

6 WORLD

- UN chief proposes options to help end Israel-Hezbollah conflict after peacekeepers leave Lebanon
- Former Thai PM Thaksin Shinawatra freed early from parole after receiving royal pardon

8 NATION

- TMC split: Expelled leader Ritabrata LoP with support of 58 rebel MLAs
- Kewal Dhillon assumes charge as Punjab BJP chief

Delhi hotel fire claims 21 lives including foreigners

Sealed windows, single exit-entry trap scores of people ● 58 people rescued

NEW DELHI, June 3: A devastating blaze tore through a hotel operating without a fire NOC in a congested bylane in south Delhi's Malviya Nagar area on Wednesday, killing at least 21 people, including 11 foreigners whose relatives were being treated in hospitals nearby.

The fire at the Flourish Stay B&B in Hauz Rani in Malviya Nagar started around 8.30 am and quickly spread through the five-floor narrow building that had only one entry-exit point, permanently sealed windows and a sensor-operated main door, officials said. Factors which combined to turn the building into a virtual death trap.

As the flames raged, catching everybody unawares and some in their sleep, rescue workers, including many locals, rushed to pull out those trapped inside.

At least 58 people were rescued and rushed to hospitals where 21



were declared brought dead, officials said. The dead include 10 Indians.

The death toll in the fire -- amongst the worst in the city in recent years -- could rise with several of the injured in a critical condition, officials said.

Many of the casualties are from

Central Asian and African countries. They were staying in the hotel in to attend to their kin admitted in Max Hospital minutes away.

In a tragedy that was perhaps waiting to happen, the hotel had permission for only six rooms, granted under the Delhi government's bed and breakfast policy, but was operating 25, police officials said. Rooms had also come up in the basement.

The structure housed a restaurant on the ground floor while the basement and the upper floors were being used as the hotel.

Officials said the building was only ground floor plus one till six-seven years ago. The additional floors came up later without informing the authorities. Besides, a complete building plan was not submitted.

The building, they said, was reportedly above 15 metres in height, making fire safety clearance mandatory.

"As far as a fire NOC is concerned, we had not received any reference from either the building authorities or the licensing agency," Deputy Chief Fire Officer A K Malik told PTI.

The design of the building made escape (CONTD. ON PAGE 2)

Eviction demand in Kheroni gets louder ● KAAC holds talks with agitators

Authorities given 15-day deadline to act



HT Bureau

DIPHU, June 3: The Karbi Anglong Autonomous Council (KAAC) on Wednesday held a meeting with representatives of a group demanding eviction of alleged encroachers from Protected Grazing Reserve (PGR) and Village Grazing Reserve (VGR) land in Kheroni, West Karbi Anglong. The meeting was held at the conference hall of the KAAC Secretariat and chaired by Chief Executive Member (CEM) and MLA Tuliram Ronghang.

Speaking to reporters after the meeting, agitator leader Angtong Engti Kathar said the discussion was convened following the submission of a fresh memorandum to the State government and the KAAC, seeking

action on their longstanding demand for eviction of alleged encroachers from PGR/VGR land.

Kathar said the delegation had given the authorities a 15-day deadline to clarify whether they would honour their earlier commitment to carry out the eviction drive.

He stated that the eviction process had remained stalled as several families had approached the Gauhati High Court claiming ownership of the land and seeking legal protection against eviction.

According to him, the pending court case had been cited by the authorities as a reason for delaying action.

Kathar, however, claimed that the High Court has since disposed of the matter and directed the petitioners to submit their land documents before the competent land revenue authorities within 30 days to establish their claims.

He maintained that failure to produce valid documents would leave the matter (CONTD. ON PAGE 2)

Shah to chair NEC plenary in Shillong today

NEW DELHI, June 3: Union Home Minister Amit Shah will chair the 73rd plenary session of the North Eastern Council (NEC) in Shillong on June 4 where discussions will be held on a number of issues, including tourism, agriculture, horticulture and investment promotion.

A pre-plenary meeting on Wednesday discussed flagship initiatives such as bamboo, agarwood, the Ashtalakshmi Darshan and other issues.

The plenary session on Thursday will discuss and deliberate on progress made by the CM High-level task forces constituted for critical sectors of regional development, an official statement said.

Presentations will be made on tourism; agriculture and Horticulture, investment promotion; self-reliance in milk, eggs, fish and meat; sports promotion; economic corridor development; infrastructure and connectivity; and handloom and handicrafts, the statement said.

The deliberations are expected to

facilitate coordinated action among states and stakeholders for achieving shared developmental goals.

The meeting will also review important initiatives of the Ministry of DoNER, including updates on major schemes and programmes, outcomes of the North East Investment Summit and Bankers' Conclave, youth-focused initiatives, and efforts relating to tourism, logistics, and the Unique Selling Proposition (USP) projects in the region.

The plenary session will further deliberate on the North East Vision Plan 2047, which seeks to provide a long-term roadmap for transforming the Northeastern region into a vibrant hub of economic growth, connectivity, innovation, sustainability, and cultural prosperity by the centenary year of India's independence.

The Members of the NEC will also share their perspectives on regional development priorities and opportunities for enhanced inter-state cooperation.

The session will be attended by Union (CONTD. ON PAGE 2)

CM briefs Prez on Assam's development roadmap



HT Bureau

GUWAHATI/NEW DELHI, June 3: Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma on Wednesday called on President Droupadi Murmu at Rashtrapati Bhavan and briefed her on Assam's ongoing development initiatives, economic growth trajectory and the government's roadmap for sustaining the state's progress in the coming years.

Sharing details of the meeting, Sarma said he apprised the President of Assam's journey as one of the country's fastest-growing states and outlined the government's plans to further accelerate development across key sectors.

"Honoured to call upon Mahamahim Rashtrapati Smt Droupadi Murmu ji today. An epitome of courage, resilience and leadership,

meeting the Hon'ble President is always an inspiring experience and her words act as an encouragement in our path of public service," the Chief Minister said in a social media post.

Sarma, who was sworn in for a second consecutive term as Chief Minister on May 12, said he sought the President's blessings and guidance to continue the state's journey of public welfare and development.

The meeting assumes significance as the Assam government continues to focus on infrastructure expansion, industrial growth, connectivity, healthcare, education and welfare initiatives aimed at accelerating economic transformation and improving public service delivery across the state.

During his visit to Rashtrapati Bhavan, the Chief Minister also toured Granth Kutir, which houses a rich collection of manuscripts and books in 11 classical Indian languages. The repository showcases India's diverse cultural, literary, philosophical (CONTD. ON PAGE 2)

Border talks await Assam cabinet expansion



SHILLONG, June 3: The second phase of border talks between Assam and Meghalaya over the six remaining disputed areas will resume only after the expansion of the Assam Cabinet, Meghalaya Deputy Chief Minister Prestone Tynsong said on Wednesday.

Addressing questions on the status of the regional committees, Tynsong said both states are awaiting the Cabinet reconstruction in Assam before joint inspections can continue.

"On the regional committees dealing with the areas of difference between Meghalaya and Assam, we are waiting again because the expansion of the Cabinet is being awaited," Tynsong said.

He confirmed that Assam Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma remains committed to the process but has sought time.

"The Assam Chief Minister has already expressed his willingness to continue the talks and the (CONTD. ON PAGE 2)

Rajjor Dal MLA Akhil Gogoi's mother dies at 94

GUWAHATI, June 3: Priyada Gogoi, mother of Assam's Rajjor Dal MLA Akhil Gogoi, died on Wednesday due to age-related ailments, family sources said. She was 94.

She is survived by six children, including the Sivasagar legislator.

She had campaigned extensively for her son's victory in the 2021 Assam Assembly elections when he was lodged in jail.

The octogenarian had gone door-to-door canvassing for him and addressed several election rallies on his behalf.

She was also vocal in demanding her son's release after he was arrested in connection with anti-Citizenship (Amendment) Act protests and booked on charges including sedition.

Gogoi said her body will be taken to (CONTD. ON PAGE 2)

BSF to discuss assault on Indians by B'deshis with BGB

NEW DELHI, June 3: The Border Security Force (BSF) on Wednesday said the forthcoming meeting between the heads of border guarding forces of India and Bangladesh in Delhi will discuss the issues of assault on its troops and Indian civilians by Bangladesh nationals, stopping entry of criminals from across the border and the breaching of the frontier fence by Bangladeshis.

The 57th edition of the bi-annual Director General-level border coordination conference between the BSF and Border Guard Bangladesh (BGB) will be held at the headquarters of the force located on Lodhi Road between June 8-11.

The Indian delegation will be led by BSF DG Praveen Kumar while the BGB team will be headed by its DG Maj Gen Mohammad Ashrafuzzaman Siddiqui, the BSF said in a statement.

"During the course of the conference, discussions will be held on prevention against assault on BSF personnel and Indian civilians by Bangladesh nationals, to prevent trans-border crimes, prevent entry of Bangladesh criminals into India, incidents of fence breaching by Bangladesh nationals and construction of fence. The discussions will also include action against Indian insurgent groups (IIGs) in Bangladesh, issues related to border infrastructure, Confidence Building Measures (CBM) and other issues," the statement said.

The forthcoming meeting will be the first since the BNP government took charge in Dhaka early this year.

The meeting assumes significance as the Modi government, through the public speeches of Union Home Minister Amit Shah, has underlined that India will not allow illegal infiltration of

Nearly 44,000 applications filed for re-evaluation: CBSE

NEW DELHI, June 3: Nearly 44,000 students have availed the verification and re-evaluation facility for board exams and completed the application process till Wednesday morning, the Central Board of Secondary Education (CBSE) has said.

The board said the online portal has received a total of 43,980 applications for verification and re-evaluation of answer sheets.

"The portal has accepted 4,924 applications for verification and 39,056 applications for re-evaluation (total of 43,980) as of 12 noon today," the CBSE said in a post on X on Wednesday.

It said payment gateways of the State Bank of India (SBI), Canara Bank, Bank of Baroda and Indian Bank are available on the verification and re-evaluation portal, adding that students are not required to have an account with these banks to complete the payment process.

"Students need not have an account with these banks to complete payment but can use any of these payment gateways to make payments," the board said.

"As of 9:30 am today, nearly 40,000 students have

availed this facility and completed the application process successfully without any issues," it added.

Candidates may use online payment options, including UPI, net banking, credit card and debit card, through the designated gateways, it said.

"Please rely on official CBSE communications for correct information," the board added.

The portal was launched after a delay, with the CBSE having earlier said filing applications for verification and re-evaluation of answer books was expected to begin by May 29.

The development comes following concerns raised by some students and parents over the on-screen marking (OSM) system used by the board.

The CBSE has faced criticism from students and parents over technical glitches, payment failures and access-related issues during the verification and re-evaluation process.

The board launched the online portal on Tuesday for a verification of issues observed in scanned copies of answer books and re-evaluation of answers for students dissatisfied with their (CONTD. ON PAGE 2)

India-US agricultural cooperation gains momentum through dialogue led by IFFCO Chairman

HT Correspondent

NAGAON, June 3: A high-level dialogue aimed at strengthening agricultural cooperation between India and the United States was recently held under the leadership of IFFCO Chairman Dileep Sanghani, drawing attention from policymakers, industry leaders and agricultural stakeholders in both countries.

The interaction was hosted by the U.S.-India Business Council (USIBC) at its headquarters in Washington, DC, during a visit by a delegation of the PHD Chamber of Commerce and Industry (PHDCCI) led by Sanghani.

Highlighting the significance of the engagement, the USIBC stated that the discussions would provide renewed momentum to India-US cooperation in the agricultural sector and help identify solutions to shared challenges while exploring new opportunities for collaboration.

According to the Council, the dialogue focused on strengthening partnerships in areas such as innovation-driven agricultural policies, sustainable farming practices, food security and farmer welfare.

The meeting also featured extensive deliberations on enhancing agricultural productivity,

promoting the adoption of advanced technologies, improving soil health, providing technical support to farmers and developing innovation-based solutions for the agriculture sector.

Agricultural experts, policymakers and industry representatives from both countries agreed that deeper cooperation between India and the United States could create new opportunities for agricultural growth and deliver long-term benefits to farmers.

The USIBC noted that the engagement reflected the growing importance of India-US collaboration in agriculture and underscored the role of cooperative institutions in advancing sustainable agricultural development.

The recognition accorded by the USIBC, one of the leading business advocacy organisations in the United States, is also being viewed as a reflection of the increasing global recognition of India's cooperative movement and IFFCO's contribution to the agricultural sector.

The dialogue is expected to contribute to strengthening bilateral cooperation in agriculture, promoting innovation-led growth and enhancing food and nutritional security while supporting farmers' income and productivity in both countries.

UN calculates nation-sized environmental footprints for AI, data centres

WASHINGTON, June 3: The environmental footprint of data centres already rivals some of the world's largest countries, according to a United Nations University report, which also predicts their water and energy use and pollution will double in just four years as use of artificial intelligence grows.

Last year, global data centres used 448 trillion watt-hours of electricity, more than all but 10 countries of the world, said the report issued Wednesday.

That electricity use produced about 208 million tonnes of carbon dioxide, about the same amount as Argentina, and producing that much energy consumed about 4.5 trillion litres of water, according to the report on the environmental consequences of AI's energy use.

By 2030, data centres will account for nearly 3 per cent of the world's projected electricity use, with 935 trillion watt-hours. If data centres were a coun-



try, the country would be projected to rank sixth-highest in power use in 2030. That would produce nearly 440 million tonnes of carbon dioxide, the report said.

The study focused on energy use and didn't examine the massive amount of

Canada. "The demand is enormous."

Much of the growth of data centres is being driven by AI. About 20 per cent of data centres' energy is currently due to AI, but that should grow to 40 per cent by 2030, the report said.

First global look at ecological impact

The report is significant because of the credibility and authority of the UN, not just because of any one set of eye-popping numbers, said Fengqi You, a Cornell University energy engineering professor who directs the college's AI sustainability issues.

"Its value is that a UN institution is putting carbon, water, land, life-cycle impacts and environmental justice into one frame" for an issue that is often shrouded in secrecy and partial disclosures, said You, who was not part of the report.

"The general public should be concerned, but not panicked," he added. Jean Su, director (CONTD. ON PAGE 2)

PW students from Guwahati excel in JEE Advanced 2026

HT Bureau

GUWAHATI, June 3: Education company PhysicsWallah (PW) has celebrated the strong performance of its students from Guwahati in the Joint Entrance Examination (JEE) Advanced 2026, the results of which were recently declared.

Among the high-performing students from the city were Harsh Barman, who secured All India Rank (AIR) 3104, Sagnikpran Ranjanbonshi (AIR 3630) and Gopesh Garodia (AIR 3710).

According to data released by the organising Indian Institute of Technology (IIT), a total of 1,79,694 candidates appeared in both Papers 1 and 2 of JEE Advanced 2026, of whom 56,880 candidates qualified.

Congratulating the successful candidates, PhysicsWallah Founder and Chief Executive Officer Alakh Pandey said the achievement reflected the hard work, perseverance and dedication of the students.

"I want to congratulate every student who cleared the JEE Advanced 2026 examination through their hard work and determination. For those who did not get the results they hoped for, this single examination does not define their capabilities or future success. Education is a long journey, and many opportunities lie ahead," he said.

PhysicsWallah offers preparation programmes for competitive examinations, including JEE and NEET, along with academic support for school students through its online, hybrid and offline learning platforms.

NAME CORRECTION

I, Shahnewaz Laskar, S/o Late Basarat Ali Laskar, Vill- Pachim Nilabagan, PO- Nilabagan, PS- Hojai, District- Hojai (Assam) That my father's name in my PAN card, Voter ID, Aadhaar card is Basarat Ali Laskar and land documents under paschim nilabagan kissam, Patta no-62, (Dag-158), Patta no- 66 (Dag-162), patta no-218 (Dag-314), patta no- 219 (Dag-315) under Nilabagan Kismat respectively, Basarat Ali and Basarat Ali Laskar are the same person

NAME CORRECTION

I, Sri Rensing Bey son of Bura Bey, resident of Village Loren Rongpi (Rongchingrum) Gaon, Diphu, Karbi Anglong would like to mention that in my SBI Bank Passbook my name Wrongly recorded as Sutrosing Bey instead of my actual name Rensing Bey, both are the same person.

AFFIDAVIT

I, Sri Rensing Bey, S/o Bura Bey, resident of village Loren Rongpi (Rongchingrum) Gaon, P.O. & P.S., DIPHU, district Karbi Anglong, Assam, do hereby solemnly affirm and declare through an affidavit before the Notary Public Diphu Court on 01st, June, 2026, that my actual name is Rensing Bey as recorded in my PAN card Vide No.DHEPB1838P and Aadhaar Card Vide no.5384-9723-6444 and State Bank of India passbook vide A/C No.38423864685, whereas in another bank account of State Bank of India, Diphu Branch bearing A/C No.32096011763 my name has been inadvertently recorded as Sutrosing Bey instead of Rensing Bey. That both names Rensing Bey and Sutrosing Bey are the same and single person, not different individuals, i.e. myself. The balance remaining in A/C No.32096011763 may be transferred into my new savings A/C No.38423864685.

ACHIEVEMENT



Heartiest Congratulations to Dr. Dawatshogmo Lama
We are proud to announce that Dawatshogmo Lama, a resident of Dumukhia, Bokajan, has been awarded a Doctor of Philosophy (Ph.D.) degree by Assam University. The university officially declared her qualified for the award on April 20, 2026.

Her doctoral thesis, titled "Ecology and Forest Resource Management in North-Cachar Hills of Assam: A Historical Study," was completed under the guidance of Prof. Vulli Dhanaraju in the Department of History at Assam University, Diphu Campus.

Dr. Lama holds M.A., B.Ed., and D.El.Ed. degrees and currently serves as an Assistant Teacher at Lahorjan Bagan LP School. She is the daughter of the late Sanjay Lama and Chitra Rabha Lama, sister of Nimatashi Lama, and wife of Bhupom Shyam. Her family, relatives, friends, and well-wishers extend their heartfelt congratulations on this remarkable achievement and wish her continued success, good health, and a bright future in her academic and professional career.

— Family Members, Relatives & Well-Wishers

RBI's rate-setting panel starts deliberations, policy announcement tomorrow

MUMBAI, June 3: The high-powered Monetary Policy Committee, headed by RBI Governor Sanjay Malhotra, on Wednesday started its three-day brainstorming amid expectations that the central bank may leave the key policy rate unchanged at 5.25 per cent as the West Asia conflict poses challenges to inflation as well as economic growth.

After three days of deliberations, the six-member Monetary Policy Committee (MPC) will announce the decision on June 5.

With surging energy prices, continuing supply chain woes and a depreciating rupee, primarily driven by external challenges, some experts are of the view that the Reserve Bank of India (RBI) may raise its inflation forecast and lower its GDP growth estimate.

In April, the Reserve Bank had kept its key policy rate unchanged, adopting a cautious wait-and-watch stance as policymakers assessed the fallout from the West Asia conflict on energy supplies, inflation and growth.

A report from private-sector lender Yes Bank said that policy challenges remain magnified, even as the war situation improves, yet remain unresolved, thereby keeping the economy open to supply shocks.

The pass-through from the WPI to retail inflation has just begun, in the form of increases in pump-head petrol and diesel prices, alongside increases in commercial LPG prices, it said.

Also, manufacturing and farm input costs have risen sharply, and manufacturers have indicated a willingness to pass the impact onto the retail side.

"While every policy remains live, we see a very small probability for a rate and stance change in June, as RBI buys time to assess the second-round impact of price rises," Yes Bank's report said.

Gaura Sen Gupta, Chief Economist at IDFC First Bank expects the RBI to stay on pause as inflation remains within the inflation-targeting band.

"Moreover, there is downside risk to growth due to the surge in input costs. RBI's flexible inflation-targeting band provides it policy space to look through the first-round impact of the surge in fuel prices. Communication will be cautious, with RBI stating its willingness to act if there are second-round



impacts on inflation," Gupta added.

Abhishek Bisen, Head-Fixed Income, Kotak Mahindra AMC, said that the meeting comes amid heightened uncertainty due to global conflicts, rising crude prices, sharp rupee depreciation, and monsoon risks.

While CPI inflation remains benign at 3.48 per cent, surging WPI and fuel costs signal emerging pressures, he said, adding that growth remains strong but faces headwinds.

"Against this backdrop, while markets are pricing in potential rate hikes ahead, the RBI is likely to hold the repo rate at 5.25 per cent for now but adopt a more hawkish tone—raising inflation forecasts, slightly trimming growth projections, and relying on forex tools to manage currency volatility," Bisen said.

The RBI factors in the consumer price index (CPI) when formulating its monetary policy.

The government has set the consumer price index (CPI) based headline inflation target at 4 per cent with the upper tolerance level of 6 per cent and the lower tolerance level of 2 per cent for the central bank.

The CPI or retail inflation rose slightly to 3.48 per cent in April, mainly due to higher prices of gold and silver jewellery as well as some kitchen items.

HSBC Chief India Economist Pranjul Bhandari believes it would be a close call for the RBI, but the repo rate may be left unchanged on June 5 since CPI inflation remains below target so far, financial conditions are tightening anyway, and the RBI may not want to give the impression that it is using rate hikes for forex defence.

On the real estate sector expectations, Kunal Rishi, COO, Krisumi Corporation, said the RBI is currently navigating a complex macro-economic environment, where it must carefully balance inflation management with the need to sus-

tain growth momentum.

"...we believe the RBI should maintain its growth-supportive stance. The ideal approach would be to keep rates unchanged to support economic activity. For the housing sector, lower borrowing costs are critical to sustaining homebuyer demand and enhancing affordability," Rishi opined.

Tanuj Shori, CEO of Square Yards, said the residential real estate market has shown remarkable resilience, driven by strong end-user demand, rising household incomes, and a growing preference for home-ownership. The cumulative rate cuts over the past year have already improved affordability and borrowing conditions.

"Looking ahead, policy measures that balance growth and inflation while supporting liquidity in the financial system will help sustain housing demand in key markets. For prospective homebuyers, predictability of interest rates is a crucial factor in their purchasing decisions, and continued macroeconomic stability will further enhance confidence in the sector," Shori said.

Gaurav Maheshwari, CFO, Alankit Limited, opined that while domestic economic fundamentals and corporate earnings remain resilient, recent cost-driven supply shocks—notably from escalating fuel prices and heightened global commodity volatility—are pushing retail inflation projections closer to the 5 per cent mark.

"For India Inc, a continued neutral stance ensures predictable borrowing costs in the short term, sustaining corporate credit momentum," he said.

Mythri Kumar, co-founder and CEO, TimbuckDo, said a stable interest rate environment will help sustain business confidence, encourage investments, and create more opportunities for students, freelancers, and emerging enterprises that are increasingly contributing to the country's economic momentum.

"As India continues to witness strong entrepreneurial activity and growing participation in flexible work and gig opportunities, we hope the Monetary Policy Committee maintains a growth-supportive stance," Kumar said.

The Reserve Bank had reduced the policy rate cumulatively by 100 bps in 2025-26. (PTI)

RBI dismisses gold sale rumours; physical reserves stand steady at 880.52 tonnes

MUMBAI, June 3: Debunking reports of gold sale, the Reserve Bank of India on Wednesday said there is no change in the physical stock of gold, which remains unchanged at 880.52 tonnes.

The clarification from the Reserve Bank of India (RBI) comes following reports that the RBI may have sold gold amounting to approximately USD 12 billion to shield its foreign-currency reserves from the impact of the ongoing conflict in West Asia.

"The RBI emphasises that these reports are not correct," the central bank said in a statement.

Members of the public are, therefore, advised to rely on official information published by the RBI from time to time in such matters, it said.

Meanwhile, the Press Information Bureau also published a fact-check on the reports.

According to RBI, the share of gold in India's foreign exchange reserves rose from 13.92 per cent at the end of September 2025 to 16.70 per cent on March 31, 2026, and further to 16.85 per cent as of May 22, 2026, it said.

As on March 31, 2026, total gold held by the Reserve Bank was 880.52 metric tonnes as compared to 879.58 metric tonnes as on March 31, 2025, an increase of 0.94 metric tonnes of gold in the year.

"Of the 880.52 metric tonnes, 312.32 metric tonnes of gold is held as an asset of the Issue Department as compared to 311.38 metric tonnes as on March 31, 2025," RBI in its latest annual report said. The remaining 568.20 metric tonnes, same as on March 31, 2025, is treated as an asset of the Banking Department, it said.

Income Tax Department conducts awareness programme on Income-tax Act, 2025 for NPOs

HT Bureau

GUWAHATI, June 3: The Income Tax Department organised an awareness programme titled "PRARAMBH 2026" on the provisions of the newly introduced Income-tax Act, 2025 for registered Non-Profit Organisations (NPOs) at ICAI Bhawan, Manik Nagar, Guwahati.

The programme witnessed participation from a large number of chartered accountants, tax professionals, auditors and representatives of trusts, societies, educational institutions and other non-profit organisations from across the region.

The inaugural session was attended by Commissioner of Income Tax (Exemption), Kolkata, Manish Kumar Jha, Deputy Commissioner of Income Tax (Exemption), Kolkata, Basuki Nath Jha, and Chairman of the Guwahati Branch (EIRC) of ICAI, CA Anjani Kumar Mundhra.

