies.

India said the situation in Gaza has grave humanitarian implications that call for a sustained ceasefire, humanitarian access and a credible pathway towards a durable and peaceful resolution based on a negotiated two-state solution with a sovereign, independent, viable State of Palestine, living side by side in peace and security with Israel, within secure and recognised borders. (PTI)

Pakistan criticises India's remarks on PoK Trump has a new, surprising take on the higher cost of living: 'I love the inflation'

ISLAMABAD, June 11: Pakistan on Thursday criticised India's recent remarks on Pakistan-occupied Kashmir, asserting that it was addressing the issues related to the protests in the region within a democratic and constitutional framework.

On Tuesday, India came down hard on Pakistan for its "brutality" against people in PoK and called on the international community to hold that country accountable for its "abuses".

India's reaction came as over 20 people were reportedly killed in police action on protesters in several parts of PoK.

Responding to questions during his weekly media briefing, Foreign Office spokesperson Tahir Andrabi on Thursday said Pakistan rejected India's statements "in their entirety."

He also rejected any effort to compare the political situation on the two sides of the Line of Control (LoC).

The situation in PoK is being

addressed "within a democratic and constitutional framework," he said. "Any attempt to conflate the two is misleading and does not withstand objective scrutiny".

Reacting to a statement made by an Indian minister, Andrabi warned that any attempt by India to block water would be treated as "an act of war".

"Pakistan will take all necessary measures to safeguard its economy and its vital national interests and the lives of its 250 million people," he said.

He said that Pakistan firmly rejected any notion that water can be treated as a political tool or instrument of coercion or a weapon. "Such actions would threaten not just regional peace and security of South Asia and beyond...," he stated.

On a question regarding the latest yearbook published by the Stockholm International Peace Research Institute (SIPRI), he said Pakistan noted the report's

assessment of India's nuclear capabilities, including the reported deployment of nuclear warheads.

Citing developments including the canisterisation of missile systems, the expansion of sea-based nuclear capabilities, and the pursuit of longer-range missile systems, he said such developments could increase operational readiness and complicate crisis stability in South Asia.

Commenting on military strikes in Afghanistan on June 9, he claimed that Pakistan had acted on "credible intelligence" and targeted hideouts and safe havens of militants belonging to Tehreek-e-Taliban.

Responding to a question about a recent UN report documenting civilian casualties in eastern Afghanistan, Andrabi said he had not yet reviewed the report and therefore could not comment on its findings or methodology. (PTI)

WASHINGTON, June 11: President Donald Trump on Wednesday showed how he had learned to stop worrying about inflation and simply, in his own words, "love" it.

Asked about the new report that the consumer price index in May had jumped 4.2 per cent over the last year, the president took a surprisingly optimistic tack with the challenging news. Trump didn't dismiss the affordability issue as a "hoax" that was started by Democrats, as he has done previously. Nor did he claim that he was bringing down the cost of living.

Instead, after the government said that inflation spiked to the highest level since April 2023, Trump praised the numbers.

"You know what I really love?" Trump said. "I love the inflation."

It was an unexpected take given that voters ahead of the November midterm elections have ranked the economy as a top concern — and have given Trump low marks on that issue. Within minutes of his on-camera comment, Democrats quickly rushed to promote it on social media.

Trump had pledged in his 2024 campaign to quickly vanquish inflation, but his argument now is that higher prices are solely a function of the Iran war raising energy costs. On Wednesday, he claimed that relief is already on its way because of a secret military operation that had ferried what he said was 100 million barrels of oil through the Strait of Hormuz, the primary shipping channel for 20 per cent of the world's global oil supply that has been effectively closed by the war since late February.

"Trump really said, I love the inflation." On camera. For all of America to hear." Senate Democratic Leader Chuck Schumer quickly posted on X. "His contempt for you knows no bounds."

House Democratic Leader Hakeem Jeffries said on X that with Trump's stated love of inflation, "We finally found something that Donald Trump loves as much as he loves himself."

Rep Emilia Sykes, D-Ohio, quickly pressed Energy Secretary Chris Wright at a hearing about

whether he, too, loved inflation.

"Do you love inflation?" Sykes asked. "I love ending Iran's ability to have a nuclear weapon," Wright answered. He only conceded after being pressed: "No, I would prefer lower inflation."

When asked about Trump's specific comments, Wright said, "He's an entertaining, hyperbolic guy who's done tremendous leadership."

Trump claimed the secretive shipments were why oil prices had fallen below USD 90 a barrel, after surpassing USD 110 at the start of April.

"I'm just announcing today for the first time, but we've been taking out millions of barrels of oil, millions of barrels every night," Trump said. On social media, the president said the mission began last month and had "resulted in more than 100 MILLION Barrels of Oil making its way through the Strait, and into the Open Market. More than 200 Commercial Ships have safely traveled through the Strait." There was no immediate data available to back up that total, and it was not immediately clear

what role the US military had played. To put that figure into context, a daily average of 20 million barrels of oil had gone through the strait before the war, which would mean that Trump's mission had resulted in the equivalent of five days' worth of normal oil shipments.

Responding to the new inflation report, the White House pointed out that some expenses had dropped in May relative to the previous month: the price of new vehicles, prescription drugs and auto insurance, for example. But when the overall inflation number is paired with the change in hourly wages, there is a bleak sign that people's spending power relative to their earnings has declined.

"President Trump has consistently maintained that oil and gas prices — and thus overall inflation — will plummet once the Iran situation is resolved, and the administration will continue pushing our affordability agenda to enable Americans to keep more of their hard-earned money," White House spokesman Kush Desai said in an email. (AP)

HKH region faces twin threat of droughts, flash floods despite weaker monsoon

KATHMANDU, June 11: The Hindu Kush Himalayan (HKH) region is likely to face the twin risks of droughts and flash floods during the 2026 monsoon season despite forecasts of below-normal rainfall in several countries, according to a new report released on Thursday.

The HKH region, often referred to as Asia's water tower, stretches across eight countries — Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Bhutan, China, India, Myanmar, Nepal and Pakistan — and provides freshwater resources to nearly two billion people. The Hindu Kush Himalaya Monsoon Outlook 2026, published by the International Centre for Integrated Mountain Development (ICIMOD), projects below-normal monsoon rainfall across parts of

the region. Scientists, however, warned that a weaker monsoon does not necessarily translate into lower disaster risks.

Experts caution that the risk of flash floods, landslides and other hazards remains high.

"Even in a weaker monsoon, short periods of intense rainfall remain a major concern," said Manish Shrestha, Hydrologist at ICIMOD, stressing the need for communities and authorities to closely monitor short-term forecasts and advisories.

The warning comes amid growing concerns over the impact of climate change on the HKH region, which has been warming faster than the global average and has witnessed an increase in extreme weather events, including devastating floods, landslides, glacial lake outburst floods and prolonged droughts in recent years.



According to the regional climate body report, prolonged dry spells interspersed with intense downpours could increase the likelihood of both droughts and floods within the same season. Such rainfall patterns could

trigger flash floods and landslides, particularly in fragile mountain ecosystems.

The outlook points to a drier monsoon overall, but that does not mean lower risk. Short, intense rain-

fall events can still trigger serious hazards," Shrestha said.

The report noted that rising temperatures are "likely to intensify heat stress and reduce water availability."

The warming of the HKH region has significant implications for the global climate. Acting as a heat source in summer and a heat sink in winter, the region, along with the Tibetan Plateau, helps shape the Indian summer monsoon.

Experts warn that climatic changes in the HKH could further affect the monsoon, which is already exhibiting changes in its spread and rainfall distribution patterns.

Lower snow persistence at the start of the monsoon season has also weakened the region's natural water-storage capacity, making river flows and groundwater recharge more vulnerable to fluctuations in rainfall, the ICIMOD report said.

"Lower snow persistence means the region is entering the monsoon with a reduced seasonal water buffer," said Sarthak Shrestha, co-author of the outlook.

Experts said the growing unpredictability of the monsoon is complicating disaster preparedness and response efforts across South Asia.

"The growing unpredictability of the monsoon is already creating coordination challenges. Preparedness now requires stronger coordination between government, technical agencies, and local authorities," according to Neera Shrestha Pradhan, Water and Disaster Risk Reduction (DRR) Lead at ICIMOD. The outlook warned that erratic weather patterns could put additional pressure on food production, water resources, and energy systems while increasing vulnerability in both rural and urban areas.

"Erratic rainfall following long

dry spells increases the risk of landslides. This can worsen socio-economic pressures, including migration, rising food prices, energy stress, and disruptions to tourism," said Ranit Chatterjee, CEO of social entrepreneurial start-up Rika India.

Scientists also called for stronger early warning systems and impact-based forecasting.

"Drought and flood risks can no longer be managed separately. Early warning systems, short-term forecasts, and locally driven preparedness need to work together to address increasingly complex hazards," said Arun Bhakta Shrestha, Senior Adviser at ICIMOD.

Experts said that with climate variability increasing, governments and communities must prepare simultaneously for multiple hazards rather than planning for a single type of disaster. (PTI)

'Killing' of Naga hostages

Manipur govt will not remain mute spectator to atrocities: CM Singh

IMPHAL, June 11: The Manipur government will not remain as a mute spectator to atrocities, Manipur Chief Minister Y Khemchand Singh said on Thursday, after police found the mortal remains of six people suspected to be of missing Naga men, who had been held hostage by armed groups in Kangpokpi district.

Six persons of the Naga community were abducted from Leilon Vaiphei village in Kangpokpi district on May 13.

In an official statement, the CM said the state government won't tolerate such violence, and "will not remain a mute spectator to these atrocities".

"Culprits responsible for the murder will be arrested and punished as per law," Singh said.

The bodies were recovered a day after 14 Kuki individuals who were abducted by armed groups in Manipur's Senapati district nearly a month ago, were released on June 9.

"After nearly 24 hours of sustained search operations involving around 450 personnel of the Manipur Police, CRPF, and Assam Rifles, assisted by sniffer dogs and forensic expert teams, the mortal remains of six persons were recovered this afternoon. The deceased are believed to be among those taken hostage from Leilon Vaiphei on May 13, 2026," the police said in a post on X on Wednesday.

These 14 Kuki people and the six Nagas



were among others who were abducted following the killing of three church leaders in Kangpokpi district on May 13.

In a post on X, the chief minister later said: "Deeply anguished by the brutal murder of six innocent Naga villagers abducted from Leilon Vaiphei village, Kangpokpi district. My heartfelt condolences to the bereaved families."

"The Government of Manipur strongly condemns this heinous act and is committed to ensuring that the perpetrators are brought to justice. The case is being investigated by the NIA. Violence has no place in our society. We remain steadfast in our commitment to peace, security, and the rule of law in Manipur," Singh said.

An NIA team visited the JNIMS mortuary in Imphal, after the bodies of the six men were brought to the hospital around 2 am, as part of its investigation into the killing.

Meanwhile, protesters allegedly vandalised the Naga Peoples' Front Manipur unit office at Liangmai Taphou in Senapati district late on Wednesday, after the bodies were recovered by the police.

Furniture and other office property were set afire by the agitators, officials said.

Miscreants also torched two trucks near a school in Karong area on Wednesday evening, they said.

The United Naga Council, the apex body of Nagas in Manipur, has imposed a 24-hour shutdown in parts of the state from 6 am on Thursday to protest against the killing. (PTI)

BJP's Tai Tagak elected unopposed to Rajya Sabha from Arunachal

ITANAGAR, June 11: Senior BJP leader Tai Tagak was on Thursday declared elected unopposed to the lone Rajya Sabha seat from Arunachal Pradesh after the withdrawal period for nominations ended with no other candidate in the fray.

Returning officer-cum-secretary of the Arunachal Pradesh Legislative Assembly, Tadar Meena, formally declared Tagak elected following the close of the candidature withdrawal period at 3 pm.

Since only one nomination had been filed and no withdrawal was made before the stipulated deadline, the declaration was issued under the provisions of the Representation of the People Act, 1951, and the Conduct of Elections Rules, 1961, a communique from the Assembly secretariat said.

The official certificate of election was handed over to the newly elected MP at a function held at Nokmey Namati Hall of the Assembly.