Welcoming the participants, Mundhra highlighted the significant changes introduced under the Income-tax Act, 2025 and appreciated the initiative of the Income Tax Department in conducting awareness programmes for stakeholders. He reiterated the commitment of the Guwahati Branch of ICAI towards promoting professional knowledge and facilitating interaction between tax professionals and the Department.

The technical sessions were conducted by Manish Kumar Jha and Basuki Nath Jha, who elaborated on the key provisions of the Income-tax Act, 2025, the Income Tax Rules, 2026 and the compliance requirements appli-



able to registered NPOs. The sessions focused on the practical implications of the new legislation and the preparedness required from organisations and professionals for its effective implementation.

An interactive question-and-answer session provided participants an opportunity to seek clarifications on various procedural and compliance-related aspects of the new law. The programme received an encouraging response from attendees, reflecting the significance of the new tax framework for the non-profit sector.

The event concluded with a vote of thanks delivered by H. Joyo Singh, Income Tax Officer, Ward 2(3), Guwahati, who acknowledged the efforts of the Income Tax Department and the ICAI Guwahati Branch in organising the programme and creating a platform for knowledge-sharing and stakeholder engagement.

Contd. from Page 1...

Delhi hotel fire

almost impossible, he said. "Buildings of this nature act like a shaft, where heat and smoke generated by a fire can engulf the entire structure within seconds, making evacuation even more challenging," he said.

The hotel was being operated by three partners, who are also believed to own other hotels and guesthouses across Delhi, police sources said.

Delhi Police has filed an FIR under charges of culpable homicide among other relevant sections of BNS. The building owner has been identified as LavKesh, the license was issued in the name of Jai Mishra and the owner of the hotel has been identified as Lokesh Bajaj, the sources added. No one has been arrested as yet.

Alerts have been issued to railway and airport authorities to prevent the suspects from fleeing. Raids were conducted at multiple locations, including the residences of the building owner and the licence holder registered with the tourism department. The cause of the fire is yet to be ascertained.

Visuals from the area -- with narrow lanes, overhanging wires and cramped buildings haphazardly sharing space -- showed high flames rising in the air and wires twisted out of shape in the heat hanging precariously. Shattered glass and mangled metal lay scattered around the smoke charred building.

Teams from the Delhi Fire Services, police and disaster response units searched through the smoke-blackened structure for survivors.

Victims were seen being pulled out of the basement and rushed to hospitals in ambulances. The urban village of Hauz Rani is minutes away from swanky malls, upscale hospitals and the Saket court complex as well as the residential localities of Malviya Nagar and Saket.

Officials said the fire started at Lemon Green Restaurant, but police later clarified that it was a hotel building. According to one eyewitness and a first responder, the basement was locked and he helped the fire team to help open it. "It took more than 20 minutes to open the basement area," he alleged. Horrific scenes played out all over. As thick smoke engulfed the building and flames spread rapidly, several people were seen breaking window panes and calling for help.

"A woman holding a young child jumped from the third floor after local residents spread mattresses on the ground below in an attempt to save those trapped inside," an eyewitness said.

A foreigner couple could be seen trapped on the fourth floor. They broke the window glass, smashed the aluminium mesh and climbed down using a pipe to escape the inferno.

Arman, who owns a blanket and cotton shop opposite the hotel, spread as many quilts and mattresses as he could to cushion the fall of people while others administered CPR to the injured.

"At that time, we did not think about anything else. We provided as many quilts as we were needed," Armaan told PTI. At the Max Hospital across the road, stunned relatives crowded the waiting area searching for their loved ones, scanning lists and making frantic phone calls as the injured and the dead were brought in.

"We can't recognise them by looking at pictures. Everyone is severely burnt," said one man sobbing uncontrollably. Also searching desperately was Namit Goel, who said six of his relatives were among those caught in the fire. "Four bodies are in Max Saket mortuary and two bodies are in another hospital. We are trying to locate them," he said.

Max Hospital said in a statement that 39 patients were received at the emergency department. Of these 18 were brought dead, while 15 were admitted to the ICU, including eight who are on ventilator support and critical. The patients suffered from asphyxiation, minor burn injuries and fractures, it said.

Five patients with minor injuries were treated and discharged after primary medical care, while one patient was shifted to Safdarjung Hospital due to extensive burn injuries, it added.

The All India Institute of Medical Sciences received 13 patients -- three of them sustained injuries from fall and 10 were those who got hurt while rescuing those trapped in the burning building.

President Droupadi Murmu and Prime Minister Narendra Modi were among those who expressed their condolences. "The news of the loss of lives in the fire incident in Malviya Nagar, Delhi is extremely heartbreaking...." Murmu said in a post on X in Hindi. The prime minister announced ex-gratia payment of ₹ 2 lakh from the Prime Minister's National Relief Fund for the next of kin of each deceased and ₹ 50,000 for those injured.

Describing the loss of lives as tragic, he said on X, "My condolences to those who have lost their loved ones." Congress leaders, including party president Mallikarjun Kharge and leader Rahul Gandhi, expressed their grief and urged party workers to extend all possible help. State government authorities should provide adequate and timely compensation, including prompt medical care to the victims, Kharge said.

The worst fire in Delhi remains the 1997 Uphaar Cinema fire in which 59 people died. (PTI)

Authorities given

open for action by the concerned authorities. He further alleged that the KAAC had already issued an order on May 9 directing the concerned individuals to furnish valid land documents before the Assistant Revenue Officer (ARO).

In view of these developments, he asserted that there were no longer any legal hurdles to the eviction process and urged the authorities to initiate immediate action.

Appealing for unity among supporters, Kathar urged people not to indulge in blame games and called for the movement to continue peacefully until the demand is fulfilled.

Among those present at the meeting were Angtong Engti Kathar, Litsong Rongphar, Robindro Rongpi and several other leaders of the movement.

Meanwhile, a group of protesters staged a demonstration outside the KAAC Secretariat, demanding immediate eviction of alleged encroachers from the PGR/VGR land in Kheroni.

Border talks await

inspections by both regional committees. But he requested us to wait till the expansion of the ministry is completed," Tynsong said. The delay, he explained, will allow proper ministerial representation.

"This is so that the ministers concerned who will be entrusted with the task can also be part of the regional committee," he added.

The second phase covers Langpih, Borduar, Nongwah-Mawtamur, Desh Doomreah, Block-I and Block-II, and Psiar-Khanduli.

Six other areas were settled in the first phase through an agreement signed in March 2022. (NNN)

CM briefs Prez

and intellectual heritage. The President's Office shared photographs of the meeting and the Chief Minister's visit to Granth Kutir on social media. The interaction reflected the continued engagement between the Centre and the state on developmental priorities, with the Chief Minister reiterating Assam's commitment to sustaining its growth momentum and achieving long-term development goals. (With inputs from PTI)

Shah to chair

Minister for Development of North Eastern Region (DoNER) and Vice Chairman, NEC, Jyotiraditya M Scindia, Governors and Chief Ministers of the eight Northeastern states, senior officers of central and state governments.

The NEC, established under the North Eastern Council Act, 1971, serves as the apex regional planning body for the North Eastern Region and plays a pivotal role in fostering coordinated development and strengthening co-operative federalism in the region. (PTI)

Rajior Dal MLA

their family home at Seleghat in Jorhat district where her last rites will be performed.

State Congress chief Gaurav Gogoi, president of Assam Jatiya Parishad, Lurinjyoti Gogoi, and several MLAs across party lines condoled her death. (PTI)

Nearly 44,000

Class-12 board exam evaluation. According to the board, the facility is available only to those students who have obtained scanned copies of their evaluated answer books.

"The portal for applying for verification of issues observed in supplied scanned copy of answer book and re-evaluation of answers has been made live on June 2, 2026. Students can avail the facility of verification of issue(s) observed in supplied scanned copy of answer book, if any, and re-evaluation of answer(s) if not satisfied with the evaluation," the CBSE said.

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

Students will have to log in through the CBSE website using their Aadhaar number and submit applications online. The board said the entire process, including payment of fees, will be conducted digitally.

For verification of issues in scanned copies of answer books, students can report concerns, such as missing pages, missing supplementary sheets, missing maps or graphs, blurred pages, incorrect answer books or evaluation against a different question paper set.

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

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

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

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

The board said applications will be treated as successfully submitted only after online payment is completed. "Students may also apply online for re-evaluation of one or more questions across one or more subjects by providing the required details, including question number, page number, as the case may be," the board said.

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

A visual guide and a tutorial video have also been made available to help students complete the process, the board added. (PTI)

UN calculates nation

of the Energy Justice Programme at the Centre for Biological Diversity, said the report is important because it is the first UN, or even global, report "that shines a light on the environmental harms of AI."

National Artificial Intelligence Association President Caleb Max emphasised how his industry is becoming more efficient and how it benefits the public: "AI is rapidly becoming part of our everyday lives and adding benefits that improve safety, live longer, work more efficiently, enhance food production, and reduce poverty. The evidence is growing daily that the energy return on investment of AI development is transformative for our world and therefore more than worth it."

Josh Levi, president the Data Center Coalition, said the industry takes its environmental impact seriously.

"We remain committed to working with policymakers, local communities, and industry partners to ensure that as data centres grow, they do so responsibly, transparently, and in ways that reflect the best available practices," he said in a statement. (AP)

BJP says UCC being implemented as promised, criticises Congress delay

Party leaders highlight provisions of the Uniform Civil Code and call it a historic reform

HT Bureau

DIPHU, June 3: The BJP is actively implementing the Uniform Civil Code (UCC) as promised during the last election—a constitutional vision originally mentioned by Dr Bhim Rao Ambedkar but delayed by past Congress leadership, the BJP Assam Pradesh stated on Wednesday.

Addressing a press conference at the Atal Bihari Vajpayee Bhawan here, Amal Narayan Patowary, spokesperson of BJP Assam Pradesh, targeted the Opposition over the historical delay in implementing the code.

"The UCC was mentioned by Dr Bhim Rao Ambedkar, but it was not agreed to by the then Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru and the Congress leadership for the appeasement of minorities (Muslims)," Patowary said.

He further noted that despite subsequent petitions and advisory directives from the Supreme Court



of India pushing for its implementation, the then Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi also declined to move forward with it.

"After the BJP came to power, the UCC has been passed in Uttar Pradesh and Gujarat and is being implemented. Assam is the third state to do so," Patowary added.

Highlighting key provisions of the UCC, the BJP spokesperson emphasised that polygamy and second marriages are banned under the code.

Other key highlights mentioned during the press meeting included mandatory registration of live-in relationships within one month,

equal inheritance rights for sons and daughters, a strict ban on child marriage and provisions stating that Scheduled Tribes are completely exempted from the UCC. He also said that the matrilineal customs of the Garo and Khasi communities will remain unaffected.

Patowary criticised the Congress party for opposing the UCC Bill, contrasting their stance with that of indigenous Muslim groups such as the Hodou Asom Gorias Moria Parishad, who have welcomed the move. Terming the Chief Minister's initiative a "historic step," he expressed confidence that the president of India would sign the Bill into law within a few months.

The press conference was also attended by Roland Timing, President of the BJP East Karbi Anglong District Committee; MAC Krishna Bhattacharya and Bidyasing Rongpi, Secretary in-charge of Media and Publicity.

Executive Council takes key decisions on salaries, land allocation and cattle markets

BTC cuts salaries, approves land pattas for landless people



HT Correspondent

KOKRAJHAR, June 3: The Executive Council (EC) meeting of the Bodoland Territorial Council (BTC) was held at the Bodoland Secretariat in Bodofa Nwgr, Kokrajhar on Wednesday under the leadership of BTC Chief Executive Member Hagrama Mohliary.

Several key decisions were taken during the meeting. The council decided to reduce the salaries of all BTC Executive Members and Council Members by 30 percent for the next six months in view of the current economic challenges arising from the ongoing conflict in the

Middle East.

The EC also approved the distribution of land pattas to landless people in BTC. Discussions were held on providing up to seven bighas of land to rural residents and one-and-a-half kathas to urban residents. Zonal committees will be formed to identify genuine landless beneficiaries.

The council further decided to establish new cattle markets and reopen several closed cattle markets across the BTC region.

BTC Executive Member Maheswar Basumatary announced the decisions during a press conference after the meeting.

Mass protest against drugs

HT Correspondent

NAGAON, June 3: In a massive show of public outrage against drugs, thousands of residents took to the streets in Nagaon and vandalised houses of alleged drug peddlers in the Herapati Tanpara area earlier on Wednesday.

According to reports, residents of Tanpara near Nagaon town organised a powerful campaign against the drug menace, demanding a drug-free society. Young men and women, students and residents in large numbers participated in the protest, raising strong slogans against drugs and creating a charged atmosphere.

The agitated crowd targeted the residences of about seven families allegedly involved in the illegal drug trade. Protesters ransacked the houses, set furniture ablaze and torched a motorcycle. Several houses suffered damage during the public action.

Locals alleged that despite repeated appeals to authorities to shut down the drug trade, no action was taken. They said the drug menace had ruined the lives of several young people in the area and fuelled crimes like theft, robbery, violence and other anti-social activities. Fed up with administrative inaction, residents launched the "clean-up drive" themselves to rid the locality of the drug scourge. Police from Haibargaon Police Outpost later reached the spot and brought the situation under control. No arrests have been reported so far in connection with the incident till the time of filing this report, sources added.

Six arrested in Bokajan drug busts

HT Correspondent

BOKAJAN, June 3: In a major double blow to interstate narcotics smuggling, police teams in the Bokajan subdivision of Karbi Anglong district conducted two separate successful operations on Tuesday, arresting six individuals and seizing substantial quantities of heroin and opium. In the larger of the two seizures, Dillai police intercepted a massive consignment of opium valued at an estimated ₹ 65 lakh in the international market.

Acting on routine naka (check-point) checking along National Highway 36 (the four-lane highway), police personnel flagged down an auto-rickshaw. A thorough search of the vehicle led to the discovery of more than 13 kg of opium (locally known as kani) hidden beneath the passenger seat. The contraband was neatly packaged into 14 separate plastic packets.

Five smugglers travelling in the auto-rickshaw were promptly arrested. The accused have been identified as Md Taz Uddin, Md Hafiz Uddin, Faisal Uddin, Amgbi Phochem and Einoch Phochem.

According to preliminary police investigations, all five individuals are residents of Manipur. The consignment had been transported from Manipur and was reportedly destined for Guwahati before Dillai police foiled the attempt.

Meanwhile, on Tuesday evening, Khatkhathi police successfully executed a targeted anti-drug operation at Laborjan Tea Estate.

Acting on specific intelligence input, a police team led by Sub-Inspector Debashis Bora and Amarjyoti Gogoi laid a trap and intercepted a suspect arriving from the Dimapur side. Upon searching the individual, officers recovered approximately 13.96 grams of suspected heroin concealed inside a soap box. The accused has been identified as Moniram Narzary (25), son of Moneswar Narzary, a resident of Gobardhana Melagaon under Barpeta Road police station in Assam's Barpeta district.

The contraband from both operations was seized under legal procedures in the presence of independent witnesses. Khatkhathi and Dillai police have taken all six accused into custody. Further interrogation is underway to trace the wider supply chains, identify source networks and locate the key operators behind these interstate trafficking routes through Karbi Anglong.

Poor road conditions disrupt daily life in Morigaon tribal belt

HT Correspondent

MORIGAON, June 3: Teachers who regularly travel from Morigaon and Jagirao to Gagalmar, Kotahari Sikabari, Batobori ME School via Basanaghat Manipur, Gasaguri and Udori are facing severe difficulties due to the pathetic condition of the road.

Around 15 km of road connecting Morigaon to Kotahari remains in poor condition, with its surface badly damaged. The general public and students of nearby localities are suffering the most due to the lack of proper connectivity. The affected areas are predominantly Scheduled Tribe (ST)-dominated regions. The tribal people in these localities largely depend on fishing, maize cultivation and paddy cultivation for their livelihood.

KAAC holds executive committee meeting in Diphu

HT Bureau

DIPHU, June 3: The 27th Executive Committee (EC) meeting of the 13th Karbi Anglong Autonomous Council (KAAC) was held on Wednesday at the KAAC Conference Hall in Diphu under the chairmanship of Chief Executive Member Tuliram Ronghang.

The meeting reviewed key developmental initiatives and discussed important policy matters aimed at accelerating progress across various sectors in Karbi Anglong. Deliberations focused on strengthening governance, improving public services and ensuring the effective implementation of welfare and infrastructure projects for the benefit of the people.

Speaking on the occasion, Ronghang reiterated the Council's commitment to inclusive growth and sustainable development. He stated that under the leadership of Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma, Karbi Anglong is witnessing a new era of transformation marked by enhanced infrastructure, improved connectivity and expanded opportunities for its citizens.

The Executive Committee reaffirmed its resolve to work collectively towards realising the vision of a prosperous, self-reliant and developed Karbi Anglong, thereby contributing to a new chapter of growth and progress for the region.

AAUBC felicitates 65 meritorious students



HT Correspondent

SIVASAGAR, June 3: The All Assam United Brahmin Council (AAUBC), Sivasagar District Committee felicitated 65 meritorious students who passed the HSLC and HSSLC examinations with distinctions in the district at Sivasagar Amolapatty Hindu Dharma Namghar.

Rajendra Prasad Borthakur, president of the district unit, lit the ceremonial lamp. The meeting was attended, among others, by Manoj Kumar Borthakur, president of the Central Committee of the AAUBC; Amrit Goswami, representative of the Jorhat Committee; Dr Ranjit Baruah, principal of Dikhowmukh College; Dr Protim Sarma,

principal of Sibsagar Girls' College; Dr Arun Changkakoty, retired District Agriculture Officer; Dr Moni Pathak, vice-president; Arabinda Baruah, treasurer and Gopal Pandey, secretary of the AAUBC Central Committee. Rajani Changkakoty, executive president of the district committee; Raman Sharma, former principal of Sivasagar Government HS School; Pronab Sharma, noted entrepreneur; Mukul Bhat-tacharya and Munu Sharma, educationists were also present.

Addressing the students and guardians, Dr Ranjit Baruah said that the New Education Policy 2020 caters to the needs of the time as well as students of all categories and classes through its diverse and

integrated courses. He said that students need to prioritise their individual choices and potential before embarking on a specific course.

Dr Protim Sarma, principal of Sibsagar Girls' College and Dr Arun Changkakoty also inspired the students with informative speeches on career building.

Manoj Kumar Borthakur said that Brahmins had led Indian society from the front for over a millennium for the wellbeing of all, sacrificing individual and petty interests. He said Brahmins would continue to do so in the future as well. However, he added that they now found themselves at the receiving end and deprived of their legitimate rights in diverse areas in independent India. It is under these circumstances, he said, that organisations like the AAUBC have emerged to safeguard their culture and interests.

Nimisha Sandilya anchored the programme, while Sanju Baruah delivered the vote of thanks. The district Mahila Parishad presented a chorus at the beginning of the programme.

Yoga and Wellness Centre inaugurated at Nalbari District Jail

HT Correspondent

NAGAON, June 3: A Yoga and Wellness Centre (Y&WC) under the National AYUSH Mission, Assam, operated by Arogya Care Foundation, Nagaon was formally inaugurated at the District Jail, Nalbari on Wednesday. The programme commenced with a welcome address by the Jailor of District Jail, Nalbari. The inauguration ceremony was attended by Dr Manab Kumar Chaudhary, Joint Director of Health Services, Nalbari; Dr Hemen Kumar Sarma, District Nodal Officer (AYUSH), Nalbari and Mrinal Kanti Deka, dealing assistant, AYUSH, Nalbari.

Addressing the gathering, the Joint Director of Health Services highlighted the importance of yoga and wellness activities in promoting physical and mental well-being among inmates. The District Nodal Officer (AYUSH) also spoke on the role of Yoga and Wellness Centres under the National AYUSH Mission in improving health outcomes and encouraging a healthy lifestyle.

Yoga instructors Nirmal Sarkar and Archana Bhuyan coordinated the programme and conducted yoga-related activities. Jail officials, staff members and inmates were present on the occasion.

NFR inducts advanced maintenance vehicle



HT Bureau

GUWAHATI, June 3: Northeast Frontier Railway (NFR) has further enhanced its infrastructure maintenance capabilities with the induction of a Rail-Borne Maintenance Vehicle (RBMV), designed to undertake critical track and engineering maintenance activities with greater efficiency, precision and safety. The newly procured vehicle will play a vital role in supporting maintenance operations across difficult and strategically important railway sections, particularly in the under-construction Bairabi-Sairang railway project in Mizoram.

The advanced maintenance vehicle is equipped with modern features that enable the transportation of personnel, materials and maintenance equipment directly

to work sites located in remote and inaccessible areas. The vehicle is also fitted with specialised lifting and handling arrangements, allowing railway personnel to carry out track-related works, replacement of components and emergency restoration activities in a safe and time-bound manner. Its deployment will significantly reduce dependence on conventional maintenance methods and improve overall operational efficiency.

The Bairabi-Sairang section, which traverses hilly terrain and presents unique engineering challenges, requires robust maintenance support to ensure safe and reliable railway operations. The induction of this maintenance vehicle will facilitate such support during inspections and infrastructure upkeep activities. The vehicle will also be useful in carrying out preventive maintenance, thereby helping to minimise disruptions and enhance asset reliability.

Safety remains the foremost priority for NFR. The deployment of this modern maintenance vehicle is expected to strengthen safety standards by providing railway personnel with a dedicated and efficient platform for undertaking maintenance works under demanding field conditions. The improved mechanism of maintenance activities will also reduce the manual handling of heavy equipment and materials, thereby enhancing workplace safety and productivity.

Income Tax Department holds awareness programme on New Income-tax Act

HT Bureau

GUWAHATI, June 3: The Income Tax Department successfully organised "PRARAMBH 2026", an awareness programme on the provisions of the newly introduced Income-tax Act, 2025 for registered non-profit organisations (NPOs) at ICAI Bhawan, Manik Nagar, Guwahati.

The programme was attended by a large number of chartered accountants, tax professionals, auditors and representatives of trusts, societies, educational institutions and other non-profit organisations from across the region.

The inaugural session was graced by Manish Kumar Jha, IRS, Commissioner of Income Tax (Exemption), Kolkata; Basuki Nath Jha, IRS, Deputy Commissioner of Income Tax (Exemption), Kolkata and CA Anjali Kumar Mundhra, Chairman, ICAI Guwahati Branch (EIRC).

Welcoming the participants, CA Anjali Kumar Mundhra highlighted the significant changes brought by the Income-tax Act, 2025 and appreciated the initiative of the Income Tax Department in conducting awareness programmes for stakeholders. He reaffirmed the commitment of the Guwahati Branch towards promoting professional knowledge and facilitating interaction between the department and tax professionals.

The technical sessions were jointly conducted by Manish Kumar Jha, IRS, Commissioner of Income Tax (Exemption), Kolkata, who highlighted the changes proposed in the new Income-tax Act, 2025 for NPOs and Basuki Nath Jha, IRS, Deputy Commissioner of Income Tax (Exemption), Kolkata, who provided detailed insights into the provisions of the Income-tax Act, 2025, the Income Tax Rules,

2026 and the compliance requirements applicable to registered NPOs. The sessions focused on the practical implications of the new law and the preparedness required from organisations and professionals for its effective implementation.

An interactive question-and-answer session enabled participants to seek clarifications on various practical and procedural aspects of the new legislation. The programme received an encouraging response from the attendees, reflecting the importance and relevance of the subject for the non-profit sector.

The event concluded with a vote of thanks by H. Joyo Singh, Income Tax Officer, Ward 2(3), Guwahati, who acknowledged the efforts of the Income Tax Department and ICAI Guwahati Branch in organising the programme and providing a platform for knowledge sharing and stakeholder engagement.

Bodoland University to host regional science conference

HT Correspondent

KOKRAJHAR, June 3: The Faculty of Science and Technology, Bodoland University and the Bodoland Science Congress are jointly organising a one-day regional conference on "Current Trends in Science 2026" on June 12, 2026, at Bodoland University in Kokrajhar district.

The conference aims to provide a common platform for scientists, academicians, researchers, scholars, students and professionals to deliberate on emerging trends, developments, innovations and contemporary challenges in various branches of science. The event is expected to witness participation from educational institutions, re-

search organisations and universities from different parts of the region. Prof B L Ahuja, Vice-Chancellor of Bodoland University will inaugurate the conference. Distinguished scientist Dr Dinesh Ch. Goswami will deliver the keynote address, while Prof Anku Moni Saikia, Principal of Dhubri Medical College and Hospital will grace the occasion as the plenary speaker. The conference will feature scientific presentations, discussions and exchanges of ideas on recent advancements in science and technology. It is expected to strengthen scientific temper, research culture, innovation and academic collaboration among institutions and researchers across the region.

Three-day Census 2027 training concludes in Karbi Anglong

HT Bureau

DIPHU, June 3: A three-day intensive training programme on Census Operations 2027 for district- and charge-level officials concluded successfully on Wednesday at the Circuit House.

Conducted from June 1 to June 3, 2026, the programme specifically focused on the upcoming House Listing and Housing Operations (HLO) Phase-I of Census 2027. The initiative aimed to strengthen the preparedness and technical capacity of officials responsible for implementing the massive nationwide exercise within Karbi Anglong district.

Reviewing the training sessions, Aranyak Saikia, District Commissioner-cum-Principal Census Officer of Karbi Anglong, emphasised the critical pillars of capacity building, procedural accuracy, technological readiness and well-coordinated field operations. He urged all participating officials to discharge their duties

with utmost dedication and strictly adhere to Census guidelines to ensure a smooth, transparent and highly reliable data collection process across the district.

The comprehensive training was attended by 19 Charge Census Officers, 22 Charge Census Assistants and 21 Technical Assistants, along with senior district-level officers. Key officials present included Pradip Kumar Gupta (ADC-cum-District Census Officer), Dipankar Bora (Assistant Commissioner) and Kamruz Zaman (Director, NIC & DIO).

The training modules were led by expert resource persons Mridul Das (Assistant Director) and Md Zafar Siddique (SI-II) from the Directorate of Census Operations, Assam. Over the course of three days, participants underwent detailed theoretical and hands-on digital training covering core census concepts and HLO procedures; the Census Management and Monitoring System (CMMS) and dashboard

reporting; House Listing Block (HLB) creation and layout mapping; data verification, strict privacy and information security protocols and mobile applications deployed for digital field operations.

The administration highlighted that the digital-first approach for Census 2027 will offer multiple avenues for data collection.

Residents can opt for self-enumeration, allowing them to fill out and submit their household particulars securely online in advance via the official Self-Enumeration (SE) portal. This online facility will be active from August 2 to August 16, a move expected to boost public participation and enhance data accuracy.

Following the self-enumeration window, the traditional house-to-house enumeration for the House Listing and Housing Operations Phase-I will be carried out on the ground across Karbi Anglong from August 17 to September 15.

QUOTE OF THE DAY

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

India-US trade talks on track

The most consequential economic negotiation currently underway for India is not with China, Europe, or the Gulf states. It is with the United States. Beginning June 1, senior trade negotiators from both countries have resumed four days of intensive discussions in New Delhi to finalize an interim trade agreement and move toward a broader Bilateral Trade Agreement (BTA) that aims to lift India-U.S. trade to \$500 billion by 2030. The talks come after nearly eighteen months of tariff battles, political brinkmanship, and geopolitical pressure centered on India's purchases of Russian oil. At stake is far more than tariff reductions. The negotiations touch energy security, semiconductor access, defence technology, supply chains, artificial intelligence, digital trade, and India's strategic autonomy. The current trade saga began in February 2025 when Modi and Trump launched negotiations for a comprehensive bilateral trade agreement. However, relations deteriorated after Washington imposed steep tariffs on Indian exports. By late 2025, some Indian goods faced effective duties approaching 50%, combining reciprocal tariffs and additional penalties linked to India's continued purchase of Russian crude oil.

The sectors hit hardest included: Pharmaceuticals, Gems and jewellery, Textiles and garments, Leather products, Engineering goods, Chemicals. Indian exporters suddenly found themselves less competitive against rivals from Vietnam, Bangladesh, Mexico and parts of Southeast Asia. The pressure forced both sides back to the table. A breakthrough came in February 2026. Washington agreed to reduce tariffs on many Indian products to about 18%, while India agreed to consider lowering duties on several American industrial and agricultural products. The framework also outlined a goal of reaching \$500 billion in bilateral trade by 2030, compared with roughly \$212 billion in 2024. But the framework was only a skeleton. The difficult details remain unresolved. That is why the June talks are crucial. The tariff dispute has always been about more than trade. Trump's strategic objective appears to be threefold. The White House framework explicitly linked tariff relief to India's reduction of Russian oil imports. Washington has repeatedly argued that continued purchases of discounted Russian crude undermine Western sanctions.

The U.S. wants India integrated into trusted supply chains for semiconductors, electronics, critical minerals, artificial intelligence infrastructure, and advanced manufacturing. American negotiators continue pressing for greater access for: Agricultural products, Industrial goods, Digital services, medical equipment, Energy exports. Washington views India's tariff regime as one of the largest barriers facing U.S. companies. New Delhi enters the talks with a different set of objectives. Protect Export Industries. India wants stable market access for sectors employing millions: The U.S. remains India's largest pharmaceutical export destination. Indian drug manufacturers account for a significant share of generic medicines consumed by Americans. Any prolonged tariff uncertainty threatens investment and future export growth.

POST BAG

Structural Friction Overrules Political Optics

DK Shivakumar's tactical brilliance won him the Chief Minister's chair but running Karnataka on backroom deals & astrology is a dangerous strategy the Rock of Kanakapura cannot govern a complex state purely as a corporate friendly regional boss. His immediate nightmare is structural not political because bankrolling the populist Five Guarantees has already bled the exchequer dry starving critical infrastructure. If he favors Bengaluru's tech elite while rural irrigation rots the backlash will be swift. Furthermore sitting on the explosive caste census report while trying to placate both his own community & Siddaramaiah's AHINDA base is a recipe for administrative paralysis. Pragmatism must replace political optics or the state's anti incumbency trap will instantly crush his leadership.

Dr Vijaykumar H K

Education beyond degrees and certifications

For generations, education has been closely tied to degrees, diplomas, certificates, and formal qualifications. Across societies, these credentials have served as markers of knowledge, competence, and social standing. Parents encourage children to pursue academic excellence, institutions design programs around examinations, and employers often use degrees as the first filter in recruitment. The belief is deeply rooted: better qualifications lead to better opportunities, higher income, and greater social mobility. While there is undeniable truth in this assumption, contemporary society is increasingly revealing the limitations of viewing education solely through the lens of credentials. The world is changing rapidly. Technology is transforming workplaces, industries are evolving at unprecedented speed, and the demands of modern



DEGREE OF THOUGHT
By: Himangshu Ranjan Bhuyan

As a life often require skills and abilities that cannot be measured by a certificate hanging on a wall. As a result, a broader and more meaningful conversation about education has emerged—one that asks whether true education extends far beyond degrees and certifications.

The distinction between being educated and being qualified has become increasingly important in the twenty-first century. A degree may indicate that an individual has completed a prescribed course of study, but it does not necessarily guarantee wisdom, creativity, adaptability, or sound judgment. Similarly, certifications may validate technical competence in specific areas, yet they cannot fully measure qualities such as empathy, ethical responsibility, leadership, resilience, and critical thinking. These human attributes often determine success in professional and personal life far more than academic credentials alone. Modern societies are witnessing situations where highly qualified individuals struggle to navigate real-world challenges, while others with modest educational backgrounds demonstrate remarkable innovation, leadership, and problem-solving abilities. This contrast highlights a fundamental reality: education is not merely the acquisition of information but the development of the whole person.

The origins of education itself support this broader understanding. Long before universities, formal examinations, and professional certifications existed, human societies transmitted knowledge through observation, experience, storytelling, mentorship, and participation in community life. Children learned practical skills from elders, absorbed cultural values through traditions, and developed social understanding through interaction with their surroundings. Education was not confined to classrooms; it was woven into daily life. While modern educational institutions have brought tremendous benefits by systematizing learning and expanding access to knowledge, they have also contributed to a tendency to equate education with institutional recognition. As societies become increasingly credential-driven, the deeper purpose of education sometimes risks being

overshadowed by the pursuit of certificates and grades.

One of the most significant challenges facing contemporary education is the rise of credentialism. In many parts of the world, degrees have become social requirements rather than indicators of genuine learning. Students often pursue qualifications not because they are passionate about a subject or eager to expand their understanding, but because they perceive credentials as necessary for employment and social acceptance. This phenomenon has created intense competition, academic pressure, and a growing emphasis on examination performance. Educational success is frequently measured by marks, rankings, and certifications rather than intellectual curiosity or personal growth. As a

result, many learners focus on memorization and short-term achievement while neglecting deeper understanding and independent thinking. The consequences extend beyond individual students, influencing entire educational systems that prioritize measurable outcomes over meaningful learning experiences. The workplace provides some of the clearest evidence that education cannot be reduced to credentials alone. Employers across industries increasingly emphasize skills such as communication, teamwork, adaptability, creativity, and emotional intelligence. Technical knowledge remains important, but organizations recognize that knowledge alone is insufficient in dynamic environments. Employees must collaborate with diverse teams, respond to unexpected challenges, learn continuously, and adapt to technological change. Many companies have discovered that candidates with impressive academic records may not always excel in practical settings, while others with less prestigious qualifications often demonstrate exceptional initiative and problem-solving abilities. Consequently, recruitment practices are gradually evolving. Skills-based hiring, portfolio assessments, project evaluations, and practical demonstrations are becoming more common as employers seek a fuller picture of a candidate's capabilities.

The digital revolution has further transformed the relationship between education and credentials. Access to information is no longer limited to universities, libraries, or formal institutions. Millions of people now learn through online platforms, digital communities, podcasts, webinars, open educational resources, and independent research. Individuals can acquire sophisticated knowledge in fields ranging from programming and design to business management and psychology without enrolling in traditional degree programs. This democratization of learning has challenged long-standing assumptions about educational pathways. A motivated learner with internet access can develop expertise through self-directed study, often at a fraction of the cost associated with formal education. While credentials

continue to carry value, they no longer hold a monopoly over knowledge acquisition. The modern learner has unprecedented opportunities to shape personal educational journeys based on curiosity, necessity, and ambition.

Another dimension often overlooked in discussions about education is character development. Societies frequently celebrate academic achievements while paying comparatively less attention to the cultivation of integrity, responsibility, compassion, and ethical awareness. Yet history repeatedly demonstrates that intellectual brilliance without moral grounding can lead to harmful outcomes. Education should prepare individuals not only for careers but also for citizenship and human relationships. It should encourage respect for diversity, commitment to justice, concern for environmental sustainability, and awareness of social responsibilities. These qualities are rarely measured through standardized examinations, yet they are essential for the health and stability of communities. In a world facing complex challenges such as climate change, social inequality, misinformation, and political polarization, the ability to think ethically and act responsibly may be among the most valuable forms of education. The concept of lifelong learning has emerged as a defining feature of contemporary society. In previous generations, education was often concentrated in the early stages of life, followed by decades of relatively stable employment. Today, technological innovation and economic transformation require continuous learning throughout adulthood. Skills become outdated more quickly, industries evolve rapidly, and career changes are increasingly common. Consequently, education can no longer be viewed as a process that ends with graduation. Individuals must continually update knowledge, acquire new competencies, and adapt to changing circumstances. This reality challenges traditional notions of educational completion. A degree earned years ago may provide a foundation, but ongoing learning determines long-term relevance and effectiveness. Those who embrace lifelong learning often discover that curiosity, adaptability, and intellectual openness are more valuable than any single qualification.

Creativity represents another area where education extends beyond formal credentials. Many educational systems continue to emphasize standardized assessments and predetermined answers, often leaving limited room for experimentation and originality. Yet creativity drives innovation across virtually every sector of society. Scientists develop new theories, entrepreneurs create new businesses, artists challenge cultural assumptions, and engineers design solutions to pressing problems. These achievements require imagination, risk-taking, and the ability to think beyond established frameworks. Creativity cannot be fully captured through examinations or certificates. It flourishes when individuals are encouraged to question assumptions, explore diverse perspectives, and engage with uncertainty. Educational environments that nurture creativity contribute not only to



individual fulfillment but also to social and economic progress. The relationship between education and emotional intelligence has gained increasing attention in recent years. Emotional intelligence encompasses self-awareness, empathy, emotional regulation, interpersonal skills, and the capacity to navigate social relationships effectively. These abilities influence leadership effectiveness, workplace performance, mental well-being, and community engagement. Despite their importance, emotional competencies often receive limited emphasis within traditional academic structures. A student may excel in mathematics, science, or literature while struggling with communication, conflict resolution, or emotional resilience. True education should address both intellectual and emotional dimensions of human development. It should help individuals understand themselves, relate constructively to others, and respond thoughtfully to challenges and setbacks.

The growing emphasis on entrepreneurship further illustrates why education must transcend credentials. Entrepreneurs operate in environments characterized by uncertainty, ambiguity, and rapid change. Success often depends on qualities such as initiative, persistence, creativity, adaptability, and practical problem-solving. While formal education can provide valuable knowledge, entrepreneurial achievement frequently emerges from experience, experimentation, and continuous learning. Many successful entrepreneurs attribute their growth not solely to academic instruction but also to failures, mentorship, networking, and real-world engagement. Their experiences highlight an important lesson: education is not confined to structured learning environments. Valuable knowledge often emerges through action, reflection, and interaction with the world.

Contemporary society also faces a significant challenge related to information overload. The digital age has made vast quantities of information instantly accessible, but access to information is not equivalent to understanding. Individuals encounter an endless stream of news, opinions, data, and content through digital platforms. In such an environment, critical thinking becomes essential. Education must equip people to evaluate sources, identify misinformation, analyze evidence, and make informed judgments. These capacities are increasingly important for democratic participation, professional effectiveness, and personal decision-making. Degrees and certifications may indicate subject-specific expertise, but they do not automatically guarantee the ability to navigate complex information landscapes. Critical thinking remains a lifelong educational pursuit.

The social dimension of education deserves equal attention. Human beings learn through interaction, collaboration, and shared experiences. Conversations, debates, cultural exchanges, community engagement, and interpersonal relationships all contribute to intellectual and personal growth. Educational institutions often provide valuable opportunities for such interactions, but meaningful learning also occurs beyond formal settings. Community organizations, workplaces, volunteer activities, cultural events, and social networks serve as important educational environments. Through these experiences, individuals develop perspectives, challenge assumptions, and gain practical understanding of diverse realities. Education, therefore, is not merely an individual achievement but a social process that connects people to broader communities and collective experiences. The future of education will likely require a balance between formal qualifications and broader human development. Degrees and certifications will continue to play important roles in professions that require specialized expertise, such as medicine, engineering, law, and scientific research. Society benefits from rigorous standards and professional accountability. However, reliance on credentials alone is increasingly inadequate. Educational systems must prepare individuals for complexity, uncertainty, and change. They must foster curiosity, adaptability, ethical reasoning, communication skills, creativity, and lifelong learning habits. These qualities enable people to thrive not only in careers but also in citizenship, family life, and community participation.

Ultimately, the question is not whether degrees and certifications matter. They do. The more important question is whether they represent the entirety of education. Contemporary society suggests they do not. Education at its deepest level is about expanding understanding, cultivating character, developing judgment, and nurturing the capacity to contribute meaningfully to the world. It is reflected in how individuals think, communicate, solve problems, treat others, and respond to challenges. A certificate may open a door, but education determines what a person does after entering the room. In an age defined by rapid transformation and growing complexity, societies must resist the temptation to reduce education to credentials alone. The future belongs not merely to those who collect qualifications, but to those who continue learning, questioning, adapting, and growing throughout their lives. That broader vision of education remains one of the most important foundations for individual fulfillment and collective progress in the modern world.

Assam's strategic leap: Defence corridor to secure India's Eastern frontier

AUTHOR

By: Dipak Kurmi

The geopolitical architecture of South Asia is undergoing a profound transformation, forcing a comprehensive reevaluation of India's traditional security paradigms and regional developmental strategies. At the heart of this recalibration is a compelling proposal put forward by Assam Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma to establish a dedicated Defence Industrial Corridor in Assam. Presented during a series of high-level deliberations with Union Ministers in New Delhi, the proposal argues that such an infrastructure framework would organically complement India's long-standing Act East Policy, significantly fortify military preparedness across the highly sensitive eastern sector, and unlock unprecedented economic opportunities for the entire northeastern territory. This initiative arrives at a critical juncture when New Delhi is actively reassessing the strategic weight of its eastern frontiers, driven by an increasingly volatile and unpredictable regional security matrix that demands proactive structural adaptations rather than reactive posturing.

India's contemporary defence-industrial landscape has already witnessed a paradigm shift through the conceptualization and operationalization of specialized Defence Industrial Corridors in Uttar Pradesh and Tamil Nadu. These flagship initiatives were explicitly designed to stimulate indigenous defence manufacturing, mobilize substantial private capital, systematically reduce a historical dependence on foreign military imports, and substantively advance the overarching national vision of Atmanirbhar Bharat, or self-reliance. Consequently, Assam's demand for a similar mechanism should not be misconstrued as an isolated manifestation of regional aspiration or provincial assertiveness. Instead, it represents a mathematically logical and highly strategic extension of a well-established national blueprint that seeks to intentionally decentralize defence production, eliminate single points of failure in the industrial base, and build highly resilient,

geographically distributed supply chains capable of enduring prolonged external shocks.

The strategic rationale dictating the placement of a defence manufacturing corridor in Assam is both multifaceted and unassailable when viewed through the lens of modern military logistics. The Northeast occupies a unique and complex geographical position, sharing thousands of kilometers of international boundaries with China, Bangladesh, Bhutan, and Myanmar, making it one of the most sensitive and active security theatres on the subcontinent. Within this landscape, military preparedness, rapid tactical deployment, and robust supply chain infrastructure are not merely administrative objectives but critical determinants of territorial integrity. The operational importance of this region has intensified exponentially following prolonged military standoffs and heightened tensions along the Line of Actual Control with China, alongside a broader, intensifying geopolitical competition in the wider Indo-Pacific zone. Establishing advanced manufacturing and deep logistical capabilities in close proximity to active operational areas would effectively mitigate the risks of relying on far-flung production centres located in central or southern India, thereby rationally compressing supply chain response times during national emergencies.

Furthermore, a dedicated defence corridor in Assam would create a powerful multiplier effect when integrated with the massive, state-funded investments currently being directed toward roads, railways, bridges, and border infrastructure across the Northeast. The Union government has increasingly recognized that connectivity in this rugged terrain transcends simple macroeconomic utility and constitutes an absolute strategic necessity. As upgraded railway networks, all-weather high-capacity highways, and advanced multimodal logistics hubs steadily reshape the topographic and economic landscape of the region, integrating specialized defence manufacturing with this evolving infrastructural ecosystem becomes imperative. Such an integration would successfully institutionalize a sophisticated, dual-use framework capable of seamlessly serving civilian commercial development during peacetime while providing rapid, unhindered surge capacity for

military requirements in times of conflict.

When viewed through the expansive lens of the Act East Policy, the proposal acquires an even deeper historical and diplomatic significance. For many decades following independence, the Northeast was inadvertently treated as a peripheral zone, isolated from the economic heartland of mainland India by challenging geography, administrative inertia, and a glaring deficit of high-capacity infrastructure. In the contemporary era, however, New Delhi is actively seeking to invert this narrative by positioning the region as India's primary land-linked gateway to the dynamic economies of Southeast Asia. Assam, by virtue of its centralized geographical positioning, robust internal transport networks, and superior economic base, serves as the indispensable anchor for this transnational vision. The introduction of a defence corridor would not only reinforce hard national security along the borders but would simultaneously catalyze the growth of high-technology, advanced manufacturing capabilities that can serve as the foundational bedrock for broader, diversified industrial development throughout the state.

The downstream economic dividends of such a massive undertaking would be transformative for a region historically dependent on primary sectors like agriculture and tea. Defence manufacturing is universally recognized as a high-value catalyst that inherently generates specialized employment and fosters a dense, self-sustaining ecosystem of advanced ancillary industries. Small and medium enterprises specializing in cutting-edge domains such as electronics, precision engineering, advanced metallurgy, aerospace components, secure communication systems, and specialized logistics would naturally cluster around the primary manufacturing hubs. These industrial clusters possess the capacity to generate thousands of highly skilled, well-compensated jobs for the aspirational youth of Assam and its neighboring sister states, providing a viable alternative to out-migration. The tangible success of the Uttar Pradesh Defence Industrial Corridor, which has successfully secured massive investment commitments and generated extensive employment opportunities in relatively underdeveloped zones, offers a clear, verifiable template of the structural economic

metamorphosis that Assam could experience.

Fortunately, the internal alignment within Assam is exceptionally well-suited for the immediate absorption of such an initiative, as the state government has already demonstrated commendable foresight by unveiling its comprehensive Aerospace and Defence Manufacturing Policy. This specialized regulatory framework is explicitly tailored to attract global and domestic private capital while simultaneously incentivizing industrial innovation through a structured suite of fiscal benefits, including substantial capital subsidies, robust tax reimbursements, and targeted production-linked support systems. These domestic policy maneuvers indicate that the state has already taken the initiative to lay down the necessary institutional groundwork and regulatory clarity required to sustain a high-technology industrial ecosystem. A formal federal declaration of a corridor, backed by the financial authority and sovereign backing of the Central government, would accelerate these localized efforts and instill deep, long-term confidence in institutional investors.

From a national security standpoint, the project offers a crucial defensive dividend that directly addresses one of India's most profound geographical vulnerabilities. The northeastern states remain bound to the rest of the Indian landmass via a remarkably narrow strip of land known as the Siliguri Corridor, colloquially and strategically referred to as the Chicken's Neck. This highly constricted passage represents a perennial choke point, where any severe kinetic or non-kinetic disruption would have immediate, catastrophic implications for the movement of heavy military hardware, personnel, and vital logistics. While the establishment of a defence industrial corridor within Assam cannot physically widen or eliminate this geographical vulnerability, it can profoundly alter the strategic equation by cultivating an unprecedented degree of regional self-sufficiency in terms of essential ammunition, equipment maintenance, repair overhauls, and localized support services. Cultivating such distributed, autonomous operational capabilities is a fundamental requirement in an era where logistical resilience is recognized as being just as critical as raw frontline combat strength.

Nevertheless, translating this visionary concept into a functional, world-class industrial asset will demand meticulously calibrated planning, sustained political will, and execution that bypasses traditional bureaucratic bottlenecks. Defence corridors do not achieve viability simply through the promulgation of government notifications; they require the continuous infusion of capital, the cultivation of a highly specialized technical workforce, deep institutional research partnerships, and integrated global supply chain linkages. It is absolutely vital to embed premier national entities like the Defence Research and Development Organisation, prominent defence public sector undertakings, established private aerospace majors, and regional technical universities directly into the fabric of this developing ecosystem. Moreover, the corridor must deliberately avoid focusing exclusively on obsolescent, conventional arms production. Instead, it must boldly position itself at the vanguard of next-generation warfare technologies, carving out specialized niches in the manufacturing of autonomous unmanned aerial vehicles, artificial intelligence applications, advanced cybersecurity defense tools, complex electronic warfare suites, and next-generation composite materials. Ultimately, the broader ideological message embedded within Assam's forward-thinking proposal signals a profound shift in how India must perceive its frontiers in the twenty-first century. The eastern gateway can no longer be evaluated through a narrow, fragmented lens that separates hard security interests from economic development goals, as the two dimensions have become structurally inseparable. A Defence Industrial Corridor in Assam would represent the ultimate strategic convergence of national defense imperatives, high-tech industrialization, and equitable regional development. If executed with precision and long-term commitment, this initiative will fundamentally redefine the Northeast, transforming it from a historically insulated frontier territory into a powerful, self-sustaining pillar of India's comprehensive economic growth and strategic influence within the wider Indo-Pacific landscape. (The writer can be reached at dipakkurmi@ppltd@gmail.com)

Cinema that fights for the Earth

By: Zahid Ahmed Tapadar

Cinema has never been neutral. At its most purposeful, it has been a weapon — aimed not at people, but at indifference. For more than five decades, filmmakers across the world have pointed their cameras at melting glaciers, dying oceans, burning forests, and vanishing species, and refused to look away. They have made audiences weep, rage, and change. This is not cinema that observes the environmental crisis from a careful distance. This is cinema that fights — film by film, frame by frame — for the Earth itself.

The origins of this cinematic tradition trace back to the early 1970s. 'Silent Running' (1972), directed by Douglas Trumbull, imagined a future where one man sacrifices himself to preserve the last of Earth's trees, plants, and wild animals after deforestation destroys the planet. 'Soylent Green' (1973), directed by Richard Fleischer, was a dystopian thriller set in a world ravaged by the greenhouse effect, overpopulation, and depleted resources. Both films arrived when ecological anxiety was still confined largely to scientific circles, yet they understood what policy reports could not: that fear, properly dramatised, moves people.

The decisive turning point came in 2006 with 'An Inconvenient Truth'. Directed by Davis Guggenheim and featuring former US Vice President Al Gore, the film brought the science of global warming into mainstream public conversation. Released less than a year after the destruction of Hurricane Katrina, it became an unparalleled wake-up call. It won the Academy Award for Best Documentary Feature in 2007, and its influence extended into education, diplomacy, and electoral politics across multiple continents.

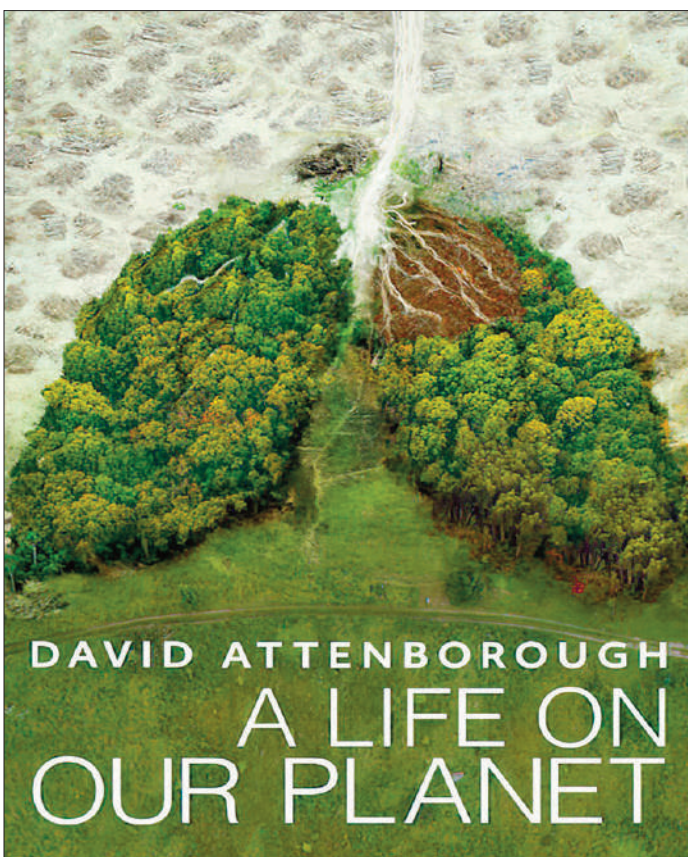
The same year, the BBC produced what many consider the greatest nature documentary series ever made, 'Planet Earth' (2006), narrated by David Attenborough and produced by Alastair Fothergill, was filmed with 71 camera operators in 204 locations across 62 countries — the first BBC wildlife series shot in high definition, eventually broadcast in 130 countries. It did not preach — it revealed, letting the astonishing beauty of the natural world argue

its own case for conservation.