The ceremony was attended by state chief electoral officer-cum-observer Pawan Kumar Sain, Joint CEO Liken Koyu, assistant returning officer Longman Ronrang, and senior BJP leaders.

Later, Tagak called on Speaker Tesam Pongte, who congratulated him on his unopposed election to the council of states and wished



him success in his new responsibilities.

The election was necessitated as the term of the incumbent Rajya Sabha member, Nabam Rebia, is scheduled to end on June 23.

A veteran BJP functionary, 54-year-old Tagak joined the party on September 9, 1995, after serving as a unit organiser of the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS) in Arunachal Pradesh from 1989.

He subsequently held several key organisational positions, including state general secretary and spokesperson, before becoming the state BJP president in February 2013.

During his tenure as state BJP president from 2013 to 2015, the party registered significant electoral gains, winning 11 Assembly

seats and the Arunachal West Lok Sabha constituency while securing around 31 per cent of the vote share.

He is also credited with playing a key role in the political developments that led to the BJP forming the government in Arunachal Pradesh for the first time in 2016.

Hailing from Peel village under Sangram circle in Kurung Komey district, Tagak was known as a social worker and cultural activist before entering active politics.

He has also served two terms as adviser to the chief minister.

Speaking after his election, Tagak said the BJP had honoured a simple grassroots worker and that his selection conveyed a strong message that hard work, sacrifice, dedication and teamwork are recognised in the party.

Recalling his humble beginnings, he said he had worked as a child labourer fetching drinking water for labourers for ₹ 2 a day in 1981-82 and later as a daily wage worker during school vacations for ₹ 5 a day.

He said his nomination reflected the party's faith in dedicated workers and was in line with Prime Minister Narendra Modi's vision of promoting people from non-political backgrounds to contribute to the building of a "Viksit Bharat". (PTI)

8 villagers carrying arms detained in Manipur's Ukhrul

IMPHAL, June 11: Security forces detained eight villagers with arms in Manipur's Ukhrul district, police said on Thursday.

They were later disarmed and released with a "stern warning" on Wednesday, a police officer said.

"In view of recent developments, there were intelligence reports that armed persons were planning to attack isolated villages in the hills... Accordingly, a joint operation was launched at Horei Kaplung hills in Ukhrul district," he said.

"During the operation, around one dozen armed persons were spotted on top of the hills. While some of them fled, eight persons were detained, disarmed and let off with a stern warning," the officer said. A large quantity of arms and ammunition were also recovered from "illegal bunkers" on the hill top, he added.

Fresh violence had erupted in the northeastern state on June 5 after three people, including a woman, were killed as armed assailants launched an attack at a village in Kangpokpi district.

At least seven houses were also gutted in a fire during the attack around 4 am at Loibol Khullen village in Saitu-Gamphazol subdivision of the district, police had said. (PTI)

Officials trained on SIR of electoral rolls in Namsai

HT Correspondent
NAMSAL, June 11: A virtual training programme on the Special Intensive Revision (SIR) of electoral rolls was conducted at the Deputy Commissioner's Conference Hall in Namsai on Thursday to familiarise election officials with the procedures and guidelines for the revision exercise.

The programme was attended by Electoral Registration Officers (EROs), Assistant Electoral Registration Officers (AEROs), Supervisors and Booth Level Officers (BLOs) of the district.

During the training session, participants received detailed instructions on electoral roll revision, voter verification and the field-level implementation of the SIR process.

Mizoram Gov leads Green Mizoram Day plantation drive in Aizawl

AIZAWL, June 11: Mizoram Governor Vijay Kumar Singh on Thursday led the Green Mizoram Day plantation drive by planting a sapling of the state tree, Herse (Mesua ferrea), at the Upper Lawn of Lok Bhavan here.

Officials and staff members of the governor's secretariat also took part in the plantation programme.

Speaking on the occasion, Singh praised the state's annual mass plantation initiative under Green Mizoram Day, describing it as an important step towards environmental protection and sustainable development.

He urged citizens to plant as many saplings as possible throughout the current plantation season instead of limiting their efforts to a single day on Green Mizoram Day.

Highlighting the importance of environmental conservation, the governor noted that the state continues to maintain rich forest cover and healthy

TEJAS workshop promotes entrepreneurship in Namsai

HT Correspondent

NAMSAL, June 11: The Namsai district administration, in collaboration with Startup India under the Department for Promotion of Industry and Internal Trade (DPIIT), Ministry of Commerce and Industry, Government of India, and the Arunachal Pradesh Innovation & Investment Park (APIIP), organised a TEJAS workshop at the Multipurpose Cultural Hall, Namsai on Thursday to promote entrepreneurship and empower local business owners.

The workshop witnessed participation from aspiring entrepreneurs, Self-Help Groups (SHGs), artisans, students and job seekers from different parts of the district.

Deputy Director of Industries, Nondo Doka welcomed the participants and highlighted the objectives of the programme, emphasising the importance of entrepreneurship in driving economic growth and employment generation.

Addressing the gathering, deputy commissioner CR Khampa encouraged participants to utilise local resources, skills and innovation to establish sustainable enterprises and emerge as job creators rather than job seekers.

District Planning Officer Dr Keshab Sharma briefed participants on various government schemes aimed at promoting entrepreneurship and self-employment, including the Deen Dayal Upadhyay Swavalamban Yojana (DDUSY), National Livestock Mission-Entrepreneurship Development Programme (NLM-EDP) and Atmanirbhar initiatives.

Representatives from Startup India, Rishi Dewan and Simran Hasija, elaborated on startup opportunities, funding support mechanisms and the national vision of fostering innovation-driven entrepreneurship across the country.

Officials from APIIP, Manish Mall and Vikas Sharma, highlighted initiatives related to Ease of Doing Business and startup facilitation in Arunachal Pradesh, encouraging entrepreneurs to take

advantage of the support ecosystem available in the state.

Resource persons also shared information on various entrepreneurship promotion schemes, including the Pradhan Mantri Formalisation of Micro Food Processing Enterprises (PMFME), One District One Product (ODOP) and the Prime Minister's Employment Generation Programme (PMEGP).

The workshop aimed to create awareness about entrepreneurship opportunities, government support programmes and startup ecosystems while encouraging youth and local entrepreneurs to explore innovative business ventures.

Rio calls killing of 6 Nagas in Manipur horrific, demands justice

HT Correspondent
DIMAPUR, June 11: Calling the killing of six innocent Nagas allegedly by the Kuki community in Manipur as tragic, inhuman and horrific, Nagaland chief minister Neiphiu Rio on Thursday appealed to the Government of India and the Manipur government to take all necessary and urgent measures to ensure that justice is delivered.

In a social media post, Rio said those responsible for this heinous crime must be identified, apprehended and prosecuted to the fullest extent of the law.

"Accountability is essential. Only through a fair, transparent and credible process can a measure of confidence be restored among the people," he said.

Rio said this barbaric and reprehensible act represents a complete disregard for the sanctity of human life and the most fundamental principles of humanity, adding it is an atrocity that deserves the strongest possible condemnation from every right-thinking individual and from every section of society.

He said this tragedy is even more painful and disturbing as it occurred after the Naga people had peacefully and unconditionally facilitated the safe release of all 14 Kuki hostages who were in their custody.

"Throughout the period of captivity, every effort was made to ensure their well-being, safety and dignity. They were treated with humanity and compassion, and all their needs were attended to without hindrance," Rio stated.

Also, demanding that the authorities must take concrete and impartial steps to ensure the safety and security of all communities, Rio said at a time such as this, people must continue to have faith in the government, the rule of law and the institutions entrusted with maintaining peace and order.

Tripura: 3 sentenced to 20 years' rigorous imprisonment in narcotics trafficking case

AGARTALA, June 11: A special court in Tripura's Sepahijala district has sentenced three persons to 20 years of rigorous imprisonment in connection with the seizure of a large quantity of banned Yaba tablets in 2024.

The court also imposed a fine of ₹ 1 lakh each on the trio, the non-payment of which will attract simple imprisonment for six months, police said.

A total of 9,500 Yaba tablets, weighing 950 gm, were seized from a vehicle at Kathalia Naka Point in October 2024, and the three were subsequently arrested, a police officer said.

They were booked under sections of the Narcotic Drugs and Psychotropic Substances (NDPS) Act.

"Special Judge Sanjoy Bhattacharjee, after a thorough trial on Wednesday, found the three accused persons guilty and sentenced them to 20 years of rigorous imprisonment," the officer said.

Yaba tablets, also called "crazy drug", contain a mixture of methamphetamine and caffeine and have been banned in India. (PTI)

Arunachal inks pact with IIFT to set up export facilitation cell



ITANAGAR, June 11: Arunachal Pradesh on Thursday signed a pact with the Indian Institute of Foreign Trade (IIFT) Kolkata for the setting up of an export facilitation cell here.

The initiative is a major step towards boosting exports and helping local products reach international markets.

The MoU was signed at the civil secretariat here in the presence of trade and commerce secretary Bullo Mamu, director of trade and commerce Sonyung Modi, IIFT Kolkata head Dr K Rangarajan, export facilitation cell (EFC) coordinator with states and consultant, X-Cell, IIFT Kolkata, Sumana Das, and other officials, a statement said.

The proposed cell will function as a dedicated support centre for exporters, entrepreneurs, farmers, producer groups, self-help groups (SHGs), MSMEs and startups in the state.

It will provide assistance in export procedures, market intelligence, product development, quality standards, trade documentation,

capacity building and market linkages, officials said.

Speaking on the occasion, Mamu said the establishment of the EFC would help unlock Arunachal Pradesh's export potential by connecting the state's unique products with global markets.

She said the centre would provide critical support in export readiness, market intelligence, capacity building and trade facilitation.

The collaboration with IIFT is also expected to provide technical expertise, research support, policy inputs and training programmes for stakeholders, strengthening the state's efforts towards export promotion, entrepreneurship development and economic growth, officials said.

The establishment of the export facilitation cell marks a major milestone in the government's efforts to promote trade, improve ease of doing business and enhance the state's export competitiveness under the vision of Atmanirbhar Bharat, they added. (PTI)

Two shot dead, houses burnt by militants in Manipur's Kamjong

IMPHAL, June 11: Suspected militants attacked a village in Manipur's Kamjong district on Thursday, gunning down two persons and burning several houses, police said.

The incident took place a day after the bodies of six Naga civilians were recovered in Kangpokpi district. It is suspected that the mortal remains belonged to those held hostage by armed groups. Kuthuh Kuki, a small village, was attacked by suspected militants at around 4.55 am, during which two persons were killed, police said.

Some 30 households near the border area with Myanmar were also burnt, the official said.

Security forces have reached the remote village, but the identity of the perpetrators is yet to be known. Kuki Baptist Convention condemned the killings and urged the authorities to take "decisive and comprehensive measures" to ensure protection of civilians.

On the killing, Congress leader Dr Lamintang Haokip claimed that "the Head Deacon of the Kuthuh Church and Chairman of the Youth Dept were brutally murdered."

He alleged that the government's failure to control the situation is "beyond tolerance". (PTI)

No.B/HFD/33/5/Auction/885 Dated Kokrajhar the, 10/06/2026

SHORT SALE NOTICE

Interested individuals and parties are hereby invited to participate in an open Auction Sale of 04 (Four) nos. Timber Lots (Lot No. KDO/13 of 2025-26 and KDO/WF/01, 02 of 2025-26 comprising 2,987 m³ Wind Fallen of N/Sal logs. The auction will be conducted on 19/06/2026 at the office of the Divisional Forest Officer, Haltugaon Division, Kokrajhar as per Auction Notice No. 49, Dated 10/06/2026

Sd/-
Divisional Forest Officer,
Haltugaon Division, Kokrajhar

IPR(BTC)/C/2026-27/517



Third TMC MP quits, Kalyan targets Abhishek; Shatrughan, Sougata rally behind Mamata

NEW DELHI, June 11: The crisis in the Trinamool Congress deepened on Thursday as Raja Sabha MP Prakash Chik Baraik resigned from both the Upper House and the party, becoming the third TMC parliamentarian to quit this week, even as senior leaders including Shatrughan Sinha, Babul Supriyo and Sougata Roy publicly reaffirmed their support for party supremo Mamata Banerjee.