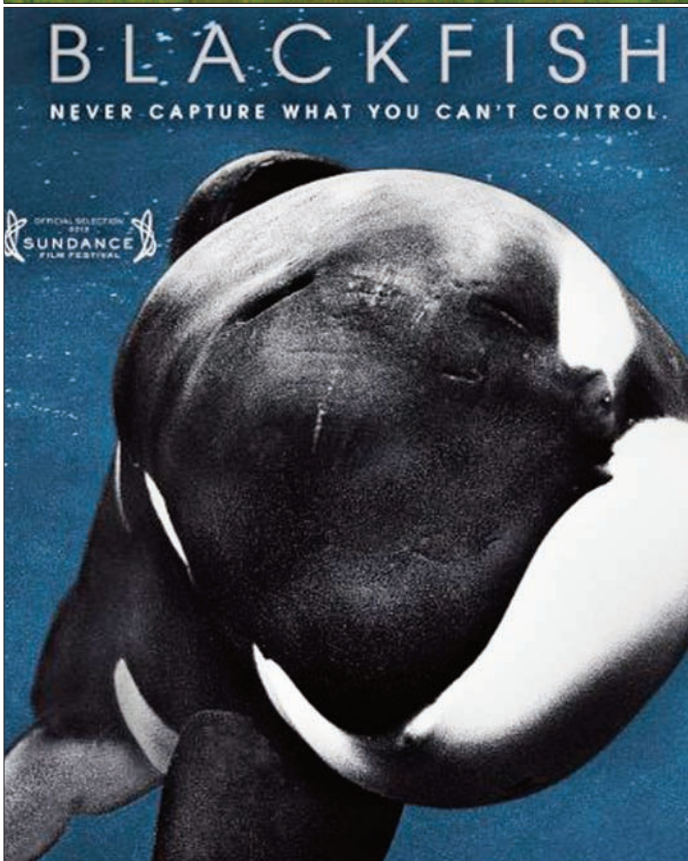
While 'Planet Earth' stirred wonder, later films sought to provoke urgency. Jeff Orlowski's 'Chasing Ice' (2012) followed photographer James Balog documenting glacial retreat across the Arctic. The film captured a glacier calving event at Jacobshavn Isbrae in Greenland lasting 75 minutes — the longest ever filmed — in which 7.4 cubic kilometres of ice crashed

World. Three years after its Sundance premiere, SeaWorld announced the end of its orca breeding programme and all orca shows — measurable institutional change driven by a single documentary.

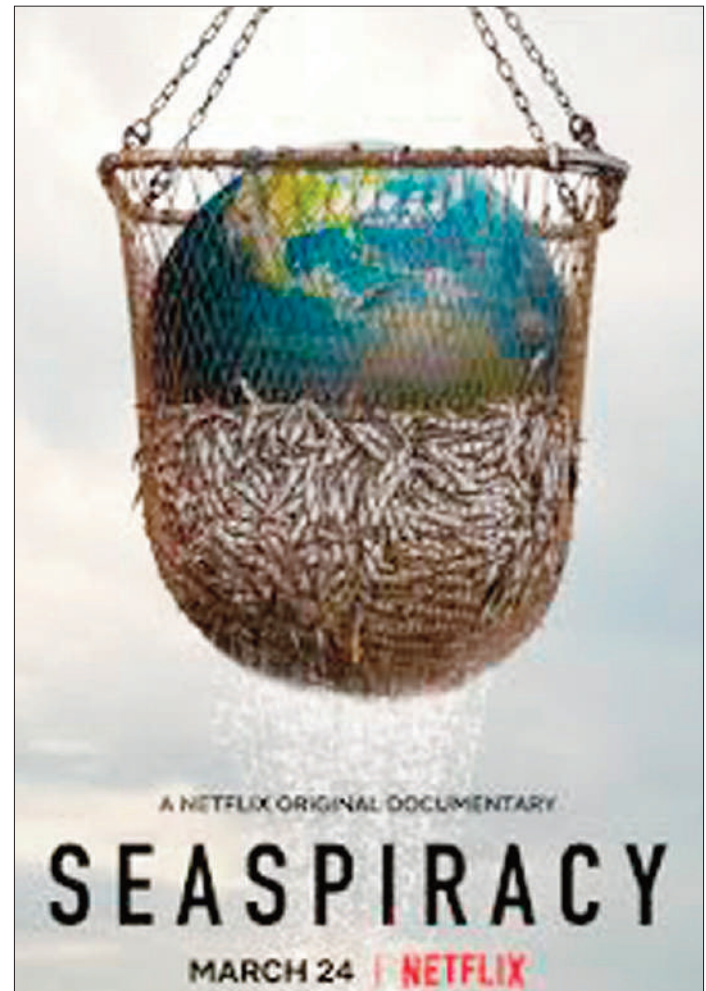
Environmental cinema also found powerful voices in fiction. Andrew Stanton's 'Wall-E' (2008), produced by Pixar, imagined an Earth buried under centuries of



DAVID ATTENBOROUGH
A LIFE ON
OUR PLANET



BLACKFISH
NEVER CAPTURE WHAT YOU CAN'T CONTROL.



A NETFLIX ORIGINAL DOCUMENTARY
SEASPIRACY
MARCH 24 | NETFLIX

into the sea. The footage rendered abstract scientific projections viscerally real: this was not a graph or a percentage. It was a city, breaking apart.

Two documentaries took aim at specific industries with extraordinary results. 'Seaspiracy' (2021), directed by Ali Tabrizi and produced by Kip Andersen, examined plastic pollution, ghost nets, and overfishing, rejecting the concept of sustainable fishing entirely. 'Blackfish' (2013), directed by Gabriela Cowperthwaite, investigated killer whale captivity at Sea-

consumerism and waste through a near-wordless narrative that moved adults as profoundly as children. James Cameron's 'Avatar' (2009), the highest-grossing film of its time, embedded ecological philosophy within science fiction, drawing parallels between the Na'vi people's relationship with Pandora and real-world conflicts over indigenous land, mining, and deforestation.

David Attenborough's 'A Life on Our Planet' (2020), directed by Alastair Fothergill, Jonathan Hughes, and Keith Scholey,



reached a new moral intensity. Described by Attenborough as his "witness statement," the film tracks atmospheric carbon rising from 280 ppm in 1937 to 415 ppm in 2020, and wilderness shrinking from 66 per cent to 35 per cent in a single lifetime. It won three Emmy Awards and proposed rewilding, renewable energy, and plant-based diets as interconnected solutions.

Indian cinema has developed its own essential strand of environmental storytelling. 'Kadvi Hawa' (2017), directed by Nila Madhab Panda, places climate change in the lives of indebted farmers in drought-prone Bundelkhand — receiving a Special Mention at the 64th National Film Awards. Amit Masurkar's 'Sherni' (2021) examined human-wildlife conflict through a forest officer confronting a tigress in central India, exposing the bureaucratic and ecological forces converging at the shrinking border between settlement and wilderness.

The most internationally celebrated Indian environmental film of recent years is Shaunaq Sen's 'All That Breathes' (2022), following siblings Mohammad Saud and Nadeem Shehzad, who rescue injured black kites falling daily from Delhi's smog-choked skies. The film won the Grand Jury Prize at Sundance, the Golden Eye at Cannes, a Peabody Award, and an

Academy Award nomination. In this quiet way, it argues that environmentalism is not ideology but compassion — that rescuing a falling bird is, in miniature, the act of choosing to remain human.

What connects 'Silent Running's' lonely astronaut, Attenborough's 93-year witness statement, and two brothers in a Delhi basement nursing wounded raptors back to flight is not sentiment — it is conviction. That a camera pointed honestly at a melting glacier, a dying reef, or a falling bird can do what legislation alone repeatedly fails to do: move people. Not just to feel, but to act. Environmental cinema has never been a passive witness. It has been a combatant. SeaWorld ended its orca programme. Plastic bag policies changed. A generation grew up knowing the names of glaciers. The fight is not over. And as long as the Earth needs defending, the camera will keep rolling.



By: Monuhar Pegu

Across the pine-covered slopes of Eastern West Khasi Hills district in Meghalaya, chilli cultivation once symbolised agricultural modernisation. Hybrid varieties such as Arka Meghana F1, HM-2880 and INDAM-5 were introduced to meet growing market demand. Farmers adopted chemical fertilisers, pesticides and insecticides to increase production, and chilli soon became an important cash crop.

But the gains came at a cost. Over time, farmers began noticing that soils were losing moisture, earthworms were disappearing and water sources were drying up during summer months. Pest attacks increased, while yields stagnated despite rising expenditure on external inputs.

"Earlier, the soil remained black, porous and alive," recalled 54-year-old farmer Tebalin L Nongbri from the Nongsohma village. "After years of chemical farming, the land started becoming hard and dry. On steep hill slopes, farming became challenging."

Fading diversity of traditional farming For generations, Khasi communities practised jhum or shifting cultivation, a farming system that was diverse, adaptive and closely connected with local ecosystems.

Unlike monoculture farming, jhum fields supported a rich mix of traditional crops including chilli, maize, millet,

beans, cucurbits, colocasia, yam and vegetables. These mixed farming systems ensured food security while helping maintain soil fertility, moisture and biodiversity.

Traditional farming knowledge evolved over centuries through close observation of forests, rainfall patterns, soils and seasonal cycles. Farming was integrated with livestock, forests and local food systems, forming a broader socio-ecological landscape.

However, over the past two decades, many parts of Meghalaya have witnessed a shift towards market-oriented cash crop cultivation. The rapid expansion of broom grass and commercial crops has altered farming landscapes and reduced crop diversity.

Local farmers increasingly describe this transition as a form of 'ecological monocropping', a gradual replacement of diverse farming systems with a narrow set of market-driven crops.

As farming diversity declined, so did local seed varieties, traditional soil management practices and ecological knowledge passed down through generations.

Farming under pine trees At Nonglang village, chilli cultivation takes place beneath scattered pine trees on steep slopes. Farmer Biangtilin Mawblei recollected how chemical-intensive agriculture was promoted as a solution for increasing productivity. While hybrid chillies initially produced higher yields, ecological problems soon emerged.

World environment day: How Khasi farmers are reviving Meghalaya's soil

tioxidant and anti-inflammatory benefits. The tiny Bird's Eye Chilli packs intense heat and is widely used in local cuisines and pickles. The Synteng Hot Chilli, traditionally grown by the Synteng community in the Jaintia Hills, is prized for its exceptional pungency, rich aroma and deep cultural heritage.

Many farmers are now cultivating local chilli varieties without chemical inputs. Instead of growing chilli as a stand-alone crop, they are integrating beans, cucumber, maize, turmeric, ginger, colocasia and vegetables within the same fields.

This transition is being supported under the JIVA programme in the Kynrud landscape. Implemented by the North East India Committee on Relief and Development (NEICORD) with support from the National Bank for Agriculture and Rural Development, the initiative receives technical support from Watershed Support Services and Activity Network in collaboration with Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit.

According to Bantei Syiem, a young farmer and project supervisor with NEICORD, farmers across villages such as Kynrud, Nongsohma, Nonglang, Uming, Belkharang, Mawetkhli and Mawiong Jadap are rebuilding farming systems with a focus on soil health, local seed systems, biomass recycling and nutrition-sensitive agriculture.

The programme is also developing Internal Farmer Resource Persons who can promote farmer-to-farmer learning and expand agroecological practices across the landscape.

Rather than depending on purchased

inputs, farmers are increasingly experimenting with locally available resources and nature-based solutions. The approach aims to strengthen the relationships between forests, livestock, farming systems, food production and local enterprises.

At a broader level, these efforts contribute to an agroecological transformation in which agriculture is viewed as part of a living ecological landscape.

This shift also aligns with Meghalaya's State Organic and Natural Farming Policy (2023) and the State Organic Mission (2024-2028), which aim to bring 100,000 hectares under certified organic cultivation by 2028.

Indigenous knowledge as climate resilience

As climate variability intensifies across the Northeast region, many researchers and practitioners are revisiting indigenous farming systems for lessons in resilience.

Diversified farming systems help improve soil health, conserve moisture and support biodiversity. They also reduce farmers' dependence on costly external inputs while strengthening food and livelihood security.

In Meghalaya's fragile hill ecosystems, these benefits are particularly significant.

Farmers are increasingly adopting practices such as mulching, mixed cropping, intercropping, local seed conservation and biomass recycling to reduce soil erosion and improve soil moisture retention. Many have also introduced nitrogen-fixing crops such as sohphlang (Flemingia vestita) and legumes like French beans, along with vegetative barriers including Khasi pine (Pinus kesiya),



bhabar grass (Eulaliopsis binata) and creeping bamboo species (Melocanna baccifera and Bambusa spp.) to minimise runoff and protect fields during heavy rainfall.

According to Nongbri, these practices are helping restore the ecological functions of farming landscapes while improving resilience to climate shocks.

Mawblei points out another advantage. "The shade from pine trees creates a unique microclimate that helps conserve moisture during dry periods. Chilli grown under these conditions often develops better taste, aroma and resilience."

Beyond production For Khasi farmers, the transition to natural farming is much more than reducing chemical use.

It is an effort to restore degraded soils, revive local knowledge systems and rebuild ecological relationships between forests, water, biodiversity and agriculture.

As climate change places increasing pressure on mountain ecosystems, many farmers believe the future of agriculture lies in restoring living soils and resilient landscapes.

Beneath Meghalaya's pine-covered hills, chilli fields tell a story of how farming is once again becoming part of nature. Ahead of World Environment Day, that story offers an important reminder: Ecosystem restoration can begin with something as small as a seed, a handful of compost and a farmer's decision to bring life back to the soil.



UN chief proposes options to help end Israel-Hezbollah conflict after peacekeepers leave Lebanon

UNITED NATIONS, June 3: The United Nations chief has proposed three options to help end the decades-old conflict between Lebanon's Iran-backed Hezbollah militants and Israel when the 8,100-member U.N. peacekeeping mission in southern Lebanon ends on December 31.

All of the options presented to the UN Security Council by Secretary-General Antonio Guterres would continue U.N. military monitoring of the boundary between Israel and Lebanon, support Lebanese forces in deploying throughout the country and strengthen political efforts to end the fighting, which has persisted despite a nominal ceasefire.

UN peacekeepers have played a significant role in monitoring the security situation in southern Lebanon, a Hezbollah stronghold, for decades. Six of the peacekeepers have been killed in recent months.

Bowing to demands from the United States and its close ally Israel, the Security Council voted



unanimously in August 2025 to terminate the peacekeeping mission known as UNFIL and asked Guterres to present options for implementing a 2006 resolution that ended a monthlong war between Israel and Hezbollah.

The resolution demands that Hezbollah disarm, Israeli forces withdraw and the Lebanese army

deploy throughout the country as the sole military force. None of this has happened.

In his letter to the Security Council on Monday, Guterres said the recurring hostilities between Israel and Hezbollah show the imperative of implementing the 2006 resolution, which is the framework toward peace.

The secretary-general said UN military monitoring of the U.N.-drawn boundary between Israel and Lebanon, known as the Blue Line, was "paramount."

Under all options, he said, "a uniformed United Nations presence working to facilitate de-escalation, dialogue, liaison and coordination, and support for the Lebanese Armed Forces would be necessary." The U.N. military would complement the strengthened UN special coordinator for Lebanon, who would continue to lead efforts to implement the 2006 resolution.

Guterres proposed three options for the UN military force, ranging from 5,525 to 1,980 personnel, including some unarmed military observers. He said the largest force would be able "to most credibly observe developments along the length of the Blue Line."

UN spokesman Stephane Dujarric told reporters Tuesday that the secretary-general hopes the Security Council will make a decision soon. (AP)

Former Thai PM Thaksin Shinawatra freed early from parole after receiving royal pardon

BANGKOK, June 3: Thailand's former Prime Minister Thaksin Shinawatra formally completed all his obligations related to a prison sentence on Wednesday, when a royal pardon ended his four-month probation early.

The 76-year-old billionaire populist, who was a dominant force in Thai politics for more than two decades, was released from a Bangkok prison last month to cheering crowds. There has since been speculation that he might continue to exert his strong influence over the Pheu Thai Party, which is part of the governing coalition, though his family has said he may want to step back from politics.

The decree by King Maha Vajiralongkorn was published in the Royal Gazette late Tuesday and became effective on Wednesday. Thailand is a constitutional monarchy, giving the king the final word on pardons of convicted criminals.

The king's decision was made on the occasion of Queen Suthida's birthday. It applied broadly to eligible convicts who met specific conditions. Thaksin qualified for full release because he had been released on probation and had less



than a year remaining on his sentence.

Thaksin was a telecommunications magnate who founded his own political party in 1998 and served as prime minister from 2001 until a military coup ousted him in 2006 while he was abroad.

His ouster triggered nearly two decades of political polarisation, even as parties aligned with him repeatedly returned to government during his self-imposed exile. His populist policies won strong support among poorer voters, particularly in the rural north and northeast, but his popularity and sometimes high-handed style created deep fractures between his base and the country's urban elites, royalists and the military.

Thaksin was released on May 11

after serving eight months of a one-year sentence for corruption-related charges. As part of his parole conditions, he was required to wear an electronic monitoring bracelet and was originally scheduled to remain on probation for four months.

Thaksin's lawyer, Winyat Chatmontree, confirmed to The Associated Press that Thaksin has been fully released from his legal obligations, but said there are some procedures to remove his bracelet, which could take several days.

He had been sent to prison after being convicted on charges involving using his position to benefit his own business interests and illegally approving a state lottery project that caused losses to the government.

He was originally sentenced in 2023 to eight years in prison, but the sentence was commuted to one year by the king, and he was granted permission on medical grounds to serve it from a suite in Bangkok's Police Hospital.

After protests that he had received unwarranted special treatment, the Supreme Court in September 2025 ordered Thaksin to serve his sentence in prison. (AP)

US Police locked in negotiations with man in Bakersfield holding hostages

BAKERSFIELD (US), June 3: Police were locked in negotiations with a man holding hostages inside a building that houses a Chase bank branch and school district office in the Southern California city of Bakersfield, officials said.

Officers responding to a call of a bomb threat arrived at the scene around 1 pm Tuesday night at the Chase Bank building in downtown Bakersfield, and discovered that a man had barricaded himself inside "with several community members", the Bakersfield Police Department said in a statement.

Through negotiations, two of the hostages were released and the rest are in "good health," city police Sgt Eric Celedon said.

"We have every single resource at our disposal out here to bring this to the safest resolution possible," he said.

Nearby buildings were evacuated, including city hall and the police headquarters, and some roads were temporarily closed, according to officials. Officers established a perimeter around the building and nearby businesses, authorities said.

Celedon warned the public to stay out of the area, explaining that this is still a very active situation.

A spokesperson for JPMorgan Chase said its branch is on the ground floor of the building and is currently empty. The company is working with authorities.

The department's crisis negotiation team was in contact with the suspect by telephone.

About a dozen police cars were on scene along with one tactical vehicle and multiple emergency responders, and FBI agents were on the scene.

Jacob Davidson, a livestreamer known as Dad's



Gone Live, was a block from the bank at his family's tattoo shop when he started getting calls from his subscribers alerting him to the bomb threat.

"I went into the bank's parking garage and watched the cops enter the back of the bank. This is the biggest police presence I've ever seen in this town," Davidson said. "Now I'm watching them set up the trauma tents with the green, red and yellow tags, and black tags too, along with a command centre about a block away."

Law enforcement agencies often protectively set up trauma tents — which are colour-coded to help sort people based on the severity of injuries — just in case they become needed during an emergency situation.

Bakersfield Mayor Karen Goh said she is closely monitoring the situation.

"The best way the public can help at this time is by avoiding the area and allowing law enforcement officers, negotiators, and other trained professionals the space and opportunity to safely carry out their duties," she said in a statement. (AP)

British Sikh man's murder trial leads to anti-police protests in UK

LONDON, June 3: A British Sikh man's conviction for the murder of a teenager triggered violent clashes targeted at the police in the UK, after body-worn camera footage showed officers handcuffing the victim in his final moments over an allegation of racism.

Large crowds descended upon Southampton on Tuesday evening as officers from the Hampshire and Isle of Wight Constabulary lined up in riot protection gear near the home of Vickrum Digwa, sentenced to life imprisonment for stabbing 18-year-old Henry Nowak to death.

They were pelted with bricks and bottles as the protesters heard from anti-immigration activists, who condemned so-called "two-tier policing" or prioritising one community over another.

"There are serious questions to answer including how accusations of racism informed police thinking and we're supporting the IOPC (Independent Office for Police Conduct) to get to the bottom of what happened," British Prime Minister Keir Starmer told the House of Commons on Wednesday.

"But no matter the pain we feel, there is no justification for more violence and disorder. The attacks directed towards police officers in Southampton last night were disgraceful and completely unacceptable.

"This is a time for serious work, not rage. And let me be clear, we will ensure anyone found engaging in disorder meets the full force of the law as we have done before," he said.

Hampshire Police Chief Constable Alexis Boon said 11 officers and a police dog sustained injuries during the clashes, which sparked "fear and division" in the community.

"There can be no justification for hijacking this tragedy to stir up violence and disorder. Those responsible can expect to face the full force of the law," said

UK Home Secretary Shabana Mahmood.

There are concerns that the issue is being seized upon by far-right groups such as Reform UK and Restore Britain for electoral gains in a key by-election in Macclesfield, northern England, later this month.

The trial has also brought scrutiny over the Sikh community's legal dispensation to carry the ceremonial dagger or kirpan, after Digwa used self-defence as an argument in court over the use of a 21-cm knife he carried for religious reasons.

Judge William Mousley noted in his sentencing remarks at Southampton Crown Court earlier this week that he belonged to an order of Sikhs called the Nihang, who have a tradition of having a second knife that is often fully visible.

"It is a religious and, consequently, legal requirement that a kirpan should only be used offensively as a last resort, which would include its use in legal self-defence," he stated. After it emerged in court that Digwa had lied about being racially threatened during the incident last December, several British Sikh organisations and members of Parliament have spoken out in solidarity with the victim's family and against the unfair targeting of the kirpan.

"This case was about the murder of Henry Nowak by Vickrum Digwa. It is not about religion or racism. It was the criminal act of an individual who alone bears the responsibility for his actions," reads a joint statement by the British Sikhs All Party Parliamentary Group (APPG).

Chaired by Labour MP Jas Athwal, other signatories include Sikh heritage parliamentarians Satvir Kaur, Tanmanjeet Singh, Baggy Shankar, Jeevun Sandher, Sonia Kumar, Harpreet Kaur Uppal, Preet Kaur Gill, Warinder Juss, Kirith Entwistle and Gurinder Singh Josan, who wears a kirpan as a Nanaksari Sikh. (PTT)

Over two lakh applicants paid USD one lakh for H-1B visas: DHS Secy

WASHINGTON, June 3: More than two lakh applicants opted to pay USD 100,000 for their H-1B visas to work in the US in the fiscal year 2026, Markwayne Mullin, Secretary, Department of Homeland Security (DHS), said here.

Testifying before the Senate Appropriations Subcommittee on Tuesday, Mullin said the DHS had received about 2.86 lakh H-1B applications in the fiscal year 2026. "We had 286,000 applicants a year to date for the H-1B visas, out of those, over 200,000 of them paid USD 100,000 to be able to come in because it allows us to process them in a little bit faster of a manner," Mullin said in response to a question by US Senator Susan Collins on the shortage of doctors in rural parts of the country.

Mullin said applicants paying USD 100,000 get their papers processed in about 15 days and it takes about 7.5 months to process other applications.

Collins told the subcommittee that a hospital in Presque Isle, a rural community in northern Maine, recently had to pay the fee to secure a much-needed surgeon from overseas.

She said that medical service providers serving remote areas should be treated differently from employers recruiting highly skilled workers in sectors with larger domestic labour pools. (AP)

Indian national killed in attack on Kuwait airport

DUBAI, June 3: An Indian national was killed and several others injured on Tuesday in an attack that targeted Kuwait International Airport, officials said.

In a post on X, the Embassy of India in Kuwait said it is "closely coordinating" with the Kuwaiti authorities to extend all possible support and assistance to the bereaved family as well as those injured in the incident.

"Embassy of India in Kuwait expresses its deepest condolences at the tragic demise of an Indian national due to an attack on the airport in Kuwait today," it said.

This latest death brings the total number of Indian fatalities to at least 10 since hostilities broke out between Iran and the US on February 28. Today's attack came amid escalating tensions between the US and Iran.

Earlier, an Indian national was killed in Kuwait in Iranian strikes on a power and water desalination plant on March 30.