The day also saw fresh fault lines emerge within the party, with senior leader and Lok Sabha MP Kalyan Banerjee launching a sharp attack on TMC national general secretary Abhishek Banerjee and declaring he would remain in the party only if the latter was removed from all leadership positions. On Thursday, Baraik became the third MP of the TMC to resign from both the Raja Sabha and the party after Sukhendu Sekhar Ray and Sushmita Dev.

Talking to reporters outside the residence of BJP leader Nishikant Dubey later, Baraik said, "People of West Bengal have given their mandate to the BJP. The TMC did not win. Looking at the mandate given by the people of West Bengal, I am resigning from the party."

In an interview with PTI later, he said, "Keeping the public opinion in mind, I resigned from the party." "The Centre and the state need to be on the same page for development. We lost 34 years under the TMC when there was no collaboration between the state and the Centre," he said.

Baraik said the poor are the ones who bear the brunt of such politi-



cal differences. "The new government, in its first meeting, brought proposals for medical colleges and AIIMS. There were announcements for a bullet train from Siliguri to Delhi. We should prioritise development. We come from poor families, and I am the son of a tea-garden worker," he said.

"I will work as per the directions of CM Suwendu Adhikari and Prime Minister Narendra Modi. I want to work for the people where I come from," he said.

Meanwhile, several MPs came out in support of Mamata Banerjee, with actor-turned-politician Shatrughan Sinha, whose name figured on a purported list of rebel MPs circulating online, asserting he would not abandon the TMC supremo in her difficult times.

In an exclusive interview with PTI, the TMC MP from West Bengal's Asansol said some people

might have left Banerjee due to compulsions, fears or allurements, but his principled stand was that he would neither desert the party nor its leader. "I am issuing a three-line whip to myself -- I was with the TMC and Mamata ji, I am with the TMC and Mamata ji, and I will stay with the TMC and Mamata ji. I have no intention of going anywhere," he said. A three-line whip is typically issued by political parties before voting on important issues in Parliament.

The former Union minister, who was earlier with the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) and served in the Atal Bihari Vajpayee government, also posted on X on Thursday congratulating Prime Minister Narendra Modi on completing 12 years in office, fuelling speculation about his political plans.

Before joining the TMC, Sinha was also with the Congress for some time, and fought the 2019

Lok Sabha polls from Patna Sahib on a Congress ticket.

"I will not leave Mamata Banerjee in her difficult times. Very few people stood by me when I lost, or rather was made to lose, the Lok Sabha polls from Patna Sahib in 2019, and Mamata Banerjee was one of them," Sinha said.

He said while he had friends in all political parties, but he would not abandon Banerjee.

"For the last few days, there has been a lot of speculation about me. Some are speaking the truth, while others are spreading rumours. Some have claimed that I have joined the so-called rebel group," he said. "I am also grateful to those who invited me to join the TMC rebel group. Everyone is my friend, I have no complaints against them. But my principled stand is that I should stand by Mamata Banerjee now. As of now, I will not change my path," he said.

Raja Sabha MP Babul Supriyo, who was also earlier with the BJP, made it clear that he was with the Mamata Banerjee camp.

"Amidst all this confusion and rumours, I want to make it amply clear that I am neither joining any faction nor any other party. It is inappropriate to abandon a ship when it is in troubled waters," he said in a post on X.

TMC Lok Sabha MP Pratima Mondal also denied being part of any dissident group.

"The false news that is being spread is not good, not for the public who elected me in the election, and not for me either. I have not even gone to Delhi," the Lok Sabha MP told PTI Videos. (PTI)

SC to hear Natarajan's plea All 3 BJP candidates from MP elected unopposed to Rajya Sabha

BHOPAL, June 11: The returning officer on Thursday declared the three BJP candidates elected unopposed in the biennial Rajya Sabha elections in Madhya Pradesh, even as Congress candidate Meenakshi Natarajan has moved the Supreme Court against the rejection of her nomination.

Returning Officer Arvind Sharma announced that the Bharatiya Janata Party's Tarun Chugh, Rajnesh Agarwal and Mahesh Kewat have been elected.

The trio visited the assembly complex here and collected their certificates of victory before displaying them to the media. They also met state BJP president Hemant Khandelwal later.

"Your dedication to the organisation, tireless hard work, and extensive experience in public service will undoubtedly present issues of Madhya Pradesh and national interest, effectively in the Upper House of Parliament. I am confident that under the leadership of Prime Minister Narendra Modi, you will all play a crucial role in realising the vision of a developed India in 2047 and will provide new energy to the aspirations of the people," Khandelwal said in a post on X, wishing the three leaders a successful parliamentary term.

The Congress had nominated Meenakshi Natarajan as its sole candidate, but returning officer Sharma rejected her nomination on Tuesday on the ground that she concealed information about a court complaint filed against her in Telangana in the Form 26 submitted with her nomination.



BJP candidate Mahesh Kewat had filed a complaint in this regard.

The Supreme Court would be hearing Natarajan's petition against the Returning Officer's decision on Friday.

A partial working day bench of Justices Prashant Kumar Mishra and Atul S Chandurkar, however, also questioned how the petition was maintainable while the election process was ongoing.

Senior advocate Abhishek Singhvi, appearing for Natarajan, argued before the Supreme Court on Thursday that a candidate is required to disclose only the criminal cases carrying a minimum sentence of at least two years, whereas in the present case, only summons have been issued.

Voting for the three Raja Sabha seats from Madhya Pradesh was scheduled for June 18. These seats were to fall vacant with the expiry of the terms of BJP's George Kurien and Sumer Singh Solanki and senior Congress leader Digvijay Singh on June 21.

The BJP has 164 MLAs in the 230-member Madhya Pradesh Assembly while the Congress has 62 MLAs eligible to vote. With each Raja Sabha candidate requiring 58 votes to win, the BJP was assured of winning two seats comfortably, while the Congress had enough votes to win a single seat.

But the saffron party fielded a third candidate, whose victory would have depended on cross-voting or abstention by opposition members had polling taken place.

Speaking in Delhi, Congress general secretary K C Venugopal said what happened in Madhya Pradesh was "seat chori (seat theft)". "There is no criminal case against Meenakshi Natarajan. In Jharkhand a BJP-backed person's nomination was allowed despite him leaving two columns empty. It was wrong but it was accepted," Venugopal said, adding that they will fight against the rejection of Natarajan's nomination "politically and legally." (PTI)

CMs of JK, four states meet PM Modi

NEW DELHI, June 11: Chief Ministers of Uttar Pradesh, Tamil Nadu, Karnataka, Telangana, and Jammu and Kashmir on Thursday separately called on Prime Minister Narendra Modi and discussed with him issues concerning their respective states.

The chief ministers are in the national capital to attend the 11th Governing Council meeting of the NITI Aayog, which was chaired by the prime minister earlier in the day.

"Chief Minister of Uttar Pradesh, Shri @mygadiyanath met Prime Minister @narendramodi," the Prime Minister's Office (PMO) said in a post on X.

Sources said Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath discussed with Modi various issues concerning Uttar Pradesh. Tamil Nadu Chief Minister C Joseph Vijay also called on Modi.

"Chief Minister of Tamil Nadu, Thiru @TVKVijayHQ met Prime Minister @narendramodi," the PMO said.

This was the second time Vijay met the PM after assuming charge as the chief minister last month. The Tamil Nadu Chief Minister's Office said Vijay met Modi after the conclusion of the NITI Aayog meet.

Karnataka Chief Minister D K Shivakumar also called on Modi and had a "constructive discussion" on the state's development priorities. This was Shivakumar's first meeting with the prime minister after taking charge as the chief minister on June 3.

"Chief Minister of Karnataka, Shri @DKShivakumar met Prime Minister @narendramodi," the PMO said in a post on X.

Shivakumar said he had a "constructive discussion" with Modi on Karnataka's development priorities, including infrastructure, investment, urban mobility, irrigation, innovation, and welfare initiatives that directly impact the lives of people.

"Met Hon'ble Prime Minister Shri @narendramodi avaru in New Delhi today for the first time after assuming office as the Chief Minister of Karnataka," he said in a post on X.

The chief minister said Karnataka has always been a key contributor to India's growth story and reiterated the state government's commitment to further strengthening that role.

"I look forward to working closely with the Union Government in the spirit of cooperative federalism to accelerate development, attract greater opportunities, and fulfil the aspirations of the people of Karnataka. Together, we can build a stronger Karnataka and contribute meaningfully to a stronger India," he said. (PTI)

Abhishek appears before CID for questioning in LoP selection signature forgery case

KOLKATA, June 11: Trinamool Congress national general secretary Abhishek Banerjee on Thursday appeared before the West Bengal CID to face questions in the signature forgery case over the party's choice of Leader of Opposition in the state assembly.

Banerjee skipped three previous appearance notices before the investigating agency sleuths, citing illness and his filing of a challenge petition before the Calcutta High Court.

This was the TMC Diamond Harbour MP's first tryst with a state probe agency following the change of guards at Bengal's power corridors. Earlier, he had been questioned on multiple occasions by central agencies -- ED and CBI -- in connection with coal pilferage and school jobs recruitment scams.

He reached CID headquarters 'Bhabani Bhaban' at around 5.50 pm after the high court on Thursday granted him interim protection from any coercive action. The court had directed the TMC MP to appear before the CID at its headquarters by 6 pm on Thursday.

Banerjee returned to Kolkata around 4.30 pm from Delhi, where he had spent the past three days holding meetings with INDIA bloc leaders, including Rahul Gandhi. His arrival was marked by chaotic scenes at the airport, where a section of angry people, amid the crowd which had gathered there, shouted "signature chor" slogans at him. After a nearly 30-minute

stopover at his Kalighat residence, Banerjee arrived at Bhabani Bhaban about 10 minutes ahead of the court-stipulated deadline, with the premises wrapped in tight security cover.

The CID on Tuesday conducted simultaneous searches at the TMC's central office at party supremo Mamata Banerjee's Kalighat residence and at Abhishek's Camac Street office in the city, in their bid to recover the original copy of the TMC's meeting resolution book and attendance sheet containing signatures of 70 MLAs present at the May 6 meeting, but returned empty-handed.

Based on the resolution, the MP had allegedly named Sobhabdeb Chattopadhyay as the assembly's Leader of Opposition, Asima Patra and Nayna Bandopadhyay as deputy LoPs and Firhad Hakim as the chief whip.

CID officers had said that Abhishek had sent a written communication to the Speaker on May 20, where he enclosed a copy of the meeting resolution book and the attendance sheet, reiterating the party's endorsement for the assembly posts.

Two expelled TMC legislators -- Ritabrata Banerjee and Sandipan Saha -- had lodged a complaint before Speaker Rathindra Bose that "no resolution was adopted about the selection of LoP" in the party's May 6 meeting, and that the duo had signed the meeting resolution book on a later date on May 19. (PTI)

Bengal: TMC MP Pratima Mondal denies rebel link

KOLKATA, June 11: Trinamool Congress Lok Sabha MP Pratima Mondal on Thursday denied reports linking her to a group of rebel Parliamentarians allegedly seeking to distance themselves from the party, asserting that her name was being falsely dragged into the ongoing political turmoil triggered by a series of resignations by TMC leaders.

Responding to speculation that she was among the 19-20 MPs who had reportedly signed a letter to Lok Sabha Speaker Om Birla, Mondal said she had no knowledge of any such move.

"Regarding the 19-20 MPs you are talking about and the letter that was reportedly sent to Birla, I have no information about it. I am learning about it only through the media. If 19 or 20 people have signed it, my signature is not among them," she claimed. (PTI)



JAIPUR, June 11: Union Minister for Railways, Information and Broadcasting, and Electronics and Information Technology Ashwini Vaishnavi on Thursday virtually inaugurated a 20 kW Akashvani FM transmitter at Jaisalmer's Ramgarh from the Akashvani Jaipur premises.

With this addition, the total number of FM transmitters in Rajasthan has risen to 39. The Ramgarh transmitter will provide radio coverage within an 80-kilometre radius in the border region, covering nearly 20,000 square kilometres of Jaisalmer district, enabling people to access a range of information, educational and entertainment programmes.

Addressing the gathering, Vaishnavi called for a transformation in the functioning and outlook of Prasar Bharati, stressing that radio broadcasting must adopt a "Digital First" and "Hyper-Local" ap-

proach to remain relevant in an era of rapid technological advancement. He directed officials to prepare a roadmap for this transformation and emphasised the need to integrate local artists and artisans into the broadcasting ecosystem.

The minister also referred to the upcoming Artificial Intelligence (AI) data centre in Jaipur, describing it as a key step towards future technological advancement.

Prasar Bharati Chairman Prasoon Joshi, who also addressed the event, highlighted the continued relevance of institutions like Akashvani and Doordarshan, saying they remain deeply connected to society and play a crucial role in disseminating information and reflecting ground realities. Officials said the transmitter will strengthen the reach of All India Radio and Doordarshan in border areas, serving not only Jaisalmer but also surrounding regions, and marking a significant step in enhancing communication infrastructure along the frontier.

The initiative aligns with the vision of expanding dedicated broadcast infrastructure "from Kashmir to Kutch", ensuring wider and more systematic coverage across border areas. During the event, Vaishnavi also interacted with young officers of Prasar Bharati. (PTI)

OFFICE OF THE EXECUTIVE ENGINEER (PHE) HAMREN DIVISION, HAMREN

NO. EE/PHE/HRN/SBMG-10/2026-27/

Date:

SHORT TENDER NOTICE NO – 1 of 2026-27 UNDER SBM(G)

Sealed tender affixing KAAC receipt worth ₹10.00 (Rupees ten) only are invited from registered contractors/firms of PHE Department, Karbi Anglong district for the below mentioned work of CONSTRUCTION OF PLASTIC WASTE MANAGEMENT UNIT (PWMU) duly approved and accorded by the Chief Engineer (PHE) Sanitation, Hengrabari, Guwahati-36 the vide No. RGRWSM-121/P-11/2017-18/3527 Dated 05/02/2026 under Hamren Division, Hamren will be received up to 29-06-2026 up to 2:00 P.M. and tender so received will be opened on the same date at 3:00 PM in presence of intending tenderer or their authorized representative who likes to be present.

Detail tender papers, specification, terms and condition etc. may be obtained from the office of the undersigned on all working days from 10:00 AM to 2:00 PM from 09-06-2026 and up to 12.00 noon of 29-06-2026 on payment of ₹100.00 (Rupees one hundred) only in demand draft which should be pledge in favour of "Executive Engineer (PHE), Hamren Division, Hamren". The undersigned have reserved the right to accept or reject or cancel the same without any reason and claim thereof. In case of any unavoidable circumstances if tender could not be received or open on the predetermined time and date the same shall be received and opened in the next working day at the same time, for which no separate communication will be made.

Name of Work: Construction of Plastic Waste Management Unit (PWMU) (3 Nos)

Place of Work: a) Amri Block b) Chinthong Block c) Socheng Block

Estimated Amount: 7,88,000/- (Seven Lakh Eighty-Eight Thousand) only

Terms and Condition :-

- Bidder should quote their rates distinctly both in figures and in words on percentage basis as per below /above / and the estimated rates / departmental approved rates.
- The Bidder should furnish their full name and address distinctly in the tender papers.
- Earnest money should invariably be enclosed to the tender papers.
- Income tax, Professional tax and GST clearance certificate should be enclosed with the tender papers.
- The work must be completed within stipulated time.
- The work should be started after signing necessary agreement and in consultation with AEE (PHE) /SO (PHE) i/c.
- Payment will be made subject to availability of fund.
- No advance payment will be made for the work.
- Non-tribal tenderer must produce up to date KAAC trading license along with the tender documents.
- All other terms and condition will be followed as per APWD-2 form of tender.
- The undersigned reserved the right to accept / reject any or all tender in part of in full without assigning any reason thereof and he does not bind himself to accept the lowest tender rate.

Sd/-

Member Secretary, DWSC
Cum Executive Engineer (PHE)
Hamren Division

Memo No.EE/PHE/HRN/SBMG-10/2026-27/127-134

Date: 8/6/26

Nipah virus infection reported in Kerala's Kozhikode, 77 contacts identified

Health Minister K Muraleedharan held a meeting in Thiruvananthapuram to assess the situation

KOZHIKODE (KERALA), June 11: A Nipah virus infection case has been confirmed in Kozhikode district, prompting the administration to initiate preventive measures on Thursday.

The infection was confirmed in a 43-year-old man from Ramanattukara, Kozhikode District Collector M S Madhavikutty said.

A government press release said the patient is undergoing treatment in the ICU of Kozhikode Medical College Hospital.

According to the collector, 77 people have been identified in the contact list of the infected individual. Among them are 58 healthcare workers, 14 family members, and five friends and colleagues.

None of the contacts has reported any symptoms so far, the statement said.

Of the 77 contacts, two have been classified in the highest-risk category, 13 in the high-risk category, and 62 in the low-risk category.

All those in the highest-risk and high-risk categories have been placed under quarantine, the statement said. The patient's route map has also been prepared, the collector said.

"Field-level containment



and surveillance activities have already commenced. Rapid Response Team meetings were held in Ramanattukara municipality on Wednesday and Thursday as part of preparedness measures," the collector said.

Personal protective equipment, including PPE kits, gloves, and masks, has been made available, and steps have been initiated to ensure the availability of medicines as a precautionary measure, the collector said.

A control room has been opened at the district medical office to provide information and address public queries regarding the disease.

The contact numbers of the

control room are 0495-2373901 and 9072007767.

A document on the Kerala Directorate of Health Services website states that the Nipah virus is a zoonotic virus capable of transmission between animals and humans. Fruit bats, also known as flying foxes, are the natural reservoir of the Nipah virus. The virus can also cause illness in pigs and humans, it adds.

"Infection with NiV is associated with encephalitis (swelling of the brain) and can cause mild to severe illness and even death. Outbreaks occur almost annually in parts of Asia, primarily Bangladesh and India," it said.

The document on the offi-

cial website said Nipah virus infection can be prevented by avoiding contact with sick pigs and bats and by not consuming raw date palm sap, which may be contaminated.

It added that standard infection-control practices can help prevent transmission in hospitals during outbreaks.

Health Minister K Muraleedharan held a meeting in Thiruvananthapuram to assess the situation.

Late Wednesday night, he said that the patient had come into contact with a large number of people.

The minister said the patient first visited the outpatient section of a hospital and later underwent MRI and echocardiography tests.

"We have asked the concerned health workers and others who may have been exposed to remain in quarantine," he added.

He said all necessary arrangements had been made at Kozhikode Medical College to handle the situation.

"There is no need for panic at this stage. The patient had recently rented a godown and cleaned it himself. We suspect he may have contracted the infection during that process," Muraleedharan said. (PTI)

OFFICE OF THE DISTRICT LEGAL SERVICES AUTHORITY

Karbi Anglong District Judiciary Campus, Diphu, Pin: 782460

Karbi Anglong, Assam

Email- disa.djka@gmail.com

Contact: 6901281636

ADVERTISEMENT NO. 01 (A) OF 2026

Dated-11.06.2026

Applications are invited in STANDARD FORM from the suitable desirous candidates for engagement of 41 (Forty One) nos. of Para Legal Volunteers (PLVs), who are local residents of Karbi Anglong district along with documents related to Educational Qualification, Caste Certificate (if any), two numbers of Passport Size Photographs etc. who are willing to serve as a Para Legal Volunteer (PLV) at Karbi Anglong district under District Legal Services Authority, Karbi Anglong. The applicants should have the following qualifications to apply for the selection of PLVs-

- The applicant must be a citizen of India and a local resident of Karbi Anglong District.
- The applicant should have passed at least matriculation, possess the capacity for overall comprehension, and have a mindset to assist the needy in society. The applicant must demonstrate compassion, empathy, and concern for the upliftment of marginalized and weaker sections of society. They must also have an unflinching commitment to the cause, which should be reflected in their work.

Vacancy Details :-

Name of the Vacancy	No. of Post	Remarks
Para Legal Volunteer (PLV)	41 Nos.	Out of 41 nos. of vacancy, 2 nos. of vacancy are reserved for Persons with Physical Disabilities.

Eligible applicants may belong to the following groups:-

- Teachers (including retired teachers)
 - Retired Government servants and senior citizens
 - M.S.W students and teachers
 - Anganwadi Workers
 - Doctors/Physicians
 - Students and Law Students (till they enrol as lawyers)
 - Members of non-political, service-oriented NGOs and Clubs
 - Members of Women Neighbourhood Groups, Maithri Sanghams and other Self-Help Groups including of marginalized/vulnerable groups
 - Educated Prisoners with good behaviour serving long-term sentences in prisons.
 - Spouses or adult children of currently serving defence personnel
 - Any other person whom the District Legal Services Authority deems fit to be Identified as a PLVs.
- The works of PLV do not carry any salary, remuneration or wages except honorarium fixed by the National Legal Services Authority/Assam State Legal Services authority from time to time, as per rules.
 - Preferably the PLVs shall be selected, who do not look up to the income they derive from their services as PLV, but they should have mind to assist the needy in the society coupled with the compassion, empathy and concern for upliftment of marginalized and weaker sections of the society with commitment to work for free legal services.
 - The filled up application should reach the office of the Secretary, District Legal Services Authority, Karbi Anglong on or before 30/06/2026 (till 5 P.M.). The applicants must submit their mobile/contact number in their application for further communication.
 - Incomplete applications will be rejected. No applications will be entertained after the last date fixed.
 - The decisions of the Selection Committee in short listing the number of candidates for interview and selection of PLV shall be final.
 - In case of any objection regarding selection of PLV's the decision of Chairman, District Legal Services Authority, Karbi Anglong shall be final and binding to all concerned.
 - List of shortlisted eligible candidates for interview, if any, will be notified in the Official Notice Board as well as uploaded in the Official website of Karbi Anglong District Judiciary i.e. <https://karbianglong.dcourts.gov.in/> for interview. No other mode of communication will be made to the candidates.
 - Canvassing directly or indirectly will disqualify the candidate.
 - No TA/DA will be provided for appearing in the interview.
 - The District Judge-cum-Chairman, DLSA, Karbi Anglong reserves the right to alter/modify or change any terms or conditions including selection criteria etc. mentioned in the advertisement and in such an eventuality due notice thereof will be published at the discretion of the undersigned only via the official website of Karbi Anglong District Judiciary.
 - All other condition(s) which are not specially provided herein shall be decided by this Authority time to time.

Sd/-

District Judge

-cum-

Chairman, DLSA

Karbi Anglong,

Memo No. DLSA/KA/2026/1584-1601

Dated, Diphu the 11th June, 2026

Chhattisgarh CM unveils roadmap to double income of tribals in Bastar

NEW DELHI, June 11: Chhattisgarh Chief Minister Vishnu Deo Sai on Thursday presented a comprehensive action plan to double tribal family incomes in Bastar through dairy development, expand irrigation facilities across 32,000 hectares and attract investments in sectors such as AI and semiconductors.

At the 11th meeting of the NITI Aayog Governing Council chaired by Prime Minister Narendra Modi, Sai said Bastar, once a hotbed of Naxal activity, is now poised to emerge as a model of economic resurgence, driven by employment, education, tourism, and agriculture-based development.

A comprehensive action plan is ready for doubling the income of tribal families in Bastar, expanding irrigation facilities, developing tourism, and attracting investment in Artificial Intelligence and semiconductors, he said.

Rapid progress is being made towards transforming Chhattisgarh into a developed state in line with the vision of 'Viksit Bharat 2047', according to an official statement.

Sai said Bastar is acquiring a new identity, with efforts underway to boost milk production, water being brought to farmlands, digital health facilities reaching villages, and continuous initiatives being taken to connect the youth with employment opportunities. He said the government has set a target of raising the average monthly income of families in Bastar to ₹ 30,000 over the next three years.