Kuwaiti Interior Ministry spokesperson Brigadier General Nasser Bousleeb said that the passenger terminal (T1) at the airport was subjected to an attack by several hostile drones.

"The attack resulted in the death of one traveller and injuries to several workers and trav-

ellers," he said, adding that the airport's facilities and operational infrastructure suffered serious material damage.

Kuwait suspended air traffic on Wednesday after the Iranian strikes hit Terminal 1, causing casualties and damage to airport facilities, Directorate General of Civil Aviation spokesperson Abdullah Al-Rajhi was quoted as saying by the state-run KUNA news agency.

Air traffic was suspended and flights were diverted to nearby airports until further notice, he said.

Dr Abdullah Al-Sund, the official spokesperson for the Ministry of Health, said that seven hospitals have received 63 injured so far following the attack targeting the airport.

He added that seven cases have undergone urgent major surgical procedures, in addition to several minor surgeries.

Abdullah said that the injured included civilians, airport workers, and travellers.

Last month, an Indian sailor was killed and several others injured after their wooden dhow caught fire near the Strait of Hormuz.

In March, an Indian national died and another was injured by debris from the interception of a missile in the UAE capital of Abu Dhabi. (PTT)

Solomon Islands says will review its secretive security treaty with China

MELBOURNE, June 3: The Solomon Islands will review its secretive security treaty with China, the South Pacific nation's new Prime Minister Matthew Wale said Wednesday.

The pact struck in 2022 with the Solomons' then-Prime Minister Manasseh Sogavare created fears in the United States and among allies including Australia that it would allow the Chinese navy to build a base in the South Pacific.

Before Wale became prime minister in a parliamentary vote May 15, he had called for the detail of the treaty to be made public.

Wale said Wednesday he had only been provided with a copy a few days ago and after he had "removed certain people from key positions". He didn't identify those people.

"I haven't had a good look at it. I've had a look at it," Wale told re-

porters in the Australian capital Canberra.

"I've been praying and fasting about it... There is a nondisclosure clause in it, so I couldn't show it to you right away. But we are going to be reviewing (the treaty), as we are reviewing other security agreements that we have with many other countries," he added.

Wale was visiting Australia in his first overseas trip since he became leader of his nation of 700,000 people, 2,000 km northeast of Australia.

Wale and his Australian counterpart Anthony Albanese announced their governments would negotiate a comprehensive strategic treaty that would elevate the bilateral relationship and cover security and economic issues.

Wale's predecessor, Jeremiah Manele, had resisted Australia's efforts to forge closer ties, but Wale

said the two governments had decided to "reset" the bilateral relationship.

"We acknowledge that there's been some problems in the past few years," Wale said.

Albanese said Australia should be the Solomons' primary security partner, rather than China.

"We have said very clearly we want Australia to be the security partner of choice in our region and we want the Pacific family to look after our security in this region," Albanese said.

Wale said the regional looking after its own security was "the direction we want to take."

China has provided police instructors to the Solomons as part of their bilateral deal.

The Solomons doesn't have a military, so police there have a larger security role than in countries with defence forces. (AP)

Raúl Castro turns 95 as Cuba celebrates enigmatic figure

HAVANA, June 3: Raúl Castro turned 95 on Wednesday, a landmark birthday for a man still helping lead one of the last communist countries in the world.

His name and face became synonymous with the 1959 revolution led by his brother, Fidel Castro. Decades after the triumphant revolution, Fidel Castro stepped down, and Raúl Castro served as Cuba's president for 12 years.

He formally retired from politics in April 2021 but still serves as general of Cuba's Revolutionary Armed Forces, has a seat in the National Assembly and is considered to play a central role in rising tensions with the US, which recently indicted him.

Here's a look at the life of a man known as the "hero of the Republic of Cuba."

Raúl Castro became involved in politics early

Castro was born on June 3, 1931 in the village of Birán in eastern Cuba. He was the fourth of seven children; his mother was Cuban and his father Spanish.

As a child, he attended school in Santiago de Cuba but later moved to

Havana, where he began studying law at the university and became deeply involved in student politics, opposing the dictatorship of Fulgencio Batista.

By 1953, he was part of a group that attacked military barracks in Santiago de Cuba as part of a failed effort to overthrow Batista. He was charged, jailed and later released, fleeing to Mexico, where he joined the guerrilla group that would soon unseat Batista.

After a victorious revolution in 1959, Castro was appointed minister of Cuba's Revolutionary Armed Forces and oversaw battles in Africa and Latin America that riddled some US Republicans.

Many Cubans, including María Cristina Barrio Ramos, a 62-year-old teacher who lives in Havana, praised him for his actions.

"He gave us everything so that we could be free," she said. "We owe our freedom and dignity to him."

In October 1965, Raúl Castro became the second secretary of the Central Committee of Cuba's Communist Party. At the time, Fidel Castro lauded him in a speech.



"It is a privilege for me that, in addition to being an extraordinary revolutionary figure, he is a brother," Castro said as his sibling stood up and smiled as the crowd around him applauded.

Fidel Castro was known for praising his brother: "Everyone who gets to know him and become close to him realises his humanism, his great character, and his feelings; they are surprised by the image of Raúl as belligerent, aggressive and harsh,

when they see the feelings of friendship, affection, and love he is capable of having for people. And he has been a great mentor and a great educator."

Castro rises to power after brother's health worsens

In 2006, Fidel Castro's health began to decline, and Raúl Castro was temporarily handed power in late July of that year until Cuba's National Assembly elected him as president in February 2008.

In the years that followed, Castro proved himself to be more liberal than his brother, allowing private enterprises to operate in Cuba while former US President Barack Obama lifted restrictions on remittances and family travel, and allowed US citizens to travel to Cuba under certain conditions.

By 2015, the US and Cuba restored diplomatic relations and reopened embassies. A year later, Obama travelled to Cuba to meet with Castro. That same year, commercial flights between the two countries restarted.

During a historic 2016 press conference in Havana, Castro famously tried to raise Obama's left arm, whose hand went limp in an image that went viral.

Under Castro, Cuba also entered negotiations with Russia's government in June 2014 that led to the cancellation of 90 per cent of a multibillion-dollar debt dating from the time of the Soviet Union.

In 2018, Raúl Castro left the presidency in the hands of Miguel Díaz-Canel, marking the first time in decades that a person without "Cas-

tro" as their last name took control of the government.

In April 2021, Castro announced he would not seek another political position. Since then, he has made only sporadic public appearances.

Castro retires but remains a high-profile figure

Ever since officially retiring from politics, Raúl Castro has appeared in public only sporadically, but he is believed to still wield power behind the scenes even as he leads a discreet life.

His grandson and bodyguard, Raúl Guillermo Rodríguez Castro, met with US Secretary of State Marco Rubio on the sidelines of a Caribbean summit earlier this year. Since then, Cuban and US officials have confirmed talks, but tensions between the two countries remain high.

Raúl Castro was last seen at a May 1 rally that drew tens of thousands of Cubans. He was dressed, as usual, in olive green military garb and stood at the side of Díaz-Canel. Behind him was Castro's grandson.

Almost three weeks later, the US government indicted Raúl Castro in the 1996 downing of civilian planes

flown by Miami-based exiles over Cuban waters. He faces charges including murder and destruction of an airplane.

While the government and its supporters have condemned the indictment, Raúl Castro has remained mum.

As his birthday approached, social media was flooded with the hashtag #RailesRaúl, a political figure who has long been averse to birthdays, monuments and statues, just like his brother.

The Cuban Embassy in the US noted on X: "Not many people have the privilege, the health, the stoicism — and if you like, you can also add: that quintessentially Cuban stubbornness — to reach the age of 95."

Meanwhile, Cuba's Communist Party posted several videos Tuesday on X of Cubans praising Castro.

"To talk about Cuba, you have to talk about Raúl," said Digna Guerra, director of the island's national choir. "He represents Cuban identity, he represents the Cuban people, he represents the revolution, which for us has immense significance. ... Thank you for existing." (AP)

Event focuses innovation and emerging challenges in electoral communication

ECI hosts global conference on media and elections

HT Bureau

ITANAGAR, June 3: The Election Commission of India (ECI) is organising a two-day international conference on "Global Best Practices and Innovations for Media in Electoral Processes and Campaigns" on June 3-4, 2026, at the India International Institute of Democracy and Election Management (IIIDEM), New Delhi.

Delivering the keynote address at the conference, Chief Election Commissioner Gyanesh Kumar said that the Election Commission of India undertakes the training of grassroots field functionaries, including Booth Level Officers (BLOs) and Booth Level Agents (BLAs), to ensure a seamless connect with over 100 crore electors. He added that the trust of electors



in the electoral process was reflected in their highest-ever participation in the recently held General Elections to the State Legislative Assemblies.

More than 480 participants, including District Election Officers (DEOs), Electoral Registration Officers (EROs), thematic experts, academicians, research scholars and members of Electoral Literacy

Clubs (ELCs) are taking part in the conference. The conference seeks to develop practitioner-oriented global knowledge resources that document international experiences, model standards and best practices across various dimensions of election management. The initiative aims to contribute to the final thematic report envisaged

Discussions during the conference will focus on key issues in media campaigns, including misinformation and disinformation, AI-generated deepfakes and synthetic media, non-transparent digital political advertising and platform governance.

The two-day conference is being organised by the Office of the Chief Electoral Officer, Delhi in association with IIIDEM and Delhi Technological University (DTU), under India's 2026 Chairship of the International Institute for Democracy and Electoral Assistance (International IDEA).

Mizoram: Murugan stresses education, sustainable farming to achieve Viksit Bharat goal

AIZAWL, June 3: Union Minister L Murugan on Wednesday underscored the importance of education and sustainable agriculture in achieving India's goal of becoming a developed nation by 2047, officials said.

Murugan, who was on tour to Kolasib district near the Assam border, visited various educational institutions and took stock of government initiatives in the northern district.

Interacting with students at a state-run model primary school, he spoke about the country's vision of transforming into a developed nation under the Viksit Bharat 2047 initiative.

He said today's students would be at the forefront of shaping the nation's future and called upon them to contribute through education, innovation and responsible citizenship.

Later, the minister launched the 'Khed Bachao Abhayan' at the Indian Council of Agricultural Research (ICAR) centre in Kolasib. The campaign aims to promote chemical fertiliser-free cultivation, improve soil health and equip farmers with modern agricultural knowledge. The initiative also seeks to encourage sustainable farming practices while enhancing agricultural productivity and environmental conservation.

Addressing officials of ICAR and KVK Kolasib as well as local farmers, Murugan emphasised that agriculture would remain a key pillar in India's development journey.

He stressed the need to provide farmers with access to the latest technologies, scientific innovations and climate-resilient farming practices to ensure food security and improve crop quality.

On Tuesday, Murugan chaired a meeting with officials and representatives of leading civil society organisations, including Young Mizo Association



(YMA), during which he underscored the Centre's commitment to the development of the Northeast, promotion of tourism and strengthening of education and infrastructure, the sources said.

The minister said Prime Minister Narendra Modi and the central government place high priority on the development of the Northeast, describing the region's progress as integral to India's overall growth.

He expressed satisfaction over the progress achieved in sports and women empowerment initiatives in Mizoram.

Murugan further pointed out significant improvements in connectivity in the state, which he said boosted tourism.

He noted that the Mizoram government and the Ministry of Development of North Eastern Region (DoNER) are working closely to accelerate development projects across the state, adding that strong support from the Centre has contributed to rapid progress in the region. Murugan also said efforts would be made to encourage prominent filmmakers from across the country to shoot in Mizoram, leveraging the state's scenic landscapes to promote both tourism and cinema. (PTI)

ZPM fields party spokesperson Laltluangkima for Raja Sabha seat

AIZAWL, June 3: Mizoram's ruling Zoram People's Movement (ZPM) on Wednesday announced party spokesperson K Laltluangkima as its candidate for the upcoming Raja Sabha election.

ZPM vice-president C Lalunnema declared Laltluangkima as the party's official nominee for the election to the lone Raja Sabha seat from the state, scheduled to be held on June 18, during a function at the party office here. Opposition parties are yet to announce their candidates for the poll.

The Congress, which has one member in the 40-member Mizoram Assembly, is unlikely to field a candidate, party spokesperson Lalremruata Renthlei told PTI. In the present Assembly, the ZPM has 27 legislators, while the main opposition, Mizo National Front (MNF), has 10 and BJP (2).

The MNF is likely to field its candidate soon, party treasurer Lalruatkima said. (PTI)

Traffic restored on Akajan-Likabali-Bame Road after landslides

HT Bureau

LIKABALI, June 3: The Akajan-Likabali-Bame Road, a vital lifeline connecting the upper districts was blocked at several locations this morning following heavy rainfall, disrupting vehicular movement to and from the region.

According to the District Disaster Management Officer (DDMO), Tarik Nyitan, landslides and debris accumulation caused road blockages at Siji, Hathi Nallah and the Brahmaputra View Point.

Upon receiving information about the disruptions, the Lower Siang District Administration immediately launched restoration efforts by deploying earth movers and excavators to the affected locations. The teams worked continuously to clear the debris and restore connectivity. Due to the prompt response and coordinated efforts of the district administration, traffic movement along the affected stretches was successfully restored by the afternoon, bringing relief to commuters and residents of the upper districts.

Lower Subansiri achieves 100% tap water coverage

HT Bureau

ZIRO, June 3: In a major step towards securing long-term water security for rural communities, the District Water and Sanitation Mission (DWSM) convened a pivotal strategic meeting at the district headquarters in Ziro. Under the leadership of Deputy Commissioner Oli Perme, who also serves as the Chairman of the DWSM, the session focused on strengthening local water infrastructure, forming specialised grassroots technical teams and ensuring that rural water supply systems remain sustainable for generations to come.

The meeting followed a comprehensive agenda aimed at reinforcing the institutional framework and rural sanitation progress. Opened with a welcome address by the Executive Engineer of the Public Health Engineering Department (PHED), the session brought together key administrative and departmental heads to review DWSM operations, establish a new District Technical Unit (DTU) and deliberate on critical strategies presented by the Source Finding Committee (SFC).

A standout milestone celebrated during the proceedings was Lower Subansiri's remarkable achievement under the Jal Jeevan Mission (JJM): the district has officially reached 100% Functional Household Tap Connection (FHTC) coverage. This massive collaborative effort success-



fully spans 2 blocks, 109 panchayats, 200 villages and 271 habitations, bringing clean, reliable running tap water directly into the homes of 5,740 rural families.

To safeguard these achievements and ensure that water continues to flow uninterrupted, the DWSM formally constituted the District Technical Unit (DTU). Acting as the specialised technical backbone at the grassroots level, this newly formed 10-member team comprises engineers, lab assistants, consultants and operators. The DTU will provide hands-on professional support, day-to-day oversight and rigorous monitoring to maintain the health and longevity of rural water supply systems.

Recognising that a tap is only as reliable as its water source, the Source Finding Committee (SFC), under the chairmanship of the Executive Engineer of the Water Re-

sources Department, Ziro, laid out a strict mandate to identify and protect reliable, high-yield water sources. This proactive planning will ensure that local water sources can comfortably sustain villages through seasonal shifts and long-term climate challenges.

Looking ahead, the mission also established a clear roadmap to extend coverage to newly emerged habitations, empower Village Water and Sanitation Committees (VWSCs), streamline revenue collection and implement the 'Jal Seva Ankalan' framework.

As a core district-level government body operating under the guidance of DC Oli Perme, the DWSM remains deeply committed to transforming rural lives by successfully advancing the goals of both the Jal Jeevan Mission and the Swachh Bharat Mission (Gramin) across the region.

Army organises rally in Arunachal to mark World Bicycle Day

ITANAGAR, June 3: On World Bicycle Day, the Indian Army organised a 10-km bicycle rally in Arunachal Pradesh's West Siang district on Wednesday to promote physical fitness, environmental awareness and sustainable living.

Around 50 students from local schools and colleges participated in the rally, which traversed the scenic Siyom River valley, a defence spokesperson said.

The event highlighted the importance of adopting cycling as a healthy, eco-friendly and sustain-

able mode of transport while underscoring the need to preserve the state's natural environment, Defence spokesperson Lt Col Mahendra Rawat said in a statement.

The rally aimed to encourage young people to embrace regular physical activity and foster a sense of responsible citizenship. It also sought to raise awareness about collective efforts needed to build a greener and healthier future.

Held under the theme 'Pedalling towards a healthier and greener to-

morrow', the event brought together students, local youth and personnel of the Indian Army in a shared commitment towards fitness and environmental conservation.

Observed annually on June 3, World Bicycle Day recognises the bicycle as a simple, affordable, reliable and environmentally sustainable means of transportation.

The day also promotes the role of cycling in improving health, reducing pollution and supporting sustainable development. (PTI)

Mizoram to issue liquor permit for individuals on medical grounds

AIZAWL, June 3: Dry state Mizoram will issue 'Red Card' permits, allowing people to consume India Made Foreign Liquor (IMFL) on medical grounds under the provisions of its amended prohibition Act, officials said on Wednesday.

In a notification on Tuesday, the excise and narcotics department said the permits would be granted under Section 45B(1) of the Mizoram Liquor (Prohibition) Amendment Act, 2025, to eligible applicants whose health conditions warrant the possession and consumption of liquor.

Application forms can be obtained from excise and narcotics offices across all districts, they said.

The permit will remain valid for one year on payment of ₹ 5,000, officials said.

In March last year, the assembly amended the Mizoram Liquor (Prohibition) Act, 2019 amid stiff opposition from opposition parties.

The new law also allows special liquor permits to dignitaries and foreign and domestic tourists.

It further allows the manufacture, sale

and supply of local wine and fruit beer made solely from locally produced agricultural and horticultural products like ginger, banana, dragon fruit, passion fruit, pineapple, gooseberry, guava, starfruit, sugarcane, jackfruit, watermelon and honeydew melon.

The Mizoram Liquor (Prohibition) Act, 2019 was enacted during the previous Mizo National Front (MNF) administration, which totally prohibited the manufacture, consumption, sale and import of liquor or any alcohol-related substances in the state. (PTI)

Meghalaya govt intensifies efforts to check spread of African Swine Fever

SHILLONG, June 3: Meghalaya government has intensified efforts to contain the spread of African Swine Fever (ASF) and imposed restrictions on pig transportation and trade in affected districts, Chief Minister Conrad K Sangma said on Wednesday.

Sangma said the outbreak was being closely monitored and immediate measures had been put in place to prevent the disease from spreading further.

"This has been a problem in the past also. We are monitoring the situation and taking immediate action. The department is taking measures to ensure that ASF doesn't spread on a large scale," he told reporters.

According to officials, confirmed cases have been detected in Pynursla and Mawlai blocks of East Khasi Hills district, Mawthadraishan block of West Khasi Hills district, Umsning and Bhoirymbong blocks in Ri-Bhoi district, Mairang block of Eastern West Khasi Hills district, as well as at the Regional Pig Breeding Farm in Kyrdemkulai.

The affected villages include Urkew Wapthaw, Mawkajem, Mawlai Mawkynroh, Nongkasen, Kyrdemkulai, Lum Umph,

Mawkyrdap and Mawphanniew.

Invoking provisions of the Prevention and Control of Infectious and Contagious Diseases in Animals Act, 2009, the animal husbandry and veterinary department has declared areas within a 1 km radius of infected premises as infected zones, while areas extending up to 10 km have been designated as surveillance zones.

A complete ban has been imposed on the movement of live pigs, pig feed, pork and pork products into or out of affected areas. Pig markets, slaughterhouses and abattoirs in the affected zones have been ordered closed until further notice.

Authorities have also prohibited swill feeding using kitchen or restaurant waste and barred the removal of infected or dead pigs and contaminated materials from designated zones.

Officials said disposal of pig carcasses in rivers, lakes or other water bodies would attract penalties ranging from ₹ 2,000 to ₹ 5,000, while repeat offenders could face imprisonment of up to three months. Carcasses are required to be disposed of through deep burial with lime cover as per veterinary guidelines. (PTI)

Meghalaya CM reviews education sector performance, stresses better learning outcomes

SHILLONG, June 3: Meghalaya Chief Minister Conrad K Sangma on Wednesday said the state is undertaking major reforms in the education sector to improve learning outcomes and quality of schools, as he reviewed its progress under the national Performance Grading Index (PGI) framework.

Chairing a high-level meeting with officials of the education department, Sangma assessed the state's PGI performance and reviewed initiatives to strengthen the education ecosystem, including investments in foundational learning, school infrastructure, vocational education, digital governance and student welfare.

The 2022-23 PGI ranking put Meghalaya among the worst-performing states in the country

"We have ensured that every child has access to a school. Our next goal is to ensure that every school delivers the highest quality of learning," Sangma said.

He said directions have been issued to the education department to put in place a focused strategy and stronger mechanisms to improve performance, learning outcomes, and build on our commitment for infrastructure improvements in schools in order to ensure the state achieves a better PGI ranking in the coming years.

Officials informed the meeting that the state's exten-



sive network of nearly 14,600 schools reflects the government's commitment to ensuring access to education even in remote areas, making it one of the most accessible schooling systems in the Northeast.

The review highlighted that learning outcomes, which carry the highest weightage under the PGI framework, remain a key focus area.

"The government is implementing several initiatives to strengthen foundational literacy and numeracy, improve classroom teaching and provide greater support to students," a senior education official said.

The meeting also reviewed ongoing efforts to upgrade school infrastructure, including the establishment of science laboratories, ICT facilities, smart classrooms, libraries, kitchen gardens, rainwater harvesting systems, drinking water facilities and solar-powered infrastructure.

Officials said vocational and skill-based education is being expanded through the community skill integrated curriculum, which introduces practical and skill-oriented learning to students from primary to secondary levels.

The government is also strengthening student welfare measures, including improvements to the mid-day meal programme and the installation of sanitary pad vending machines and incinerators in girl schools.

The meeting reviewed efforts to improve digital governance and educational data systems through better reporting, Aadhaar integration, digital compliance and institutional record management, aimed at ensuring educational progress is accurately reflected in national assessment frameworks.

Officials also highlighted progress under the school rationalisation programme, under which 3,198 of the state's 14,582 schools have already been merged or consolidated to optimise teacher deployment and improve resource utilisation. (PTI)

No. ACE-133/PWD/G.79/2025-26/81
PRESS NOTICE INVITING TENDER
 Dtd. Kokrajhar, the 2nd June, 2026

The Addl. Chief Engineer-cum-Director, PWD, BTC, Kokrajhar on behalf of the Governor of Assam re-invites bids for "Repairing and renovation of Baikhung Satipur ME School under No.15 Kajalgaon Constituency, Dist: Chirang under Grant No.79" from approved and eligible contractors registered under PWD (Bldg.), Assam or BTC for a total bid amount of **Rs.59,95,739.00 (Rupees fifty-nine lakh ninety-five thousand seven hundred & thirty-nine) only (approx.)**.

Details may be seen at the website www.assamtenders.gov.in and also in the office of the undersigned during office hours.

Sd/-
 Addl. Chief Engineer-cum Director,
 PWD, BTC, Kokrajhar

IPR(BTC)/C/2026-27/419

TMC split: Expelled leader Ritabrata LoP with support of 58 rebel MLAs

'The TMC legislative party is a team of 58 MLAs who won on the TMC symbol'

KOLKATA, June 3: The TMC on Wednesday suffered its first split in its 28-year history as 58 rebel MLAs elected expelled leader Ritabrata Banerjee as Leader of Opposition, wresting control of its legislature party, and secured recognition from the Assembly Speaker, plunging Mamata Banerjee's outfit into its gravest internal crisis since its inception.

Within hours, a rattled TMC leadership dissolved all party committees and frontal organisations across West Bengal in what appeared to be an attempt to regain political control amid a fast-escalating power struggle.

The dramatic rebellion, unfolding within two months of the party's crushing defeat in the assembly elections, exposed a deep rupture between the organisation and its elected legislators, raising questions over leadership, succession and the future direction of the party that has dominated Bengal politics for more than a decade.

The rebel camp, led by Ritabrata Banerjee and fellow expelled MLA Sandipan Saha, submitted letters of support from 58 legislators before Speaker Rathindra Bose, comfortably crossing the two-thirds threshold required under the anti-defection law for recognition as a separate bloc.

"Our claim has been accepted by the Speaker," Ritabrata Banerjee told reporters after meeting the

Speaker. Claiming legitimacy through numbers, he asserted that the dissidents now represented the real Trinamool Congress in the Assembly.

"The TMC legislative party is a team of 58 MLAs who won on the TMC symbol. We are the real TMC now in the Assembly," he said. The Speaker's acceptance effectively formalised the first organisational rupture in a party founded by Mamata Banerjee in 1998 after her break from the Congress.

The dissident camp unveiled a new leadership structure, naming Ritabrata Banerjee as LoP and Akhruzzaman as chief whip. Senior legislators and party old-timers Javed Ahmed Khan, Sandipan Saha, Sabina Yasmin and Shiuli Saha were appointed deputy leaders. Several veteran TMC legislators joined the rebellion, including Samar Mukhopadhyay, Arup Roy, Rathin Ghosh, Javed Khan and Prasan Banerjee.

Yet, significantly, the rebels stopped short of directly challenging Mamata Banerjee's primacy.

In their communication to the Speaker, they continued to recognise her as chairperson of the Trinamool Congress while making it equally clear that they no longer accepted the authority of her nephew and party national general secretary Abhishek Banerjee in the functioning of the legislature party. "We accept Mamata Banerjee as



our leader but do not accept Abhishek Banerjee," a leader associated with the dissident camp said.

Seeking to soften the optics of the revolt, Ritabrata Banerjee even appealed to the former chief minister to guide the legislature party. "We would request Mamata Banerjee to play the role of chief adviser to the legislative party," he said.

However, the Mamata Banerjee camp questioned the validity of the rebels' move, claiming that the communication to the Speaker was submitted on plain paper rather than the party's official letterhead. It maintained that only the party chairperson and national general secretary Abhishek Banerjee were empowered to convey such decisions to the Assembly.

and eventually into the biggest challenge to Mamata Banerjee's authority since she founded the party.

Recognising the seriousness of the threat, the Mamata Banerjee-led faction moved swiftly on the organisational front, announcing a comprehensive review of its structure and functioning before reconstituting all organisational units.

"After careful consideration, it has been decided that all committees of the All India Trinamool Congress in West Bengal, as well as all its frontal organisations, shall stand dissolved with immediate effect," the party said in a statement.

Significantly, Ritabrata Banerjee was state president of the TMC's trade union, whereas Abhishek Banerjee was the TMC national general secretary.

Political observers viewed the move as an acknowledgement that the crisis had gone beyond routine factionalism and entered the realm of a struggle for control of the party itself.

For many, the unfolding events carried unmistakable echoes of Maharashtra.

Like the Shiv Sena split engineered by Eknath Shinde in 2022 and the Nationalist Congress Party split led by Ajit Pawar in 2023, the Bengal rebellion has been built around numerical strength within the legislature party rather than control of the parent organisation. (PTI)

Kewal Dhillon assumes charge as Punjab BJP chief



CHANDIGARH, June 3: Newly appointed Punjab BJP president Kewal Singh Dhillon formally took charge on Wednesday, with party leaders saying they aim to provide governance in Punjab inspired by Sikh emperor Maharaja Ranjit Singh's rule where everyone was treated equally.

Dhillon, a fat Sikh face, took the charge at the party headquarters here amid 'ardas' (Sikh prayer) and 'puja' rituals. A portrait of the 19th century Sikh ruler Maharaja Ranjit Singh was also unveiled in the party office.

Describing it as a historic day, 76-year-old Dhillon said Shere-e-Punjab Maharaja Ranjit Singh's rule was known for fairness and equal treatment and the BJP would work towards establishing a governance model inspired by his regime. His appointment came ahead of the assembly elections due early next year.

Dhillon, the first ever Jat Sikh president of state unit, assumed the charge in the presence of Haryana Chief Minister Nayab Singh Saini, BJP national general secretary Tarun Chugh, national secretary Narinder Singh Raina, Union minister Ravneet Singh Bittu, Punjab BJP working president Ashwani Sharma, former union minister Preet Kaur and senior party leader Iqbal Singh Lalpura.

Later addressing a gathering of party workers and leaders at Law Bhawan, Dhillon thanked Prime Minister Narendra Modi, Union Home Minister Amit Shah and BJP president Nitin Nabin for giving the responsibility.

Emphasising on the mantra of 'Sabka Saath, Sabka Vikas', he said, "We will walk together."

He also thanked his predecessors, including Sunil Jakhar and Ashwani Sharma, for laying the strong foundation of the party in Punjab.

Targeting the AAP-led Punjab government, Dhillon said the party led by Arvind Kejriwal had promised a fake 'badlav' (change) in the state.

He said women were betrayed

by the AAP government as he lashed out at it over its poll promise of ₹ 1,000 per month of financial assistance.

He said each section is feeling cheated under the Bhagwant Mann government.

Dhillon also slammed the government over the issue of drug menace in the state.

Referring to the recent elections of municipal bodies, he said these polls were "looted" as he alleged misuse of official machinery by the AAP government.

Emphasising the farming sector, Dhillon spoke about minimum support prices being given on all crops in the BJP-ruled Haryana state.

While laying emphasis on crop diversification, he recalled that he had set up PepsiCo in Punjab during the militancy days.

People are fed up with the AAP government, the new Punjab BJP chief said, adding that "we will bring a 'badlav' in Punjab".

Earlier speaking on this occasion, BJP national general secretary Tarun Chugh also said the BJP will establish a regime in Punjab inspired by Maharaja Ranjit Singh's rule.

"'Khalis soch' (pure thinking), thinking of taking Punjab forward, thinking of treating everyone equally, thinking of protecting the poor, elimination of corruption, gangsters," Chugh said.

Dhillon, comes from the Punjab's politically significant Malwa belt, which accounts for 69 of the 117 Assembly seats in the state.

The industrialist-politician is credited to have brought PepsiCo to Punjab in 1980s during the days of militancy when no one was willing to invest in the state.

A two-time former MLA from Barnala, he was elected legislator both times when he was with the Congress.

Dhillon joined the BJP in 2022 and was subsequently appointed vice-president of the state unit of the party. He replaces Sunil Jakhar, whose three-year tenure as Punjab BJP chief ends in July. (PTI)

Archana Gupta assumes charge as Haryana BJP chief

CHANDIGARH, June 3: Archana Gupta formally assumed charge as the Haryana BJP president on Wednesday, only the second woman to occupy the post in more than four decades, with the party describing it as a reflection of its commitment to 'nari shakti'.

"No responsibility is big or small... In the BJP, the sky is the limit. It is only in the BJP that a booth president can become the chief minister, a Union minister. A tea seller's son can become the prime minister... an ordinary worker... can become the state president," she said while addressing a gathering at the party's Haryana headquarters in Panchkula. Gupta, who assumed charge in the presence of senior party leaders, including Chief Minister Nayab Singh Saini, and her family members, urged party members to fulfil their responsibility with honesty and dedication, and said she will always be available for them and the people of Haryana.

Saini, while referring to Gupta being the second woman president of the Haryana BJP, said it serves as a reflection of a transforming Haryana --- one where women are not merely participating, but are actively leading.

"This represents the true form of the 'New India' taking shape under the able leadership of Prime Minister Narendra Modi," he said.

The chief minister said that Indian culture has always revered women as the embodiment of 'Shakti' (divine power). However, for many years, women's participation in politics remained limited.

"Under the leadership of Prime Minister Modi, the nation has witnessed a transformative shift in this status quo. The prime minister has not merely spoken of women's dignity; he has actively worked to place women at the very centre of the decision-making process," Saini said. The 'Beti Bachao, Beti Padhao' campaign, which was launched by PM Modi from Haryana in 2015, has transformed the societal mindset towards daughters across the country, the chief minister said, adding that women are excelling in every field and making the nation proud. (PTI)

Great Nicobar project commercial enterprise; unique biodiversity being endangered: Ramesh

NEW DELHI, June 3: Senior Congress leader Jairam Ramesh on Wednesday wrote to Environment Minister Bhupendra Patel Yadav, saying the Great Nicobar Island Project as presently conceived is "overwhelmingly a commercial enterprise" and the unique biodiversity of the area is being endangered.

In his response to Yadav's letter of May 27 which was a reply to his earlier letter, Ramesh said his letter on May 10 was a simple plea to comply, in letter and spirit, with the law in assessing the ecological impacts of the Project in a comprehensive manner, given that the environmental impact assessment (EIA) report of March 2022 itself had stated that it is only a rapid reconnaissance study.

"I am so glad you have admitted that the environmental clearance was not based on comprehensive EIA studies based on three seasons primary data and primary data was collected over only a 'single seasonal cycle,'" the former environment minister said.

"But I wish to, however, point out that the studies mentioned by you in the reply are not even based on primary data collected over 'single seasonal cycle' as claimed. The reports themselves admit that baseline data/surveys for these reports were collected only over a few weeks. I had extracted portions of these reports



for your convenience," Ramesh pointed out in his letter to Yadav.

"A substantial portion of your reply has been dedicated to the claim that institutions under the Ministry of Environment, Forests & Climate Change possess historical data sets which have been used in the impact assessment reports prepared by them," the Congress general secretary in-charge communications said.

The Congress leader said Yadav would be aware of the difference between primary data collected at the project site and its impact areas and secondary data collected from pre-existing studies.

Secondary data is just not a substitute for primary data collection and project-specific studies, Ramesh pointed out.

"Your letter repeatedly mentions judgments

of the National Green Tribunal (NGT) dated April 3, 2023 and February 16, 2026 in response to the issues I have brought to your attention. I have read these judgments carefully again and wish to inform you that: In the judgment dated April 3, 2023, para 33 expressly records that there are 'unanswered deficiencies' in the environmental clearance issued to the project and proceeds to list three, including the need for a comprehensive EIA and remanded the clearance for re-examination," Ramesh said.

In the judgment dated February 16, 2026, para 46 records the submissions of the Ministry of Environment, Forests & Climate Change on the erosion status of Galathea Bay, the Congress leader said.

The report of ISRO's Space Applications Centre has clearly marked stretches of the eastern flank of Galathea Bay in red, indicating erosion, Ramesh pointed out.

"You will recall that under the Island Coastal Zone Regulation, 2019, ports are prohibited in 'high' erosion stretches and comprehensive EIA study is necessary in low and medium' erosion stretches. Given the fact that ISRO's report has marked erosion along Galathea Bay's shoreline, it is not prudent to conduct comprehensive EIA studies over three seasons to account for seasonal variations?" Ramesh said. (PTI)

Andhra govt to engage one crore people in Yogandhra-2026 campaign

AMARAVATI, June 3: Andhra Pradesh Chief Minister N Chandrababu Naidu on Wednesday said the state aims to engage one crore people in Yogandhra-2026, a statewide campaign to promote yoga as a public health movement ahead of International Yoga Day.

Addressing a press conference, the CM said yoga is a priceless way of life gifted by India to the world and an effective remedy for stress, anxiety and lifestyle-related health problems.

"We aim to engage one crore people in Yogandhra 2026. Yoga should become a daily practice in every household and evolve into a powerful movement for building a healthy Andhra Pradesh," said Naidu.

He said Yogandhra-2026 will be conducted across the state from June 7 to 20, with district-level programmes and a major event in Amaravati featuring a yoga demonstration by 25,000 participants on the Krishna River West Bypass Bridge.

The CM said a special theme has been assigned to each district, with programmes planned for specific groups such as police personnel in NTR district and farmers in Konaseema district.

He noted that special yoga events would also be organised in 56 prominent tourist destinations, including Undavalli Caves and Srisailem, to promote yoga tourism.

Naidu said his government aims to create 10 lakh

certified yoga practitioners and increase the number of trainers to 2.5 lakh as part of its Swarna (golden) Andhra-2047 vision.

Further, he announced that Rs 10 crore has been allocated for Yogandhra-2026 to support district-level infrastructure, publicity and organisational arrangements.

Yoga would be promoted as a year-round movement, with continuous training being provided through the AP Yoga Prachara Parishad, the Sanjeevani app and Habuidd Whatsapp communities.

He also said that June has been declared as 'Yoga Month' and that special awareness programmes are being conducted among youth, women and students.

The CM noted that the government is integrating yoga into schools and colleges to encourage healthy habits from a young age and linking the campaign with the Sanjeevani project.

Recalling last year's programme held in Visakhapatnam in the presence of Narendra Modi, Naidu said Andhra Pradesh secured two Guinness World Records, 21 World Book of Records recognitions and a Skoch Award.

According to him, 2.4 crore people registered for Yogandhra last year, 1.9 crore participants received certificates and the programme was conducted at 1.33 lakh venues with the support of 1.5 lakh trainers. (PTI)

From BS-IV to BS-VI: Cabinet nod for cleaner mobility in Delhi-NCR



NEW DELHI, June 3: The Union Cabinet on Wednesday approved a scheme for replacement of old trucks and buses in Delhi-NCR area, a move aimed at reducing air pollution in the region and promoting cleaner mobility.

The scheme seeks to incentivise owners of trucks and buses registered in the Delhi-NCR that comply with BS-IV or earlier emission norms to replace them with BS-VI or stricter emission-compliant vehicles or electric vehicles (EVs).

According to a statement, the Centre will provide 5 per cent interest subvention on loans for five years, monthly fuel vouchers worth up to Rs 4,800 depending on vehicle category, and lump-sum benefits for EV purchases or certificate of deposit trading.

The scheme will benefit approximately 2.07 lakh (1.91 lakh trucks and 16,329 buses) owners in Delhi and NCR states, such as Haryana, Rajasthan, and Uttar Pradesh.

The total financial outlay on the scheme will be Rs 9,585 crore, including Rs 5,041 crore from the Centre and an estimated Rs 1,601 crore in tax concessions from the states. The decision was taken at a Cabinet meeting chaired by Prime Minister Narendra Modi.

Addressing a press conference, I&B Minister Ashwini Vaishnaw said that it's a two-year-year

scheme to replace older and BS IV trucks and buses with their BS VI compliant variants.

This is a constant effort by the government to reduce pollution in cities and villages, he said.

The government said the scheme will be funded through the National Capital Region Planning Board (NCRPB) under the Ministry of Housing and Urban Affairs (MoHUA) and implemented by the Ministry of Road Transport and Highways (MoRTH) and Ministry of Petroleum and Natural Gas (MoPNG).

It will be implemented in collaboration with the participating states of Haryana, Rajasthan, Uttar Pradesh, and Union Territory of Delhi.

For BS-III or older vehicles, scrapping at registered vehicle scrapping facilities is mandatory, while BS-IV vehicles may either be scrapped or sold outside NCR in non-NCAP cities or towns.

Owners must then purchase and register a BS-VI or stricter norm compliant or electric vehicle within NCR.

However, in Delhi, light goods vehicles purchased under the scheme must be electric, while buses must be BS-VI CNG or electric only. Government vehicles are excluded from the scheme.

The government said that by ac-

celerating the transition to cleaner transport technologies, the scheme is expected to significantly reduce vehicular emissions and contribute to improved air quality across the Delhi-NCR region.

Under the scheme, state governments will waive registration fees and grant up to 100 per cent motor vehicle tax concessions for new vehicles and 50 per cent for used vehicles for 10 years.

They will also waive pending liabilities on the old vehicles participating in the scheme. Participating Auto OEMs will offer 8 per cent discounts on ex-showroom prices.

Implementation will be fully digital through an integrated portal, which will enable real-time eligibility checks, automated interest subvention claims, monthly fuel voucher credits, and monitoring of pollution reduction outcomes.

The central government benefits will continue for five years from the date of registration of the new vehicle, ensuring sustained impact beyond the two-year enrolment window.

The scheme will be monitored by an Empowered Committee, chaired by cabinet secretary with CEO, Niti Aayog, secretaries of MoHUA, MoRTH, MoPNG, DFS, chief secretaries of states in Delhi NCR as members, and member secretary of NCRPB being the member convener.

At the district level, district collectors or district magistrates will be tasked with implementing and monitoring the scheme.

The statement said that air pollution in the Delhi-NCR remains a severe public health challenge, particularly during winter months.

Air pollution in the Delhi-NCR remains a severe public health challenge, particularly during winter months.

A report, 'Source Apportionment of Particulate Matter (PM 2.5 and PM 10) in the NCR', published in 2018 shed light on the extent of pollution caused by the transport sector alone. (PTI)

IIT-Roorkee acknowledges glitch after teen flags JEE Advanced 2026 data exposure

NEW DELHI, June 3: IIT-Roorkee has confirmed that the JEE (Advanced) 2026 results portal faced a cloud storage configuration issue after a teenager who identifies as a cybersecurity researcher claimed that personal and examination details of lakhs of students were accessible without authorisation.

The response from the IIT-Roorkee, which conducted the exam this year, came after the cybersecurity researcher 16-year-old Rylen Anil took to X, claiming that the public cloud storage endpoint of the result portal was accessible without authentication, exposing bulk candidate data. The institute on Tuesday night said the data stored was in read-only mode, with no possibility of record alteration and added that the issue was being addressed on priority.

The user had alleged that around 1.79 lakh result records and 1.87 lakh admit card PDFs were accessible, along with personal details such as names, dates of birth and mobile numbers. "JEE Advanced 2026 candidate/result infrastructure had a public cloud storage misconfiguration exposing bulk candidate data



without auth. This exposed ~179.6k result records and ~187.3k admit-card PDFs, including candidate names, DOBs and mobile numbers," Anil said on X.

Responding to the claim, IIT-Roorkee said, "Thank you @DarthKermy72747 for pointing out the configuration issue in the cloud storage device. The same is being plugged on priority. The data stored was read-only and so there was no possibility of any alteration. We applaud your responsible and ethical behaviour."

The development comes amid a series of recent technical and operational issues reported

in major national examination systems, including CUET-UG, NEET-UG and CBSE-related processes, which have faced complaints ranging from technical glitches and server-related disruptions to challenges in application, evaluation and result-processing systems.

The JEE (Advanced) is the gateway for admission to undergraduate programmes at the Indian Institutes of Technology (IITs) and several other premier engineering institutions across the country.

The results were declared on June 1, in which 56,880 candidates were qualified in the Joint Entrance Examination (Advanced) 2026.

Of the total qualified candidates, 10,107 were female candidates, and 46,773 male candidates. Only one third-gender candidate appeared for the examination, but they did not qualify. The examination also saw 3,052 PwD registered candidates, of which 2,864 appeared in both papers and 887 of them qualified.

Shubham Kumar of the IIT Delhi zone secured the top rank, scoring 330 out of 360 marks. (PTI)

Cabinet approves ₹10,000 cr jet fuel stabilisation fund to ease airline cost pressures

NEW DELHI, June 3: The Union Cabinet approved a Rs 10,000 crore fuel price stabilisation programme for airlines on Wednesday, providing financial support to state-owned oil retailers to cap aviation turbine fuel (ATF) prices and shield carriers from soaring fuel costs linked to the ongoing West Asia crisis.

A one-time, interest-free advance of up to ₹ 10,000 crore will be provided to oil marketing companies (OMCs), enabling them to supply jet fuel to scheduled Indian airlines at a fixed price for both domestic and international operations.

Briefing reporters on the decision, Information and Broadcasting Minister Ashwini Vaishnaw said the government has capped the ATF price for domestic airlines at ₹ 75.6 per litre, significantly below the current market price.

While the cap is expected to provide immediate relief to airlines, it could increase financial pressure on refiners and fuel retailers,

which will be compensated through the stabilisation fund.

The support mechanism comes as international jet fuel prices have surged amid geopolitical tensions in West Asia.

Vaishnaw said international ATF prices have risen nearly 2.5 times, from ₹ 60.5 per litre in March to about ₹ 142 per litre in May.

Fuel accounts for roughly 40 per cent of airline operating costs and can rise to as much as 60 per cent during periods of extreme price volatility, making it one of the industry's largest cost components.

Under the approved framework, OMCs will be compensated whenever international import parity prices exceed a benchmark level determined by the government. Once global fuel prices moderate, the support provided to OMCs will be recovered and returned to the Consolidated Fund of India through a defined true-up mechanism.

The arrangement will remain in force for up to three years, subject

to annual review, or until the entire support amount has been recovered, whichever occurs earlier.

Participating airlines will be required to purchase ATF exclusively from OMCs under agreements signed with the fuel retailers and overseen by the ministries of civil aviation and petroleum.

Vaishnaw said the scheme would help stabilise airline operating costs, reduce fare volatility for passengers and preserve domestic and international air connectivity.

Officials also said the measure would support regional air services, including routes connecting smaller cities under India's regional connectivity programme.

The move comes as Indian airlines face mounting operational costs from both elevated fuel prices and longer international flight routes, following the closure of Pakistani airspace to Indian carriers. The detours have increased fuel consumption on services to Europe, North America and Cen-



tral Asia, contributing to higher operating costs and weaker demand on some long-haul routes.

A monitoring committee comprising representatives from the ministries of civil aviation and petroleum and the Department of Expenditure will oversee implementation, claims verification and settlement, with all transactions subject to audit.

The scheme would help sustain domestic and international air connectivity, including services to regional and smaller cities, while

supporting employment across aviation, tourism, hospitality, logistics and related sectors.

Vaishnaw said the fund would help stabilise ATF prices for scheduled Indian carriers and prevent disruption of airline operations.

With the fund, airlines would get a stable ATF price as long as the turmoil is there, and once the crisis is over, then the participating airlines would have to reimburse the amount, he said.

According to the minister, the fund would shield air passengers

from fare spikes, driven by the global oil price surge, and also protect 77 lakh jobs dependent on the aviation ecosystem.

The budgetary support will be in the form of interest-free advances to OMCs through the Demands for Grants of the Ministry of Petroleum and Natural Gas, an official release said.

The support will be provided to OMCs to facilitate stable ATF pricing for airlines during the ongoing period of exceptional fuel price volatility arising from the West Asia crisis.

The corpus will compensate OMCs for losses arising from elevated international ATF prices whenever the prevailing Import Parity Price exceeds the benchmark price, determined under the approved mechanism.

"When international ATF prices moderate, the differential amount shall be recovered from OMCs and returned to the Consolidated Fund of India. The arrangement shall continue until the entire support amount is fully recovered and settled," it added.

ATF price stabilisation support will be in force for a period of 36 months with provision for annual review or until the advance amount is fully recovered/settled, whichever is earlier.

Vaishnaw further said the fund would help safeguard public investment in airport infrastructure by keeping airline operations viable and maintaining air connectivity to Europe, North America and Central Asia amid the Pakistan airspace closure.

Indian airlines are now taking longer routes for international flights, which also means increased fuel burn due to the Pakistan airspace closure that has been in place since early last year.

While ATF price has been capped for domestic operations, Indian carriers continue to purchase the fuel for international operations at Import Parity Prices (IPP), exposing them to elevated fuel costs. (PTI)

Bengal CM launches Annapurna Yojana 28.25 lakh women to receive ₹ 3,000 monthly aid in first phase

KOLKATA, June 3: The West Bengal government on Wednesday launched the Annapurna Yojana for women and began the process of transferring ₹ 3,000 per month to 28.25 lakh beneficiaries enrolled in the first phase.

The rollout of this financial assistance scheme was one of the key poll promises of the BJP in this year's assembly elections. It has replaced the previous TMC government's 'Lakshmir Bhandar' scheme, under which around 2.42 crore women received a maximum of ₹ 1,500 per month.

Inaugurating the Annapurna Yojana, Chief Minister Suwendu Adhikari said 28.25 lakh women had been verified and registered on the dedicated portal over the past three days. Officials said the enrolment process will continue for the next three months, both online and offline, with applications being accepted at block development offices, municipal offices and designated government centres.

"Prime Minister Narendra Modi's guarantee and the double-engine government's commitment have ensured that the promise to provide the aid of Rs 3,000 has been implemented," Adhikari said after the launch.

The chief minister said fresh applications would continue to be accepted, and all eligible



beneficiaries would be brought under the scheme. "As forms are received and verification is completed, ₹ 3,000 will be transferred to the beneficiaries' accounts. Our target is to ensure that every eligible woman receives the benefit," he said.

Defending the fresh registration exercise, Adhikari said the government decided to re-verify beneficiaries after discovering that many people whose names had been permanently deleted from electoral rolls following the Special Intensive Revision, continued to avail benefits under welfare schemes such as Lakshmir Bhandar.

He said the BJP government was committed to ensuring that public funds reached only eligible Indian citizens and asserted that no "non-

Indian" would be allowed to receive benefits under government schemes.

The chief minister, however, clarified that persons whose cases were under appeal before tribunals and Hindu refugees from Bangladesh who had applied for citizenship under the Citizenship Amendment Act can also apply.

Adhikari alleged that under the previous regime, ineligible beneficiaries, including men and illegal immigrants, had received benefits under women's welfare schemes, taking advantage of corruption and inadequate verification mechanisms.

"The fresh application and verification process has been introduced to ensure transparency and

prevent irregularities," he said.

The chief minister also assured people that those unable to complete the enrolment process on their own would be helped by government employees at their homes, if necessary.

The government would issue updates every seven days on the number of verified beneficiaries and new enrolments, the chief minister said.

He said the scheme was aimed at strengthening the economic security of women and recalled the contributions of women icons from West Bengal, including Rani Rashmoni and freedom fighter Matangini Hazra.

Chief Secretary Manoj Kumar Agarwal said teams would go door to door to fill out the form, and people can raise objections if someone's eligibility to receive benefits under the scheme is cancelled.

The West Bengal government launched a helpline and email for people to lodge their grievances. People can lodge complaints by dialling 82820-82820 between 9 am and 6 pm from Monday to Saturday, or by emailing asap@wb.gov.in.

The chief minister also held three 'Janata Darbars', meeting common people and helping them resolve their problems. (PTI)

Gujarat police apprehend 362 illegal Bangladeshi migrants

GANDHINAGAR, June 3: Gujarat police have apprehended 362 illegal Bangladeshi migrants from across the state and another 780 suspects are being probed, officials said on Wednesday.

The crackdown under 'Operation Delta Hunt' was meticulously planned and covered all parts of the state, Minister of State for Home Harsh Sanghavi told reporters here.

"In total, investigations are being conducted into the backgrounds of over 6,200 individuals. Of these, 362 have so far been identified as (illegal) Bangladeshi nationals, and the investigations will continue in the days to come," he said.

A dedicated team of police is also conducting a probe against the persons who provided accommodation to these migrants or hired them without the mandatory police verification, Sanghavi said.

Police teams worked tirelessly for the last more than 72 hours, employing a comprehensive strategy that utilized technical surveillance as well as human intelligence to find illegal migrants, the minister said.