Currently, around 85 per cent of families in the region earn less than Rs 15,000 per month. The government is working to strengthen the economic status of rural families through agriculture, animal husbandry, forest produce, small-scale industries, and various welfare schemes, he said. (PTI)

'Will I perform the same again': Re-exam fear haunts NEET-UG candidates

NEW DELHI, June 11: Several NEET aspirants preparing to reappear for the medical entrance examination say they are facing heightened anxiety, disrupted routines, loss of confidence and growing distrust in the examination system following the cancellation of the earlier test.

Students who had spent months and, in some cases, years preparing for the exam said the cancellation came as a shock and forced them back into an intense preparation cycle.

Ridhima Bansal, who appeared for both the Class 12 board examinations and NEET this year, said the cancellation of the entrance test has left her emotionally drained and she is struggling to resume her studies.

"I was expecting a good score that would have helped me secure a seat in a medical college. I came out of the NEET exam feeling happy and confident that I would get into a medical college. Then suddenly, the news came that the exam has been cancelled," Bansal told PTI.

"When I reopened my books, I was not feeling like studying," she said, adding that the uncertainty has also affected her daily routine and mental well-being.

"Sleep issues have started because all-nighters are again happening. After the exam, I was sleeping peacefully. Now I am back to sleeping at 3 a.m., waking up at 7, attending classes, giving mock tests and studying again. Mental health is affected. I don't feel like eating," Bansal said.

She said the controversy has also weakened her faith in the examination system. "The trust is over because when the news came, NTA was saying it was just a few questions. But even if a few questions were out, that is also a paper leak. Why should even a few questions get out," she asked.

"I don't trust the system now," she added. The National Testing Agency (NTA) did not respond to queries seeking its response on issues raised by students.

Another aspirant, Vaibhavi (17) said she was on a family vacation when she learnt that the examination had been cancelled and would be conducted again.

"I was disheartened about the exam being cancelled. I was on a family vacation when I got the notification that the exam is being

cancelled and they are going to re-conduct the exam. So I panicked thinking what is going to happen now," she said.

Vaibhavi said the controversy affected her concentration and motivation.

"I don't feel like studying anymore. It's like more of a joke. You should read as much as you want, but it's not going to be good enough," she said.

"I would zone out while studying and keep thinking about what would happen now. I would completely zone out and not acknowledge anything around me," she added.

She said the break between the May 3 examination and the announcement of the re-test disrupted her preparation.

"There was a gap after May 3 exam and then suddenly we had to start preparing again. Once that continuity breaks, it becomes difficult to get back into the same rhythm," she said. Vaibhavi also expressed concerns about the upcoming examination.

"My plan was to get around 550 or 530 marks so that I could get a government college. But everyone is saying that re-NEET will be very hard. I think the paper is going to be hard. So, I am scared," she said.

Madhuri Sudhir Shelar, who had prepared for NEET for two years, said she was devastated when she learnt that the examination had been cancelled.

"It hurt a lot because I had been preparing for two years. After studying so hard for so long, hearing this news was extremely painful. It felt very bad," she said. Shelar said she had walked out of the examination centre believing her hard work had paid off.

"My confidence has definitely dropped. I don't feel like studying at all. Everything feels very different. But I'm still studying because my future depends on it. I'm motivating myself, telling myself that I have goals to achieve and a future to build. That's the only reason I'm continuing," she said.

The NEET-UG for admissions into medical courses took place on May 3 but was cancelled by the NTA on May 12 amid allegations of a paper leak. The CBI is currently investigating this matter, and a retest is scheduled for June 21. Psychologist Bhavna Barmi advised aspirants to focus on what remains within their control. (PTI)

Disciplinary authority must be very careful in imposing punishment of dismissal from service: SC

NEW DELHI, June 11: The Supreme Court on Thursday said a disciplinary authority must be very careful before imposing the severest form of punishment of dismissal from service as it has a devastating effect not only on the dismissed employee but also on their dependant family members. The apex court said dismissal from service must remain reserved for cases where the misconduct is of the most serious nature where elements of synthetic consideration would be undesirable and inappropriate.

The observations came from a bench of justices Sanjay Karol and N Kottiswar Singh which delivered its verdict on an appeal filed by a woman, who was employed with the Maharashtra State Electricity Distribution Company Limited and was dismissed from service. "Dismissal is ordinarily justified where the misconduct is of such gravity that continuance of the employee would be wholly incompatible with discipline, trust or institutional functioning," the bench said.

The top court said cases involving corruption, illegal gratification, moral turpitude, misappropriation, acts causing substantial loss to the employer or conduct showing complete unfitness for continued service stand on a different footing.

It observed where the misconduct does not involve corruption, moral turpitude, financial misappropriation or proved loss



to the employer, and where there is long service without much blemish, the disciplinary authority must carefully examine whether any lesser punishment would meet the ends of justice.

Dealing with the case, it said, "With respect to the punishment of dismissal which we consider wholly disproportionate to the charges proved, the competent authority shall consider any punishment other than the ultimate penalty of dismissal from service, after considering the appellant's long service, past record, age, nature of misconduct, absence or presence of financial loss, and other relevant circumstances". The apex court set aside the dismissal order of July 2017 as "wholly disproportionate", while leaving the finding of misconduct undisturbed.

It noted that the appellant had joined the service in April 1985 and in September 2006, she was placed under suspension pending enquiry. It further noted that the

suspension order alleged acts of indiscipline, insubordination, disobedience of superior officers, tampering with official documents and negligence.

The bench said period of suspension continued for nearly 11 years and the authority passed the order in July 2017 dismissing her from service.

The top court was dealing with her appeal challenging an April 2024 verdict of the Bombay High Court's Nagpur bench which had upheld the order of dismissal.

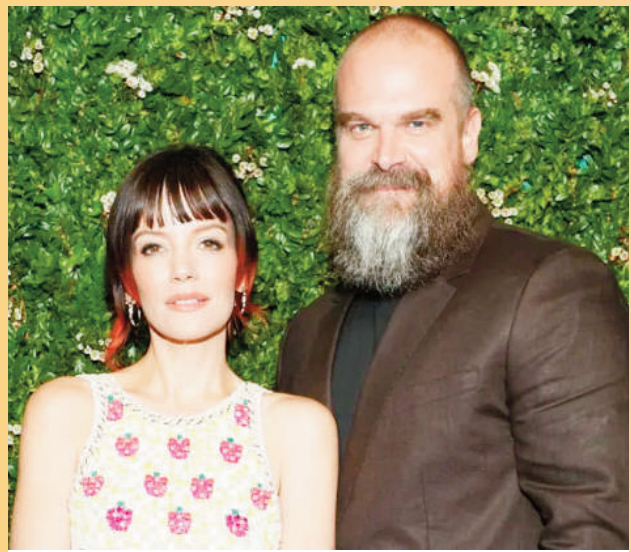
"Dismissal from service is the severest form of penalty which can be inflicted on a delinquent employee in service jurisprudence. It brings the relationship of employer and employee to an end permanently, and ordinarily deprives the employee of the incidents of past service, including retiral benefits," the bench said.

It said dismissal from service does not lead merely to the loss of existing source of income for the employee but also for the dependent family members.

"Thus, it will have a devastating effect not only on the dismissed employee but also on all those who are dependent on the employee," the bench said.

"Because of the severity of its impact not only on the employee but also to his dependents, the disciplinary authority must be very careful in seeking to impose the severest form of punishment of dismissal," it said. (PTI)

David Harbour finally breaks silence on Lily Allen's west end girl album



David Harbour has spoken out for the first time about his ex-wife Lily Allen's latest album, *West End Girl*. When the album dropped in October 2025, it immediately got the whole world talking, with many listeners inferring that it detailed the breakdown of the two stars' marriage in candid detail.

For her part, Lily has always maintained the album is a work of "autofiction", claiming in a 2025 interview that its songs were "inspired by what went on" towards the end of her marriage to the *Stranger Things* actor, albeit with artistic licence applied.

Addressing the album during a new interview with *Variety*, David claimed: "I don't think I could say it's all true."

Reflecting on the release, he admitted: "It was weird. I do believe that it is the privilege of every artist to use their experience to create art, and so I respect her for doing that."

He continued: "I can't really say that much more because it's my private life. In spite of the fact that a lot of people don't take me a private life - I value it. And I also value the lives of the people that I interact with privately. I just won't speak about that."

He added that "stories are complex", and he respects his famous ex's "creation of art

to channel her experience", even if it "isn't my experience".

Back in November, Lily claimed that she didn't feel any "reluctance" about making an album as personal as *West End Girl*, telling *CBS Mornings*: "At the time, I wasn't even really thinking about it as... like... a commercial endeavour. It was an act of desperation actually."

"You know, while I was writing it, I wasn't really sure that it was going to see the light of day."

She added: "Since I've put it out, it's felt completely and utterly liberating. It was kind of hellish having it in the background."

"I just feel like [...] it said everything that I needed to say. And I felt like I couldn't really get on with my life until I'd said it."

Upon its release, *West End Girl* was a huge hit for Lily both critically and commercially, receiving positive reviews from critics, fans and the *Not Fair* singer's industry peers, as well as becoming her highest-charting album since 2014.

Next week, Lily will embark on her first headlining UK arena tour in support of the album, having performed *West End Girl* in full at smaller venues, as well as at the *Mighty Hoopla* music festival, earlier this year. (Agencies)



SOCIAL MEDIA NOT FOR DEFAMATION: HC

Salman Khan's neighbour to consider deleting posts

Access to social media does not entitle anyone to post defamatory content, including against celebrities, the Bombay High Court observed on Thursday (June 11, 2026) while asking Salman Khan's Panvel farmhouse neighbour to consider deleting his posts against the actor.

A single Bench of Justice Sharmila Deshmukh questioned why anyone should upload such content on social media instead of addressing their grievances with the authorities concerned.

Ketan Kakkad owns the property adjoining Mr. Khan's farmhouse at Panvel in Maharashtra's Navi Mumbai township.

He had alleged that the actor violated environmental norms during the construction of his farmhouse and blocked access to the

neighbour's property. Mr. Kakkad also claimed to have approached authorities on the issue, but no action was taken.

Mr. Khan later filed a defamation suit against Mr. Kakkad, claiming he had uploaded videos and other content on social media about the actor's activities at his farmhouse. He claimed the posts were defamatory.

The actor sought the court to direct Mr. Kakkad to remove the defamatory videos that he had uploaded and also to stop him from making such comments further. When a civil court refused to pass such an order, he approached the HC.

Mr. Khan, in his plea in the HC, said the posts uploaded by Mr. Kakkad were not only defamatory in nature, but also communally provocative against him.

On Thursday (June 11,

2026), the plea came up for hearing before Justice Sharmila Deshmukh, who questioned as to why anyone should upload such videos and content on social media instead of taking up their grievance with the authorities concerned.

"Just because one has access to social media does not mean they can upload videos about any person, whether a common citizen or a celebrity, merely to defame them. Why upload such videos on social media?" Justice Deshmukh said.

The court also wondered if judicial time should be wasted only to decide whether or not a particular social media post is defamatory and hence should be deleted.

The Bench suggested Mr. Kakkad to consider deleting the content and posted the matter for further hearing on July 6. (PTI)

Actors Mihir Ahuja, Prasanna Bisht to headline Aditya Chandioke's dramedy



The *Archies*' actor Mihir Ahuja and Prasanna Bisht, known for her work in the series "Chiraiya", will play the lead roles in an untitled movie from filmmaker Aditya Chandioke.

The two actors have started filming for the film, which is described as a light-hearted dramedy set in small-town India.

Chandioke is best known for directing the Netflix film "Greater Kalash" and miniseries "Baat Pakki".

In the movie, Ahuja plays a young man from Ujjain.

"This film feels extremely special to me because I genuinely feel like I'm stepping into a world I've never explored before as an actor. I've never played a character from

Ujjain, and that comes with its own rhythm, innocence, body language, and way of speaking.

"I wanted to approach it with complete honesty, so I've been spending a lot of time understanding the Ujjaini and Malwai dialect, the culture, and even the little nuances in how people communicate there. It's both challenging and exciting at the same time," the actor said in a statement.