A majority of illegal Bangladeshi nationals were engaged in manual labor with the highest concentrations found in Ahmedabad, Surat, Rajkot, Vadodara and Bharuch, he said.

As per Ahmedabad police, 300 such individuals were rounded up in the city and 66 of them have



been so far confirmed to be illegal migrants.

"An operation was also conducted in Dang district where five suspicious individuals were apprehended. No corner of Gujarat was left untouched," Sanghavi said.

While the police conducted raids, vigilance was maintained at railway stations, bus terminals and along highways and district borders. At least 18 persons were apprehended while trying to flee Gujarat, said Sanghavi.

"This was a meticulously planned operation. As the investigations proceed, the number of illegal migrants is expected to rise significantly," the minister said.

Police will also continue door-to-door and village-to-village operations, aiming to repatriate every single Bangladeshi national living illegally in the state back to their

home country, he added.

Many of these migrants managed to procure Aadhaar cards based on minor government documents obtained from certain villages in West Bengal, which facilitated their illegal stay in the country, Sanghavi said.

"By leveraging new technologies and software, we have succeeded in accurately identifying these individuals, and we intend to carry out even more detailed work in this regard in the coming days. I consider this to be a proactive initiative by the police, one that we are pursuing with the utmost seriousness," he said.

Robust fencing of the Bangladesh border in West Bengal will deny infiltrators the opportunity to enter the country, making the national borders more secure, the minister said. (PTI)

Ladakh to develop 10 model border hamlets

LEH/JAMMU, June 3: Ladakh Lieutenant Governor V K Saxena on Wednesday said the union territory will develop 10 model border hamlets under the vibrant village programme, with the foundation stone of the first such village laid at Chumur in eastern Ladakh.

Addressing locals during the launch of the project, Saxena described the initiative as a matter of pride and said the enthusiastic participation of villagers reflected their aspirations and wholehearted support for the ambitious programme. "The vibrant village programme, envisioned by Prime Minister Narendra Modi, aims to create self-reliant, climate-resilient, tourism-enabled and economically vibrant border villages in India's high-altitude frontier regions," he added.

Located at an altitude of 16,700 feet along the Indo-China border, Chumur comprises 24 households with a population of 91 people, all of whom are engaged in Pashmina rearing and production. (PTI)

FIRs registered against two illegal madrasas in Ghaziabad's Khoda

GHAZIABAD (UP), June 3: Police have registered FIRs against two madrasas, which were allegedly operating illegally in Uttar Pradesh's Ghaziabad district, following a sealing action, officials said on Wednesday. The FIRs have been registered against three persons after the madrasas in the Khoda area were found to be allegedly operating without approval from the Minority Welfare Department and without valid registration, police said.

This comes in the wake of the killing of 17-year-old Surya Chauhan, a resident of Khoda, who was stabbed by one Asad and his associates on the day of Bakrid on May 28.

Chauhan's family claimed he was called out of the home on pretext of celebrating the festival and then killed.

Asad subsequently was killed following a police encounter on the intervening night of May 30 and 31, while his father Nawab and two friends Farhan and Asif have been arrested in connection with the case.

Deputy Commissioner of Police (Trans Hindon) Dhawal Jaiswal said verification of illegal properties in the Khoda police station area was underway, following which two madrasas were sealed on Tuesday. (PTI)

Prolonged matrimonial litigation only leads to perpetuity of marriage on paper: SC

NEW DELHI, June 3: Prolonged pendency of matrimonial litigation only leads to perpetuity of marriage on paper, the Supreme Court has said while dissolving the marriage of an estranged couple who were living separately for more than 15 years.

The apex court noted that the Rajasthan High Court had granted divorce in favour of the husband on many grounds, including cruelty committed by the wife against him by denying sexual relations on several occasions.

"The courts in India have repeatedly established that withholding sexual intimacy inflicts severe emotional distress and undermines the bedrock of marriage," a bench of Justices Sanjay Karol and Augustine George Masih said.

"Therefore, the conclusion of the high court is sustained. The decree of divorce as granted by allowing the appeal of the respondent-husband is upheld," it said.

It noted that as held in several judgments of the top court, denial of conjugal rights including persistent refusal of sexual intercourse without a reasonable cause constitutes mental cruelty and is a valid ground for divorce under Section 13(1)(ia) of the Hindu Marriage Act.

The bench noted that both the wife and the husband, who were married in Decem-



ber 2007, are doctors and are in government service in Gujarat and Rajasthan, respectively.

Exercising its powers under Article 142 of the Constitution to do complete justice, the top court said the marriage between the couple deserves to be dissolved as it was apparent that the wedlock has broken down irretrievably. The top court delivered its judgement on June 2 on an appeal filed by the wife challenging a February last year order of the high court.

The high court had allowed the appeal filed by the husband and granted him divorce. In its verdict, the apex court noted that the parties were living separately for over 15 years, there was no child from the wedlock and despite repeated efforts by the courts, there was no reconciliation.

The bench said marriage, in its legal and constitutional dimension, can never

be reduced to a mere contractual intersection of individual rights, nor can it be viewed strictly through the narrow lens of a petition for conjugal rights.

"It is a deeply personal and social partnership built on mutual respect, shared expectations and equal responsibility. When two parties enter into matrimony, they weave a tapestry of interdependence that demands a continuous balancing of interests," it said.

The bench said conjugal rights do not exist in a vacuum and that they are the structural counterparts to conjugal duties.

"To demand the fulfilment of the former while wilfully abandoning the sanctity of the latter is to undermine the very essence of the institution," the bench said.

It said persistent withdrawal from the foundational aspects of marriage may have legal consequences while evaluating allegations of mental cruelty.

The bench said from the conduct of parties in this case, it was clear that even during the short period of cohabitation, they failed to perform their conjugal responsibilities. "This court is conscious of the view that approach of the courts should be to preserve the sanctity of marriage and the court should be reluctant to dissolve the marriage at the mere asking of one of the parties," it said. (PTI)

केन्द्रीय विद्यालय बोकाजान/ KENDRIYA VIDYALAYA BOKAJAN
कार्बी आंगलॉग, असम-782400/ KARBI ANGLONG, ASSAM-782400
 शिक्षा मंत्रालय, भारत सरकार के अधीन। (Under Ministry of Education, Govt. of India)
Mobile no.: 9694192834, 8638416113, 9101870014
 ई-मेल/E-Mail : kvbokajanka@gmail.com

Region- Guwahati, Region Code – 10

Kendriya Vidyalaya Bokajan, Karbi Anglong, Assam

Date: 04.06.2026

Admission Notice

Offline registration applications are invited for admission to fill a few vacant seats in Balvatika-III and Classes 1 to 5 at Kendriya Vidyalaya Bokajan for the academic session 2026-27, in accordance with the Admission Guidelines 2026-27 issued by Kendriya Vidyalaya Sangathan (Headquarters), New Delhi.

Registration Schedule (Session 2026-27)

Sl No.	Contain	Schedule date
1	Offline Registration	05.06.2026 to 11.06.2026 (upto 03.00 PM)
2	Publication of the provisional list of registered candidates and the waitlist	12.06.2026
3	Admission of selected eligible candidates	From 15.06.2026 to 20.06.2026

(i) Registration forms can be obtained from the school between 10:00 AM and 03:00 PM. Reservation for SC, ST, OBC (NCL), and CWSN categories will be applicable as per KVS rules.

Total vacant seats for all categories:-

Sl No.	Class	Vacant seat
1	Balvatika-III	13 (4 seats are vacant under RTE)
2	Class -1	9
3	Class -2	15
4	Class -3	16
5	Class -4	9
6	Class -5	23

This is a tentative list of vacancies. The number of vacant seats may increase or decrease

For more details please visit Vidyalaya website i.e.:- <https://cibokajan.kvs.ac.in>

**Sd/-
Principal**

NFDC-NFAI restores eight iconic Ritwik Ghatak films in pristine 4K for Global audiences

In a monumental stride towards preserving and globally promoting India's rich cinematic heritage, the National Film Development Corporation – National Film Archive of India (NFDC-NFAI), operating under the Ministry of Information and Broadcasting (MIB), has successfully restored legendary filmmaker Ritwik Ghatak's entire feature filmography in 4K. To commemorate the visionary director's birth centenary, NFDC-NFAI has partnered with the British Film Institute (BFI) to present a landmark retrospective at the prestigious BFI Southbank in London, commencing in June 2026. This comprehensive showcase will allow international audiences to experience Ghatak's radical storytelling and profound aesthetic vision in its ultimate, pristine visual form.

The restoration project of the films of Ghatak is one of the most commendable works of National Film Heritage. Speaking on the institutional significance of this international collaboration, Shri Prakash Magdum, Managing Director, NFDC, stated, "India possesses one of the most vibrant cinematic legacies in the world, and the NFDC-NFAI is mandated to restore and preserve these assets to the highest global standards under the NFHM. As we mark the birth centenary of Shri Ritwik Ghatak, we are pleased to collaborate with the BFI for this retrospective in London. It provides an excellent platform for the global film community to experience Shri Ghatak's brilliance and witness the caliber of India's archival achievements firsthand."

This massive archival triumph was executed under the National Film Heritage Mission (NFHM), which is MIB's flagship initiative



original cinematic vision, the color grading process was directly supervised by the National Award-winning Indian cinematographer Shri Avik Mukhopadhyay, who lauded the NFHM restoration project, said "I am really proud and enthralled to be part of Ghatak restoration as he is one of the most original filmmaker nationally and internationally. As a Cinematographer, it offered me a scope to watch his beautiful craft closely. I really thank the whole team for such a painstaking but wonderful effort."

The London retrospective will provide an opportunity to engage with Ghatak's creative universe across multiple periods of his illustrious career. The expansive programme features the newly restored 4K presentations of his eight seminal narrative features, namely Nagarik, Ajantrik, Bari Thekey Paliye, Meghe Dhaka Tara, Komal Gandhar, Subarnarekha, Titas Ekti Nadir Naam, and Jukti Takko Aar Gappo. Complementing these masterpieces, the showcase will also screen his historically significant shorter format works, documentaries, and rare

the BFI strongly reinforces the continued commitment to restore India's cinematic assets to world-class standards. By championing such extensive restorative and promotional initiatives under the National Film Heritage Mission, the Government of India ensures that these masterpieces will transcend geographical boundaries and continue to inspire global audiences for decades to come.

About (NFDC-NFAI)

The National Film Development Corporation-National Film Archive of India (NFDC-NFAI) is India's premier institution dedicated to preserving, documenting, and promoting the nation's cinematic heritage. It aims to trace, acquire, preserve, and restore films of historical, cultural and artistic significance for future generations while also maintaining a representative collection of world cinema.

A member of the International Federation of Film Archives (FIAP) since 1969, NFDC-NFAI serves as a key repository of India's film history. Its Research and Documentation Section houses an extensive collection of film-related materials, including over 2 lakh photographs, 40,000 film posters, 24,000 song booklets, and 2.28 lakh press clippings, much of which has been digitized for preservation and research purposes.

About National Film Heritage Mission (NFHM)

To strengthen film preservation efforts, the Government of India launched the National Film Heritage Mission (NFHM) in 2015. Under this mission, NFDC-NFAI undertakes 2K and 4K digitization and restoration of landmark Indian films, conducts condition assessments of film reels, develops archival vaults, and builds institutional capacity through training and workshops.

Through these initiatives, NFDC-NFAI plays a vital role in safeguarding India's rich cinematic legacy and ensuring that classic films remain accessible to present and future generations. (PIB)



dedicated to the safeguarding of the nation's audiovisual legacy. The meticulous 4K restorations were achieved by utilizing various original film elements that have been carefully preserved over decades by the NFDC-NFAI, alongside invaluable resources from the West Bengal State Film Archive. To ensure visual authenticity and strict adherence to the maestro's

incomplete work, including Bihar Ke Darshaniya Sthan, Musafir, Fear, Rendezvous, Nagarik Sanrakshan, Scientists of Tomorrow, Yeh Kyun, My Lenin, Puruliari Chhau, Durbar Gati Padma, Heerer Prajapati, Chinnamul, Ramkinkar Baij, Roungeer Golam, and Bagalar Banga Darshan.

This partnership between NFDC-NFAI and

Guild speaks out amid Ranveer Singh-Farhan Akhtar dispute

The Producers Guild of India has taken cognizance of actor Ranveer Singh's exit from 'Don 3', and the controversy surrounding it.

On Wednesday, the body, spearheaded by Shibasish Sarkar, took to its official X, formerly Twitter, handle, and shared a statement, condemning the artistes' conduct which has far-reaching consequences and undermines the spirit of trust, professionalism, and mutual respect.

They wrote, "There have been growing instances of talent, directors, and technicians, renegeing on their commitments to producers, often at the eleventh hour. We, the Producers Guild of India, have also received formal complaints from our members, Excel Entertainment Private Limited and Panorama Studios International Limited regarding these issues coming up just days before the commencement of

principal photography.. No member of the industry should indulge in such behaviour that has, in these cases, led to substantial financial loss to our member producers as well as to other verticals in the industry".

The statement further read, "Such actions by any industry member have serious and far-reaching consequences and undermine the spirit of trust, professionalism, and mutual respect on which the film industry is built. These instances have caused significant reputational damage, adverse impact on credibility and brand value of the films concerned and jeopardised the livelihoods of hundreds of technicians and crew members who depend on these projects".

The body also called for amicable resolution of disputes between all the parties involved, as it stated, "We would also like to state in no uncertain terms that the



Guild always stands for a free and fair business environment without encouraging any encumbrances or disruptions to the process of content production. Any position to the contrary is not ethical and harms the collaborative spirit of our film making community. We urge all parties to resolve their disputes amicably and we will strive to protect the fraternity's inter-

ests". Earlier, the FWICE (Federation of Western India Cine Employees) announced a non-Cooperation Directive (NCD) against Ranveer Singh. Farhan Akhtar and Ritesh Sidhwani had complained to FWICE saying they have faced a loss of approximately Rs 45 crore towards the pre-production of 'Don 3'. (Agencies)

FWICE WITH-DRAWS NON-COOPERATION DIRECTIVE AGAINST RANVEER AFTER ACTOR'S LEGAL NOTICE



The Federation of Western India Cine Employees (FWICE) on Wednesday said it has withdrawn the non-cooperative directive issued against Ranveer Singh over his exit from Farhan Akhtar's 'Don 3' after the "Dhurandhar" star sent a legal notice to the organisation.

The decision was taken after an intervention by the Indian Motion Picture Producers' Association (IMPPA), the Producers Guild of India (PGI) and Cine & TV Artists' Association (CINTAA). "We are taking back our non-cooperative directive from immediate effect after a request by IMPAA, the producers' guild and CINTAA.

"We have been told that we should all sit together with the producers' body and take an appropriate decision where neither the producers and directors nor the actor face any issues," FWICE president BN Tiwari told reporters here.

"No one has won or lost in this matter. Our legal department will respond to his legal notice," he added.

The non-cooperation directive against Singh was issued on May 25 and came after Akhtar and his producing partner Ritesh Sidhwani filed a complaint with the Indian Film and Television Directors' Association (IFTDA), which referred the issue to the FWICE for further intervention.

"Don 3", a reboot of the popular franchise, has reportedly been in development for three years and was yet to begin shooting. The producers have claimed that over Rs 45 crore had already been spent on pre-production.

FWICE, formed in 1956, is the primary trade union and umbrella organisation for film and television workers in India. Other than taking care of its members, including spot boys, camerapersons, sound engineers and editors, it also steps in to mediate conflict arising between artists, technicians and production studios.

According to Ashoke Pandit, chief advisor to FWICE, Singh sent the legal notice to the organisation on Tuesday evening.

He urged Singh to engage with the federation and work towards resolving the issue.

"We all have celebrated his stardom, we are all with him and we want him to become an even bigger star. Our intention is to involve everyone in resolving all the problems, and not just this problem (referring to 'Don 3'). We want industry to survive," he added.

Pandit expressed confidence that the matter would ultimately be resolved positively.

"Many big people from the industry like actors, producers, directors, etc want this to end (solve the matter). The federation has created an atmosphere where something like this if happens in future can be resolved," he claimed.

Pandit also stressed that the workers' body never banned Singh, who is currently not working on any project.

"We've no authority to ban to anyone, we are not judiciary. We used the phrase non cooperation directive because we've the right to decide whether we want to work with a person. This could be a choice made by the technician, worker, producer or actor, whether they wish to work with that person or not," he said.

"Please see to it that our words are not used unnecessarily because it creates confusion. We inform our members to not work with a person but some may still choose to work with that person and we can't stop him or her from doing so," he added.

Though Singh hadn't publicly reacted to the FWICE's non-cooperation directive against him, his team had issued a statement, saying the actor continues to hold "deep respect and goodwill" for everyone associated with the film and the industry.

"Throughout the recent developments surrounding 'Don 3', he has consciously chosen to maintain silence, believing that professional discussions and personal equations are best handled with dignity, maturity and mutual respect," the statement said.

Singh has also found support from filmmakers Ram Gopal, Sanjay Gupta and actor-politician Kangana Ranaut. (PTI)



Aamir Khan-starrer 'Lagaan' to re-release on June 12

Superstar Aamir Khan's Oscar-nominated movie "Lagaan" will return to cinemas across the country on June 12 on the occasion of its 25th anniversary.

The film, which originally released on June 15, 2001, was directed by Ashutosh Gowariker.

The period sports drama told the story of a cricket match between a group of untrained villagers and their colonial masters. "Lagaan" was nominated in the Best Foreign Language category

at the 74th Academy Awards and received widespread critical and commercial acclaim.

Khan's production banner Aamir Khan Productions shared the announcement on its official Instagram handle on Wednesday.

"A timeless epic that touched every heart. On the 25th Anniversary of 'LAGAAN' the epic saga returns to the big screen. Relive the magic in theatres on 12th, 13th and 14th June," read the caption.

Besides Khan, the film also

starred Gracy Singh, British actors Rachel Shelley and Paul Blackthorne, Suhasini Mulay, Kulbhushan Kharbanda, and Rajendra Gupta, among others.

The music of the film was composed by A R Rahman and includes songs such as "Ghanan Ghanan", "Mitwa", "Radha Kaise Na Jale", and "O Rey Chhori", which still resonate with the audience.

It won eight awards, including Best Popular Film award at the 49th National Film Awards. (PTI)

Gukesh is a smart player, don't see any clear weakness in his game: Sindarov



OSLO, June 3: D Gukesh's prolonged form slump might be a talking point in the chess world right now but his world championship challenger Javokhir Sindarov sees no obvious weakness in the Indian's game and is fretting over his own lack of

experience for their high-intensity clash this year.

The 20-year-old Uzbek beat a stacked field of seven contenders in the Candidates Tournament earlier this year to secure a clash against reigning world champion

Gukesh at a yet-to-be-decided venue later this year.

Speaking on the sidelines of the ongoing Norway Chess Tournament here, Sindarov said he will begin the World Championship preparations in right earnest only next month.

"I feel he is a very smart player. I played him at Tata Steel chess; he's really very strong," Sindarov said, recalling their dramatic draw in Wijk Aan Zee this year.

"I don't see any clear weakness in his game. From next month I'll start my preparations, but right now I need to focus on the Olympiad. My team is already working on the World Championship," said Sindarov, who lost to Gukesh in rapid action at the Grand Chess Tour Super Rapid and Blitz in Poland earlier this year.

It was their first meeting since Sindarov became the world championships challenger.

Sindarov said his lack of experience in one-on-one matches -- especially in the 14-game World Championship format -- weighs on his mind but he is focused on improving his game.

"Actually, I've played 6-8 matches in the men's World Cup (in Goa last year), but this classical 14-game match, I've never played before. I cannot say anything because I don't have any experience, but I know it will be very hard, and I also know I'm very close.

"So, I'm close to winning this tournament, like Gukesh also, because the chances might be similar, so it will be a very good match. But from my side, I just want to work on my chess and play well in my next tournament and in the World Championship match too," said Sindarov, who won the World Cup in Goa for his first major international title.

Sindarov said he has increased his

workload, spending more than 10 hours a day in order to achieve his goals.

"From last year, I can say only one thing, that I really work a lot. I mean, even if you take how many hours I play (the Counter-Strike (game), I really work a lot," said Sindarov.

"I work 10 hours in one day, like probably in one year it should be more than 80-90 days...and we've really worked a lot on chess and the results are coming.

"I want to be a very strong chess player, and if I keep working in this system of putting in long hours, I believe I can become one of the strongest players in the world. There is a dream," he added.

Sindarov has previously admitted to struggling with motivation after early success, which included becoming one of the youngest grandmasters in history at 12 years of age and later winning the Candidates.

The Uzbek said he no longer sets fixed targets and prefers to take things as they come.

"No, I mean, of course, I never think like next year I will be a Candidate (winner), let's say last year, but okay, everything can happen," he said.

On his preferred venue for the World Championship match, Sindarov suggested Cyprus as an attractive option, citing its warm weather as a plus.

"Actually, for me, in general, I want to play in a hot country. Winter is a little bit uncomfortable for me. But I'm not a chess player who needs very comfortable conditions, because I grew up in all kinds of conditions.

"So for me, it doesn't matter where I play. Just a nice food centre -- that would be the best thing to have in a match," he said with a laugh. I will be very happy to play somewhere like Cyprus." (PTI)

India drub Chinese Taipei 13-1 to enter semifinals of U-18 men's Asia Cup hockey

KAKAMIGAHARA (JAPAN), June 3: The Indian men's hockey team produced a clinical display, thrashing Chinese Taipei 13-1 in its last Pool A match to storm into the semifinals of the U-18 Asia Cup 2026 here on Wednesday.

India ended their pool engagements with wins against Kazakhstan, Korea and Chinese Taipei, while losing to hosts Japan. It gave them nine points from four matches.

The team's attacking prowess was on full display against Chinese Taipei, with Ashish Tani Puri emerging as the standout performer with a hat-trick (27th, 35th, 42nd minutes), while Gazeer Khan (40th, 44th), Siddharth Ben (30th, 52nd) and Rahul Yadav (20th, 54th) scored a brace each.

Karan Gautam (7th), Premchand Soy (11th), captain Ketan Kushwaha (13th) and Varinder Singh (50th) also contributed to the tally.

India made their intentions clear from the outset, dictating the tempo with incisive play that constantly troubled the Chinese Taipei



defence. They broke the deadlock in the seventh minute as Karan converted India's first penalty corner of the match.

Premchand then doubled the lead with a field goal, while skipper Kushwaha added a third in quick succession to put his side firmly in control by the end of the first quarter.

India continued their dominance in the second quarter. Yadav added a fourth before Puri converted a penalty corner to make it 5-0.

Siddharth rounded off a prolific second quarter for India with another field goal right at the stroke of half-time.

However, Yong-Jyun Jhang (30th) pulled a goal back for Chi-

nese Taipei, scoring from a penalty corner just before the hooter to make it 6-1 at the break.

India resumed with the same intensity after the break. Puri bagged his second goal from another set-piece in the 35th minute to make it 7-1.

Khan then got into the act, converting a penalty corner to extend India's lead even further.

Puri completed his hat-trick by converting another penalty corner, while Khan added his second as India went into the final quarter with a commanding 10-1 lead.

The fourth quarter saw India maintaining their relentless pressure as they remained clinical from set-pieces.

Varinder converted a penalty corner before Siddharth scored his second goal of the match.

Yadav rounded off a fine team display with his second goal of the match.

India will play their semifinal on Friday but their opponent will be decided after the last Pool A match between Japan and Kazakhstan later on Wednesday. (PTI)

After 60 years of hurt England turns to a German coach to end World Cup title drought



MANCHESTER, June 3: In a bid to end its decades-long wait to win a second World Cup, England has put its fate in the hands of a German.

It's fair to say the appointment of Thomas Tuchel was not universally well received.

"I'm sorry I have a German passport," the serial-winning former Paris Saint-Germain, Chelsea and Bayern Munich coach quipped at his official unveiling in 2024.

He had woken that morning to some unflattering headlines in the British media.

The Daily Mail described it as a "dark day for England" and said the national team had gambled on a "GERMAN."

The leader of the right-wing Reform Party Nigel Farage asked on X: "Why can't we have an English manager?"

Never mind that Tuchel was a Champions League winner who had lifted trophies in three different countries. Or the fact that England has gone down the foreign route before: a Swedish coach in Sven-Goran Eriksson and an Italian in Fabio Capello. And in the days before Tuchel's appointment, there were rumors that Pep Guardiola was also a leading candidate.

Historic rivals

A point of contention was the fact that Germany has long-been England's biggest soccer rival. Since winning the 1966 World Cup final against West Germany, England has often struggled against the Germans in major tournaments. Some England fans have brought 20th-century history to the rivalry with provocative chants taunting Germany about World War II.

Debate about Tuchel's nationality, however, dissipated quickly, helped by his easy-going charm when dealing with the media and a perfect winning record during England's World Cup qualifying campaign.

According to professor Jan Rieger, author of the upcoming book "Great Powers: A History of Britain and Germany," the wider reaction to Tuchel's appointment points to a change in Anglo-German relations after the tensions that prevailed in the decades following two world wars.

"There were questions, but it certainly hasn't turned into an ongoing saga in the way in which it would have in the 1990s or even around the turn of the century," Rieger told The Associated Press. "Then it would have been unthinkable to have a German manager."

"Germany really isn't the bad guy anymore. That's long since passed. I don't think it works portraying Germany as the bogyman."

England coaches face fierce criticism Time will tell

if Tuchel is portrayed as a hero or villain at the World Cup. If England fails, his nationality might be raised again. But England managers of the past have been the subject of brutal criticism by fans and media, regardless of what it says on their passport.

Tuchel's predecessor Gareth Southgate was widely credited with making England fans fall back in love with the national team during his eight-year spell, yet he faced a torrent of abuse from sections of supporters during the 2024 European Championship, with plastic beer glasses thrown in his direction after one match.

Southgate departed after leading England to back-to-back Euros finals and the World Cup semifinals in 2018.

He goes down as the nation's second most successful manager after Alf Ramsey, who led England to World Cup victory in 1966.

If Tuchel can end England's trophy wait, he would become a national treasure.

"Everyone in the squad, the staff, everyone believes we can win it," midfielder Kobbie Mainoo said.

Difficult decisions

Tuchel stunned some fans and players with his squad selection for the World Cup, leaving out big names including Phil Foden, Cole Palmer and Trent Alexander-Arnold.

It was evidence that he would not be swayed by public opinion, which has been a criticism of previous coaches.

"Everything I know about international football tells me that tournaments are won by teams, not individuals," he said. "What we're trying to achieve in the summer can only be achieved as a team."

Midfielder Jordan Henderson was one of the surprise inclusions at the age of 35.

"I know everybody likes to speak about players that aren't here, unfortunately that's the case with every England squad really."

Henderson said. "There's so many good players, so much talent, but for us as a squad here, it's about being together and we're here for a reason and it's about bringing that, being the best version of yourself, being best version individually and collectively, working every day to achieve our dreams."

A proven winner

Tuchel is the 14th coach tasked with the challenge of ending England's trophy drought, which now stretches to 60 years.

After Southgate's departure the English Football Association said it was looking for a candidate to "win a major tournament". That might sound obvious, but even coaches who had won big prizes with club teams such as Bobby Robson, Terry Venables, Eriksson and Capello could not emulate that success with England.

As a foreign coach — albeit one who coached in the Premier League with Chelsea — Tuchel cannot bring that same dynamic to the role.

He does, however, fit the description of a winner of major tournaments, having led Chelsea to the Champions League in 2021. He was also Champions League finalist with Paris Saint-Germain.

In Harry Kane, Jude Bellingham and Declan Rice, he has three of the biggest stars in European soccer and enough talent at his disposal that he felt able to leave out the likes of Foden and Palmer. (AP)

Bhullar, Pukhraj among top Indian challengers at Bharath Classic

EL JADIDA (MOROCCO), June 3: Gaganjeet Bhullar, winner of most Asian Tour titles among all active players on the Tour, will be a strong contender when he tees at this week's IGPL Bharath Classic.

Apart from Bhullar, the other leading Indian challengers will be Pukhraj Gill, Karandeep Kochhar, Udayan Mane, young Kartik Singh, who was T-12 last week on the ADT, Shaurya Bhattacharya, Aman Raj, Sachin Baisoya and Aryan Roopa Anand.

The USD 500,000 flagship event on the IGPL Tour is being held in Morocco this season, after the successful first edition at Kenville Golf Resort in India last year. A win this week will earn the player a full card to the region's main Tour and good performances here will also open doors to the International Series. More than 40 players from the IGPL Tour have gained entry into the half a million dollar event.

"Getting to an event like this what IGPL has provided for us, plus there are opportunities on the International Series," said Pukhraj Singh Gill, winner of the AM Green IGPL Order of Merit 2025. (PTI)

Bodoland University felicitates Wushu champions, coaches for national success

HT Correspondent KOKRAJHAR, June 3: Bodoland University on Wednesday felicitated its Wushu champions and coaches in recognition of their outstanding performances at the AIU All India Inter-University Wushu Championship held recently at the University of Kashmir.

The felicitation programme was organised to honour the athletes and coaches who brought laurels to Bodoland University, the Bodoland Territorial Region and Assam through their achievements at the national-level championship.

The programme began with a welcome address by Dr Prahlad Basumatary, Registrar (i/c)-cum-Director of Students' Welfare, who congratulated the athletes and coaches for their remarkable accomplishments.

Vice-Chancellor Prof BL Ahuja felicitated the medal winners and coaches with traditional aarona in the presence of senior university officials, including Academic Registrar Dr Manjil Basumatary, Director (i/c), CUDC, Prof Bhounik



Ch Baro, and deans of various faculties.

Among the medal winners, Daisy Rabha secured a gold medal in the Baguazhang Women's category.

Bhabani Brahma and Rangjali Brahma won bronze medals in the Duijian event, while Chibika Ramcharyi claimed bronze in the Nanquan category.

Bhabani Brahma also secured a bronze medal in the Nangun event.

The university acknowledged the contribution of Wushu coaches Tularam Basumatary and Damsrang Daimary, whose guidance

played a key role in the athletes' success.

Interacting with the champions, Prof Ahuja congratulated them on their achievements and encouraged them to continue striving for excellence in both sports and academics.

The athletes also shared their experiences and insights from the championship.

The programme underscored Bodoland University's commitment to promoting sports and encouraging student participation in national-level competitions while nurturing sporting talent across the region.

From 'Brazil Houses' to giant Messi cutouts, football fever sweeps Kerala ahead of FIFA World Cup

THIRUVANANTHAPURAM, June 3: A modest house tucked away in Nenmara in Kerala's Palakkad district has become an unlikely attraction as football fans and curious visitors stop by for selfies and photographs.

Painted entirely in Brazil's iconic yellow and green colours and decorated with football and World Cup imagery from gate to rooftop, the house stands out as a vibrant tribute to the sport.

The eye-catching home has become a symbol of the football fever that is once again sweeping across Kerala as anticipation builds ahead of the FIFA World Cup.

As the countdown to football's biggest spectacle in three countries of the American continent enters its final days, Kerala's passionate fans are leaving little doubt that the tournament is as much a festival here as it is in the host nation.

Across villages, towns and coastal hamlets, giant cutouts of football superstars are rising above coconut groves, enormous flex boards are appearing along highways, youngsters are rehearsing victory chants and fans are proudly donning the jerseys of their favourite teams.

For Shafer, a resident of Nenmara in Palakkad and a lifelong Brazil admirer, supporting the five-time champions goes beyond merely watching matches.

His entire house and compound wall now wear Brazil's colours.

"Brazil team is my life. I don't have anything more to say. Some passions simply can-



not be measured," he says with a smile.

His wife Shamma, who shares his love for the Selecao, says the house has become so popular that locals now refer to it simply as the "Brazil Veedu" (Brazil House).

Visitors frequently stop by for photographs, turning the residence into an unlikely selfie destination.

Hundreds of kilometres away, in the coastal village of Chellanam in Ernakulam district, Argentina supporters have made their own statement.

With the support of parents and local residents, a group of teenage fans recently erected a towering cutout of Lionel Messi that now dominates the village skyline.

Videos of teenagers standing in front of the

Messi cutout and raising slogans of "Argentina Vamos" have gone viral on social media.

"It was the result of three to four days of continuous hard work. Our fathers also joined us. Everyone wanted this cutout to become a reality," one of the young organisers said.

The friendly rivalry that defines Kerala's football culture is already in full swing.

Local Brazil supporters in the area say an even larger cutout of Neymar is being prepared and will soon challenge Messi's towering presence.

In Kongad near Palakkad, die-hard Argentina fans have erected an enormous flex board along the busy Palakkad-Cherpu-lasery road.

Packed with images of Messi, his co-players and memorable moments from Argentina's football journey, the installation has become a talking point across the state.

Videos showing dozens of fans carrying the giant structure into position have attracted widespread attention online.

"We put up flex boards during every World Cup. This time we simply made it much bigger. We wanted to create something that would surprise Kerala, and I think we succeeded," said one of the members of the local football club behind the initiative.

One social media user, who shared a video of the flex board, joked that he initially mistook it for a container lorry.

"You keep walking and walking, and it still

doesn't end," he remarked, referring to its length.

Drone visuals of giant cutouts and colourful flex boards standing amid Kerala's lush paddy fields have further amplified the World Cup buzz online.

Equally popular are videos of young fans rapidly naming football stars from different countries while dressed in team jerseys.

The football fever is not confined to displays and decorations.

In neighbourhoods across the state, local turfs are witnessing a surge in activity as fans prepare for friendly matches inspired by the World Cup.

At nearby Thottumukku, friends Shan and Aman are among those planning pre-World Cup football events.

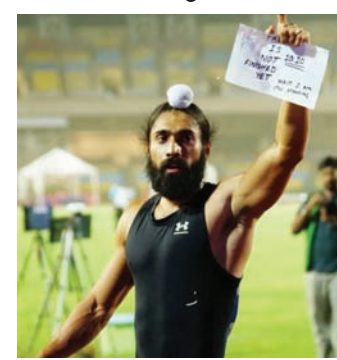
"Here we have supporters of almost every major team. Argentina may have more fans in our village, but there are plenty who support Brazil and Portugal too. We are planning friendly matches where everyone will wear their favourite team's jersey," Shan told PTI.

Football's emotional grip on Kerala is hardly new.

For decades, the state has nurtured a deep affection for the sport, fuelled by local sevens tournaments, television broadcasts and generations of fans who grew up idolising legends from Pele and Maradona to Messi, Ronaldo and Neymar.

Every four years, that passion spills out from living rooms onto streets, beaches and village squares. (PTI)

Gurvindervir Singh to lead strong Indian contingent at Asian Relays C'ship



NEW DELHI, June 3: National record holder in men's 100m, Gurvindervir Singh, will lead a 29-member strong Indian contingent at the second Asian Relays Championships, to be held in the Chinese city of Shangyu on June 20 and 21.

The Indian contingent, selected by the Athletics Federation of India will compete in all six relay events in China, says AFI president Bahadur Singh Sagoo.

"The competition in China will be a good opportunity for athletes to showcase their potential at the continental level," he added.

The third edition of the Asian Relays Championships will be held in Chandigarh.

The continental competition was recently allotted to India at the

Asian Athletics Association Council Meeting held in Hong Kong.

The competition in China will be held in the men's 4x100m and 4x400m relay, women's 4x100m and 4x400m relay. The Indian team will also compete in mixed 4x100m and 4x400m relay.

The Indian team for 2026 Asian Relays:

Men (4x400m and mixed 4x400m relay): Theerthesh P Shetty, Avinash Kumar, Setu Mishra, Nihal Wiliam, S Santhosh, Rince Joseph, Suraj Alagar Raja, Mohit Kumar, Barath Sridhar (4x400m and mixed 4x400m relay).

Men (4x100m and mixed 4x100m relay): Animesh Kujur, Gurvindervir Singh, Harsh Santosh Raut, Pranav Pramod Gaurav, Ragul Kumar Ganesh Kumar, Senthil Kumar Tamilarasu.

Women (4x400m and mixed 4x00m relay): Rashdeep Kaur, Poovamma MR, Ansa Babu, Vijaykumari GK, Saloni Nagar, Neeru Pathak, Subha V, Gowrinandana. (4x400m and mixed 4x00m relay).

Women (4x100m and mixed 4x100m relay): Nithya Gandhe, Tamanna, Sneha SS, Sudeshna Shivankar, Abinaya Rajarajan (4x100m and mixed 4x100m relay). (PTI)

England seeks a fresh start at Lord's as Ashes backlash lingers ahead of New Zealand test

LONDON, June 3: The past is fiercely protected at Lord's Cricket Ground.

The Long Room, the slope of the field, the bell before play, dress codes and honors boards.

But inside this normally comforting time capsule, England will try to escape its recent past when it begins its first home test of the year against New Zealand on Thursday.

An occasion that should herald a fresh start is enveloped by a stench of dissatisfaction lingering from England's humiliating tour to Australia.

A team that was groomed for two years to end Australia's grip on the Ashes was crushed in 11 days before Christmas; tied for the quickest Ashes series defeat in 104 years. England's slack preparation and wrong tactical approach were aggravated by reports of excessive drinking under relentless local media scrutiny.

None of the leadership group paid a price. Director of cricket Rob Key, coach Brendon McCullum and captain Ben Stokes survived a review of the Ashes tour. That didn't go down well with team supporters, and McCullum understood.

"You have got to handle a little bit of the backlash," he told the BBC.

Fixes since the Ashes include reimposing a curfew and hiring more backroom staff, including fielding coach Sarah Taylor, the wicketkeeping great and first woman to coach an England men's test team.

Nothing banishes a putrid odor like the sweet smell of success, and England can take heart from its response to a similarly dire state in 2022 when McCullum, a former New Zealand captain, took charge.

England had lost the Ashes 4-0 in Aus-



tralia and lost to the West Indies 1-0 in the Caribbean, prompting Joe Root to quit as captain. New Zealand arrived and Bazball was launched; England scored 279, 299 and 296 in consecutive second innings to sweep the series.

England has run out of patience with top-order batters Zac Crawley and Ollie Pope and replaced them with Durham opener Emilio Gay and Jacob Bethell, who scored his maiden century in January in the last Ashes test in Sydney. Gay has three hundreds in the ongoing County Championship. He'll be a dual international after playing three Twenty20s for Italy last year.

Ollie Robinson will try to be the con-

frontational new-ball bowler England consistently lacked in Australia during the Ashes. Robinson has an excellent record of 76 wickets at 23 in 20 tests but was dropped in 2024 because his fitness and attitude cost him trust. But the captaincy of Sussex this season has matured him, and he's been recalled while Jofra Archer and Brydon Carse are sidelined.

Twin peaks

Meanwhile, New Zealand will unleash its twin peaks, Kyle Jamieson and Will O'Rourke, in a test for the first time in a full-strength pace attack.

Jamieson is 2.07 meters (6-foot-8) and O'Rourke is 1.97 meters (6-foot-4). They have played together for Canterbury and in one-day internationals but both are returning

from back injuries. Jamieson's last test was in February 2024 after which O'Rourke emerged with nine wickets against South Africa on debut. But then O'Rourke broke down and hasn't played a test since July 2025.

The pair were held back from the warmup test against Ireland in Belfast last week, along with attack leader Matt Henry, to travel to England early and train with bowling coach Jacob Oram. Allrounder Nathan Smith took eight Irish wickets and looks set to be the fourth pacer.

White ball captain Mitchell Santner recovered quicker than expected from an April shoulder injury in the Indian Premier League and is vying for a spot in the middle order with fellow allrounder Glenn Phillips, fresh from helping Gujarat Titans reach the IPL final.

There's been media speculation that this tour may be Kane Williamson's last for New Zealand. He opted out of his national contract in 2024 to freelance, and the 35-year-old batter's availability is series by series.

The prospect of 14 tests over the next 12 months hasn't grabbed him even though he's 500-odd runs from the 10,000 milestone. He's admitted this will be his fifth and last test appearance at Lord's, where he's yet to taste victory.

"You only get a handful of opportunities to come to Lord's," Williamson said.

"The way they maintain the tradition is quite special. You notice those differences to all other grounds. Walking out to the pitch through the Long Room, bumping into a few members, and obviously the lunches are iconic. It is a special place to play." (AP)

Ishant's coach questions Nabi's inclusion as back-up bowler, says he should be in playing XI

NEW DELHI, June 3: Pace sensation Auqib Nabi should be a part of the Indian team playing XI for the upcoming one-off Test against Afghanistan, rather than being restricted to a backup role, believes veteran fast bowler Ishant Sharma's coach, Shrawan Kumar.

Nabi took 60 wickets in the Ranji Trophy this season and was instrumental in Jammu & Kashmir's maiden title triumph in the premier domestic tournament.

"I am talking about Auqib. Why is Auqib Nabi, after making his team Ranji champions and taking 60 wickets not considered for the one-off Test match against Afghanistan? What is this back-up bowler thing?"

"You are making him a net bowler in the name of a back-up bowler. Nabi shouldn't be treated as net bowler in the name of back-up player. It's really baffling to see what has happened." Kumar told PTI in an exclusive interview here on Wednesday.

The seasoned Delhi-based Kumar, who has been the childhood coach of top cricketers from the city including Ishant (311 wickets), felt the BCCI and the national selectors were not recognising top performers in Ranji Trophy while picking the Indian team for Test matches.

"Why are such performances not recognised? I thought he should have been playing the Test match. What is the point of taking him as a back-up player. It's just a one-off Test match." (PTI)

Haryana set to revamp sports policy with increased focus on grassroots development

CHANDIGARH, June 3: Haryana is planning to revamp its decade-old Sports Policy to make it more focussed on nurturing future Olympians through a long-term talent development programme and providing athletes with seamless access to government services through a unified digital platform.

These initiatives were presented before Chief Secretary Anurag Rastogi during a high-level review meeting held here on Wednesday to assess the state's progress on action points emerging from the fifth national conference of Chief Secretaries which was held in Delhi last year.

Director, Sports, Parth Gupta said Haryana has initiated the process of revising its Sports Policy, which was last updated in 2015. Haryana's sports policy has so far focussed more on hefty prize money for international medal winners and providing them government jobs. It has thrown up



good results so far with athletes in disciplines like wrestling, and boxing excelling globally.

For the reworked policy, a dedicated working group has been constituted to examine the existing framework and suggest reforms aligned with the latest national sports policy and emerging requirements of modern sports administration.

The proposed revision is expected to further strengthen athlete welfare, talent development programmes, sports infrastructure and institutional support mechanisms.

He also highlighted the state's ambitious "Mission Olympics-2036 Vijayee Bhavah", a long-term initiative aimed at identifying talented children in the 8-10 years age group and providing them with systematic training and support to prepare them for future Olympic participation.

The programme is proposed to be implemented through the Sports University of Haryana and has already received seed funding approval from the Finance Department.

The meeting also reviewed

Haryana's Action Taken Report on decisions taken during the national conference of chief secretaries held under the chairmanship of the Prime Minister in December 2025.

The conference, organised around the theme "Human Capital for Viksit Bharat," had identified sports and extracurricular activities as key areas for strengthening youth development and nation-building, an official statement said here on Wednesday.

During Wednesday's meeting here, which was attended by senior officers of the Sports Department and other concerned departments, Chief Secretary Rastogi directed departments to maintain close coordination in achieving the objectives outlined under the national roadmap.

The Khelo Haryana App, a comprehensive digital platform intended to serve as a one-stop solution for sports persons, is also in the works. (PTI)

NDTL signs MoU with Gurugram-based university

NEW DELHI, June 3: The National Dope Testing Laboratory (NDTL) here has signed a Memorandum of Understanding with Shree Guru Govind Singh Tricentenary (SGT) University which would facilitate joint research initiatives and "shape next generation of professionals to promote clean sport". The university is based in Gurugram.

The MoU was signed in the presence of senior officials from both institutions. "The partnership will also facilitate joint research initiatives, knowledge exchange programmes, and capacity-building activities in areas related to analytical test-

ing, anti-doping sciences, forensic analysis, and healthcare diagnostics," stated a press release from the Sports Ministry. NDTL Director Dr. P L Sahu said the collaboration will advance scientific research and contribute to "strengthening the ecosystem of scientific education and laboratory excellence in the country." "Partnering with an institution of SGT University's calibre allows us to shape the next generation of scientists, researchers, and healthcare professionals who will champion clean sport. We look forward to a fruitful and impactful collaboration," he stated. (PTI)

Living a dream: Rookie Harsh Dubey looks forward to rubbing shoulders with Kohli, Rohit and Gill

NEW DELHI, June 3: Sharing the ODI dressing room with Virat Kohli and Rohit Sharma would be quite an "achievement" for rookie Indian all-rounder Harsh Dubey who is also looking forward to understand Test captain Shubman Gill's leadership style in the upcoming home series against Afghanistan.

The 23-year-old Dubey has been picked in both the Test and ODI squads and the left-arm spinner said everything has felt like a dream since he was informed of his maiden national call-up.

Speaking to 'JioStar', Dubey recalled the moment he found out about his selection in the Indian squad for the Afghanistan series, which begins with a one-off Test in Mullanpur from June 6.

"We had reached the airport and found out our flight was delayed by an hour. I got a call from someone managing a cricket social media page, asking how I felt about my name being in the ODI series," he said.

"Because of the noise and network issues in the lounge, I thought he was referring to the



Sri Lanka A ODI tri-series, so I said it felt like one step closer to the dream and that my focus was still on the IPL.

"As soon as I hung up, I started getting messages saying I had received both the Test and ODI call-ups. I was confused because the squad had just been announced, so I quickly checked online and saw the news. It honestly took me a few minutes to process what had happened...It genuinely felt like I was dreaming."

The Sunrisers Hyderabad player was a standout performer for Vidarbha in the 2024-25 Ranji season, snaring 69 wickets and contributing 469 runs.

Dubey said he still doesn't have words to describe his state of mind but is looking forward to making mark.

"...instead of thinking too far ahead, I prefer to focus on what is in my hands, one game at a time...I don't want to think too far ahead about playing the 2027 World Cup or winning the WTC for India. I just want to stay in the present and do the best I can with what is in my hands," he said.

On the prospect of sharing dressing room with Kohli and Rohit during the three ODIs that

SHAHIDI'S BIGGEST TEST Afghanistan skipper carries a nation's red-ball hopes

MULLANPUR, June 3: When Afghanistan take on India in a one-off Test beginning Saturday, Hashmatullah Shahidi will be more than just the captain of the visiting cricket team.

The 31-year-old would also be the batting fulcrum around whom Afghanistan's Test ambitions revolve.

In the absence of veterans Rashid Khan and Mohammad Nabi, the soft-spoken left-hander will shoulder the responsibility of proving that Afghanistan's red-ball aspirations are no longer dependent on a handful of superstar names.

It is a role that would have made his father proud. Shahidi's father, a physics teacher and author of multiple textbooks, values education above everything else.

Like many Afghan families affected by years of conflict and political turmoil, the Shahidis spent time in Pakistan before returning home, and cricket was hardly the most secure career path for a young boy growing up amid uncertainty.

Yet the son of a teacher worked his way up to emerge as one of Afghanistan's most important cricketing minds.

If Rashid is the team's global superstar, Shahidi is the man entrusted with giving it direction.

The significance of the Test against India here therefore extends beyond the result.

Afghanistan played their maiden Test against India in Bengaluru in 2018 when they lost 20 wickets in just two sessions. It was in this very game that Shahidi made his debut.

Eight years later, they arrive as a team seeking validation in the longest format, and their captain stands at the centre of that quest.

Unlike many modern batters whose reputations are built on audacious strokeplay, Shahidi's strengths are rooted in patience and discipline.

He is an old-fashioned accumulator in an era that increasingly celebrates instant impact.

For Afghanistan, that quality is invaluable.

Test cricket remains unfamiliar territory for a nation that has played only a limited number of matches since gaining entry into the format. Shahidi himself is only 11 Tests old.

The side has often relied on moments of individual brilliance, whether from Rashid's wrist spin or the aggressive batting of younger stars.

Shahidi offers something different and that's stability.

His numbers underline his importance. He became the first Afghan batter to score a Test double hundred when he made an unbeaten 200 against Zimbabwe in Abu Dhabi in 2021.

He later bettered that effort with a monumental 246, the highest individual Test score by an Afghan batter.

Those innings showcased a temperament that is rare in Afghanistan's cricket ecosystem.

While the country has pro-



duced a steady stream of naturally gifted stroke-makers and attacking bowlers, Shahidi's greatest asset is his willingness to embrace the grind that Test cricket demands.

That quality has also shaped his leadership.

Captaining Afghanistan is unlike leading many other international teams.

The squad features players who have become global T20 stars and command significant respect across franchise leagues.

Managing those personalities while building a coherent red-ball culture requires a different skill set.

Shahidi has largely achieved that through calm authority. His leadership style is not overtly aggressive as is often seen in modern captains.

Team-mates frequently describe him as approachable and measured, qualities that have become increasingly important as Afghanistan navigate a period of transition.

The absence of Rashid and Nabi only amplifies his significance.

For much of the last decade, the two veterans (Rashid in terms of experience) have been the pillars around which Afghan cricket was built.

Rashid's global stature and Nabi's experience often eased the burden on whoever held the captaincy.

Against India, Shahidi will not have that luxury.

For Afghanistan, competing over five days will require discipline, patience and resilience.

It demands players willing to bat long hours, absorb pressure and think beyond the next session. That is where Shahidi assumes added importance.

As Afghanistan continue their search for a permanent place in the Test hierarchy, their captain represents the values of the format.

Whether Afghanistan can challenge India over five days remains to be seen. But as they embark on another significant chapter in their red-ball journey, Shahidi's role extends beyond runs and tactical decisions.

The son of a physics teacher now finds himself carrying the weight of a cricketing nation's longest-format dreams. (PTI)

Rai to tee up for first time as Major winner

DUBLIN (US), June 3: Aaron Rai will be the focus this week at The Memorial Tournament being held at Muirfield Village Golf Club. The 31 year-old will tee up for the first time since his career-changing success at the Major, PGA Championship.

Indo-British Rai made history when he became the first English player in 107 years to win the PGA Championship last month.

While Rai will headline the field the other Indian origin players this week will be Akshay Bhatia, Sahith Theegala and Sudarshan Yellamaraju.

Bhatia has already won a signature event this year but since then he has struggled with consistency. He missed the cut on two of the seven events after claiming his first title of the season. He even missed the cut at The Hero Indian Open in India, which was part of the DP World Tour.

Sahith Theegala was at one time set to break into the top 10 of the OWGR rankings but injuries derailed his plans last year. Having returned to an injury free status Theegala began his 2026 campaign with multiple top 10 finishes and has begun to show the consistency of results. (PTI)