Ahuja said he was impressed by the script's "simplicity and heart".

"There's a certain warmth and humour in this story that instantly connected with me. The tone of the film has that light-hearted dramedy space where emotions feel organic and humour comes naturally from situations and people," he added. (PTI)

Vir Das unveils cast for psychological horror film 'Baara Number'

Mumbai, Actor-comedian-filmmaker Vir Das has roped in Sheeba Chaddha, Arunoday Singh, Ahsaas Channa and Atul Kulkarni, among others, for his next directorial venture "Baara Number", a found-footage psychological

horror film. Das made his directorial debut earlier this year with the spy comedy "Happy Patel: Khatarnak Jasoos" earlier this year.



horror film. Das made his directorial debut earlier this year with the spy comedy "Happy Patel: Khatarnak Jasoos" earlier this year.

For the new project, he will once again collaborate with "Happy Patel" co-director Kavi Shastri, who will serve as a creative producer.

Das will also lead the film's cast that also includes Niharika Lyra Dutt, Shriya Pilgaonkar, Suhail Nayyar, Pujya Sarup and Naveen Kaushik, according to a press release.

"What made this project especially exciting was bringing together a group of actors whose work I've admired for years. Sheeba, Atul, Arunoday, Shriya, Ahsaas, Ni-

harika, Suhail and Naveen each bring a distinct energy, intelligence and authenticity to the film.

"Horror works best when audiences believe every moment is real, and this ensemble has elevated the material beyond anything I imagined

when we first started writing it," Das said in a statement.

"Baara Number" is positioned as a found-footage horror narrative that aims to go beyond conventional genre tropes, weaving psychological depth with atmospheric

storytelling.

Found-footage horror is a genre popularised globally by films such as "The Blair Witch Project" and "Paranormal Activity". In such movies, the narrative presents events through the lens of cameras and takes the form of a raw, documentary-like quality that heightens suspense and realism.

The film, which has been in development for some time, is said to explore both external tension and internal human emotions.

Das, known for featuring in movies such as "Delhi Belly", "Go Goa Gone" and series "Call Me Bae", will produce "Baara Number" through his banner Zazu Productions. (PTI)

Legends of South Indian film industry pay moving tributes to auteur Bharathiraja

Shattered by the demise of legendary filmmaker P Bharathiraja, superstar Rajinikanth, music maestro Ilaiyaraaja, and top South Indian film fraternities on Wednesday paid moving tributes to the auteur, describing him as a pioneering force who revolutionised Indian cinema by anchoring it to its rural roots.

An emotional Rajinikanth recalled his 50-year-old bond with the filmmaker, describing him as a child-like soul who lived with unmatched transparency. "He introduced countless technicians, directors, and actors, sustaining the film industry itself. He was always the first to raise his voice and fight for anyone facing a crisis," the superstar said.

Speaking to PTI Videos, actor Kamal Haasan expressed profound gratitude for his artistic association with the director, choosing to focus on the auteur's enduring legacy.

"The gentleman has gone. But his art also will continue. I'm not counting the losses. I'm counting the profits. He was there and he made films with me. I'm very grateful," he said.

Music maestro Ilaiyaraaja, who rushed to pay his last respects to his lifelong collaborator, described their connection as an irreplaceable bond.

"I am constantly praying for him. What kind of a relationship we shared is something you all know very well. Loving this country, its people, and its artists is what my life is about," he said.

Oscar-winning music composer A R Rahman also joined

the film fraternity in mourning the director, noting that Bharathiraja's work captured the true essence of rural life.

"No one has portrayed the love and vitality of Tamil villages on screen like you have. Your creations continue to inspire generations across time. Thank you for taking my music to the most remote villages of South India and introducing the life stories of those people to the world," Rahman posted on 'X'.

Acclaimed filmmaker Ram Gopal Varma hailed Bharathiraja as a "true auteur" who bridged commercial success and high artistic realism.

Taking to 'X', Varma wrote that apart from gifting Indian cinema its biggest female superstar in Sridevi, Bharathiraja "blended Satyajit Ray's realism, (Hrishikesh) Mukherjee's characters and (Basu) Chatterjee's sense of situational comedies in a tremendously rooted cinema of all genres to connect all classes of audiences irrespective of their languages." Speaking to reporters after paying his respects to Bharathiraja, actor Nasser requested Central government to consider him for Bharat Ratna. "We wholeheartedly pray and request that the Government of India honours him posthumously with its highest civilian award, the Bharat Ratna," he said.

He also requested the Tamil Nadu government to name the street where he resided after him. "The street where he lived is currently named 'Casuarina Bay', which is an English name. Since Bharathiraja lived and breathed Tamil, we most humbly request



the state government to rename this road after him," Nasser said.

The demise triggered a wave of condolences from top Telugu and Malayalam stars. Mega star Chiranjeevi Konidela expressed profound grief, stating that Indian cinema had lost one of its greatest storytellers.

"He transformed the fragrance of village soil, the beauty of human relationships, the innocence of love, and the emotions of ordinary people into timeless cinematic poetry," Chiranjeevi wrote on 'X'.

Recalling his own experience of being directed by the veteran in the film "Aradhana", Chiranjeevi added, "I was fortunate to work under his direction as 'Puliraju'... His passion for cinema, simplicity and dedication to his craft left a lasting impression on me."

Malayalam cinema icon Mohanlal, who shared screen space with Bharathiraja in 'Thudaram', paid a

poetic tribute, writing, "A director who found poetry in the soil, truth in silence, and soul in every frame."

Acclaimed heroines who debuted under his tutelage remembered him with intense gratitude. Actress Revathi paid a poignant tribute, stating, "(He was) the reason I am here as an actress and did the films I did."

Actress Sukanya broke down while recalling his protective nature on the sets of "Pudhu Nellu Pudhu Naathu", sharing how the director personally jumped into a deep well to test the safety of a shot before letting her perform. "He told me, 'I never let my artists take a risk before I do it myself,'" she said.

Rekha, whom Bharathiraja famously introduced as 'Jennifer' in the 1986 classic 'Kadalora Kavithaigal', broke down as she termed the day a "massive black day" for the cinematic world. "Personally, I didn't even know what cinema was back then. I was born and raised in a very

ordinary family," Rekha said.

She revealed that merely 15 days into the shooting of "Kadalora Kavithaigal", the director insisted she take up a role in K Balachander's 'Punnagai Mannan'.

Both films happened around the same time. If I hadn't done such brilliant classics by these legends, none of you would even know who I am today. If I can say today that I have acted across so many languages over 38 years, my guru is the sole reason."

Claimed actor-director R Parthiban, who trained under Bharathiraja and arrived with a string of jasmine to pay respect to his mortal remains, termed the demise as the loss of his "very roots," stating that the auteur taught filmmakers how to capture the true fragrance of the soil on screen.

Cinematographer Ravi K Chandran also credited the pioneer for inspiring him to take up filmmaking. (PTI)

Bigger, more open and mirrors the game's transformation



WOMEN'S T20 WC 2026

BIRMINGHAM, June 11: Bigger and more competitive than ever, the ICC T20 Women's World Cup begins here on Friday with the ever-improving India, England and South Africa expected to challenge Australia's traditional dominance in the tournament.

The Aussies, who have won six of the last nine tournaments, will be eager to displace reigning champions New Zealand for a seventh title, but that is no longer a yawning formality.

The Kiwis themselves are a formidable unit, and then there are India, who landed their maiden global title last year in the 50-over World Cup.

England, strong as ever in home conditions, and South Africa, finalists in the last three ICC events, would be no pushovers either.

In that context, this iteration of the showpiece, beginning with a match here between England and Sri Lanka, is the most open yet in its existence, and it is also the first World Cup in the UK since their first edition in 2009.

The event is also the biggest in terms of the number of participants -- 12 -- with the addition of Ireland and Netherlands to the mix from 2024.

That expansion itself is a sign of the women's game getting a stronger foothold across nations, but even more satisfying is the development of a level-playing field and the emergence of some raw but exciting talent.

Young talent

It starts with England's Alice Capsey, Tilly Corteen-Coleman and Freya Kemp while their opponents tomorrow, Sri Lanka, field the likes of Vishmi Gunaratne, Imesha Dulani, Kavisha Dilhari and Kawya Kavindi.

New Zealand skipper Amelia Kerr, one of the youngest leaders in the international circuit at 25, is a key player for her side. She is also a heart-touching story of resilience after surviving depression and suicidal thoughts during the 2020-21 season.

Strong contenders India come with promising N Sree Charani, Yastika Bhatia and Nandani Sharma in their ranks.

The Aussies are still banking on their veterans to reclaim the title, but they also have two exceptional young stars in their ranks -- batter Georgia Voll and left-arm seamer Lucy Hamilton.

The Proteas, led by the re-

doubtable Laura Wolvaardt, have Kayla Reyneke and Annerie Derksen leading the march of Next-Gen players, despite bringing back experienced pacer Shabnim Ismail and Dan van Niekerk from retirement.

The outings of these relatively fresh names will be watched keenly as they are tasked with taking the exploits of a glorious set of players, who are on the last leg of their illustrious careers.

Australia the team to beat

Despite not defending an ICC title for the first time since 2017, Australia still have the aura of the past, the Antipodeans are still the team to beat.

It is primarily because a slew of battle-hardened players are leading their campaign.

The likes of Beth Mooney, Tahila McGrath, Ellyse Perry, Ashleigh Gardner, Kim Garth, Annabel Sutherland and Megan Schutt are familiar with every contour of white ball game.

The selection of Sophie Moloney as captain might not have elicited a unanimous reaction from players, particularly from Gardner, but they need to push the past behind and work together for a

greater goal.

It's not something beyond the Aussies.

Rise of India

The biggest impediment in their way will be India, now a stronger and more consistent white ball unit. The Harmanpreet Kaur-led side will be keen to emulate Australia in becoming the second side to hold the 50-over and T20 World Cups at the same time.

Pacers like Renuka Singh, Kranti Goud and seasoned all-rounders such as Deepti Sharma along with a very strong batting line-up give them a realistic shot at having another world title in just over seven months.

The ODI World Cup triumph marshalled by almost the same squad might have also eased the anxiety in the Indian camp.

The surprise package

Some other teams like Sri Lanka, the West Indies and the newcomers Ireland do not have the burden of expectations, and that might inspire them to take on the favourites with no fear.

An underdog scripting a marvelous run will just suit the newfound openness of this tournament too.

Wait is on then for a magical July 5 at the Lord's.

Match on June 12: England vs Sri Lanka.

Teams :

England: Nat Sciver-Brunt (c), Lauren Bell, Alice Capsey, Tilly Corteen-Coleman, Charlie Dean, Sophia Dunkley, Sophie Ecclestone, Lauren Filer, Dani Gibson, Amy Jones, Freya Kemp, Heather Knight, Linsey Smith, Issy Wong, Danni Wyatt-Hodge.

Sri Lanka: Chamari Athapaththu (c), Hasini Perera, Vishmi Gunaratne, Harshitha Samarawickrama, Imesha Dulani, Nilakshika Silva, Kaveesha Dilhari, Hansima Karunaratne, Kaushini Nuthyangana, Sugandika Dasanayaka, Nimasha Madushani, Kawya Kavindi, Malki Madara, Mithali Ayodhya, Chethana Vimukthi.

Match starts at 11 pm IST. (PTI)

Teen Bargaonkar stuns third seed Gupta as upsets mark opening round

MUMBAI, June 11: Upsets dominated the opening round of the Rs 35 lakh prize money 360 One Masters Chess tournament, with several higher-rated players struggling to make an impact in the Swiss League event.

Second seed Grandmaster Sankalp Gupta suffered a shock defeat against Sri Lankan International Master L M S T De Silva, while third seed and former world junior champion GM Abhijeet Gupta went down to 17-year-old IM Akshay Bargaonkar of Pune. IM Kaustuv Kundu also produced a notable result by defeating Belarusian Grandmaster Andrey Gorovetz.

The overseas Grandmasters too found the going tough, with fifth seed GM Luka Paichadze of Georgia being held to a draw by FM Adak Bivor, while ninth seed GM Boris Savchenko drew against Daevik Wadhawan.

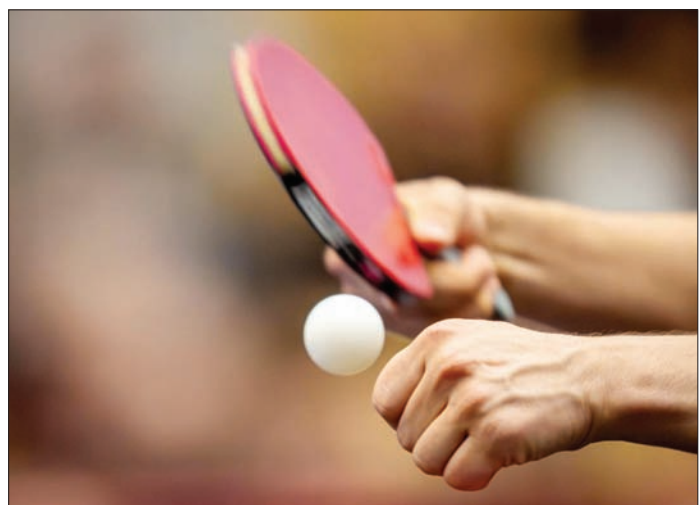
FM Vivaan Shah also secured a creditable draw against GM Aleksandrov Aleksey, while FM Kush Bhagat held eighth seed IM Nitin Belurkar. Top seed and reigning national champion GM Iniyar Pa, however, showed tremendous resilience to win from a seemingly drawn position against L Srihari.

The Queen's Gambit Declined game soon simplified into a rook and identical pawn ending, but Iniyar kept applying pressure and was rewarded when Srihari erred with a king move on the 64th turn.

Iniyar converted the advantage on the 74th move by pushing towards promotion.

De Silva dictated terms against Sankalp from the early stages of a French Advance Defence. His attacking play, involving two knights, a rook and queen, broke through Sankalp's defences after his pawns advanced deep into enemy territory. The game ended in 26 moves. (PTI)

CATCH 'EM YOUNG TOPS lowers age of induction to 13 for TT players with eye on 2036 Olympics



NEW DELHI, June 11: The age of induction for table tennis players in the Sports Ministry's flagship Target Olympic Podium Scheme (TOPS) has been lowered from 17 to 13 in a major policy change to build India's bench strength for the 2030 Commonwealth Games and the 2036 Olympics.

Following the decision, two 13-year-olds -- Rishaan Chattopadhyay and Tanishka Kalhairav -- have been already included in the TOPS Developmental Group.

Rishaan won the U-15 Boys' doubles gold medal at the WTT Youth Star Contender in Doha earlier this year, while Tanishka made waves when she won the World Table Tennis Youth Contender tournament's under-11 competition in 2023.

The other eight inductees following the policy change are Akash Rajavelu (15), Aditya Das (15), Ankolika Chakraborty (14), Naisha Rewaskar (15), Ananya Muralidharan (17), Divyanshi Bhowmick (15), Prisha Goel (17) and Syndrel Das (16).

The eligibility criteria for athletes' induction includes ITTF Youth Rankings.

The top 32 in U-15 and U-17 singles, and the top 16 in U-15 and U-17 doubles events would be eligible for inclusion going forward.

"The objective is to create a continuous pathway from junior development to Olympic preparation," said a Sports Authority of India official.

The 2030 CWG will be held in Ahmedabad, which is also in the race to host the 2036 Olympic Games as part of India's aggressive push towards becoming a global sports hub. Athletes in TOPS developmental group are entitled to a monthly allowance, international training and nutrition support among other benefits.

The Far East inspiration

SAI, which is the nodal body for training operations and support staff induction in Indian sports, carried out research work on the benefits of on-boarding younger players in TT. Other sports could also be considered for lowering of age after due deliberations going forward.

The body's inspiration were countries like Japan, South Korea and China, where pre-teens regularly make waves in the sport.

"...the inference has been that the learning curve between the ages of 12 and 16 is one of the most important phases in an athlete's development," read the conclusions that were drawn by SAI's research team.

"Unlike many Olympic sports where athletes peak in their mid-

to-late 20s, table tennis rewards early technical mastery, rapid decision-making, reaction speed and intensive exposure during adolescence."

Among the case studies highlighted was Japan's Tomokazu Harimoto, who became the youngest ever player to win the ITTF World Tour Under-21 men's singles in 2016 by snaring the top honours at just 12 years of age. A year later, he became the youngest men's junior world champion at 13.

Harimoto, who took to the racquet sport at two years of age, is 22 now, ranked number two in the world, won the WTT Cup finals last year and became an Olympic bronze-medallist in the team competition during the 2021 Tokyo Games.

"He won a World Junior title at 14, and reached the Olympics at 16. The policy change decision was based upon the fact that India has comparable talent but lacks a dedicated system during those crucial developmental years," the SAI stated, highlighting the targeted support that Harimoto received in his country to flourish.

SAI's plan for prodigal talent management is built around the sport's High Performance Director (HPD).

The HPD will be responsible for designing annual training plans, coordinating with personal coaches, monitoring athlete development, and helping athletes develop tactical and decision-making skills at an age when learning and adaptation occur most rapidly.

Performance data of the players would be reviewed quarterly and the HPD will also coordinate with personal coaches to ensure that the young athletes are at ease during a massive transition, both physically and psychologically.

'Step in right direction'

One of India's greatest table tennis players of all time, A Sharath Kamal, who is currently a member of the Indian Olympic Association's athletes' commission, said the policy change has the potential to make lasting impact.

"Asian players are best in the world by 19 to 20 years of the age. If we are able to focus on our youngsters early, then we will be able to have a transition that is smooth. Many times what happens is when they are turning 17, they are already a bit lost," he said.

"If we are able to give them direction at a younger age, it will be easier for them to flow into the next level internationally. At the age of 18, the (talent) base is not very big but at the age of 13, you have a wider base who have the potential," he pointed out. (PTI)

WPL and ODI World title created unstoppable force in Indian cricket: Nasser Hussain

MUMBAI, June 11: The arrival of the Women's Premier League in 2023 and a title win in the Women's ODI World Cup has produced an "unstoppable force" in Indian cricket which will increase the depth, former England skipper said Nasser Hussain on Thursday.

India clinched their maiden ICC title late in 2025 winning the Women's ODI World Cup and a significant amount of credit for the team's success was given to the T20 competition which brought about tectonic changes in women's cricket in India.

Hussain believes the combination of the two has already become unstoppable and Indian cricket stands to benefit in the longer run.

"It's unstoppable now in the women's, that combination of the WPL and the 50-overs World Cup win and the scenes at the end of that, now it's an unstoppable force in Indian cricket and there will be more depth to the players coming through," Hussain told reporters on JioStar Media Day.

"The biggest thing for me is depth. We're trying to work out (the best combination) in that squad now, and obviously they're missing two (players) as well because of injuries. Two very good players, Amanjot (Kaur) in particular," he said.

Hussain said Indian Women's team was reliant on a few players in the past but the recent years have seen the team's superstars coming under pressure with others knocking on the door.

"The depth to Indian cricket may be before WPL — you go back to the World Cup final in 2017 — they relied heavily on three or four players before that, the great Mithali Raj, etc. They were lone warriors for them. Then it went to three or four (players)."

"Now you're looking at — and that's good for Indian cricket because it means that your superstars in the team constantly have to perform because — as in the men's, I hate going to the men's because we're talking women's, but (a Vaibhav) Sooryavanshi comes along and those that (have) got places, someone has to be left out," he added.

Hussain also pointed out that increasing financial opportunities in the game will produce more cricketers, as seen in the IPL.

"I hear rumours of parents now wanting their daughters to play more and more cricket because of the financial inducements in cricket and WPL and Big Bash and The Hundred," he said.

"Some of The Hundred contracts we've seen just recently, it's been life-changing money. It really has: Danny Gibson, Tilly Corteen-Coleman, have had life-changing contracts. It now has become a job and I don't mean that in a negative way." (PTI)

Aaron Rai, Theegala to feature in a mix of top talents and newcomers in Toronto



ONTARIO (CANADA), June 11: Aaron Rai, winner of the PGA Championship and Sahith Theegala will tee up at the RBC Canadian Open at the TPC Toronto at Osprey Valley - North Course here.

Rai became the first Englishman since Jim Barnes in 1919 to win the PGA Championship. Rai was -19 in the Memorial and is now looking at the remaining two Majors, the US Open and the Open at Birkdale.

Apart from Rai and Theegala, there will be further Indian connections through Sudarshan Yellamaraju and Jeevan Sihota, who made his way into the draw through a qualifier.

Theegala who was once on the cusp of breaking into the top 10 of the OWGR rankings had a difficult

2025.

He finally returned being injury-free at the start of this year and has racked up multiple top 10 results and shown flashes of the brilliance that once made him one of the most promising players in the world.

Yellamaraju earned his spot on the PGA Tour by finishing in the top 20 of the Korn Ferry Tour points list in 2025.

His rookie season has been outstanding as the self-taught player has missed the cut only three times in his 16 appearances that includes two top 10 finishes as well.

Alex Fitzpatrick, once a top amateur, finally had his breakout season on the PGA Tour this year. He set a new record in March this year by winning The Hero Indian Open on the DP World Tour the week after his older brother Matt Fitzpatrick won the Valspar Championship on the PGA Tour.

This is the only time two brothers have won an event on two separate tours in consecutive weeks.

To make the year even better Alex won the Zurich Classic of New Orleans when he and his brother teamed up.

The win earned him a card on the PGA Tour, which he has used to the maximum to register three top 10 results in four starts and propelled himself to 20th on the FedExCup rankings.

Promising young player Ben James, a Virginia University senior, will be making his PGA Tour debut this week.

James earned his card to the PGA Tour by finishing first on the 2026 PGA Tour University rankings and then chose to turn pro.

James is the first player since Brice Molder to win the First Team All-America honours four times.

Other big names in the field are Matt Fitzpatrick, Tommy Fleetwood, Collin Morikawa, Viktor Hovland and Brooks Koepka. (PTI)

Serena's comeback at the Queen's Club is over

LONDON, June 11: Serena Williams' much-hyped comeback to professional tennis at the Queen's Club lasted just one match.

The 44-year-old Williams' doubles partner, 19-year-old Canadian Victoria Mboko, was forced to withdraw from the draw on Thursday because of a knee injury she sustained in a singles match against Karolina Pliskova in the last 32 on Wednesday.

In her first professional match since the 2022 U.S. Open, Williams teamed up with Mboko to beat third-seeded duo Nicole Melichar-Martinez and Erin Routliffe 7-6 (2), 6-2 at the grass-court event on Tuesday. They were scheduled to face Leylah Fernandez and Laura Siegemund in the quarterfinals.

Williams is set to play doubles at the Berlin Open in Germany next week. Her partner has yet to be announced.

Williams won 23 Grand Slam singles titles — including seven at Wimbledon — before stepping away from the game, saying at the time she was "evolving" away from tennis rather than "retiring." (AP)

Mexico City's metro chandelier turns into crush of memes

MEXICO CITY, June 11: The sound of construction roared over the most memed metro station in Mexico City as workers hammered at marble floors under a chandelier and rows of lamps reminiscent of a scene from "Harry Potter" or "Titanic," racing to finish ahead of the FIFA World Cup opening ceremony Thursday.

Mexicans milling through the busy Hidalgo metro station pointed and laughed, occasionally snapping pictures of the facade that has become the subject of a cascade of internet memes.

The cosmetic makeover that authorities have attempted to give the capital as visitors arrive from around the globe also has become a symbol of criticisms that the government is prioritizing its superficial appearance for World Cup fans over fixing critical structural issues that have long plagued the city.

"People make fun of it because it's a failed aesthetic, it doesn't make a lot of sense," said Silvia Escamilla, 28, who was hustling to work among a crowd of Mexican commuters. "All these renovations are like putting makeup on the city, because the infrastructure they could actually invest in just isn't there."

Decorations cover the problems

For weeks, Mexico City workers have plastered walls and metro cars with cartoon axolotls, the mole salamander that has



become a city mascot. They also have painted bridges purple and planted Mexican marigold flowers typical of Day of the Dead celebrations in November.

The 22 million residents of the sprawling capital, known as Chilangos, have jokingly referred to the renovations as the city's "axolotlization." They have posted videos of flooded underpasses next to freshly painted murals of axolotls and crumbling stairs and potholes painted bright purple.

Hidalgo station, in the heart of the downtown, has perhaps become the sub-

ject of more memes than anywhere else in the city.

When city workers installed the chandelier near the metro entrance and rows of Victorian wall lamps in May, social media users were quick to joke that authorities were trying to make the gritty metro system look like it was in a European city.

Social media creators mock the changes

Residents began to show up at the station in elegant dresses in videos layered over Mozart music. One social media influencer descended the marble stairs

dressed as the Beast from the classic Disney cartoon "Beauty and the Beast." Another arrived as Napoleon Bonaparte in a white wig and French military uniform.

"May you have an elegant metro connection," one social media influencer said as he strolled through throngs of commuters dressed in a tuxedo and top hat. Another filmed herself selling pink dresses aboard one of the metro trains, yelling to passengers that the items matched the "etiquette" of Metro Hidalgo.

Many more posed next to marble floors and walls torn up by construction ahead of the soccer tournament being hosted by Mexico, the United States and Canada.

The humor highlights larger issues

The crush of jokes amused Mexicans for weeks, but also cut to the core of a deeper problem in the city, said Aldo Solano Rojas, an art historian in Mexico City who has criticized the remodel.

Failures to prioritize issues like the metro's crumbling infrastructure and holes in the major municipal roadways show the government "doesn't understand the real needs of the city," he said.

"State presence, at its best, is reflected in well-maintained sidewalks and adequate transportation infrastructure that doesn't collapse every day," Solano Rojas said. "It's not reflected in frivolous, superficial axolotl murals while the streets are flood-

ing."

The criticisms come in the midst of wider social unrest in Mexico City as the country's teachers union, families of Mexico's 130,000 missing people and a range of other social movements use the proximity to the event to pressure authorities.

The government also has faced accusations of displacing sex workers and street vendors in an effort to clean up the streets. Despite the tensions, city workers on Wednesday were still racing to complete construction ahead of the opening ceremony and first match.

Mirna Baranco looked fondly on the renovations, but the 46-year-old laughed at the chandelier over Hidalgo construction workers. She nudged her boyfriend and pointed.

"I've already seen it all over the place on Facebook, but not in real life," she said.

Baranco understood the criticisms, but said she didn't think it was necessarily a bad thing that authorities were making changes to be more attractive to international visitors. The World Cup has helped push local governments to make needed renovations, even if some look a little out of place, she said.

The changes show that "Mexico isn't just how others stereotype us, as a country with narco," Baranco said. "Mexico has a lot to give the world." (AP)

Afghanistan A prevail over India A by 4 runs under DLS method

DAMBULLA, June 11: Afghanistan A caused a major upset by eking out a four-run win over star-studded India A via the Duckworth-Lewis-Stern (DLS) method in a rain-marred tri-nation series match here on Thursday.

Batting first, India A posted a daunting 349/9 in a rain-curtailed 49 overs innings, with Prabhshimran Singh leading the charge with a blazing 84 off 69 balls, supported by half-centuries from captain Tilak Varma (66) and Ruturaj Gaikwad (66).

Due to persistent rain intervals, Afghanistan A's target was revised to 294 runs from 38 overs applying the DLS method.

Following an explosive start by captain Imran (75 not out off 70 balls) and Hassan Eisaqhil (34 off 29 balls), Afghanistan kept themselves in the hunt. Bahir Shah (51 off 52 balls), then, joined Imran and the duo took them to 177/2 in 25.5 overs when another spell of rain stopped play.

At that stage of the game, Afghanistan were found to be four runs ahead of the par score requirement, which sealed their victory.

Earlier, skipper Tilak, vice-captain Ruturaj and opener Prabhshimran made well-timed fifties as India A posted a massive total.



Afghanistan bowlers struggled to contain the opposition batters through the India A innings.

India's run started with Vaibhav Sooryavanshi, hammering a 22-ball 44 that contained nine fours.

The young left-hander maintained a strike-rate of 200 without even hitting a six, revealing that he is equally adept in finding gaps in

the field for boundaries.

Sooryavanshi and Prabhshimran added 74 runs for the opening wicket in just 7.1 overs, putting India on course for a big total.

Sooryavanshi yet again fell to a bouncer outside the off-stump, this time edging Abdullah Ahmadzai, the most successful Afghan bowler on the day with a five-wicket haul

(5/68), to stumper Mohammad Ishaq while try-

ing a ramp.

But India seldom let go that early momentum. After the short stay of Priyansh Arya, Prabhshimran added 79 runs for the third wicket with Gaikwad, who brought up his second successive fifty-plus score of this tournament.

Prabhshimran fell to part-timer Imran Mir close to a deserving hundred, but Gaikwad stayed strong to milk 78 runs for the fourth wicket with Tilak, who also made his second fifty in a row.

But Gaikwad and Ayush Badoni fell in consecutive balls to Farmanullah Safi (3/85) as India momentarily slipped to 245 for five from 245 for three in the 38th over.

But Tilak found an able ally in the aggressive Suryansh Shedge (40, 27b), as the pair added 70 runs for the sixth wicket from just seven overs as India eased past the 300-run mark.

Brief Scores:

India A: 349/9 in 49 overs (Prabhshimran Singh 84, Ruturaj Gaikwad 66, Tilak Varma 66, Vaibhav Sooryavanshi 44, Abdullah Ahmadzai, Farmanullah Safi 3/85).

Afghanistan A 177/2 in 25.5 overs (Imran 75 not out, Bashir Shah 51 not out). (PTI)

Rahul Dravid's son Anvay included in India U-19 squad



NEW DELHI, June 11: Legendary batter Rahul Dravid's younger son Anvay Dravid was on Thursday included in India's Under-19 squad for the tour of Sri Lanka, starting July 4.

The BCCI's Junior Cricket Committee picked the India Men's Under-19 squads for the upcoming tour of Sri Lanka, comprising three one-day matches and two multi-day games.

Yashbardhan Singh Chauhan will lead the one-day and multi-day teams and Lakshya Raichandani as his deputy in both squads.

Dravid junior features in the One-day squad as one of the two wicket-keeping options alongside Rajat Baghel, while Manav Krishna and Aryan Sandesh Sakpal have been picked as wicketkeepers for the multi-day fixtures.

Dravid, 17, notably captained the Karnataka U-19 team to the quarterfinals in the last Vinoo Mankad Trophy in which he aggregated 220 runs in six matches with a highest score of an unbeaten 82.

He has played for the India Under-19 B squad during a triangular home series in Ben-

galuru that also featured India A and Afghanistan U-19 teams.

He also earned selection into Team C for the Under-19 One-Day Challenger Trophy following a string of good domestic performances.

In 2024, Dravid's elder son Samit Dravid was included in India's Under-19 squad for the bilateral home series against Australia, but an injury forced him to miss the rubber.

India U-19 One-Day squad: Sagar Virk, Lakshya Raichandani (VC), Yashbardhan Singh Chauhan (C), Vineeth V K, Arjun Rajput, Kushagra Ojha, Rajat Baghel (WK), Anvay Dravid (WK), Anmoljeet Singh, Vutkuri Yashveer Goud, Rohit Anil Yadav, Shavin V, Kavya Paresch Patel, Mohit Ulva, Ishan Sood.

India U-19 Multi-Day squad: Sagar Virk, Lakshya Raichandani (VC), Yashbardhan Singh Chauhan (C), Patel Kush, Manal Chauhan, Kushagra Ojha, Manav Krishna (WK), Aryan Sandesh Sakpal (WK), Hemchudeshan J, BK Kishore, Rohit Anil Yadav, Kavya Paresch Patel, Priyanshu Singh, Pranav Raghvendra, Chigurupati Venkata. (PTI)

AFI to host Indian Athletic Awards 2026 in New Delhi on June 20

NEW DELHI, June 11: The Athletics Federation of India (AFI) will host the inaugural edition of the Indian Athletic Awards on June 20 in Delhi, in an initiative aimed at recognising excellence in Indian athletics.

The awards have been conceptualised as a platform to honour current and former athletes, coaches, technical officials, mentors, state associations, sponsors, and all other stakeholders whose contributions have played a vital role in India's success on the global stage.

Most of India's leading current and former athletes are expected to be part of the event, making it a significant gathering for the Indian athletics fraternity and a celebration of the sport's rapid rise in the country. (PTI)

A tournament that helps players get into IPL: Dravid

BENGALURU, June 11: Former India skipper Rahul Dravid on Thursday termed the upcoming Maharaja Trophy KSCA T20 tournament as a fine platform for the young state players to showcase their talent, which can open the door to the lucrative Indian Premier League.

The latest edition of the tournament will be played across Mysuru, Hubballi and Bengaluru from June 20 to July 12.

"Having myself been involved in the IPL for many years, I know for a fact that it is a tournament that is followed by a lot of IPL teams. There will be scouts who come to the games live, but many of them watch it on television as well," Dravid said after unveiling the trophy.

"The scores, statistics and data from these matches are watched very closely and it really helps a lot of these players get into the IPL," he added.

Dravid cited the example of Rajasthan Royals leg-spinner Yash Raj Punja, who hails from Karnataka.

"He has not played a lot of cricket in Karnataka. But he did really well in the IPL. He was able to play in the IPL and he was able to



actually perform quite well in the IPL. So, there are some fantastic stories that come out of tournaments like this," said Dravid.

The 19-year-old Punja shone in last season's Maharaja Trophy, earning a contract with the Royals, and he grabbed nine wickets from eight matches in this IPL.

Dravid said conducting the tournament in three venues will help the development of the game in remote areas of the state.

"It's really nice to see that this year's edition of the Maharaja Trophy is going to be con-

ducted in three cities. So that is a very good thing because it really ensures that the game of cricket is being moved to different cities in Karnataka. It gives many people the opportunity to be able to see live some of the best talents in Karnataka," he said.

KSCA President Venkatesh Prasad said, "The Maharaja Trophy KSCA T20 continues to provide an important platform for young players to showcase their abilities, gain valuable experience and take significant steps forward in their cricketing careers. We are proud to offer a pathway that inspires the next generation of champions."

The KSCA secretary Santosh Menon detailed three key changes made to the playing conditions.

"The tournament will retain the Impact Player rule, with teams required to submit their playing XI before the toss, to emphasise the role of all-rounders.

"The competition will also adopt a provision whereby runs will not be awarded if a batter is dismissed off a free-hit delivery, rewarding bowlers for delivering a legal wicket-taking ball after a no-ball. (PTI)



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Pradhan Mantri Rashtriya Bal Puraskar 2026

The Ministry of Women and Child Development, Government of India, invites nominations for the Pradhan Mantri Rashtriya Bal Puraskar (PMRBP) 2026, a prestigious National Award to recognize exceptional achievements of children.

Eligibility Criteria :

- A child who is an Indian Citizen and is resident of India
- Age Limit: A child above the age of 5 years and not exceeding 18 years (as on 31st July of respective year)
- The act / incident / achievement should have been within 2 years of the last date of receipt of application/ nomination for the year of consideration in the website i.e <https://awards.gov.in>

Category of Awards :

- 👉 Bravery
- 👉 Sports
- 👉 Social Service
- 👉 Science & Technology
- 👉 Environment
- 👉 Art & Culture

Mode of Application :

- Nominations from any individual or Institution will be received only through the National Awards Portal
- Self-nomination & recommendations for the awards, both shall be considered
- The last date for receipt of online applications is 31.07.2026



DIPR /DF/HLT/306/12-Jun-26

For further details and submission of nominations, kindly visit the official website of the Ministry of Women and Child Development: <https://awards.gov.in>

Let us recognize and celebrate the extraordinary talents and courage of our children

Issued by: State Child Protection Society | Women and Child Development Department, Govt. of Assam